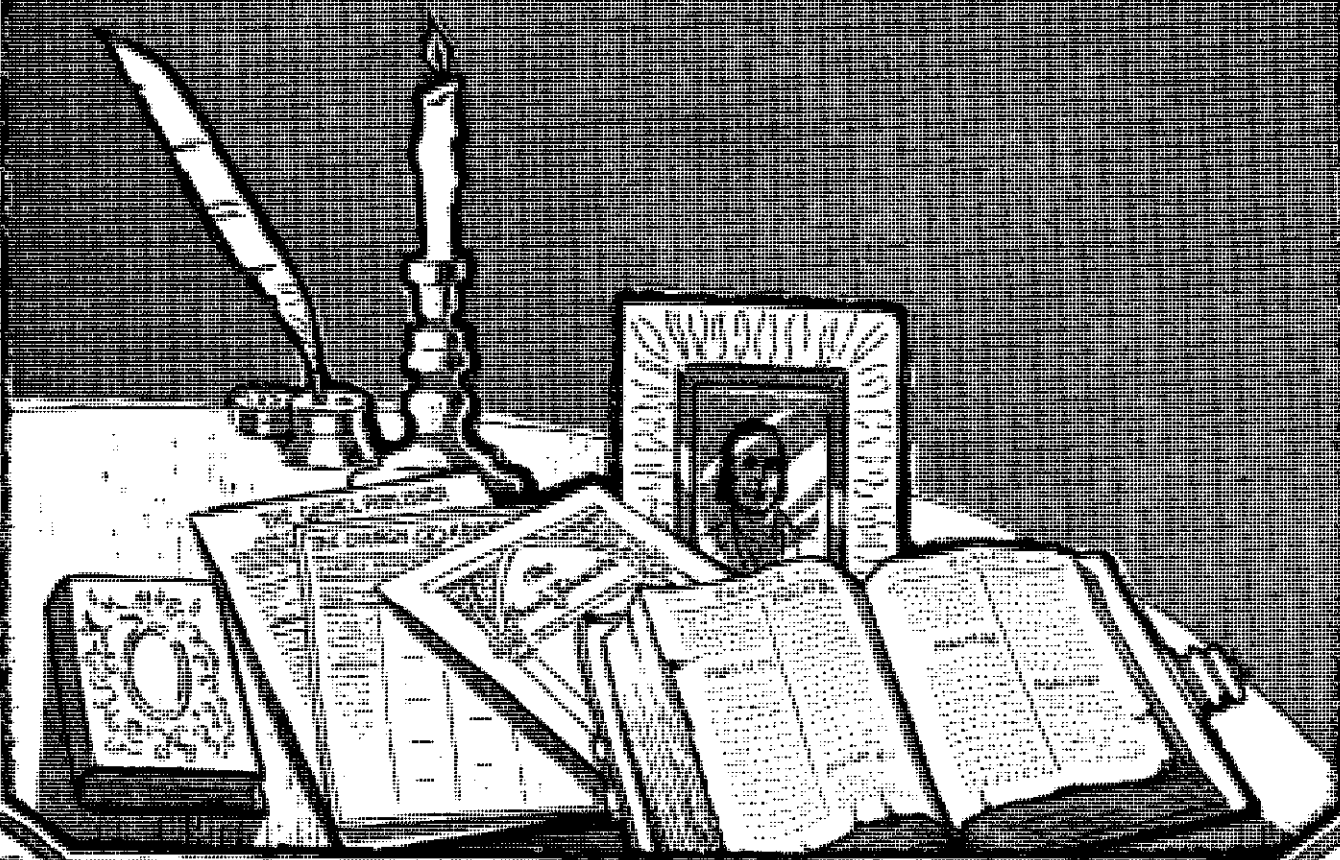


Time for Review

Facts about the founding
of the Churches of God
General Conference



History of the Churches of God

by Richard Kern

The Church of God: Origins

In eastern Pennsylvania in the early 1800s there were many Christians who were dissatisfied with the prevailing religious atmosphere. They considered the established churches too "formal" and not interested enough in promoting what has been termed "heart" or "experiential" religion. The emphasis of these Christians was on the importance of a "new birth" and a "personal relationship to Jesus Christ." Salvation consisted not in accepting the teachings of a church but in accepting Christ, often in an emotionally charged context which involved praying for sinners by name, holding experience meetings late at night, and the use of a "mourner's bench."

From time to time groups of Christians maintaining this religious emphasis would separate themselves from the established churches and form small congregations of their own. Some of these congregations disappeared as families moved west. Some eventually joined with re-

ligious groups whose emphases were similar to theirs—like the United Brethren, Evangelical Association, or Methodists. Some remained independent.

Among the independent churches, the name "Church of God" was popular. Why? Well, for one thing, it was Biblical, and these churches emphasized Biblical authority. But, more than that, the name had an established tradition behind it in eastern Pennsylvania, particularly among the German population. The Moravian Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf's "Congregation of God in the Spirit," formed in the 1740s to foster unity among the German churches in Pennsylvania, may well have had some early 19th century consequences. "The True Church of God and Its Origin" and "The Ungodly and False Church of God" are subjects of extensive discussion in *The Martyr's Mirror*, published in its first German edition in Pennsylvania in 1748. It was a popular item among those Churches of God later associated with John Winebrenner.

In 1816, an independent Church of God was organized in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Pastor of the church was John Elliott, an Englishman with some education, about whom we unfortunately know very little. The Lancaster Church of God later affiliated with the Church of God movement associated with Winebrenner, and is today the oldest church in the General Conference of the Churches of God.

Art work for this sixteen page booklet on the history and ministry of the Churches of God is the creation of Mrs. Frances Snavelly Seidel, daughter of Pastor and Mrs. Frank Snavelly. Pastor Frank Snavelly has been a Churches of God minister for 64 years.

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Copies of this booklet are on sale for \$1.00 per copy. Order from Central Publishing House, Box 2103, Harrisburg, Pa. 17105.

John Winebrenner

The person most often associated with the Church of God movement in the first half of the 19th century is John Winebrenner. Winebrenner was born in Frederick County, Maryland, on March 25, 1797. He was raised by his parents, Philip and Eva Barrick Winebrenner, in the German Reformed Church.

After attending Dickinson College for a year or so (the dates are unknown), John, in 1817, went to Philadelphia to live with and to receive theological training under the Rev. Samuel Helffenstein, pastor of the Race Street Reformed Church. It was under Helffenstein's teaching and preaching that Winebrenner was converted. His account of his conversion gives us some idea of his understanding of what Christian salvation consisted:

Hence, I continued sinning and repenting for a number of years, till in the winter of 1817, when deep and pungent convictions laid told of my guilty soul. . . And after "chattering like the swallow," and "mourning as a dove," for three or four weary months, my poor woe-fraught soul found redemption in Immanuel's blood, even the forgiveness of sins. It was on Easter Sabbath, in the city of Philadelphia, in the presence of a large congregation of worshippers, that Jesus, the "Sun of Righteousness" arose, and shone upon my soul. . . . Jesus became the joy of my heart, and the centre of my affections. His people became lovely and precious in my sight. His word was my delight.

It was on this experience that Winebrenner based his ministerial efforts in the years to come.

Upon the completion of his studies with Dr. Helffenstein, Winebrenner was ordained by the German Reformed Church on September 24, 1820. On Sunday, October 22, 1820, he preached his introductory sermon at the Salem Reformed Church in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Winebrenner soon found that his experience centered form of Christianity and particularly the "new measures" he used to promote it, were not acceptable to the Salem Church and three other country churches which constituted the Harrisburg Reformed Charge. Some of his parishioners disliked his "experience and conference meetings" in the church, and his "social prayer meetings" in

parishioners' homes. Some disliked his close connection with the local Methodists, who were not overly popular with the Reformed or Lutheran Churches. (Methodism was popularly conceived of in the Reformation based churches as a highly debased form of Christianity.) The Vestry of the Salem Church did not like the way Winebrenner seemed to ignore them in certain matters. A smoldering feud gradually developed. It resulted in Winebrenner being locked out of the Harrisburg Church sometime in early April, 1823.

With the doors of the Salem Church locked, Winebrenner and that portion of the congregation which accepted him as pastor continued worshipping together in various locations in Harrisburg. For a while they felt that they were the real congregation of the Salem Church, wrongfully deprived of the church building. However, the German Reformed Synod of 1825 decided that the opponents of Winebrenner and his congregation (the "Vestry party") were in fact entitled to the church property. What was Winebrenner to do?

The answer seemed to be the erection of a church building to house Winebrenner and his "new measure" group. Accordingly, at a meeting of Winebrenner's congregation on May 9, 1826, the following actions were agreed upon unanimously:

1. That whereas J. Winebrenner and his congregation has no suitable place of worship at present, we immediately proceed (God willing) to build a Church, provided a sufficient sum, in money, materials and work can be raised for that purpose.
2. That the Church be and remain free for the use of all Christian Denominations when it is not occupied by the Congregation.

The cornerstone of the building, named the "Union Bethel," was laid May 12, 1827. Speaker for the occasion was John Elliott, pastor of the Lancaster Church of God, and a friend of Winebrenner since at least 1822. While we do not know exactly when Winebrenner first began to use the appellation "Church of God" in referring to his Harrisburg congregation, sometime in 1826 seems most likely.

Many in the general Harrisburg area, including some who already belonged to independent

churches, began to look to Winebrenner for religious leadership. In 1844, Winebrenner wrote an account of events that followed.

About this time (1825) more extensive and glorious revivals of religion commenced in different towns and neighbourhoods, to wit: New Cumberland, Linglestown, Middletown, Millerstown, Lebanon, Lancaster, Shippensburg, Elizabethtown, Mount Joy, Marietta, and various other places. In these glorious revivals there were hundreds and multitudes happily converted to God. The conversion of these scores and multitudes in different places led to the organization of churches. And, as the writer's views had by this time materially changed, as to the true nature of a scriptural organization of churches, he adopted the apostolic plan, as taught in the New Testament, and established spiritual, free, and independent churches, consisting of believers or Christians only, without any human name, or creed, or ordinances, or laws, etc.

For Winebrenner then, the underlying or motivating principle in the establishment of these independent churches soon came to be thought of as the restoration of primitive or Biblical Christianity. Inasmuch as the church was a Biblical institution, it should therefore have a Biblical rather than a human name, viz. "Church of God."

By 1830 local churches of God had been established at several points in the Harrisburg area (primarily at those places where Winebrenner and other "new measure" ministers had held revival meetings) and the movement was spreading. The summer of 1830 saw an effort in the direction of a system of cooperation between these local churches. In spite of some determined opposition, in October of 1830 an "eldership" was organized, consisting of six "teaching elders" (ministers) from several, but not all, of the churches of God. Winebrenner later recorded the event as follows:

From among the young converts, in these newly planted churches, it pleased God to raise up several able men, to take upon them the solemn and responsible office of the gospel ministry. These ministering brethren, with a few other great and good men with similar views and kindred spirits, labored and co-operated with each other but, finally they agreed to hold a meeting for the purpose of adopting a regular system of co-operation.

Accordingly, they met together for this purpose, pursuant to public notice, in the Union Bethel, at Harrisburg, in the month of October, 1830, and organized the meeting by appointing John Winebrenner, of Harrisburg, speaker; and John Elliott, of Lancaster, clerk.

Winebrenner concluded: "Thus originated the Church of God, properly so called, in the United States of America; and thus, also, originated the first eldership."

Until his death, on September 12, 1860, Winebrenner continued in his leadership role in the Church of God movement. He inaugurated the Church of God papers, *THE GOSPEL PUBLISHER* in 1835 and *THE CHURCH ADVOCATE* in 1846. Among the other religious books and pamphlets he published, his *A Brief View of the Formation, Government and Discipline of the Church of God* in 1829 became the theological rationale for the existence of the Church of God.

After 1830, Winebrenner was most often a "preacher-at-large" or "general missionary" for the Church of God. This left him free to engage in general church work, frequently, but not always, related to the Church of God. It also left him free to engage in activities connected with several reform movements, including anti-slavery, anti-war, and temperance, and, to engage in a number of business enterprises, including publishing books, selling drugs, and growing mulberry trees for the silk industry. In 1856, his patented "harrow and clod cutter" won third prize at the Pennsylvania State Agricultural Society Exhibition. Whatever else one may think of John Winebrenner, his versatility cannot be denied.

The Churches of God: 1830-1865

Winebrenner was chiefly responsible for the organization of the Church of God in 1830. For the rest of his life he was the chief theological light of the movement, keeping in touch with the churches through his editorship of both the *GOSPEL PUBLISHER* and *CHURCH ADVOCATE*. He made several trips west, one as far as Iowa. On these trips he spoke at recently organized Churches of God and assisted in the formation of local elderships. He also used his western travels as an opportunity to sell his recently published books and large quantities of Lorenzo Dow's medicine, a patented concoction in which he apparently had great faith. But by and large Winebrenner's missionary and camp meeting work was confined to the Harrisburg and east Pennsylvania area. Joining with him in this local extension work were a large number of ministers, including James Mackey, Andrew Miller, William McFadden, Jacob Keller, E. H. Thomas, and D. A. L. Laverty—to name but a few.

By the early 1830s, work among primarily German background people had begun to the south, in Maryland. However, the primary thrust of church extension was to the west and southwest. Thomas and John Hickernell, Jacob Keller, Jonathan Hawk, John Martin, G. U. Harn, Emmanuel Logue and Daniel Wertz were among the earliest and most active Church of God missionaries in the near west. Due to their efforts, and the efforts of many others less well known, the (East) Ohio Eldership was formed in 1836; the West Pennsylvania Eldership in 1844; the Indiana Eldership in 1846; and the Iowa Eldership in 1848. A. B. Slyter was instrumental in the formation of the Michigan Eldership in 1850. J. M. Klein and George Sandoe were two of the better known ministers involved in the organization of the Illinois Eldership in 1853.

In 1854, the German Eldership was organized within the territory of the East Pennsylvania Eldership, largely through the efforts of J. F. Weishampel. (With difficulty, the German Eldership was reabsorbed by East Pennsylvania in 1893.) The Texas (and Arkansas) Eldership was

established in 1857 by Benjamin Ober and Enoch Marple, with the special blessing and financial assistance of Winebrenner. Thomas Hickernell, J. M. West, and R. H. Bolton helped to form the West Ohio Eldership in 1857. (The West Ohio and East Ohio Elderships consolidated to form the Ohio Eldership in 1875.) Also in 1857, a Southern Illinois and Indiana Eldership was organized. (Churches in this Eldership later merged with the Illinois and Indiana Elderships, in 1880 and 1903, respectively.)

In order to provide coordination between the growing number of local elderships, a General Eldership was organized in 1845. It met for the first time in Pittsburgh. John Winebrenner was elected speaker.

The close of the 1830-1865 period saw the nation wracked by the Civil War. The vast majority of ministers and laymen in the Church of God, prior to 1861, were opposed to both slavery and war. (Some few pro-slavery voices might occasionally be heard from Church of God members in Maryland, Virginia, and Texas—but not often.) But when a choice had to be made most ministers and laymen abandoned their pacifism and supported "Mr. Lincoln's War" and the Union.



G. U. Harn of Maryland, one of the ablest ministers in the Church of God, was one of those enlisting in the Civil War. Harn did missionary work and served churches in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Iowa between 1840 and 1860. He was also a vigorous debater and writer. In 1859 he was elected mayor of Wooster, Ohio (where he was serving as pastor), and missed being nominated to run for Congress on the Republican ticket in Ohio by just a few votes on the convention floor. In 1860 he attended the Republican Convention in Chicago (which nominated Lincoln). On his second enlistment in the War, he became a Captain in the 16th Ohio Volunteer Infantry and died as a result of wounds received in the battle of Chickasaw Bluffs, Mississippi (a part of the greater battle for Vicksburg) on December 29, 1862.

The Churches of God: 1865-1925

During this period the Churches of God (the name was changed from "Church" to "Churches" at the 1896 General Eldership) continued to expand, primarily to the west and southwest. The Kansas and Missouri Eldership was organized in 1871 by ministers from a number of elderships who were working in both states. Ten years later, in 1881, the Eldership was divided into the Kansas Eldership and the Missouri Eldership. In 1872, the Maryland and Virginia Eldership separated from the East Pennsylvania Eldership.

An exception to the west and southwest expansion pattern was the establishment of a Maine Eldership in 1874. It was the result of the affiliation with the Churches of God of a number of independent churches with some Free Will Baptist background. Largely due to the distance from the main body of the Churches of God, the Maine churches withdrew their affiliation in 1894.

The West Virginia Eldership was carved out of the West Pennsylvania Eldership in 1883. The Eldership then divided into two elderships, West Virginia, North, and West Virginia, South, in 1894. A Washington and Oregon Eldership was formed by six ministers from the mid-west in 1891. Later, in 1913, two elderships—Washington and Oregon—were created. However, distance from the eastern Churches of God and some severe internal problems led to the eventual dissolution of the elderships. In 1892, the Oklahoma and Indian Territory Eldership was begun, large-

ly the result of a northern extension of the Texas Eldership work. The Arkansas (and, later, Oklahoma) Eldership, made up of black churches within the Texas and Arkansas Eldership, was established in 1896.

Generally, the westward expansion of the Churches of God did not exhibit the same vitality after the Civil War as before. Why? It seems that the Churches of God were most successful in their western church extension work in those areas—primarily rural and small town—heavily settled by Pennsylvania German people, especially those people from Dauphin, Cumberland, York, and Lancaster Counties. While there were some notable exceptions, it was a German background pietistic evangelicalism, transplanted from eastern Pennsylvania, which provided the most fertile soil for Churches of God growth in the west. As this base for growth began to wither following the Civil War, due to the inundations of a pluralistic culture, Churches of God expansion slowed.

The same process was at work in the cities from the very beginning. Despite well prepared efforts, and the considerable abilities of pastors like A. X. Shoemaker and G. U. Harn, early attempts to establish churches in cities like Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Chicago either failed or were continually on the brink of failure. The evidence suggests that the failure in the large cities was not related to Churches of God teaching and practices, but rather to the cultural pluralism of the cities which eroded the German pietistic base so essential for a flourishing Churches of God. (In fact, those Germans from eastern Pennsylvania moving west—including hundreds of Churches of God families—tended to avoid the large cities. Theirs was largely a rural and small town migration. Consequently, there was not much of a Pennsylvania German pietistic base to begin with in the cities.)

Churches of God missionary activity in other countries began at the end of the 19th century. Through the efforts of the women of the Church, Clara Landes, a minister from Iowa, was sent to India in 1896. Eventually she began the first Churches of God work at Uluberia, about 25 miles southwest of Calcutta. Ms. Landes was followed by Viola Hershey and Rev. and Mrs. A. C. Bowers in 1902, who established a new mission station at Bogra, about 200 miles north of Calcutta. Other early missionaries included Leah K. Becker, Rev. and Mrs. A. B. Chamberlin, Dr. Chloe F. Hull, Mary Witsaman, Rev. Howard Cover (who married Viola Hershey), and Rev. and Mrs. Aaron E. Myers.

In 1896, the conversion of a number of Slavic Americans at the Mt. Pleasant Church of God in

the West Pennsylvania Eldership, led to the eventual extension of the Churches of God into Czechoslovakia and Hungary. By 1925 these European churches claimed several hundred members.

The 1865-1925 period saw the establishment of a number of institutions of learning by the Churches of God. Winebrenner had continuously agitated for the establishment of Church of God institutions of learning, but the Church was not inclined to take up that responsibility during his lifetime. Between 1866 and 1868 the General Eldership supported Centralia College in Nemaha County, Kansas. Located at considerable distance from most members of the Churches of God, it failed. After numerous other attempts, including the election of John A. Winebrenner (John Winebrenner's son) to a professorship at Hillsdale College (Michigan) in the hope of attracting Churches of God youth to that institution, in 1884 the cornerstone was laid for a Churches of God college at Findlay, Ohio. Findlay College, "the most complete and best arranged College Building in the Northwest," was opened on September 15, 1886, with 95 students under President J. R. H. Latchaw. Other educational institutions established during this period included the Barkeyville Academy in West Pennsylvania (1881-1906), founded by J. R. H. Latchaw, and, the Fort Scott Collegiate Institute in Kansas (1902-1917), started by O. A. Newlin.

During the 1865-1925 period, THE CHURCH ADVOCATE slowly grew under its three editors—E. H. Thomas, C. H. Forney, and S. G. Yahn. In 1885, the Churches of God opened a bookstore in Harrisburg. A publishing house was started in 1901 and, in 1922, was transferred to the newly erected Central Publishing House (of the Churches of God) at 13th and Walnut in Harrisburg. A number of Sunday School and missionary publications also originated during this period. These included THE GEM, THE SUNBEAM, THE WORKMAN QUARTERLY, and THE MISSIONARY SIGNAL.

Controversy—theological and otherwise—was not unknown in the Church of God prior to the Civil War. John Elliott, one of the founders of the Church, was disfellowshipped in 1831, apparently because he held the doctrine of "Restorationism" (or, possibly, because he concealed the fact that he held the doctrine). At the 1839 East Pennsylvania Eldership, Elder George Kimmel was questioned with regard to his "erroneous opinions," which included his beliefs (1) that he was authorized to forgive sins; (2) that the New Testament Letters of Hebrews, James and Jude were not canonical; and, (3) that he had the "gift

of healing." (A number of ministers, including Winebrenner, were appointed to "reason" with Kimmel, but, his membership in the Church of God continued.) Winebrenner himself ran into all sorts of criticism because of his reforming sentiments.

However, it was not until after the Civil War, when the Churches of God began to look inward, that theological controversy really shook the Church. Beginning in 1865, and continuing for over 20 years in an intensive fashion, the Church was in continual debate over the meaning of "Sanctification." The question revolved around whether it were a "second definite work of grace" or not. The result was the unfortunate loss to the Churches of God of one of its best pastors, Dan Warner, and some of his close followers. Warner served the Churches of God from 1867 to 1877 as a minister in Ohio and a pioneer missionary in Nebraska prior to his experiencing sanctification as a second work in 1877. He left the church, possibly more because of some less-than-laudatory attitudes on the part of his fellow Ohio pastors than because of his attitude toward sanctification. Many holding Warner's views did stay with the Churches of God, particularly in the western elderships.

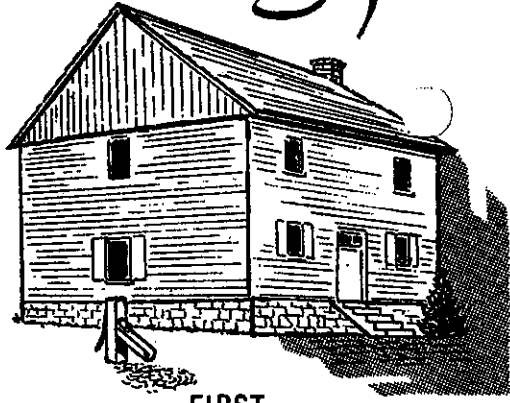
Another controversy was that related to the work of Sister Maria B. Woodworth, a minister in the Churches of God (on and off) from 1884 to 1904. She became well known both in and out of the Churches of God (primarily in the mid-west) for her evangelistic meetings. Divine healings, trances, and various highly emotional manifestations which were claimed to be the work of the Holy Spirit, were characteristic of her assemblies. The membership of the Churches of God, especially in the east, was generally not prepared for her activities. Also, her independent work outside the boundaries of the Church caused some problems. Eventually she left the Churches of God and became a leader in the developing Pentecostal movement in the United States.

Other theological controversies simmered during the period. Perhaps the most important and pervasive of these was the constant concern over the doctrines of "predestination" and the "eternal security" of the Christian believer.

Partly in response to doctrinal disputes within the Church, and partly in response to the development of theories of evolution, "higher and lower criticism" of the Biblical text, and theological "liberalism" (often, "modernism"), the 1865-1925 period saw a drift on the part of the Churches of God toward theological "fundamentalism." The General Eldership of 1925 affirmed a Doctrinal Statement. It was a recasting of the



John Winebrenner



FIRST CHURCH BUILDING IN HARRISBURG BUILT IN 1787

THE RIVER BANKS AT TIMES, IF WEATHER PERMITTED, WAS A PLACE OF GATHERING FOR WINEBRENNER AND HIS FOLLOWING BEFORE THE BETHEL WAS BUILT

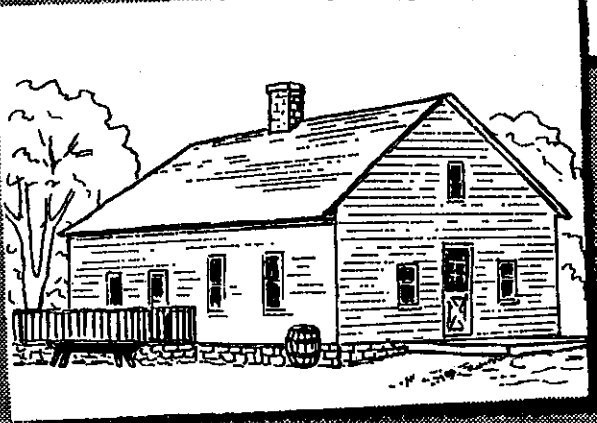


BORN MARCH 25, 1757 IN A LOG HOUSE

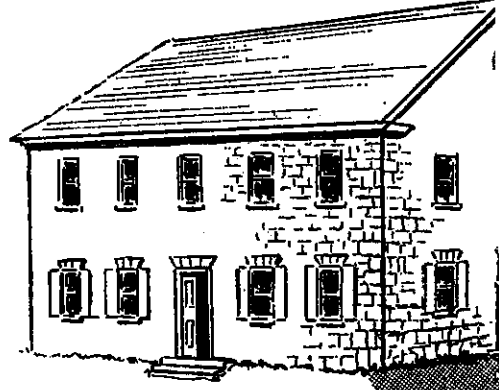
STONE HOUSE BUILT IN 1810 BY JOHN'S FATHER



Frederick Co. Maryland



GLADES SCHOOL WHERE JOHN ATTENDED



PEACE CHURCH BUILT IN 1798 NEAR SHIREMANSTOWN

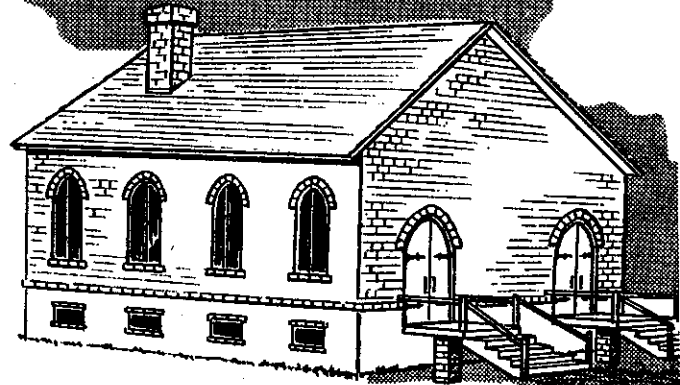
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania



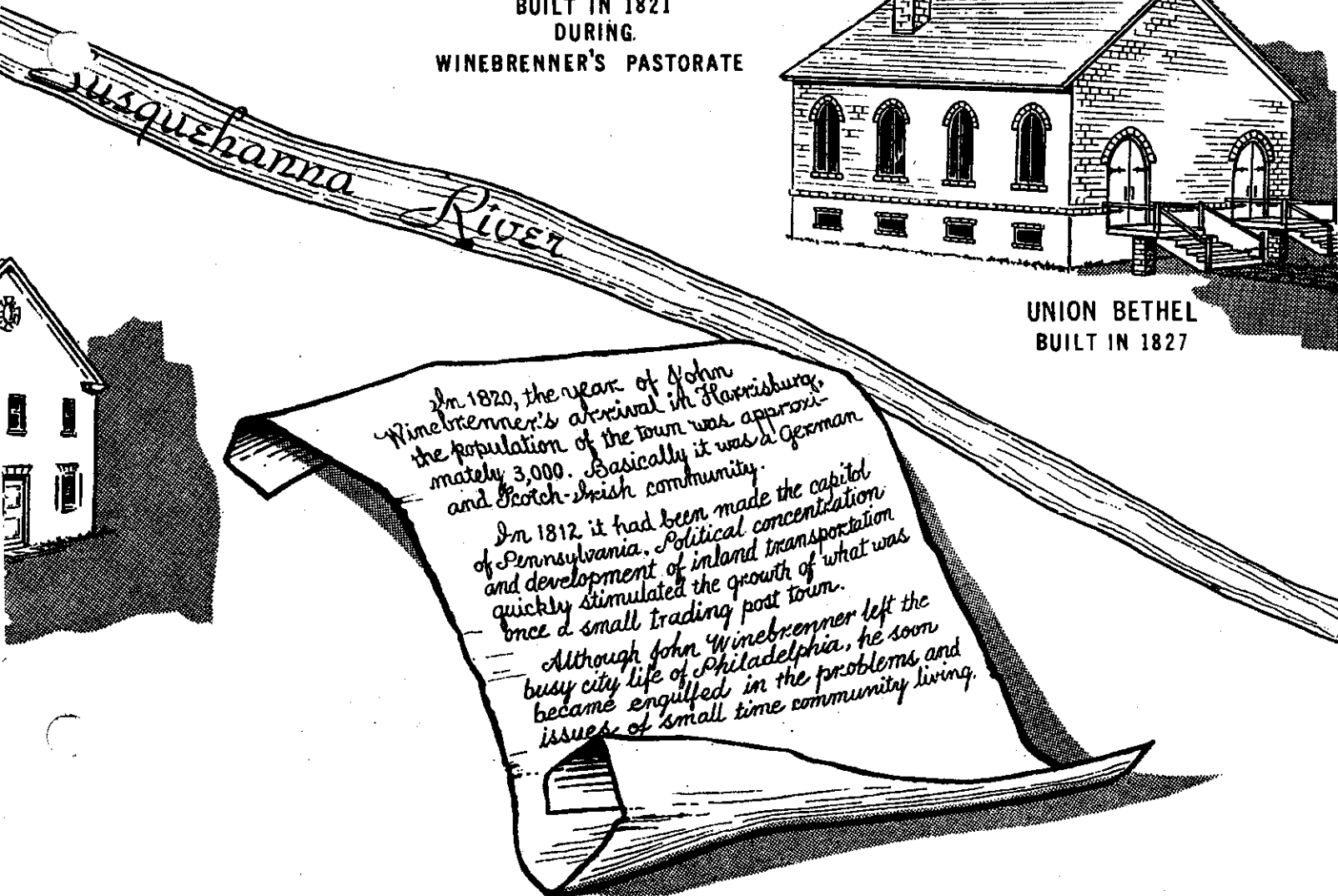
FOURTH STREET CHURCH OF GOD
BUILT IN 1854



SALEM REFORMED CHURCH
BUILT IN 1821
DURING
WINEBRENNER'S PASTORATE



UNION BETHEL
BUILT IN 1827



In 1820, the year of John Winebrenner's arrival in Harrisburg, the population of the town was approximately 3,000. Basically it was a German and Scotch-Irish community.

In 1812 it had been made the capitol of Pennsylvania. Political concentration and development of inland transportation quickly stimulated the growth of what was once a small trading post town.

Although John Winebrenner left the busy city life of Philadelphia, he soon became engulfed in the problems and issues of small time community living.

27 points given by John Winebrenner in 1844 as the "avowed principles of the Church of God," in the light of the "fundamentalist—modernist" controversy, and recent theological debates in the Churches of God. While the reshaping of Winebrenner's points probably did not do violence to Winebrenner's essential theological stance, it is doubtful that the Doctrinal Statement of 1925 reflected Winebrenner's spirit where theological dialogue was concerned. Winebrenner and the early Church of God were evangelical pietist in emphasis, not cultic fundamentalist. But times were different and the Churches of God felt the need to protect itself.

The Churches of God: 1925-1960

In many respects, the 1925-1960 period continued the tendency toward consolidation which had begun toward the end of the 19th century. One new eldership was created, California, in 1948. There had been some Churches of God representation in California late in the 19th century. However, it was not until the migration of Churches of God families to California, primarily from the southwest in the second quarter of the 20th century, that the Church became established in the state.

One eldership, Nebraska, so decreased in size during this period that by 1960 there were but two remaining churches listed in the Ministerial Roll. (The Eldership formally ceased to exist in 1966.) Other elderships, particularly those in the west with a large rural constituency, continued to decrease in size. This was in some measure compensated for by the slow growth of several of the eastern elderships. Growth was most often seen in small town and suburban churches, and in churches located in those rural areas which were becoming more densely populated. Some new Churches of God were established successfully, but, as noted, this was more a period of consolidation rather than expansion.

The Doctrinal Statement of 1925, while it apparently served well the majority of Churches of God members, was not successful from the point of view of ending theological controversies. Despite clear pronouncements in behalf of "the free moral agency" of man, an emphasis upon predestination and eternal security continued to surface in a number of elderships during this period. In some cases it led to separation of churches and members from the General Eldership. Also, there continued to be a concern over

"liberalism" in the church. Between 1925 and 1960 both theological liberals and theological conservatives left the Churches of God because of dissatisfaction with the theological climate in the Church. However, by 1960, there seemed to be a broad theologically conservative (but not fundamentalist, necessarily) consensus across the Churches of God.

Theological education in the Church received a boost with the creation in 1942 of the Winebrenner Graduate School of Divinity in Findlay, Ohio. Expanding upon the ministerial training program of Findlay College, the school offered a three year Bachelor of Divinity degree program. Over the years, Drs. Gale Ritz and J. Russell Bucher established a tradition of academic respectability and vital Christian concern at the Seminary.

The fortunes of Findlay College fluctuated. Kept in existence by the sacrifice, hope, and hard work of numerous people within and without the Churches of God, the College made it through the Great Depression, a fire, and World War II. By the late 1950s the student enrollment began the increase which was to culminate in a student census of over 1400 by the mid- and late 1960s. The College facilities began their expansion with the building of the Myers Hall dormitory in 1955.

For Churches of God publications, Roy Schreiner succeeded S. G. Yahn as editor of THE CHURCH ADVOCATE and F. D. Rayle followed C. H. Grove as editor of Sunday church school materials with a major development being the addition of teaching-learning materials for children and youth.

Child dedication services became common. In 1944 the General Eldership recognized the practice (which essentially took the place of the service of child baptism in other churches).

It was during this period that the modern church camping program was inaugurated. Many local elderships purchased camp facilities, especially for the use of their youth and families. The first General Eldership camp was held in 1931.

The Churches of God Youth Advance was organized in 1947, giving impetus to a distinctive Churches of God youth program throughout the denomination. In 1953 the Women's Christian Service Council was formed. It has coordinated the activities of Churches of God women and given them a voice on the General Eldership level. It was also during this period that the Churches of God began to get involved in ministry to the aged programs. In both the Ohio and East Pennsylvania Conferences, homes for the aged were established.

The Churches of God "now"

by Jack Parthemore

Something has been happening in the Churches of God in the past fifteen years. There is a new feeling of excitement and anticipation evinced by the theme for this General Conference triennium, "In Celebration of Life."

1960 emerged with the doctrinal statement, "Teachings and Practices of the Churches of God . . .," having been adopted by the General Eldership in 1959.

Findlay College was expanding. Enrollment in September of 1960 reached 735. The cornerstone for Lovett Hall, a residence hall for women students, had been laid on May 25, 1959, the 75th anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone for Old Main at Findlay College, on May 25, 1884.

Winebrenner Theological Seminary, established as a graduate school of Findlay College in 1942, received its charter in December of 1960 and on February 15, 1961 Dr. Gale Ritz for many years dean of the seminary, was installed as the first president.

1960 marked the centennial for Harrisburg's city charter and the Churches of God celebrated 135 years with the presentation of the pageant, "Unlocking Doors," written by Dr. Roy Schreiner, then retiring as editor of THE CHURCH ADVOCATE.

In November of 1961 Winebrenner Seminary broke ground for its own campus with dedication of a three-building complex, including the Ritz Memorial Chapel, in August of 1962. In May of 1966 the church experienced the elixir of success when the \$400,000 development drive for Winebrenner Seminary went over the top.

The same year, 1961, the Ohio Eldership opened Winebrenner Haven for senior citizens and the WCSC joined the Summer Theology Seminar.

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, noted that God "has appointed in the church", among others, "administrators." The East Pennsylvania Eldership elected a superintendent in 1961; the West Pennsylvania Conference opted

for a similar program with the naming of an administrator in 1966. By August of 1970 the General Eldership installed an administrator.

Eighteen new congregations have appeared at Lititz and Greenvillage in East Pennsylvania; Hagerstown, Maryland; Richville, Ohio; Parkwood, Indianapolis, and Bear Lake in Indiana; Freeport, Illinois; Saginaw, Michigan; as well as Wapello (re-location of the Cairo Church), Spencer, and Washington, Iowa; Desloge, Belgrade, and Irondale, Missouri; Leawood, Arkansas; Oklahoma City First on Southwest 25th Street; and Vacaville, California.

The CGYA joined the Summer Seminar program in 1963. A year later a new ministry quietly began at the First Church of God, Middletown, Pa. with the establishment of a Sunday church school class for the retarded of the community.

IN 1965, the General Eldership followed the lead of the Ohio Eldership a year earlier and replaced independent boards with an administrative council of 35 members comprising seven commissions, namely, education, world missions, national missions, evangelism, publications, stewardship and finance, and lay activities. Since that time many state Elderships have adopted this plan of organization and an increasing number of congregations are doing so.

Along with the adoption of the new plan of organization the term "Conference" has replaced "Eldership," recognizing in name what has been fact, namely that our ecclesiastical bodies are no longer "elderships," having broadened the base of lay representation. The change in nomenclature was made at the General Conference level in 1974.

In May of 1967 a new mission work was opened at Borel in Haiti, known as Project HELP, with a fourfold emphasis: evangelism, education, health, and community development.

Another first for the General Conference was the adoption, in 1970, of a General Conference pension program, replacing individual Conference programs and offering equal opportunity to pastors wherever they serve.

Ministry to the aged was being expanded when the Ohio Conference dedicated the Winebrenner Extended Care Facilities in June of 1970. A year later the West Pennsylvania Conference opened the Grove Manor Extended Care Home.

Throughout this period, from East Pennsylvania to California, Conferences have been acquiring and expending both considerable effort and money to develop camp sites with a primary emphasis on the Christian training of youth but with increasing emphasis also on retreat experiences for adults.

In early January of 1971, the children's ward was dedicated at the Christian Hospital in Bogra. (The maternity hospital had been opened at Bogra by Dr. E. Fidelia Gilbert in 1955.) Two months later, in March of 1971, what was then East Pakistan was plunged into civil war from which emerged in December of that year the new nation of Bangladesh. A great story of dedication, faith, and heroism on the part of our people and missionary staff is a legacy of those months of conflict.

In May of 1971, Christian unity at the grass roots was manifested in Auburn, Indiana, with the merger of the congregations of the Churches of God and the Church of God to form the Indian Village Church of God which relates to both the Churches of God, General Conference and the Church of God (Anderson). More recently in Michigan, action has been taken by the respective judicatories of our two communions to accept as full members in the annual meeting of each delegates from the other communion.

1973, the year of Key 73, was also the year the Churches of God celebrated 75 years of missionary work overseas. Perhaps this contributed in part to the action of our general body in 1974 whereby we are now known as the Churches of God, General Conference, rather than "Churches of God in North America" in recognition that we are a church with a world-wide constituency.

On the eve of the church's sesquicentennial in 1975, the first comprehensive biography of John Winebrenner, by Dr. Richard Kern, was published by Central Publishing House. Entitled *John Winebrenner: Nineteenth Century Reformer*, the book contributes much to a new appreciation of Winebrenner and of ourselves as his spiritual heirs.



The Future—with Vigor and Courage

by Richard E. Wilkin

In this 150th anniversary year the Churches of God review with great interest their origin and heritage. We look with genuine appreciation and thanksgiving to the efforts and contributions of our fathers and forefathers. While failures and disappointments, weaknesses and troubles can obviously be recounted, a careful study of our history will also give vibrant testimony to the vision, faith and commitment of those who were founders and those who have labored in the Churches of God before us. The pages of history can inform, inspire and enlighten the church today. We are surrounded on every hand by traditions and legacies that enrich us. We certainly look to the past with appreciation.

However, when the church's past becomes more intriguing than the church's present or future, the church is in trouble. A very real peril is ours if we attempt to live in the past. It is possible to spend so much time in reflection and memorializing of the past that we neglect our ministry in the present. In our celebrations we must remember that God is not finished with anything He is doing in His church and in the world.

The experience of the writer of Hebrews may be in some degree repeated in every generation. He looked upon the life and fortunes of the early church. He saw some Christians meeting the challenges of that age with steady endurance and resolute hearts; but others were living for themselves and had lapsed in their earlier Christian commitment.

Sometimes we think we can have life in the church without suffering or sacrifice. We may seek birth without pain or responsibility. We would like resurrection power without crucifixion love; peace without price, growth without work. It dare not be so in any age. "To serve the present

age, our calling to fulfill; O may it all our powers engage to do our Master's will."

Many existing structures in our society today are suffering a crisis of confidence and effectiveness. Many organizations or communities have lost their purposeful identity in the present and their vision of the future. In so doing they have simply committed themselves to the conservation of the past. The church is not exempt from a similar fate. Our orientation and structures may also be geared to maintain the status quo.

There are no practice sessions for any generation. In every moment and every place, we are confronted by possibilities for coming alive. The issues of life and death are at hand. A piece of the action is available to any with the sensitivity to be concerned.

Someone suggested that the motto of our age should be both "Tell it like it is!" and "Tell it like it ought to be!" When we read the pages of church history or review the life and times of the Old Testament prophets we see this with greater clarity. It may be that Amos illustrates this characteristic or approach most vividly.

In more modern parlance the words of George Bernard Shaw are, "Some men see things as they are and say, why? I dream things that never were and say, why not?"

What Ought to Be Can Be and Will Be

The future can be tailored by those who reclaim their roots in the past. Jesus arose in the synagogue at Nazareth and He read from the prophet Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are op-

pressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." And He said, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:18-19, 21 RSV). Jesus employed the tradition of Israel to tell it as it is and ought to be.

It is in the traditions of our past and in the instruction of the Scriptures that we find the direction or course we seek to pursue. Without that we flounder between opportunism and chaos.

The words of Jesus bristle with the confidence that what ought to be can be and will be. The persons needed in this age do not look back in idle reflection, or around in cynicism or despair, but, look ahead with expectancy and plot the way for ministry. The Christian faith is oriented to God as the power of the past and future which was made known in Jesus of Nazareth under the signs of promise and hope.

Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions properly answered allow us to "live."

The Christian is pulled forward by the vision of the Kingdom of God. He is not pushed into the future by the trends of the past or the tides of the present. The church can neither separate itself from the world or merge with it. The church cannot reach a proper understanding of itself and its function in the world by dwelling on itself. It exists for the world. It does not exist from itself or for itself. The church exists from the Kingdom of God which Jesus proclaimed and embodied in his own person and ministry and it exists for the world, the world for which Jesus died and was raised again.

The Gospel is not news from another world about another world. The Gospel speaks in our world to the whole man and the whole of his culture. The Gospel is the power to make new history by transforming or recreating all existing things. A church that is interested only in its self-reformation has overlooked the pulse and throb of the Word of God given on behalf of the world (society).

It is a quirk of history that there are times when persons call for action and times when the action calls for persons. We are required to become intensely realistic about the impact we can have on our age. Our perception of how we can be responsible in the world may need to be more modest and realistic. The Churches of God cannot do all things but we can do some things. It would be wasteful and foolish to endlessly ponder schemes for saving the whole world, but there are immediate tasks to which we must commit ourselves. If our vision is restricted or distorted by impure motives, our work will be in-

effective. If our spiritual growth and development are stunted and the divine resources neglected, we will only struggle for survival and labor to avoid encroaching paralyzes and death.

The church often talks mostly of itself, its structure, its doctrine, its name, its unity, its forms of worship, its buildings, etc. What would happen if we began not at this point, not with the church, but the world? If we said, "What do persons need? What are the problems in peoples lives? What causes inward and outward suffering? Who are the hungry, the blind, the captive?" The Holy Spirit never closes our hearts or our minds, but He tears us open continually for the sake of others, for the sake of community, for the sake of the family. Without the illumination of the Holy Spirit our plans and programs are as a cold stone and our efforts as wasted energy.

The question isn't how old is the church or the Churches of God; or how big is the church; or how wealthy is the church. The church can not adequately be measured by age, size, budget, building, or program. The significant measures will be found in answering: What is the church? Who are we? Why are we? How are we to minister? Every congregation and every Conference of the Churches of God can find direction in specific answers to these specific questions. Time worn cliches that convey no relevant meaning or at best deal with generalities only will not serve to stimulate new commitment and result in new life. Specific goals and objectives based upon biblical truth and stated in simple understandable terms are essential.

How Will You Respond?

In the twilight years of your life, you may be sitting in some familiar easy chair. A grandchild will climb upon your lap and with enthusiasm and excitement will say to you, "Grandpa, or Grandma, I'm glad I am a part of the church. We've talked about how God created the world and how He is eternal. Our lessons have taught us about Jesus, His Son and our Savior and Lord. The church is the family of God in the world to do His work. Do you know about the Churches of God? They started in the east with Winebrenner and moved westward a long time ago and in 1975 they celebrated the 150th Anniversary. Grandpa, or Grandma, were you alive then? Tell me, what did you do? How did you help the Churches of God?"

How will you respond? Could it be that the following would be suitable responses? Would you like to respond? "I had a part in these things."

The Churches of God grew in the fellowship of the Spirit of God. They were a family—a family of God. Respect, appreciation, acceptance of one another with mutual dependence and trust and concerted effort were increasingly evident.

Congregations of the Churches of God carefully and prayerfully developed goals and objectives. Setting of priorities, development of methods and greater cooperation were then possible.

The Churches of God gave much attention to leadership development and training experiences. Pastoral leadership was benefited by a personal commitment to improved pre-certification training and experienced pastors found rich benefit in continuing education programs.

Teacher and leadership training programs were desired and laity benefited.

New and exciting instructional programs in the Christian faith were developed and offered to meet needs of persons and families.

Scholarships were available to assist persons in preparation for church vocations.

Each congregation sought to mother a ministerial student, a missionary, or a person in some other area of church vocations.

A broader concept of "mission" was accepted by the Churches of God. Our mission begins in our own communities and extends to foreign lands.

A greater emphasis in ministry was placed on meeting the needs of the "whole" person. The value of a person, anyone and anywhere, was recognized.

Overseas "mission" work was always well supported and the work grew and expanded. As national Christians were trained to serve in their own lands, American missionaries then looked to new lands. Older mission fields also became involved in mission work.

An awakening occurred. We realized that unless our Christian community grew at home and a strong supporting base was established, we would be unable to expand overseas. A recognition of the opportunity and responsibility in home missions swept the church. A ministry to the underprivileged, the needy, the youth, the elderly was increasingly implemented. Congregations singly or collectively

mothered new congregations where shifts or increases in population warranted. Some small congregations merged or relocated to provide more complete programs and ministries, to give a more effective witness, and practice better stewardship of God given resources. Larger Conferences recognized the needs of smaller Conferences and provided assistance and support to enable full-time pastoral leadership resulting in congregational growth and expanded ministry in all parts of the country.

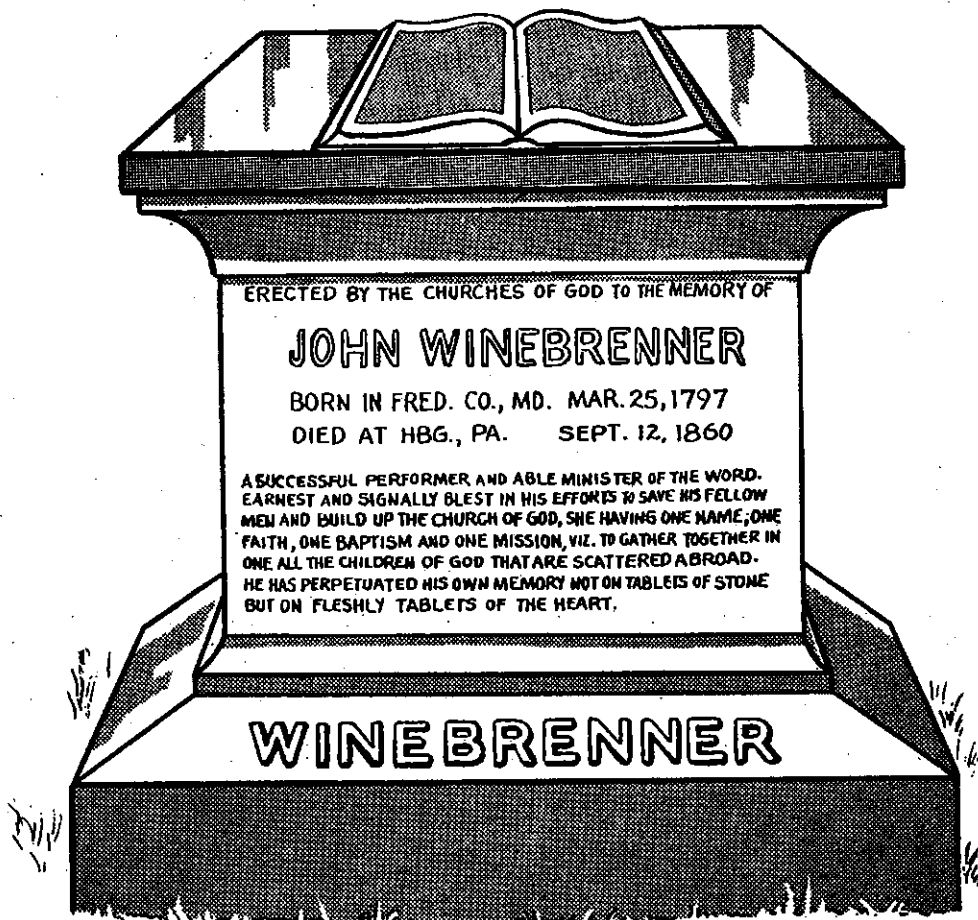
Evangelism was accepted in a broader perspective. Training and preparation for evangelistic emphasis received careful attention. A variety of methods and tools were mastered. Motivation for evangelism was purified. Conservation and equipping for involvement in the life of the congregation received prime attention. The church experienced "daily" growth as persons were added unto the Lord.

Emphases on lay vs clergy diminished. Lay persons and clergy recognized that they were a team each with unique and equally important roles.

Ministry was the topic of conversation not budgets. Needs and opportunities were emphasized not assessments, though careful and wise control of finances were deemed essential. The commitment of God's people, coupled with systematic and proportionate giving, enabled the Churches of God to go beyond anything ever dreamed possible.

Agencies or institutions of the Churches of God were co-laborers in the progress of these years. Nearly 40 per cent of the Findlay College student body have been Churches of God youth and a quality education in a Christian atmosphere has been offered. These graduates become active leaders in our communities and our churches. Winebrenner Theological Seminary was fully accredited by ATS and the student enrollment has increased. Students from every Conference have attended. Many new educational opportunities have been added for laity, clergy, and ministerial students. Central Publishing House has produced quality publications. A new History of the Churches of God was published. Equipment has been replaced. The building mortgage has been eliminated. Circulation of church publications is at record high.

Do these sound like impossible goals? Would you be pleased to share such a report in a few years? Would you allow the expectations of the future and the anticipations of the past to converge on our existence in the present? The burden of fulfillment is ours. Are we determined to insure with our own life the future in which we believe?



ERECTED BY THE CHURCHES OF GOD TO THE MEMORY OF

JOHN WINEBRENNER

BORN IN FRED. CO., MD. MAR. 25, 1797

DIED AT HBG., PA. SEPT. 12, 1860

A SUCCESSFUL PERFORMER AND ABLE MINISTER OF THE WORD.
EARNEST AND SIGNALLY BLEST IN HIS EFFORTS TO SAVE HIS FELLOW
MEN AND BUILD UP THE CHURCH OF GOD, SHE HAVING ONE NAME, ONE
FAITH, ONE BAPTISM AND ONE MISSION, VIZ. TO GATHER TOGETHER IN
ONE ALL THE CHILDREN OF GOD THAT ARE SCATTERED ABROAD.
HE HAS PERPETUATED HIS OWN MEMORY NOT ON TABLES OF STONE
BUT ON FLESHLY TABLES OF THE HEART.

WINEBRENNER