

**Service of Deconsecration of the Disciples Center Building
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma
Saturday, November 4, 2023**

Welcome

We are gathered here today to remember the beginning of this building,
The life this space has given
And to let it go.
As your Regional Minister,
I want to thank you for your presence here today.
We will have a brief service,
Share in some refreshments,
And you are welcome to wander around the Disciples Center for the last time.

A Bit of History

Sixty-five years ago, dreaming began about having a building for what was then called the Association of Christian Churches. In 1962, Rev. Orval Holt, Minister of First Christian Church in Bartlesville and President of the State Association, appointed Leland Gourley, of OKC FCC, as chairman of a state building committee. The committee was instructed to open negotiations with FCC to see about locating the building on this piece of their property.

Fred Mock chaired a group to study the proposition for FCC and presented it to the church board. The board unanimously approved furnishing the property to the state association, reserving the right to approve the plans. Harry Marberry, attorney and member of FCC, worked out the lease arrangement between the two groups. On November 22, 1963, the day President Kennedy was assassinated, the State Association board approved the lease which would be for 60 years. The Association of Christian Churches paid the lease in full — \$1.00 per year for 60 years. FCC approved it and bids began in December of 1963 to building \$150,000 building designed by Architect Fred Pojezny who passed it on in retirement to William R. Fearnow.

Construction began on the building in January of 1964 with a goal to completion in late spring or early summer of 1964.

On Friday morning, January 22, 1965, the new State Office Building of the Oklahoma Association of Christian Churches was dedicated with a full service and an abundance of joy. There were words from scripture. Words of dedication. Presentation of the building. A Dedication. A prayer, a Doxology, and a Benediction.

But that's not all!

On Monday, June 22, 1964, there was a celebration for the Cornerstone Laying at the new State Office building of the Oklahoma Association for Christian Churches.

Now many of us have walked into this building hundreds of times, and we never knew this was there. But Carrie, one of our dedicated staff persons, who was cleaning out files this past year, found a file that indicated there was a cornerstone with a time capsule. That sent us on a journey.

On June 22, 1964, there was a service to install the cornerstone. Behind the cornerstone was a time capsule.

This week, my husband and nephew of Orval Holt, who set all this in motion, removed the cornerstone, with a lot of effort!

The Time Capsule

Honestly, I was relieved that there was not a dark hole behind this cornerstone where I would have to reach in and pull something out. And we did find this copper time capsule which was sealed — soldered together. After several tools, Randy was finally able to open the time capsule and here is what was inside:

History of the Oklahoma Association of Christian Churches
Roll of Oklahoma State Secretaries and List of Former Locations
Roll of Oklahoma Christian Churches and Roll of Board
Roll of Member Agencies of Oklahoma Association of Christian Churches
Roll of Oklahoma Christian Ministers
Roll of Building Committee and Furnishings Committee
Roll of Oklahoma Association General Staff
Oklahoma Association Organization and Constitution
Roll of Oklahoma Association Office Staff
Letter of Appreciation to First Christian Church for Building Site
Letter from First Christian Church Regarding Building Site
Copy of Brochure on Building and Furnishing Cost
Letter of Appreciation to Board of Church Extension
Copy of 1964 Assembly Program
Copy of Order of Service for Cornerstone Laying
Specifications Book for building the Disciples Center

There were also some photographs! All in perfect condition after 60 years! I was hoping that there would be a deed to the property! But alas, that was not the case.

In 1964 and 1965 the Saints who have gone before us dedicated this building, the Disciples Center, to the Glory of God ~ where four Regional Ministers sat in this building, Eulis Hill, Gene Frazier, Tom Jewell, and myself over the years, many staff, and where many clergy and lay people have gathered to make important decisions about the life and ministry of the Regional Church over the years. This building also became the home of the Oklahoma Disciples Foundation, the Oklahoma Conference of Churches, now Oklahoma Faith Network, and Interfaith Alliance. Beautiful ecumenical and interfaith partnerships and intersections for ministry.

Deconsecration of the Disciples Center

Now we come to de-consecrate this building, and return it to FCC as prescribed in the 60 year lease. We give thanks for this sacred space and now let it go. And so we begin with the same words from 1965.

From Psalm 90:

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.
Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
From everlasting to everlasting you are God.

From Luke 24:

Then the Lord opened their minds to understand the scriptures,
And he said to them, "Thus it is written that the Messiah should suffer and on the third day rise
from the dead,
And that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in the name of the Lord to all
nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

Litany of Deconsecration

Regional Minister:

Blessed be the Lord, our God, who alone does wondrous things.

Blessed be the Lord's glorious name forever;

Response: May the Lord's glory fill the whole earth!

Pamela Holt: God, this building, this space was dedicated to your glory 60 years ago.

Response: Today we give thanks for this sacred space and now let it go.

Moderator: This sacred space has been a place of strengthening and unifying the total work of
the church, providing guidance and encouragement for congregations to serve the Lord with
gladness;

Response: Today we give thanks for this sacred space and now let it go.

Michael Davison: For the work of helping congregations to discern and call ministers of Jesus
Christ to serve as shepherds and leaders;

Response: Today we give thanks for this sacred space and now let it go.

Ann Scott: For the continuing and growing programs and ministries of Christian Education at
local and area levels; for the empowering and equipping of leaders; for the development of
hearts, minds, and souls, for the building of richer fellowship among our congregations;

Response: Today we give thanks for this sacred space and now let it go.

Marilyn Knott:

For the promotion of the total mission of the church in Oklahoma, the denomination, and the
world, empowering and equipping Disciples to be engaged in ministry in the world, to be a part
of the movement of reconciliation, to put our faith in action;

Response: Today we give thanks for this sacred space and now let it go.

Marilyn Bohlender:

For the development of women in the whole work of the church over the years, for their gifts and their leadership in profound ways;

Response: Today we give thanks for this sacred space and now let it go.

Eric Gray:

For the task of establishing new churches in Oklahoma, for the purpose of empowering and equipping men and women of the church in a deepened commitment of mission and ministry and growing stewardship;

Response: Today we give thanks for this sacred space and now let it go.

Michael Davison:

For the work of planting seeds of faith in our young people across the Region; for the volunteers who serve at camp and conference for shaping young disciples for understanding their own identity and their relationship with God and the world;

Response: Today we give thanks for this sacred space and now let it go.

Ellen Spleth:

For the fellowship of Regional Staff who over the years worked together for the good of the Region; who shared work space and life space together; for the laughter, the challenges, the visions, the creativity, the communication; and endurance;

Response: Today we give thanks for this sacred space and now let it go.

Regional Minister: For the Ecumenical and Interfaith relationships we have held in this space; for the purpose of continuing our heritage in promoting the causes of Christian unity amidst all our diversity;

Response: Today we give thanks for this sacred space and now let it go.

Regional Minister:

We give thanks. We give thanks for all this sacred space has been. And for how over the years the mission and ministry has transitioned. We are grateful for this building, this sacred space, the vision and the financial support from individuals and congregations. Yet, this building does not define us. Our work does not end with the release of this building, not at all. In fact, our ministry continues in profound and extraordinary ways with leadership, with equipping the saints, with shaping Disciples, with fellowship, with the Love of Jesus Christ.

Prayer

So, O God, we deconsecrate this building and release it for any honorable use. We thank you for the labors of the saints who have gone before us. We thank you for the memories over the years. We lament this change and yet give thanks that buildings are not all we are made of. We are grateful for our hearts, souls, and minds and our hands, and our feet, that take us beyond a

building to serve in the Way of Jesus. Continue to empower us and equip us, Disciples of Christ, to be your vessels of love and grace to the people we encounter day after day so that they may discover a faith that will bring hope and light to break into whatever darkness holds them.

And we wait . . . with anticipation of how our ministries will continue to unfold and the assurance that your ministries will be strengthened by you through us, your sacred vessels. And we dedicate our ministries, vital and profound, to your Glory.
Amen.

Go in Peace . . .