

“Worship through the Decades”

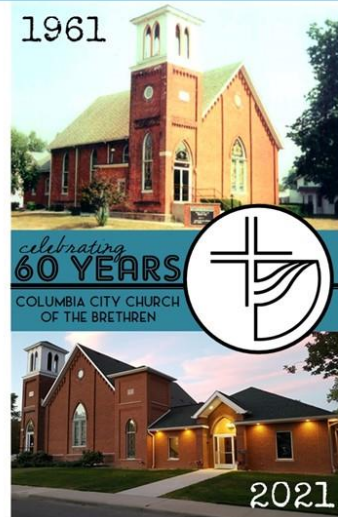
Aug. 22, 1982

Aug. 22, 2021

Honoring the
Clebert &
Helen
Johnson
family



1961



One Sunday each month from June through October of 2021, we are revisiting worship services from all of the first five decades of our church as we celebrate our 60th anniversary this year. Today, we revisit August 22, 1982.

Everything printed in the inside of your bulletin is exactly how the bulletin looked on August 22, 1982. Current info, announcements, and joys & concerns are listed on the inserts. In the 1982 bulletin, you'll see a few familiar names. You will also see that many things change but a few remain the same. We still do a Sunday School teacher recognition the last Sunday of August. We also use the greater part of the 1982 constitution that is announced as tentatively passing. It would pass fully at the October 1982 Congregational Business Meeting. Pastor Marvin Phillips served the church as a full-time pastor from October 1979 to August 1983.

Another aspect of this special series “Worship through the Decades” is highlighting families who have remained active in our church nearly all 60 years. Today we honor the legacy of Clebert & Helen Johnson.

Clebert & Helen Johnson were quiet leaders from the very beginning. Clebert served as the first chair of the Trustees and Helen served as the first chair of the Nominating Committee. Their daughter, Kendra, was elected as the first Church School Secretary. On September 14, 1961, this family of four – Clebert, Helen, Kendra, and Connie – were four of the fifty-five people who moved their

membership from the Blue River congregation to the new Columbia City Church of the Brethren. By the mid 1960s, Helen was fully involved with Women's Fellowship of which she would later be called to serve as treasurer. Kendra and Connie enjoyed youth group experiences led by the Burketts and Bundys.

Then some marriages occurred. On November 5, 1966, Kendra Johnson married Ron Nieman in Fort Wayne. On August 1, 1970, Connie Johnson married Jeff Copp in our church by Reverend Higgins. Kendra was matron of honor. Connie had just graduated from the IU School of Dental Assisting and was employed in Fort Wayne as a dental assistant. Jeff had graduated from Wabash College and intended to teach and coach.

Tragically on August 7, 1972, just two years after Connie & Jeff's wedding, Clebert died of a sudden heart attack. He was head custodian at Columbia Township School. Connie returned from Grenoble, France for the funeral.

Helen would stay active in the church serving as chair of the Board of Christian Education, Assistant Sunday School Secretary, taught Sunday School, and served on the Nominating Committee.

Upon their return from France in late 1972, Jeff & Connie Copp became very involved in the church. Connie started an adult choir for the congregation. Jeff served on the Ministerial Board and led Bible studies.

By late 1976, Jeff resigned from the Ministerial Board to attend Bethany Seminary in Oak Brook, Illinois. In October, the congregation voted to license Jeff to the ministry and would later support his ordination. Jeff & Connie would return to the Columbia City church in the summer of 1978 for Jeff to do a summer pastorate. During that time, son Joshua Harold was born. Joshua was dedicated later that summer by Pastor Herman Kauffman.

Following Jeff & Connie's leaving for seminary and future pastoral assignments, Helen was the only one of the original family members to remain in the congregation. She would go on to continue working with Women's Fellowship, serve on the Church Board, attend Women's Camp at Camp Mack, serve as District Conference delegate, and on the 25th anniversary committee.

Then on February 11, 1999, Helen went home to be with the Lord. Interim Pastor Verne Leininger and Jeff Copp officiated. The funeral was at the church on February 15 with Evelyn Zumbrun playing the organ.

And so beginning in February 1999 there was no regular presence from the family until January 2007 when Mimi Copp returned to Columbia City to stay with her Grandma Copp while working on her dissertation. Mimi worshiped with us and invited older brother, Josh and family a few months later. Josh, Anna, & Jeffrey would quickly become involved in the congregation. On March 30, 2008, Josh & Anna joined the church by transfer of membership. Their son, Jeffrey, was dedicated during that same service. Josh would often play guitar in worship or spontaneously offer to share a song for special music. In 2010, Huckleberry Blue, a music group created by Josh, held a concert in the church to raise funds for a new organ. Anna would serve on the Nurture Commission. Both Josh & Anna volunteered in the nursery. On March 27, 2011, Huckleberry Blue performed a second benefit concert, raising over \$1,000 for the organ fund. In 2011, Josh & Anna hosted an all-church picnic at their farm.

After Jeff Copp retired from serving the Agape Church of the Brethren in Fort Wayne in December 2013, Jeff & Connie transferred their membership back to the Columbia City congregation where they quickly became involved with Jeff serving as a pastor of visitation and Connie serving as an organist, pianist, and currently as Church Clerk.

Tragically, on April 14, 2014, Josh died suddenly of a brain aneurysm. A large funeral service was held at the Columbia City United Methodist Church which I officiated. Joshua encouraged many to attend our church in the seven years he was actively involved. The Lambert family began attending due to Josh' influence. Anna continues to be actively involved in the life of the church and Jeffrey, a 4th generation of the Johnson family, is active in the youth group, has shared special music in worship, and loves attending camp at Camp Mack.

We might not be the church we are today without the dedication of the Clebert & Helen Johnson family. Today, we celebrate their ongoing legacy.

- *Written by Pastor Dennis Beckner, with info from "Columbia City Church of the Brethren - Celebrating 50 Years: 1961-2011" Church History, written by Mary Helfrich, 2012.*