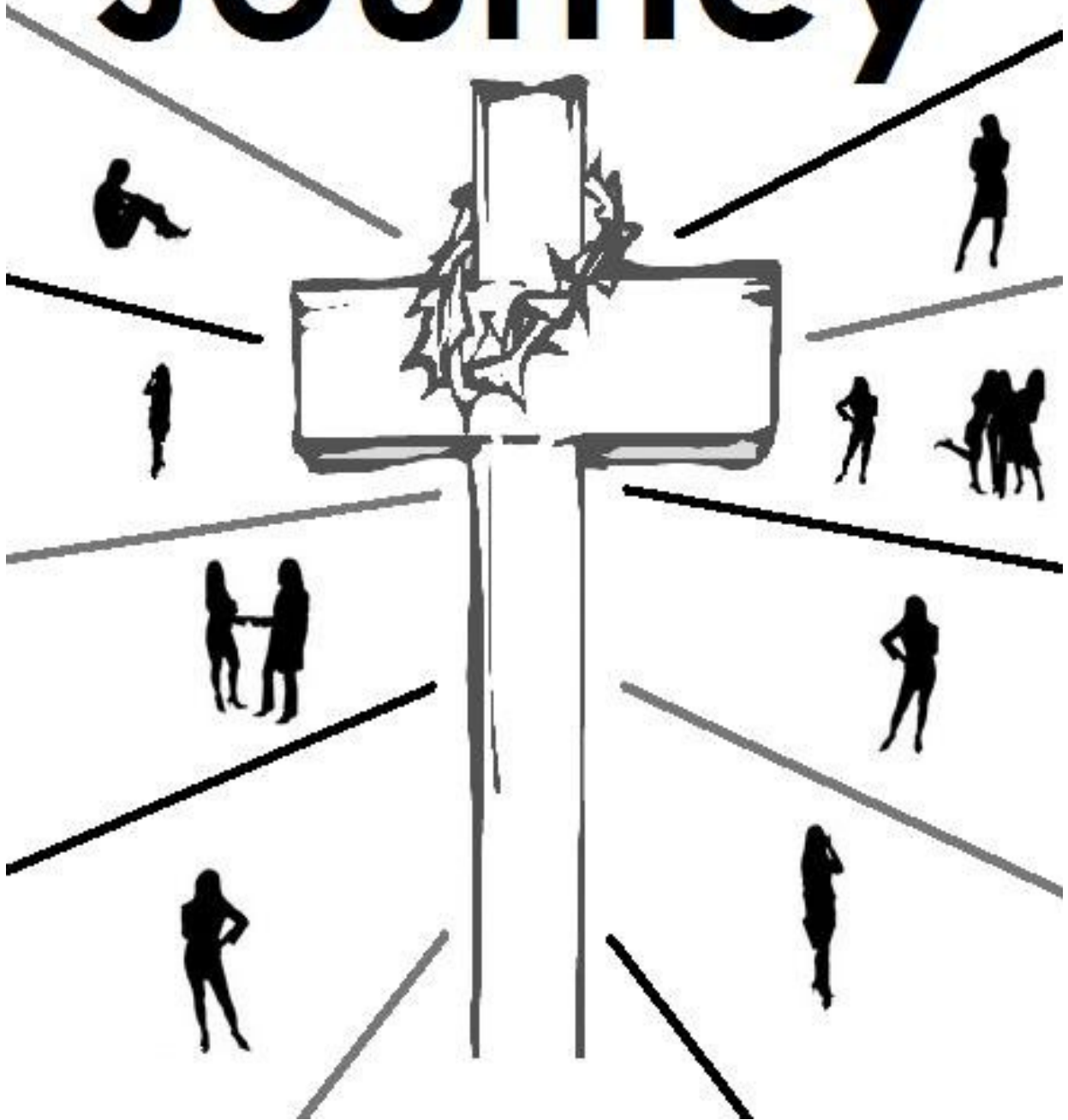


# MY FAITH Journey



First Christian Church  
Autumn, 2007

# ANDRUS

Betty



I am a product of Central Christian Church. For many years, the near downtown church was located at 9<sup>th</sup> and Pleasant Streets.

I walked to the church, along with other neighborhood children during the Depression. Children came from large rooming houses located around 14<sup>th</sup> and Woodland Avenue.

We all had a nickel, tied in our handkerchief, to give to Jesus.

Central presented Worship from its stained glass windows to its friendly, helpful congregation. Once there, I never looked for another church. I was 9 years old. Ben C. Bobbitt was our preacher and our mentor.

I met Bill and Rus at Central Friday Night Club.

William M. Andrus and Betty M. Gardner were married at Central. We were both baptized at Central. Central was sold and demolished. By unanimous vote, University and Central agreed to merge as First Christian Church.

Bill and I came to First Christian Church via Central Christian Church, interim New Christian Church.

# BRATTEBO

Don



I was raised a Lutheran in the Norwegian community of Story City, Iowa. My mother, Ruby Atkins, was raised as a Disciple in western Iowa and became a member of this church (then known as University Christian) upon moving to Des Moines with her family in 1918. Dr. Sansbury married my parents in this church at 25<sup>th</sup> St. and University Ave. on June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1927 and their wedding dinner was the very first dinner held in our Fellowship Hall.

My father, Lewis Brattebo, was from Story City, and they settled there. Mother didn't have a wide choice of denominations to attend - - there was one Catholic church and 3 Lutheran churches in town. She joined one of the Lutheran churches and I was destined to be raised a Lutheran

Mother's parents, George and Clara Atkins, came to live with us when I was 5 years old but maintained their church membership here in Des Moines in this church. One of my earliest recollections is of Dr. & Mrs. Sansbury occasionally coming to visit in our home. I was most impressed with his summer visits when he wore a white suit, white straw hat and white shoes! I remember thinking, Dr. Sansbury must surely be an "Angel from God" in that all-white outfit!

Although raised as a Lutheran, both my mother and grandmother frequently let me know that "Lutherans are NOT infallible" - - and often misinterpreted or twisted Scripture and some of the Sacraments, etc. etc." In looking back to my early years I guess one could say that I developed into a "Lutheranized" Disciple.

Consequently, when Pat and I moved to the Drake neighborhood in 1955, we visited this church and Dr. Muir invited us to join this congregation in 1957. We did, and for me it was like "coming home" for I had heard so much about this church and the Disciples in my early years. It's been 50 years since Pat and I made our "Faith Journey" commitment to First Christian Church. We're just sorry there won't be another 50 years of membership for us in this exciting congregation.

# BULLINGTON

Kathleen & Bill



Introducing William (Bill) and Kathleen Bullington, a married couple who are possibly the only current members who met at the church located at 25<sup>th</sup> and University. Both were raised and baptized in Disciples churches: Bill at Central Christian Church, now merged into First Christian, and Kathleen at the Marshalltown Christian Church. Both attended Disciples church camps at the Y camp in Boone, but they did not meet until Kathleen moved to Des Moines to work as a securities analyst at Bankers Life Company.

Suitable living conditions were very hard to find at that time, and Kathleen had moved in to a board and room house where six girls shared a single second floor bedroom under the eaves, and she usually rode the bus home to Marshalltown where she spent weekends with her family.

On one weekend in May, she altered this pattern because she had learned that there was to be a supper meeting/dance of the young people's group at University Christian Church and she decided to attend.

As Kathleen entered the door, Bill spotted her and sent two friends to greet her and learn her name. Then, noting that place cards were being used to assign places at the tables, Bill entered Fellowship Hall and changed the location of Kathleen's card, placing it next to his. Of course, they chatted and danced; then Bill offered her a ride home.

They spent the next several months getting better acquainted and looking for better housing conditions. Kathleen liked Bill and she felt right at home at the church Bill had attended with friends since junior high school days when they had played basketball in the church gym.

Rest of story: Five years went by and the two were ready for the next step: marriage. They were married in the church at Marshalltown, honeymooned at Yellowstone, and returned home to an apartment on the second floor of a large house on 34<sup>th</sup> Street, now the Kappa House at Drake. Their first daughter Anne was born; Kathleen became a stay-at-home mom, and they built their current home at 4100 Aurora. A second daughter Mary Jo was born, and shortly thereafter, finances became tight, so Kathleen began teaching school.

University Church was central to their lives. They participated in the Koinonian Sunday School class, church night dinners, and continued to enjoy their friends. Their girls were baptized in the church, and Bill's family, who had continued to attend Central Christian, were drawn into the University fellowship when Central Church and University Church merged to become the New Christian Church, later becoming First Christian Church.

Kathleen's work in the schools prevented her from active participation in daytime activities, but both she and Bill were active in other areas. Both have served as Chair of Deacons and currently assist with banking the Sunday offering. Kathleen served as Vice President of the Congregation / Chair of the Board of Elders, Chair of the Facilities and Nominating Committees, and worker in the Community Center's after school program. Bill has chaired the Worship Committee, played the role of Santa Claus in the Christmas shows, and he sings in the choir.

On their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in 2004, Bill's barbershop chorus, The Pride of Iowa, sang for the Sunday morning service, and their daughter and granddaughter played their violins.

The melody lingers on.

# DeANGELIS

Linda



I began my faith journey at Davis St. Christian Church in Ottumwa as a child. Rev. Lavern Morris was our wonderful minister. On Wednesday's following the Children's Choir rehearsal, he would always show up at the end with treats and a smile. A very gentle man. On Sunday, he was like a different person giving the sermon. He had an important message and he made sure everyone heard it! If anyone happen to nod off, when he pounded the pulpit, I'm sure they woke up. I was very fortunate to have him and Davis Street Christian provide my early foundation for my faith.

In 1974, my family moved to the big city. My Mother immediately found First Christian Church. I soon followed with a little help from Ivyl Simms. My faith has continued to grow through many wonderful teachers and friends at FCC. I think the Lord has blessed me with two great churches that I can't really imagine my life without and wish everyone I meet the same blessing. I especially will always be grateful for the many thoughts, cards, and prayers given to my Mom from her friends at FCC. She was also blessed by the faithful visits over several years by Carl and Irma Bobenhouse and Beth Stence.

# DODD

Carolyn



I grew up regularly attending a small country church in southwest Iowa. I was baptized in our farm pond. Our family was active in many ways. After graduating from Gravity High School, I started working in Des Moines. Central Christian Church was close to the YMCA where I lived, so I started attending and then transferred my membership to Central. When Central merged with University Christian, I became a member of what is now First Christian Church.

My son, Marvin Bennett, was one of the last group of children to be baptized at Central. Bob and I were married in the chapel of First Christian. We were one of the first couples that Tim joined together in marriage as he started his ministry at First Christian.

I played on the church softball team, volleyball team, women's basketball team and helped coach the girls' basketball team. I have enjoyed serving on the Diaconate, as an Elder, usher, banker, on several committees and as a member of a Circle group.

The music here is wonderful, the people are friendly, caring and truly serve one another. It doesn't seem like Sunday if I don't attend church.

Thank God for First Christian Church.



Fairview Christian Church – the picturesque steeple tucked under a bridge near the railroad tracks along Hwy S45 five miles south of Pleasantville, Iowa. It’s where my great-grandmother was one of the church founders in 1901, where my grandparents held their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary celebration in 1968, where my mom and dad were married 50 years ago, where my brother, sister, and I literally grew up in the back pew, and where my niece and nephew are now fifth-generation members, also spending their formative years in the same back pew. Our family was related to several other “regulars” at Fairview, and the rest of the congregation who weren’t our relatives seemed to be related to each other.

Soon after graduating from Iowa State University and moving to Des Moines in the fall of 1983, the Fairview minister wrote letters to many of the Disciples of Christ ministers in the Des Moines area, announcing my arrival. On three consecutive Tuesday nights, three different ministers called on me. I would then visit their respective church the next Sunday. Jim Ryan was the last one of the trio. It seemed like family at FCC, feeling comfortable enough to sing in the choir on my second Sunday.

# EVANS

Caryn



I am growing old in this church. I have been here since about age 6, with a little time out for good behavior back in the seventies. I think that until recently I wasn't necessarily growing up in this church. By that I mean the spiritual maturity I expected to come as I progressed from year to year seem to be available to all others but not to me. I saw others around me falling in love with Jesus, while I was still asking the question of why we needed Jesus at all. It seemed easy for me to by-pass him and try to go directly to the big guy. I wouldn't say that my spiritual quest has exactly been an academic one. It's more like I just go from day to day, doing what ever comes along and if something in the day looks different to me I examine it and see if it fits into one of the little cartons of information I store in my brain. I am aware that I have a little carton up there, something like shoe box, holding evidence or memorabilia related to spiritual matters. Until I offered to share this with you I was waiting for a good day to sit down and take out the experiences, thoughts, etc and scrapbook them to see what resulted.

I loved Sunday school. I remember Pat Kuhns, my teacher reading to us about Jewish festivals. Once we got to dress up and build a Succoth and hang real fruit on it and talk about a kid named Jesus whose family did the same thing so long before I was born that the distance in time didn't really matter. Pat made the dusty roads, the smell of cooking and the sounds of family members arriving and partying come alive.

Sometime around fifth grade, I realized that Jesus was going to be present in my life whether I wanted him to be or not. His picture was everywhere. Sometimes he was a baby, sometimes he was a boy and sometimes he was a man. Sometimes he was on a cross. When I went to my grandparent's house my great grandmother would sit in her room and play the radio. It was turned to the Jesus station. All the songs were about Jesus. If we weren't quiet during the Jesus songs we had to go to visit the infirmed missionary who lived in the front room of my grandparent's house. Nobody really wanted to go visit Miss Sackett, because the only games she had were about this Jesus guy, who apparently grew up to have a conglomerate that included radio stations, game companies and a franchise of churches.

When Evelyn Gates came into my life she straightened me out on a few finer points about Jesus. Her stories about Jesus had to do with healing the sick and feeding the poor and loving people who were different than the ones I knew.

Somehow, I got the feeling that being like Jesus might make things really good for me at home and maybe even at school, although there were some Jewish kids in my class who felt that Jesus was vastly overrated. It was at this time, that I started attending membership classes in preparation for my confession of faith and baptism. Mickey Mouse Club was big at that time, and I sort of thought about getting ready to join the church as equal to becoming a member of the Mickey Mouse Club. To belong to the Mickey Mouse Club you had to wear ears. To belong to the church you had to look and behave like a Jesus fan. There were no ears, but there was membership certificate, the cross necklace, and the ten-commandment bracelet that my grandmother gave me. I wasn't sure what you had to do to join Mickey's Club but I knew to join Jesus' club you had to get in a big tub and put your head under the water. This alarmed me. However, because it was for entry into the Jesus fan club, and because my other Sunday school friends were doing it, I was brave and held the hanky tight over my face and was "born into" a new life that was pretty much Jesus focused. Evelyn Gates had us making mittens out of felt for poor kids. Have you ever seen what happens to felt when it gets wet? It shrinks. I saw a flaw in her reasoning but I didn't say anything because it felt like we were doing something. She had us taking milk and diapers to babies living with their families in the SE bottoms. I had never seen people who lived in apartments with no water or bathrooms. I had never seen babies drinking sugar water. What I did see was that apparently these people were not part of the Jesus fan club. Otherwise, they would be warm and well cared for. I began to feel sorry for people not in tight with Jesus.

When I was in sixth grade, I met Ted Lyons and Mary Wiese. These were two very serious members of the Jesus Fan Club. They began to ask us really hard questions about what we believed in, sort of like a post-baptism quiz to see if you kept up your studies. They never laughed at our answers or made us feel funny about our questions. I still had big reservations about Jesus and the church. I think I was a skeptic. How come so many people were without homes and clothing and food if there was a God and he sent his son to tell us that God loved us all and would protect us? In the meantime I stayed a member of the Jesus fan club because it was fun.

In 9<sup>th</sup> grade I was given a Sunday school book called **Who Am I**. I took it home and read it from cover to cover. I wanted answers. However, the book just got me more confused and made me ask more questions and I took up a lot of air space with my teachers.

Just about that time, a new youth minister, Bob Welsh, came to the church and he really got things stirred up. He expected that parents would all participate in the Sunday night youth program. He had meetings with them and told them, this is what you are going to do and this is when you will do it. He was huge and I think he terrified the parents into submission. Thus began three of the happiest years of my life at the church. All my friends came to CYF. We ate together, played together and studied together.

In college I lived in a house with 20 young women. It was an honor house. That meant we had no house mother. We were capable of living unguarded. In my house lived the only African American on campus. Her name was Alice. Most of the women I lived with

had never seen a black person or lived with one. However, I had gone to a racially mixed school growing up and Mrs. Lewis was my mom's friend, and while they didn't think it would be a good idea for us to date their children, they allowed us free access to them as friends. In 1968, my friend Alice had an abscessed tooth. She called the dentist in Indianola and he said she could get right in. When she got there, he said he was sorry but they really had made a mistake and they had no room on their schedule. Well, my friend Carolyn and I became somewhat emotional when Alice returned and we decided to play a joke on the dentist. Carolyn stuffed her mouth with cotton so that it would appear as if her face was swollen out of proportion. I went with her and spoke for her. I told the receptionist that Carolyn had toothache and could he look at her right away. Sure thing he said. Carolyn whipped the cotton out of her mouth and we took off to the office of the Dean at Simpson. Many discussions took place with the college and the dentist. Alice was taken to Des Moines to a dentist that would see her. I had had my first real encounter with discrimination. And I asked myself again where was the God who Jesus said protected us and would not leave us orphans.

In 1989, I decided that the youth at this church were getting too comfortable. They wanted to raise money for a youth trip that would just be fun. They were tired of doing mission type things. I suggested that we raise money and bring the kids that they had met on a trip earlier to New York to Iowa. That was not the idea they had in mind.

We began a year of reluctant fundraising. We held a dance, we made donuts, we moved to cookies, and we had a rummage sale. We raised \$11,000 dollars and before long a bus arrived at our door with 43 visitors. None had ever been to Iowa. We ran out of food the first night they were at the church because not many people showed up at the potluck. Jerry Mogensen has to go to KFC to buy fried chicken. When they left, the whole congregation seemed to turn out. This was a mountain -top experience for me.

Several years ago I noticed a new guy in the choir. I introduced myself to Gary Western. I really didn't know Gary, except that he could sing like an angel, and as Moses said about Aaron-"Talk like a preacher". Gary became a blessing to me. One day he went to prison and I went to my Bible. I struggled with the concept of Grace and with justice. I struggled with how to be present in a person's life when I couldn't promise a happy ending.

What I found was John 14. One night I was awake imagining Gary alone unable to make contact with us. I prayed that he would remember that we would work on his behalf. Then it struck me, "work on his behalf". Whose behalf was I working on?

In the Bible verses it says "I will not leave you an orphan. I will get my father to leave you an advocate - The spirit of truth". The fragments of my life, like scrap for a scrapbook, began to look like something to me. It began to look like the Spirit of truth. The spirit was in the form of Pat Kuhns, Mary Wiese and Ted Lyons. Evelyn Gates, Helen Crawford, Bob Welsh, Frank Clark, Ginny Gieske, and more recently Billie Sucher, Joelle Floren and Vivian Mogensen.

I realized that I have never been alone and neither was Gary if he was willing to stay with the Jesus Fan Club. Fan Club membership requires action. Love is an action verb. If we are lucky enough to be in the presence of the Spirit of Truth, we are in a community of faith. My scrapbook is filled with memories of the journey we are on together. Some of those traveling with us have laid down to rest. Others are just beginning to walk with us. When we become too weak to pray, others speak them for us.

My son in law told me a story the other day that you probably have all heard. A man is looking around at all the wars and hunger and ugliness in the world and he asks God why he doesn't do something about it. And God responds, "I sent you."

# FLOREN

Joelle



Family, music, friends – key elements. There were 10 Hales altogether, a pew-full at First Methodist Church in I.F. Dad directed our chancel choir for 35 years and Mom was often a violin or vocal soloist. We all participated in choir from K on, until we embarked on our own journey.

I remember our youth program, MYF, as fun and the place to be every Wednesday, church night. But I don't recall feeling as though I was on a "spiritual journey."

Ten years passed without a church home. A friend from work, Mary Morrison, invited me to her church, THIS church. She said "you'll appreciate the music." Pat (Ryan) approached me with a handshake and warm smile. Mary and Pat invited me to choir. YEAH, a small group. Alpha Omega, a Sunday school class of 40 peers was the next group I joined, which served as a great social outlet and a springboard to other opportunities for involvement.

Then came Tim. What a teacher and inspirational leader he was / is.

I've become aware of a gradual shift from my earlier years, from thinking "what does this church have to offer me?" to "what do I have to offer this church?"

I have been blessed with the wisdom of significant others in this church body and am learning that we are all called to ministry as disciples – and that "THIS CHURCH" is God's kingdom, here and now.

# FLOREN

Tom



I came to FCC out of brokenness (divorce) and then new life in my marriage to Joelle. When we married, Joelle was attending FCC. My ex-wife and I had been active at St. Johns Lutheran Church. Joelle and I considered attending St. Johns, but I felt that we needed to start our church life without old baggage. (Joelle hadn't been at FCC long enough to accumulate baggage).

Surprisingly, I found the theology that I experienced at FCC was very compatible with my Lutheran background (maybe I was a bad Lutheran, although I was baptized and confirmed in the ELCA branch of Lutheranism). The practices of Disciples of Christ were a different story. It took me 10 years to get used to communion every Sunday (and served in the pews), no sung liturgy, and no creed (so what do Disciples believe?).

My participation in Following the Fire vision and design teams was a turning point for me. I began to see "church" from a new and invigorating perspective. Our Home Ministry Group members and study materials have challenged me to continue to explore my faith, confirming to me that life and faith are certainly journeys. FCC is a wonderful support for the trip.

# FRANKLIN

Steve



My journey to FCC started with my birth in Des Moines in 1964. My dad, the Rev. Dr. Ronald L. Franklin, now a retired Disciples minister was attending Drake and serving a small church in Delta, Iowa.

When I was three, we moved from Mitchellville, Iowa to Texas. As I was growing up, my dad served churches in Breckenridge, Texas (where my parents became acquainted with Tim Diebel's parents who lived nearby in Abilene), Michigan, Iowa and finally in Corydon, Indiana just across the Ohio River from Louisville, Kentucky.

After graduating from Ball State University, I began working in Louisville, my wife Mary Jo, who grew up in Dubuque, and I met and got married (at the Little Brown Church in Nashua, Iowa) and we attended Douglass Blvd. Christian Church in Louisville.

A couple of years ago, we decided it was time to return to our native soil. I started my new job with Urbandale while Mary Jo stayed in Kentucky to sell the house. After visiting a couple of churches, I told Mary Jo that I thought FCC is where we should be.

Once she arrived we visited and she agreed. We have been proud to call FCC home for just over a year.

# HERLEIN-ROLOW

Meredith R.



My grandfather was a Methodist minister. My two sisters and I would visit his one room church when our Dad had us for visitation. I was hugged and cherished by the elderly population of his church when we would visit. Shorty would help me pull the heavy rope that led outside to the bell to symbolize church was about to begin. My mother brought us three girls to First Christian Church. I remember the child care snacks of vanilla wafers and red fruit punch the same green pitchers used today. When I was old enough to sit in church I remember the children's moment and being called to the red carpeted stairs of the sanctuary. I was important to adults in church and Jesus was important to me. I always believed in treating others how I would like to be treated. There is also a story of Jesus saying bring the children unto me. The children's moment symbolizes this to me.

When I was 8 my family converted to another faith and at 17 I walked away from the church all together. At 19 I was sitting in a lecture hall learning about art history. Cave drawings of long ago were covered as well as Egyptian mythology. I sat there with my questioning heart, asking myself if 2000 years from now will people call Christianity mythology. I was approached at 21 by the church I had left to sign papers to excommunicate myself from the church. I was told that I was making a grave mistake not attending and that Christ would denounce me if I left "the only true church!" I replied, "If I can't take Christ with me wherever I go then you really aren't the church for me." I have always called on God and Christ when I struggle and don't know what to do. I sang Jesus Loves Me walking home in the dark down the street where the trees branches interlocked overhead not letting the moonlight shine on me. I always made it home because Jesus was always wherever I was.

When I was 23 I felt empty inside came back and joined the church during a Sunday morning service. The spirit led me back to the safety of the church that always had a place for me. I found the same smiles and welcoming arms that had comforted me as a child. In my heart I am a child of God and I felt home again. When I was 25 I let a friend and his daughter to attend the church with me. I soon joined the choir and we attended regularly. There was one evening in particular that I arrived at choir practice with a heavy burden on my heart about my boss at work. It was there on the chancel that I heard the spirit say with authority, "FORGIVE HER!" No one else heard the message but me. Those words of wisdom were only meant for me. I knew that something greater than my thoughts were present in that moment. My heart was so full of anger that my mind would never have used the word forgive.

When I was 28 I married Barry and had Carrol give her blessing to it. The choir was there and sang. It was the first day of my adult life that I did not have a care in the world.

When I was 29 Carrol came to live with her dad and I and we all began attending the youth program LOGOS on Wednesday evenings. I worked Sunday mornings and was not able to attend church so LOGOS had become my family's spiritual connection. I was called on to utilize my talents to serve as a volunteer for LOGOS. My husband was soon helping out in the kitchen and bonding with other members of the church, serving as a volunteer. When friends and family would invite us to do things my husband and daughter would cut them off saying I am busy on Wednesday nights. It was a beautiful transformation to see us all connecting with the church family.

When I was 31 I gave birth to a son who was dedicated in the church. I was so moved that Sunday morning when the congregation committed themselves to Barry Junior. Through this declaration I have seen the church ongoingly embrace my son as a part of the family. Carrol was baptized and was an example for her father to be baptized as well. When I was 34 Carrol returned to live with her mother and I surrendered it all to God. I knew he had a plan and it would be revealed to me in his own time. Three months later Carrol returned home. Nine months later I adopted Carrol on her birthday. She recently attended her first youth group mission trip and has a greater depth to her humanity now. Junior always asks if we are going to church and this warms my heart.

# HOLMGREN

Terri



This journey started 59 years ago, when I was born into a German, Lutheran, God-fearing Iowa farm family. I was taken to Sunday School and church at a small Lutheran church in Grimes, Iowa. One of my first life memories is learning the Ten Commandments during summer Bible school when I was about eight years old.

Grandma got mad at the pastor when I was around ten, and we started going to the other “family” church, which was First Christian Church in West Des Moines. There were Disciple ministers in the family tree, and I was baptized there on January 12, 1960, along with my sister Marilyn and my mother.

I went to church camps every year and LOVED those times. I worked the first two camps held in Newton. They were work camps, and we slept in tents, dug our own outhouse holes, never showered for a week; all the while digging up fence posts, rolling up rusty barbed wire, and generally clearing the grounds for the beginning of what is now a premier church camp for the Disciples in our region. I learned how to use a chainsaw at the age of sixteen.

I married two different times in two different Disciple churches. The Disciples loved me, divorced or otherwise! I’ve raised five children as Disciples, four of them still claim it. The other one, I’m praying for...he’s a good boy, just a little “busy”, he thinks.

My faith journey started over on January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2004. It was survive the surgery or die. God’s embrace let me know that either way, He was with me.

Since then I have sought my path through Him, on a daily basis. I am searching for Him, inside and outside of myself. I am embarking this year on a journey towards Centering Prayer, and with the guidance of mentors, my faith journey continues.....

# HUNTOON

Donald



My association with First Christian Church began in April of 1928. My mother, father, and two-year old sister moved from Egbert, WY to Des Moines, IA, making the trip in a 1926 Model T Ford Coupe. It was a big leap from Egbert, approximate population less than 100, to the big city of Des Moines. I started attending Sunday School at what was then known as University Church of Christ shortly after arriving in Des Moines.

My father's family had been members of the downtown Church of Christ prior to the spin-off and start of University Church. My Aunt Gertrude Huntoon Nourse at one time played the organ for services at University Church. She was a professor of piano at Drake University. Also, at one time, my Uncle Dr. G.A. Huntoon was Superintendent of the Sunday School.

I was overwhelmed by the size of University Church. In Egbert, we attended Church and Sunday School in the High School building.

In my early years, University Church was a neighborhood church. Many members lived close enough to walk to church. My good friend, Miles McClurg and I were active in Sunday School. We particularly liked the Church Night Dinners, many of which were chili suppers, all you could eat. When I was about 11 years old, I had a route where I distributed the weekly church paper.

I recall that one Sunday School Teacher at the elementary level was Mrs. McKay. We all wanted to be in her class. The Junior Department had an auditorium on the fourth floor. We would meet there for a combined service with stories and hymns, and then divide into small groups by grade level for study and discussion. The small classes would take turns with the responsibility of leading the combined service.

I attended a preparatory class prior to making my confession of faith and baptism. The class was taught on weekdays after school by Pastor Paul Becker. I made my confession of faith and was baptized in 1937.

University Church was one of few who had a gym. I enjoyed playing basketball and was a member of our church team which was entered in a church basketball league where the games were played at the downtown YMCA. Our Junior High team placed first in the league one year.

After three years in military service, I returned to the church while working on my baccalaureate degree at Drake, graduating in 1949. Following graduation, I was employed in Mason City for about two years where I met my wife-to-be, Irene Van Engen. We made plans to be married in June 1951. The location plans changed due to

my being recalled to active duty in the Air Force. Our wedding took place in the Base Chapel of Tyndall Air Force Base in Panama City, FL and our son Larry was born in the base hospital at McChord AFB in Tacoma, WA a year later.

After discharge from active duty, we returned to Mason City briefly and in December, 1952, moved to Des Moines, Pastor Warner Muir started calling on Irene to persuade her to become a member of University Church. She transferred her membership from the Methodist Church in Webster City. This started a time when our family, Don, Irene, Larry, Sheryl, David, and Anita became very active in the life of the church, joyfully serving in a number of positions in the church and Sunday school.



Eternally, I shall always be grateful to my mother for her faith, tenacity, and perseverance after facing the loss of my father when I was seven years of age. As a homemaker during the Depression, my mother couldn't make the mortgage payments causing us to lose our home and move to my grandmother's home.

In my formative years as an only child, I attended different churches with friends. After serving three years in the Navy during World War II, I entered Drake University, majoring in Business Administration.

While employed in advertising, I met my long-time friend, Russ Moser, a teacher and member of Central Christian Church, Des Moines. He invited me to attend his class for young people. I accepted and became actively involved in the church. I strongly believe it was Russ' invitation that was the turning point of my life leading me to a deeper relationship with God and as a servant of Christ. I was greatly influenced by my pastor, Dr. Ben C. Bobbitt, for his strong leadership, conviction, and faith in God.

After giving a sermon on Youth Sunday, I was invited the following week by an Elder and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Hansen, long, faithful members of the church, for dinner one evening. In the course of our conversation, Mr. Hansen asked me if I would consider entering the ministry for Christ. I was deeply humbled and struck with much feeling of inadequacy. It meant going back to college for three or more years and giving up a fairly lucrative job. After much deliberation, encouragement, from my pastor, close friends, in addition to much prayer, I made the leap of faith and committed my life to the ministry of our Lord.

To help ease my financial burden of attending Drake Seminary, I was called to be Associate Minister of Evangelism and Church Development, serving in this capacity while going to school.

In the ensuing years with a wife and three children along the way, I served five churches in Iowa and Colorado over the span of 45 years, my last ministry being part-time minister of Pastoral Care at First Christian, Des Moines. My wife and I attended our church because of friends shortly after my first retirement. It was not long after that I was called to the above position as Associate, serving with Rev. James Ryan and Rev. Tim Diebel, senior ministers.

I consider my life has been enriched and blessed with great support and love from my mother, friends, and pastor to be a minister of Christ for the building and glory of His Kingdom.

# KIDDIE

Helen



My faith journey began the moment I was born, for my mother (Inez Halliburton) was a devoted Christian. She came to Des Moines as a bride and became a member of First Christian Church.

I attended Sunday School and when I was seven, made the Confession of Faith.

When I went to college and met Darrell Kiddie, my future husband, I brought him and his mother to my church and they both joined and became members. He and I were married in the sanctuary.

As a mother, I brought my son Mark to Sunday School and he became a church member. He was the interior designer for the remodeling of the sanctuary.

Looking back on my lifetime membership, I am grateful for all those who have encouraged me. As I assumed roles throughout the women's organization, I have grown in faith and have been inspired by those who have preceded me.

Throughout my life, this church has been the solid rock upon which I have turned for strength and comfort. I thank God and for the men and women from who it receives its strength.

# KUHNS-HOWELL<sub>Pat</sub>



My faith journey started as a young girl living in Winterset with my sister and me walking across town to Sunday school and also summer Bible School at the Christian church. I remember making "peep boxes" with dioramas of Bible stories we had learned. I went many evenings after school to our minister's home to plan worship services for our Sunday School.

I remember the little collection boxes we took our pennies in. The church building I knew by heart, all the many "secret" doors etc. My grandfather had been the stone and brick contractor of that church which had been forming earlier in my ancestors' homes. These men were all stone masons and later were responsible for many of the buildings and old houses in the area including the Clark Tower located in the city park, a memorial to their family as the first settlers recorded in Madison County.

I was married to Harold Kuhns in that church in 1948. When we moved to Des Moines, we attended Capitol Hill Christian Church where Tom Foglesong was the pastor, that former Winterset pastor who had had so much influence in my early Christian life. We later joined University Christian church closer to our home and became involved with all the activities for our 3 daughters and our Sunday school class called "Two Doers". University at 25th is an important address in my life, having worked at the University for 27 years and being a long time member of First Christian Church.

The bond between Drake University and the Disciples of Christ is especially meaningful. Things change and I miss the old friends at First Christian who have now passed on to their eternal life. I miss opening the service with the Doxology but this church will always be special.

# LYONS

Virginia



My first experience with First Christian Church was in 1935 when I became the foster daughter of a wonderful couple. They happened to live next door to Doris Youngberg (McCollum). Doris took me under her wing and started me going to Sunday School. Mother and I were baptized together in 1937.

I had the usual experiences – skating in the halls, Wednesday night youth basketball, parties, etc, but one of my most memorable experiences was teaching four-year-olds for eight years.

Ted and I were married in the Chapel in 1944. Our three children were all baptized and active in First Christian Church.

My church has been a great influence on my life. Over the years, I have had the privilege of serving on many committees and helping to make important decisions. It is exciting today to see the younger people show the love they have for this friendly, caring church family. (72-year member).

# MARTIN

Marjorie L.



When and how does a faith journey begin? Even within the womb, could there be stirring that create a longing to be more than just another human being? Wasn't that true of Jesus? Life is such a miracle – we are so blessed to be able to live it.

My faith journey has been long and often arduous. I have never been one to accept a belief just because someone has said it to be true. I have to own it for my own, through many darkneses until a light finally shines that points a way.

Jesus Christ's demands on me are difficult, with no room for excuses. I must give myself completely to his teachings as they are God's will for my life. This is not easy. I struggle and daily seek God's help. I am comforted knowing that God is ever present, my strength and my hope.

After a divorce, I started life over as a single mother of two small bi-racial children. I have needed a strong faith to face the many prejudices we have encountered. In searching for a church home, I sought one with a strong Christian Education program, and one with an active interest in peace and justice issues. This I found in First Christian. Here, I am challenged to grow in my faith through participation in home ministry groups, Logos, the Diaconate, church school and various ministries.

I am richly blessed each day because of my church life.



Sometimes we forget that church and religious experiences are tinged within the context of the culture of the times. My faith journey began in a conservative church during the Cold War of the 50s. It had not been that long since McCarthy hearings. The religion of my childhood was legalistic in tone. I do not remember messages of service. I do remember the “thou shalt not” messages. Somehow in spite of the overall tenor of the times the message of God’s love came through buried in the message of the world’s coming destruction. However I did not request baptism in that congregation. I was not conforming to all the rules and it is questionable whether the elders ever would have agreed. It certainly would have been a mentally painful experience and not one I chose to experience.

In the intervening years of school I would periodically sample church experiences but did not seek to grow in faith. I did always expect to return to organized religion. I finished my undergraduate studies in a college supported by the American Baptist church. There were several religious requirements including chapel. In that atmosphere I found there were various ways to interpret the Bible. Philosophy was a shared student experience. I was able to practice using religious thought and experience in a safer classroom setting. This contributed to a growth in faith that complemented my various excursions into organized religion. It expanded my horizon in the kind of faith experience that is possible in a less confrontational setting.

Since that time I have actively participated in an organized Sunday morning religious experience. Of course as I moved from city to city I would look for a faith experience that allowed questions and answers that were thoughtful responses to the questions. By this time I had left the judgmental faith of my childhood far behind.

As Dave and I considered the commitment of marriage, faith again became a topic of discussion. Not high as we lived in different states, but as Rev. Ryan said we had to face our religious needs eventually. Our childhood faith experiences were different. At the time of our engagement I was attending a large fundamental church and Dave continued to participate in the Episcopal tradition. It became obvious that we needed to find a compromise. Our beliefs were not that different, but our comfort with Sunday rituals required a compromise. With the optimism of the young this decision to both move toward the center and look for a church home that accepted both of our backgrounds seemed like the obvious solution.

Since that time I have continued to explore the intricacies of the faith experience, the message of the Bible, and the mentors within the church. I have found accepting teaching experiences allowed me to learn from other resources and the multiple levels of

the message. I continue to be amazed at what I can learn from the lives of others in the faith and appreciate all who assisted me in this circuitous journey that is my faith experience. Now I understand that this is a lifetime journey that will expand my horizons as long as I make the effort to listen.

# NEVELN

Gary



(I found your request for Faith Journey submissions on the First Christian Church website. I hope that you can use a submission from a former member about a wonderful Sunday School teacher. I would certainly enjoy hearing from others that were in the high school classes and CYF in the late 1960's at then University Christian. Feel free to share my e-mail address with members who were around at that time.

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At First Christian Church when it was still known at University Christian Church, I had a terrific Sunday school teacher, William (Bill) Bowles. Bill taught high school classes in the late 1960's. Our class had him when we were 10th graders in 1965 – 66. He was one of the most generous individuals that I have ever encountered.

Early in the year, Bill would casually offer \$10.00 to the first student who memorized the poem, IF. Clued in by my older brother, I was paying attention when Bill made this offer to our class. The next week when Bill asked if anyone had memorized the poem, my hand shot up and I rattled it off. Jaws dropped when Bill pulled out his wallet and handed me the \$10.00 prize. (I can still recite most of the poem today, but not in the proper order.)

Bill offered jobs to his students. I took him up on it, as did at least one other class member. Bill would pick you up on a Saturday morning, take you to his office located at his home on Penn Avenue and pay you to update his company manuals. Bill would pay by the hour or by the report letter. The report letter was an envelope of updates and it was not easy to determine how long it would take to complete the updates in any particular envelope. Sometimes, a big thick one would replace pages 1 – 300 in the manual and in a few seconds, you were done and 25 cents richer. Other times, it would take half hour to leaf through a manual, replacing a few pages here and a few pages there to earn the quarter. After the morning's work, Bill would often treat his workers to lunch at Dahl's lunch counter on Ingersoll.

Bill also treated the whole class to a movie outing to see The Ten Commandments at the Ingersoll Theatre.

Through his teaching and generosity, Bill Bowles taught us to be grateful recipients of gifts given to us. Through his examples, Bill also encouraged us to be generous givers of our talents and time.

# **IF**

*If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you  
But make allowance for their doubting too,  
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:*

*If you can dream--and not make dreams your master,  
If you can think--and not make thoughts your aim;  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the same;  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:*

*If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it all on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings  
And never breath a word about your loss;  
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"*

*If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with kings--nor lose the common touch,  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;  
If all men count with you, but none too much,  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And--which is more--you'll be a Man, my son!*

**--Rudyard Kipling**

# POULSON

Marilyn



I grew up going to church and youth groups at the Christian Church in Iowa Falls. When I started nursing school at age 17 at Iowa Methodist Hospital in Des Moines, my sister was a student at Drake. Everything from there on changed quite a bit, going from a very fundamental thinking church to a much more free-thinking church.

My exposure to only the youth group, a group of people primarily from the divinity school, as well as people from other walks of life. Ian McCrae was one of the leaders. And he made us think about what we were discussing. We were a group of 15 – 20 young people. In that day, things were much safer and I would walk out there and back.

In 1956, I moved to Iowa City with a classmate and went to work at University Hospital in the polio rehabilitation unit with iron lung and chest respirators, and otherwise paralyzed patients or people with severe rheumatoid arthritis. It was there I met Don when he was a student in Dental School. We were married in 1957.

Our first child was born in 1958 and Don graduated from Dental School. We then moved back to Des Moines and I went back to University Christian Church. I usually went mainly to Sunday School. For many years, I think I felt confused and couldn't feel any connection with God, probably because I didn't try very hard. I had been going to church and Sunday School for a long time.

One of the influences was Wilbur Hughey. And his method of teaching and his loving nature. Also, the times for joys and concerns and the wonderful prayers from Sondra and Tim. I decided, stop doubting. Who was going to prove it to me? I would accept it "on faith" and every since then, it became meaningful to me. I feel very positive about it and am grateful to Tim, Sondra, Ben, and Wilbur for leading the way. I am very proud of our church and all it does in the community. I would tell anyone what a vital group we are, what a friendly family we are, and what the Logos group has done for young people.

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# ROBINSON

Tabitha (Tabby)



My favorite bible verse is ACTS 9:36-43 because the main person has my name. Sondra read it from the Bible. I felt so happy, that's why I like this verse.

FCC is a fun place to learn about JESUS and GOD. I love JESUS and GOD.

My favorite book is the Bible. I learned to read the bible with Jeff, Kim, Kent, Tim, God and Jesus.

I light the candles almost every Sunday. It's really fun. – The End.

# SAWYER

Gladys



Why did I come to First Christian Church?

During a one and one half year period following October 1, 1998 (after Jerry retired from a 22 year ministry at Ankeny Christian Church) I visited many of the Disciple churches in the Greater Des Moines area looking for a church where I could practice my Christian faith. I especially liked two things at First Christian – Tim’s preaching and the time of the early service. I did not attend regularly - only on the Sunday’s when I did not accompany Jerry (my husband) where he was interim pastor out of town.

It came time for us to have our membership in a congregation other than Ankeny and the next time I attended First Christian, I transferred “our” memberships to this congregation. To my surprise, Tim immediately announced that this was the last early service. As one of my friend’s at First has said, “Even then, we couldn’t get rid of you!”

# SMITH

Dan W.



I was born in Des Moines in 1931. My father bought a movie theater in Pella when I was four, but sold it when I was six and we moved to 25<sup>th</sup> street, four blocks north of University Christian Church. My parents belonged to First Baptist church downtown. My sister and I started going to Sunday school at University Christian because it was within walking distance.

When I was 10 Marvin Sansbury baptized me, so I have been a member of our church for 65 years. My parents changed their membership from First Baptist to University Christian. Maybe the best years of my life were when I was in the Candletip high school group, and the Caravan College group while I attended Drake University for six years. My wife Lois and I met friends in those youth groups that are close friends today.

In 1957, after serving in the Air Force in Gadsden, Alabama for two years, Lois and I returned to Des Moines and helped found the Couples, Inc. young married couples class. Those were good years too.

# SUCHER

Billie



When I was a little girl, my sister and I spent nearly every week-end with our grandmother, a retired elementary education teacher and a non-practicing Roman Catholic. Her only daughter lived in Des Moines on 24<sup>th</sup> Street near University Avenue. When Grandma would accompany us on the Greyhound bus to the “big city” every few years, sometimes we would walk to the “big church” at the corner of 25<sup>th</sup> and University. I was always in awe of its magnificence and grandeur and its people – they were “fancy” - - very, very fancy through the lens of my 8-year old eyes.

For most of my childhood, until around my sophomore year in high school, I attended, off and on, a small church in southern Iowa called Reorganized Latter Day Saints, or RLDS for short. Acronym or long version, I always felt I didn’t belong there. I went there because I was supposed to -- not because I wanted to. It wasn’t bad or anything...it just wasn’t right for me, and it wasn’t in my heart. I had my own ideas, mind you -- because my notion of a **real** church could be found in Des Moines, Iowa at the corner of a number and a name permanently etched in my brain. Big, brick, bold, beautiful -- and that, I vowed is where I would go to church “when I got to be a big girl.”

And indeed I did! Some 15 years later, Dr. Joseph G. Grubbs married Richard Cobb Sucher II, the city slicker from Houston, and Billie Ruth, the down-home country girl, on Saturday, August 31, 1974 at 10:30 A.M. at the University Christian Church, at the corner of 25<sup>th</sup> and University. Approaching our first wedding anniversary, Richard and I went on a canoe trip where he lost his wedding band in the Upper Iowa River near Decorah. We immediately bought another gold band and expeditiously returned to church -- Dr. Grubbs blessed the ring, re-united us in marriage, and encouraged us to repeat our vows each and every year thereafter. We heeded his wisdom. Through 1999, either Rev. Drs. Diebel, Ryan, or Grubbs, facilitated our annual marriage review and renewal of vows.

On January 31, 1982, I was baptized at FCC and member Betty Andrus gave me a beautiful card and a hand-made, embroidered cross that I cherish to this day. Our three children, Sarah, Richard III (Trey), and Tessa were born into this church and also baptized here.

And these many years later, FCC is still the church I love and the place of worship I call home. For sure, it is where I feel I belong...right side, toward the front, right end of the pew.

# WALTERS

Dorothy



My Faith Journey began long ago when my forefathers immigrated to Wisconsin from Alsace, bringing with them their faith and love of freedom. In 1883 my grandfather moved to Iowa and bought a farm near Glidden. It was here that I was born and grew to adulthood. My family were faithful members of the Methodist Church where I was baptized as a baby. At twelve I had a class learning the “correct” answers to specific religious questions. I attended Sunday School and worship every Sunday, and was an active participant in Youth Fellowship.

After high school, I attended Drake University, where a Disciple roommate introduced me to the college-age program at University Christian Church - Candletip by name. This was where I inevitably met Richard Walters. Two years later, we were married and I moved to Lexington, Kentucky where he was in Seminary. I enrolled in Transylvania College, where I had the opportunity to study courses in Bible Interpretation, Church History, Ethics, and Sociology.

I was learning to be a Disciple and was immersed by Richard (his first baptism, by the way) at his student church just outside Louisville. I have always been proud to be a Disciple, and wherever we lived throughout “our” ministry I have felt I had the best of the religious world. When we retired to Des Moines, it was inevitable that we return to First Christian Church, the church of Richard’s family for four generations.

I am still proud of it’s ministry and it’s openness and willingness to accept all persons. It’s fellowship offers an opportunity to practice my faith, and nourishes and challenges my spiritual growth.

# WALTERS

Richard



My faith journey began with the first Disciple of Christ named Walters, my great-grand- father, J.A. Walters, who was baptized in his 15<sup>th</sup> summer at the Grundy Christian Church in eastern Ohio. He became an evangelist after studying under our church's founder, Alexander Campbell at Bethany College. As JA moved west, his son, my grandfather, also spent his life as a minister in churches throughout the Midwest.

My parents joined this congregation when I was three, and 25<sup>th</sup> and University was where I was baptized at 10 and my earliest spiritual growth occurred. In my teens, I felt called to ministry, entered Drake University at 17, was ordained here at 20, graduated from Lexington Theological Seminary at 23, and began my first fulltime ministry at West Liberty Iowa. Two other Iowa ministries and one in Minnesota filled my 35 year career. After retirement, I spent eight more years serving the Region as an interim minister in a number of Iowa churches.

Much earlier, I had met Dorothy in the college group at UCC, married her, and had our family. After moving back to Des Moines, and completing my semiretirement interim ministries, we decided that First Christian Church would offer us the best place of continuing spiritual growth and Christian service, and we joined just as a new minister named Tim was arriving.

Opportunities for both growth and service have been abundant, together with friends who have become a wonderful support group. In both the early and later days of life, it's a great place to be.

# YOUNG

Frances



I was born on a farm north of Gravity, Iowa. We attended church every Sunday. My father taught the adult class; my mother taught the children's class.

We had a large regulation-size croquet court on our farm. The young people from church came over every Sunday afternoon and we played croquet.

We didn't have a baptistery in our church. I was baptized with 11 other young people in the Lake of Three Fires in Bedford, Iowa.

Gravity is a small town and there wasn't any work there. I moved to Des Moines. I lived at the YWCA. Central Church was a block from the YWCA. Roy Ives came to the YWCA and invited me to Central Church. I taught Sunday School nine years at Central and 16 at First Christian.

I have been ushering for 17 years. I served on the Worship, Teaching Ministry, Discipleship, Membership, and Stewardship Departments, and was a member of the Church board. I was elected an Elder in 1998.

I worked for EMC Insurance Company for 40 years. After I retired, I started participating in the Iowa Senior Olympics. I won 16 medals last year.

I have traveled in every state and around the world.

