

The history of Grace Fellowship Church:

On the cold, snowy night of February 12, 1994, a group of believers met at the Peet Freight office to discuss the possibility of beginning a new congregation of believers in Woodstock. Those initiating the meeting felt that there needed to be ten family units willing to commit to this endeavor before we would begin meeting on a regular basis.

That night exactly ten families signed a card indicating that they would commit to the call to begin a new work for the purpose of encouraging and equipping the saints to do the work of the ministry in reaching the lost. The remainder of the evening was spent discussing needs, goals, and objectives.

It was agreed that we start with Sunday evening services beginning the following Sunday, February 20th. Before that meeting even took place we realized that there would be too many to meet in a home and so we rented the Farm Bureau Building for that first service.

The service on February 20th was followed by a brief business meeting. We voted to pursue the renting of space in a building on McHenry Avenue across from Marion Central High School. The resulting inquiries to Mr. Harding of Harding Real Estate, indicated that he would work with us and allow us to rent one month at a time for a cost of \$1100 per month. The service on the evening of February 27th was held in the building.

The service on February 27th was preceded by a business meeting during which we voted to call our congregation of believers "Grace Fellowship." We elected a Board of Directors and discussed when we would begin morning services.

The next business meeting was held on March 6th, and it was reported that we now had our Federal ID# and a checking account. We voted to have our first official morning worship service on April 10, 1994.

At the next meeting, held on March 13th, we confirmed the purpose of this group of believers:

1. To show love to the unsaved and to minister to their physical and spiritual needs and then present the way of salvation.
2. To evangelize and disciple on mission fields at home and abroad.
3. To assemble to worship God, to administer the ordinances of the Lord's Supper and Baptism, and fellowship with His body of believers.
4. To reflect our oneness in Jesus Christ and to promote unity in the Body.
5. To build up and equip the believers to minister to each other's needs and accept the leading of the Holy Spirit in the discipline of Christian living and in accordance with God's Word. Ephesians 4:1-16

The next meeting was held March 27th at which time we approved the Bylaws and discussed the need to find a new place to meet.

God was really blessing and if we were to continue to grow we would need to move to larger facilities. God was helping us along by bringing pressure from the outside as well. Our neighbors, Five County Glass wanted our portion of the building as well. It was obvious that we

were going to have to move out soon. Our neighbors started remodeling before we had moved out. The black tarp over the hole in the wall immediately behind the pulpit was a constant reminder.

At the next business meeting, held on April 24th, we discussed various rental possibilities. One was the Sears building and the other was the D.B. Hess building. At the next meeting, on May 1st, we voted to arrange a meeting with the proper people at D.B. Hess and find out if there would be any possibility of renting that facility.

The first Sunday of June 1994 we began meeting in a portion of the old D. B. Hess building, 1150 McConnell Road. The large room where we met for worship on Sunday morning was also the gym on Monday evening for Awana Club. The six offices along the outside walls were great Sunday School rooms on Sunday morning and small group rooms for club on Monday evening. Later on we changed our club night to Thursday and in the fall of 2006 we changed the Awana Clubs to Wednesday evening leaving The Corps, our teen group, on Thursday.

By September 1994 we had received applications for membership. There were thirty-nine senior and six junior members. In October of 1994 we voted to support our first missionary, David DeBoer who was going to Africa as a mechanic for Missionary Aviation Fellowship. On July 9, 1995 the membership voted to accept the proposed constitution. In September of 1995 we rented additional space from D. B. Hess and in April of 1996 we rented even more space enlarging the auditorium to allow a meeting capacity of 200 and giving us a second larger room and more classrooms.

Then WOW what a step! On June 4, 2000 the membership of Grace Fellowship voted to purchase property on Cairns Court. The year to come brought lots of prayer, incredible challenges, and awesome miracles! We held our first service in our remodeled manufacturing building July 29, 2001 with a Dedication Service on August 12th.

In February of 2006 we signed a contract with Church Building Consultants to give us architectural design and drawings for a Master Plan for the full use of the buildings on Cairns Court.

In the beginning we did not have a full time pastor but Jim Dunn, Jim Rodgers, Dr. Thomas McComiskey, Dr. Michael Sabo and others taught on Sunday mornings until Dr. Sabo was asked to be interim pastor in February of 1997. We called our first full-time pastor, Jim Johnson, in April of 1999. Fred Burtelson was called to be the pastor of Grace Fellowship in November of 2001.

Through our church services, Awana Club program and Vacation Bible School we have touched the lives of approximately 1500 families. We praise God and trust He has been able to use us and will continue to use us for the glory of His kingdom.