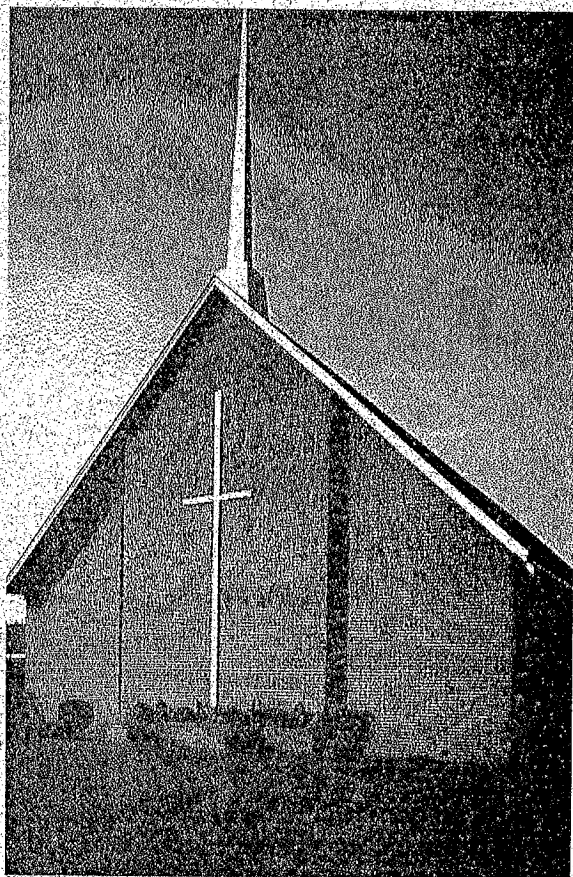


Rona Missionary Church

**75th
Anniversary**



1926-2001

Compiled By:

Jesse K. and Mary E. Osborn
1967

Updated By:

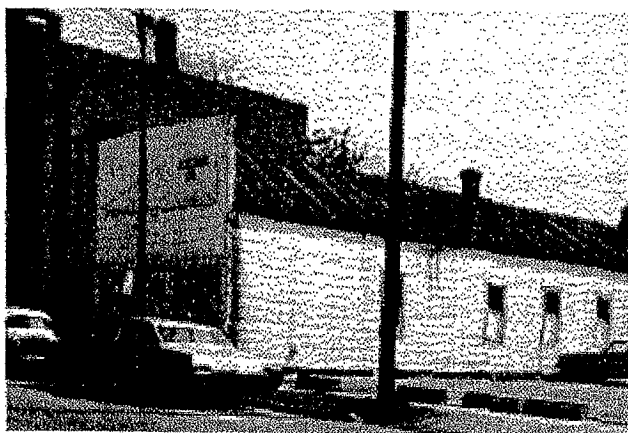
Averil Aldridge and Ann H. White
1976

Pamela Riffell and Brad Steiner
2001

Celebrating 75 Years

September 15-16, 2001
Rona Missionary Church
1082 Rona Parkway Drive
Fairborn, Ohio 45324

History of Rona Missionary Church



Mission 1926

In September 1926 Rev. H. M. Metzger, Ohio District Superintendent, and the Home Mission Committee rented a store room on West Xenia Drive in Fairfield (now Fairborn). A revival meeting began immediately at this location and continued every night for six weeks. Rev. Colonel Spry, Rev. J. I. Moore, and Margaret Powell Sensenbaugh were the evangelists, each preaching for two weeks. At the close of the meetings, Miss Powell officially opened the mission in the store room and then acted as pastor until April 1927. Some of the people



**Margaret Powell
Sensenbaugh**



**Mrs. Elizabeth
Kline**

who were converted during this six month period and others who wished to make this their church home formed a group of thirteen charter members and organized in April 1927.

At that time, Mrs. Elizabeth Kline became pastor by appointment of conference and moved to Fairfield with her husband and two daughters. From 1929-1932 the Fairfield

and Pleasant Grove churches were on a circuit pastored by Mrs. Kline, with Sunday morning services being conducted at Pleasant Grove on alternate Sundays.

In 1931 Mr. Peter Weimer became associated with the church group. Services were then being conducted

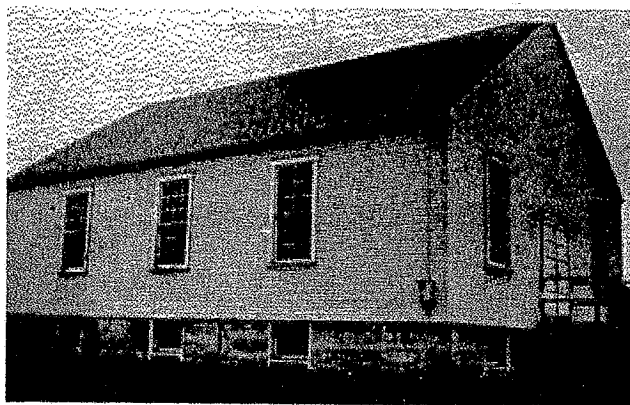


Mission 1928



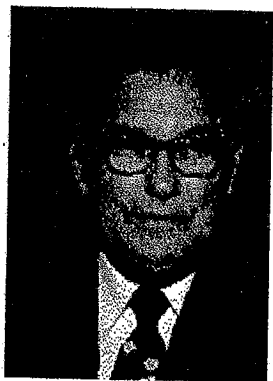
**Rev. William
Manney**

in part of the building which now houses the Fairborn Fire Department on Broad Street. Realizing the need for a church building, Mr. Weimer donated the lot at Second and Walnut. The construction of the church began in 1936 under the direction of Rev. William Manney, using donated labor and equipment. The original frame structure (34 by 48 feet) was completed in 1937. The church was called Fairborn United Missionary Church.



Church 1938

It was during Rev. Raymond Pettit's pastorate—about 1946—that the church had its first radio broadcast. It was also during Rev. Pettit's pastorate that the house at 315 Greene Street was purchased as the church's first parsonage.



**Rev. Raymond
Pettit**

As the membership and Sunday School attendance increased, the church facilities became inadequate. Consequently, in 1950 during Rev. Gordon Beck's pastorate, an additional thirty feet and a wing were added at the rear of the church building. Also about this time, the church again sponsored a radio broadcast each Sunday morning over stations WJEL and WIZE in Springfield.



Rev. Gordon Beck

While Rev. Lowell Nihizer was pastor, about 1955, the church parsonage on Greene Street was replaced by the purchase of the one at 410 Clover Street. This was more conveniently located with the rear of its lot adjoining the rear of the church lot.



**Rev. & Mrs.
Lowell Nihizer**

In 1958 while Rev. Forest Huffman was pastor, the group decided to further improve the appear-

ance and capacity of the church. A vestibule and cloakroom, new steps, and entrance were added to the front, and a large Sunday School room was constructed under this addition. The entire exterior of the building was then covered with brick.

In 1964 while Rev. Howard Brenneman was pastor, the parsonage kitchen was enlarged and remodeled, a new bedroom added,



Church 1958



Rev. Forest Huffman

and a new grade entrance to the basement constructed. During the next year the area at the rear of the church and adjoining the parsonage was black topped to provide parking space.

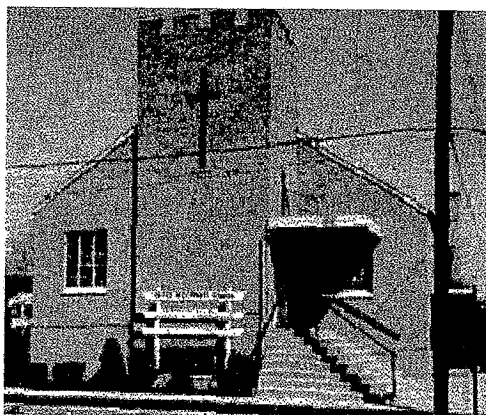
In 1966, upon action of the church board, provision was made for the



Rev. Howard Brenneman

pastor, Rev. Ronald Byers, to begin buying his own home through a monthly subsidy provided by the church. After he bought a house, the property on Clover Street was used for various church functions.

Also, while Rev. Byers was pastor, an attempt was made to purchase property adjacent to the church for off-street parking and future expansion. All attempts failed so in 1968 a decision was made to relocate. In 1968 land was purchased in Rona Hills for the site of a new church.



Church 1966



Rev. Ronald Byers

In 1969 the United Missionary Church denomination and the Missionary Church Association denomination combined to form the Missionary Church. With this merger, the church name was changed to Fairborn Missionary Church.

CORRECTION:
PARSONAGE PURCHASED
UNDER JDE WENGER
TENURE.



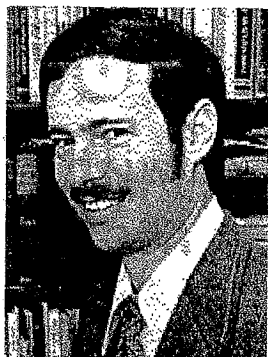
**Rev. Frank
Armstrong**

In 1970 Rev. Frank Armstrong became the pastor while plans were being completed for the construction of the original building. Construction was started in April 1971 and completed in July 1972. The dedication service was held on October 29, 1972. The church name was changed to Rona Missionary Church at this time.

During this period the church board felt the need for someone to work full time with the youth and in the area of Christian Education. Rev. Bill Armstrong came and served effectively in this capacity from October 1971 until December 1972.



**Rev. Bill
Armstrong**



**Rev. Robert
Stauffer**

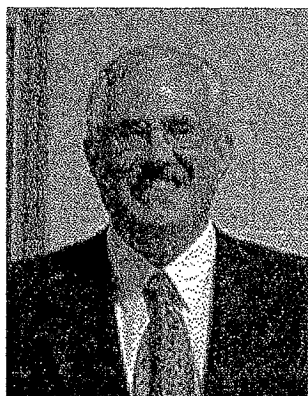
Rev. Robert Stauffer came to Rona in July 1974. He worked to involve more families from the Rona Hills area in the life of the church. The results of these efforts were realized. Rev. Stauffer's wife, Gloria, was instrumental in evangelizing the community through prayer groups and Bible studies during the week. Some of the families began attending the church and were encouraged in Christian living. During this time much work was

accomplished toward paving the church parking lot.

Rev. Thomas Swank, along with his wife, Kim, and children, Leslie and Matthew, became our Pastor in the spring of 1978. Tom ministered to, cared for, and loved the Rona family until he accepted the call in 1984 to be the District Superintendent of the East Central District. It was while Rev. Swank was our Pastor that the church purchased a house on Cottage Court in Rona Hills to be used as a parsonage.



**Rev. Thomas
Swank**



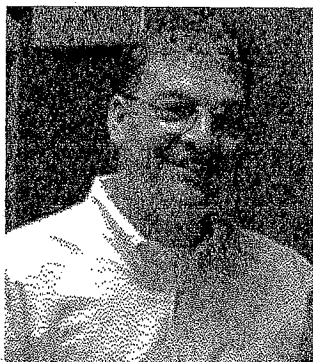
Rev. Joe Wenger

Rev. Joe Wenger, his wife, Dianna, and their children, Jennifer, Matt, and Ben, came to Rona in October 1984. Pastor Joe has a great gift of preaching and teaching God's word. He has also been a great asset on the many workdays at the church.

Rona has grown in many ways because of pastor Joe's leadership. Attendance has gone from 133 in his first full year to 200 in 2000. Recent Christmas Eve, Easter, and special services have had attendances of well over 200, and a

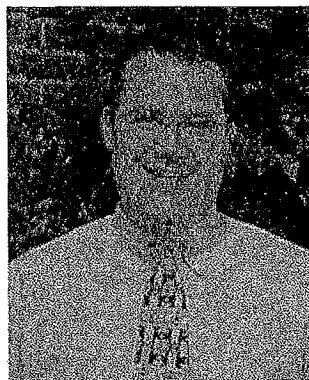
Friend Day in 2000 saw 300 attend morning worship. The music ministry has been a significant part of the worship services. There have been a number of gifted musicians and leaders. The choir has grown to over 25 members. Giving has increased from \$82,000 to \$283,000 and missionary support includes the partial support of six families. Ten percent of the annual budget is allocated for mission support. Prayer groups for men and women, women's circle groups, men's breakfasts, seniors for seniors, and growth groups have been added. The staff has also grown. It now includes Pastor Joe, two associate pastors, two part time secretaries, and a Director of Music.

In 1996 the church called Rev. Shawn Hicks as Associate Pastor with emphasis on youth ministry. The youth group started with 12 children of church members. In 2000, attendance at youth meetings averaged 30. Pastor Shawn has grown this group by building relationships with Rona youth and their friends. Over these years a number of new families have joined the church as a result of this ministry. In 2001 a new van was purchased to replace the old one. The van supports the youth program as well as other programs of the church. The youth participate in Wednesday night meetings, mission trips, disciple groups, outreach events, 30-hour famines, 3DYC (Missionary Church youth event), and youth camp.



Rev. Shawn Hicks

In July 2001 Dr. Stuart Snow came to Rona as the Director of Christian Ministries/Associate Pastor. Pastor Snow's emphasis is on children's ministries. Plans call for a "Patch Kids Club" this fall. Pastor Snow's energy and enthusiasm will be an asset for this ministry.



Dr. Stuart Snow

The church building has been added onto twice to accommodate the growing attendance. In 1994 a larger fellowship hall, kitchen, and additional restrooms were added. At that time the old fellowship hall and kitchen were remodeled into a nursery and permanent classrooms for younger children. In 1998 the sanctuary was remodeled—the platform was extended and new carpet, wallpaper, and pew cushion coverings were installed. In 2000 a narthex, three Sunday School classrooms, and a youth room were added, and the balcony was finished to seat 80 additional people for worship services.

In 1999 the parsonage on Cottage Court was sold when Pastor Joe and Dianna purchased their own home.

Through the years the Lord has blessed Rona Missionary Church. It has been a top priority to encourage and support missionaries. Rev. and Mrs. John Gamble were partially supported by the church in the 1960s when they were missionaries to India. Through this support they have remained friends, and the church has helped support their son Eldon and his family as missionaries. Also, Roberta Hensley Schlabach, who grew up in the church, went with her husband, Dale, to Brazil where they worked as teachers of missionaries' children at Greenacre School for one term. Ron Artz, who also grew up in the church, served with his wife, Janet, as missionaries in Indonesia with the New Tribes Mission. Rev. and Mrs. Ralph Riley, Rev. and Mrs. John Moore, and Rev. and Mrs. Bill Todd were converts of this church. Numerous others who were saved or called into Christian work while attending Rona are serving the Lord in various localities and positions.

Many military personnel are able to stay in Fairborn for only short periods of time because of their work. This, however, has not hindered them from contributing greatly to the work of the church. Almost every position in the church has been filled at some time by a member of a military family and many are remembered as friends as well as contributors to the work.

A number who helped establish the church and support its programs have now gone on to their eternal reward. Their faithful devotion to their Lord and to the tasks they performed in his service speaks to us today and presents a challenge to continue to be faithful to the things God requires of us.

Roll of Pastors

Miss Margaret Powell	1926-1927
Mrs. Elizabeth Kline	1927-1932
Rev. & Mrs. E. M. Maddox	1932-1934
Miss Vianna Longnecker & Miss Edith Schryer	1934-1936
Rev. William Manney	1936-1941
Rev. Raymond Pettit	1941-1949
Rev. Gordon Beck	1949-1953
Rev. Lowell Nihizer	1953-1957
Rev. Forest Huffman	1957-1960
Rev. Carlon Kress	1960-1960
Rev. Howard Brenneman	1961-1965
Rev. Ronald Byers	1965-1970
Rev. Frank Armstrong	1970-1974
Rev. Robert Stauffer	1974-1978
Rev. Thomas Swank	1978-1984
Rev. Joe Wenger	1984-

Charter Members

Mrs. Elizabeth Kline

Mr. Henry Kline

Miss Sarah Kline

Miss Mary Kline

Mr. Ward Palmer

Mrs. Dora Palmer

Mr. Harrison Null

Mrs. Elizabeth Null

Mr. Charles Edmison

Mr. Joe Campbell

Mr. Roy Maggert

Mr. Elmer Seifer

Mrs. Etta Seifer Deisch