

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Christian Church of West Liberty
other names/site number MO-WL-5

2. Location

street & number 304 Prestonsburg Street

NA
NA

 not for publication
city or town West Liberty vicinity
state Kentucky code KY county Morgan code 175 zip code 41472

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Signature of certifying official/Title Mark Dennen/SHPO Date _____
Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____
Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register
 determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register
 other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

5. Classification

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Ownership of Property

Category of Property

Number of Resources within Property

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		district
		site
		structure
		object
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

NA

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Colonial Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Stone and Brick

walls: Brick

roof: Asphalt shingle

other: _____

Narrative Description

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Summary Paragraph

The Christian Church of West Liberty (MO-WL-5) stands at the southeast corner of the intersection of Prestonsburg Street and Broadway in this town, the seat of Morgan County, Kentucky. The brick building was erected in two campaigns. The historic portion faces north to Prestonsburg Street, which is also US 460, and was built in 1910. In 1984, a one-story brick addition was added to the back of the church, and the brick veneer was replaced. The area proposed for listing is the entire 90' x 170' lot, and consists of the single contributing building, the church.

Detailed Description

The lot

The church lot sits within the urban environment of West Liberty, a small-sized (2003 population: 3344, according to <http://www.epodunk.com/cgi-bin/genInfo.php?locIndex=4380>) county seat in the foothills of eastern Kentucky. The lot is bounded on the north by Prestonsburg Street, on the west by Broadway, on the south by Ruth Avenue, and on the east by an urban lot. The church and its addition occupy the majority of the area of the lot. The property slopes somewhat from north-to-south, with the highest elevation being Prestonsburg Street. A small courtyard is created by the back of the historic building and the L-shape of the addition; that courtyard is visible from Broadway. That courtyard is landscaped with a deciduous tree, flagpole, sidewalks, and medium-sized shrubs which provide a slight visual separation from Broadway.

Exterior Description

When completed in 1910 (see supplemental images, Figure 1), two-story rectangular-plan church measured about 40' x 70'. McGuire proclaimed that it "was then undoubtedly the most imposing building in the town, with the exception of the [1907] court-house" (McGuire 1951, 6).

While it occupies a rectangular footprint, its roof profile suggests a more irregular massing. The basic form of the roof is a side gable, with the ridge running from east to west. A bell tower rises above the ridge level from the building's northwest corner, integrated into the rectangle so as to preserve the rectangular footprint. Two identical crossing gables are found on the building's front (north) face, east of the bell tower, and meet the northern slope of the roof. The primary entrance is through double wooden doors, on the north face of the bell tower. A nine-step concrete stair rises from the sidewalk to the threshold of this main entry point. Secondary single-door entrances occur on the north side to the east of the main entrance, and on the west side, near the southwest corner.

The dominant visual feature of the north and west sides, the most public faces of the building, are prominent stained glass windows. Three puncture the walls centrally, each below the main gables. The fanlight over the main entrance provides a fourth arched opening. Two of these arched windows have below them a window of three parts—a single light stained glass window flanked on each side by double-hung sash window, also with stained glass—a narrowed and subdued nod to a Palladian window. The eastern-most arch on the north face "floats," or is separated by several brick courses rising above the header of three small double-hung windows below.

The bell tower also pulls the eye upward in this composition. Both its north and west sides are punctured by 3 narrow arch-topped louvered openings, placed on a diagonal rise from each other, lighting the course of the stairs to the belfry. The bell tower is capped by a hipped roof, with a broad

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soffit containing simple rectangular dentil-work that overhangs the main entry. The secondary entry on the north side has a simple pent-roof covering supported by diagonal brackets, something commonly found shielding the entry on Craftsman-styled houses.

The side of the building facing Broadway is much simpler in its presentation, containing two double-hung sash windows at street level, a pedestrian door, and two narrow openings within the gable, above the main arched window.

Interior Description

The main entry doors open onto the vestibule in the base of the bell tower, which leads into the western portion of the interior. That portion contains a sanctuary with a vaulted ceiling. The basic interior floor plan is a modified Akron Plan. The full Akron Plan arranges the meeting space at the building's center, with rooms surrounding it, which leads to efficiency of movement and reduces the need for hallways. The plan has that name because it was employed on the First Methodist Episcopal Church in Akron Ohio, in 1872 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akron_Plan). The Christian Church's sanctuary has a focal point, "with rostrum in a corner where the congregation may see the pulpit from all parts of the building" (McGuire 1951, 5). The eastern interior wall has a small door that provided access to the remainder of the building and large, folding doors, together with a section of wall that could be raised, providing access to an antechamber for use by overflow crowds

The sanctuary is illuminated on three sides by large stained-glass windows: that facing south depicting Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, the one looking onto Broadway Street portraying Christ as the Good Shepherd holding a lamb, and the one facing Prestonsburg Street being non-pictorial. These were supplied by donors (the Womack, Phillips, and Blair families respectively) at a reported cost of \$500 each—a considerable sum in 1910.

The eastern portion of the church housed the educational section of the building lodged between the structure's eastern exterior wall and the antechamber mentioned above. It contained a row of four classrooms. Directly overhead is another row, accessible by a balcony that overlooked the antechamber. At the rear of the building is a small minister's study. Some of the furnishings of the first church—along with the original bell—were installed into the new building upon its completion.

Changes over Time

The church has endured three substantial changes over the years.

First, photographic evidence (Supplemental images, Figure 2) shows that some time in the post-WWII-era, the bell tower was covered with asbestos shingles and its roof appears to have been lowered, possibly to remedy problems with its roof. At the conclusion of that project, the bell tower was closed as a safety precaution.

In the late-1970s or early 1980s, the church acquired an adjacent property to the south containing a house, demolished it, and erected an L-shaped educational wing (Supplemental images, Figure 3). This structure extends to Ruth Avenue, running behind the church, and contains 13 rooms, including classrooms, pastor studies, kitchenette, restrooms, etc. It is lit by fixed windows in a one-over-one light configuration, and provides several metal doors for egress.

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The third major change was a project in 1984 to remove the brick veneer (Supplemental Images, Figure 4) from the building and replace it with new brick. The original mortar had begun to fail, and there was concern that the structural strength of the brick-veneer wall was insufficient to allow patching instead of full-replacement. In this project, the sandstone foundation blocks were covered with brick. During this project, the original appearance and height of the bell tower was restored, and its roof repaired. This allowed the church to reopen the bell tower.

Interior changes have occurred as well; these are not considered as substantial as those mentioned above.

A retractable wall, part of the original interior that created an anteroom between the sanctuary and the classrooms, was permanently retracted in the 1970s, enlarging the worship space.

In 1945, the church acquired an internal baptistry, then located in the sanctuary, in an alcove behind the dais, containing a tank for the water and a background oil painting of John the Baptist baptizing Jesus—the large picture being a focal point for the congregation. Approximately a half century later, the baptistry and painting were relocated to the side. The painter was Harriet “Hattie” Cole Baldwin (1877–1968). Widowed from her second husband and living with her daughter, who said her mother previously produced only “drab efforts,” Hattie learned of “the remodeling of the old Christian Church” to include a new baptistry with its stark, white wall that needed a painting. So she created “Baptism of Christ”—taking art lessons so she could get “the right expression,” as she said, “in the Master’s eyes.” The picture was installed and dedicated the first Sunday in May, 1945 (Gentry 1974, 62, 106, 214–223).

The church acquired the property on its east side in 1993 (See Supplemental Images, Figure 5), as indicated in Deed Book 162, p. 53. That lot held a building which had served for many years as the May Grocery. By the 1990s, it had ceased that function and was a storage place for hay. The church demolished that building, and now uses the grounds for parking. That lot is part of the church’s property ownership, but lies outside the area proposed for listing.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Social History

Period of Significance

1910

Significant Dates

1910

Significant Person

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Gross, Saul, Sr. (builder); Gross, Saul, Jr. (builder); Gross, Bill (Builder), Joseph Monroe (builder); Wells, David (builder); Wells, Frank (builder); Wells, Boone (builder)

Criteria Considerations

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Period of Significance (justification)

The Period of Significance is a single year, as the event of the church construction is viewed in this nomination form as an index on a continuum of social organization. This church's importance is its ability to show the way that the county had changed by the year 1910, from its earlier settlement past.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

The church meets Criterion Consideration A, as it is owned by a religious group and currently is used for religious services. The church's significance is interpreted within the Social History Area of Significance, not within the Area of Religion. This follows guidance in the National Register bulletin, "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation."

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Summary Paragraph

The Christian Church of West Liberty (MO-WL-5), located in the seat of Morgan County Kentucky, meets National Register Criterion A and is significant in the context of “Social Organization of West Liberty, Kentucky, 1823--1918.” As a building owned by a religious group, it is nominated according to the guidance for Criterion Consideration A, focusing upon its social meaning more than upon its religious function. West Liberty and Morgan County sit within eastern Kentucky, in what Scalf (1972) aptly called “Kentucky’s Last Frontier.” The story of the church helps us realize the lengthy period of time that this town took to move from its settlement era to the period of full establishment. Originally housing a Disciples of Christ denomination, the current building descends in a direct and interesting way from the first church in the town. The settlement era of many Kentucky places, including Morgan County, is marked by itinerant migrants who served as the area’s first professionals—circuit riding judges, doctors on horseback, visiting preachers, and temporary teachers—all providing a vital service on an intermittent basis until locals hired them to remain permanently, or installed a home-grown functionary in the itinerant’s position. Churches can be viewed as a very important plank in the stabilization of any unsettled area. In the way that a family bible will record one family’s important events—births, baptisms, marriages, and deaths—churches can reveal the collective social progress in the areas they served. The arrival of the current Christian Church in West Liberty gives a record of a community that had fully emerged from its settlement era into a term of greater social maturity.

Historic Context: Social Organization of West Liberty, Kentucky, 1823--1918

Social Organization in Morgan County as Indicated by Early Churches

The mountainous eastern region of the state was settled comparatively late by pioneers lured to the rugged, isolated area by its cheap land and its profusion of game and virgin timber. Many arrived with little more than their family Bibles, Kentucky long rifles, and sharpened axes. As early as 1800, a few people had settled in then-Floyd County, in what would become Morgan County in 1823. These early settlers viewed some form of church as vital in their efforts to make a new homeland. On December 17, 1808, a congregation calling itself the South Fork Baptist Church was organized at White Oak Creek, and members chose Daniel Williams—whom local tradition says was married at Boonesborough and fought with Daniel Boone at the Battle of Blue Licks (Nickell 2004)—as “moderator.” They also determined to build a “meeting house” according to the still-extant church minutes (Nickell 1986, 22).

The site of this first church in what was to become Morgan County was at Malone, Kentucky. The present Old South Fork Church (MO-386) stands there on the same site, although the building has been replaced two or three times (Johnson 1974, 283).

Alexander Campbell (1788–1866), a founder of the Disciples of Christ, preached a Protestantism that adapted well to a frontier situation lacking in many forms of social organization. He stressed a Christian unity that did not depend upon a denominational institution. “Campbellites” sought the end of denominational differences by erecting a practice supported by the bible solely. They identified themselves as members of their communities first, and denominations second. The movement flourished in the 1830s through the 1850s in areas that were developing at that time: Kentucky,

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Indiana, Virginia, eastern and southern Ohio, and western Pennsylvania (Kleber 1992, 154; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Churches_of_Christ).

Inspired by Campbell, the second and third churches established in Morgan County were both Disciple of Christ churches, the first at White Oak in 1832 (MO-67) and Grassy Creek (demolished) the following year. Reverend Joseph Nickell (1792-1874) founded the White Oak Church on land donated by his uncle, Isaac Nickell. The settlers at Grassy Creek reportedly worshiped in a simple log building on a hill overlooking the valley. Today's church is a block building in a hollow near the original site. A hilltop cemetery contains graves of pioneers (Stacy and Nickell 1973, 179; McGuire 1951, 2-3; Nunnally 2008, 180, 254).

As was the practice, Reverend Nickell was not confined to a single church. He also evangelized in nearby counties, as shown by this account given by J. Green Trimble in his *Recollections of Breathitt* (n.d., 25):

When Breathitt County was created there was no church organization of what is now known as the Christian church within the county. Rev. Joseph Nickell was the first pioneer minister of that denomination, and preached the first sermon in the county delivered by a minister of that church. With the assistance of Rev. Raney Maxey . . . he organized the first church in the county at Jackson in 1842. . . . Rev. Nickell was a successful evangelist and was noted for having baptized more converts and married more couples than any minister of his age in the State. When this church was first organized in Kentucky it was known as the Campbellite Church from the fact that Alexander Campbell was its founder and organizer. . . .

A rare and colorful picture of the region and time in which Reverend Nickell evangelized is shown by this anecdote also given by Trimble (n.d., 22). It concerns a Mr. Simon Cockrell, a decent if somewhat profane man:

There was a protracted meeting held at Jackson by Rev. Joseph Nickell, who represented a denomination that preached the doctrine of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, and that remission occurred in the act of baptizing. Fourteen persons joined the church during the meeting, and at its close they all went down to the river to be baptized. Among the converts was a man who had formerly been a tenant of Mr. Cockrell's and with whom he had had some difficulty. Mr. Cockrell happened to be in town that day and he followed along with the large crowd of over 150 persons to see the baptizing. As his former tenant was being immersed, Cockrell called to the parson in his loud and stentorian voice that could be distinctly heard a quarter of a mile and said: "Souise him again, Joe for he's a dam'd dirty dog, and it will take two dips to wash away his sins!"

However, although Nickell often conducted funerals and marriages throughout Morgan—he is frequently listed as officiating officer in county marriage records from 1831 to just a few months before his death in 1874—he never succeeded in founding a church building in West Liberty.

West Liberty's first "Church": the Courthouse

Indeed, for over six decades there was no purpose-built church building at all in West Liberty. A description of the town as it appeared in the early 1830s was given by a one-time resident, William H. Lampton (1896), who wrote to the local newspaper, *The Messenger*, from Winchester, Kentucky.

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Lampton reminisced about “Your pleasant little town more than sixty years ago”—that is, about 1836—stating:

I do not recall that there were any regular lawyers, doctors, or preachers in town. I remember that there was a doctor around sometimes and that Mason Williams, the celebrated Baptist minister, used to preach in the courthouse. There was no church in town, and only a sorry excuse for a schoolhouse in an old dwelling. . . . The courthouse was a frame building two stories high and may have had one coat of paint on it long before I came to town.

Sometime during this antebellum period, West Liberty was reportedly visited by the great Kentucky evangelist “Raccoon” John Smith (1784–1868). A Disciples of Christ convert, he gained his nickname after once introducing himself as hailing from the frontier, where raccoons also lived (Kleber 1992, 830). As reported by McGuire (1951, 2):

Tradition contends that it was in the home of a West Liberty hostess where Smith and a preacher of another denomination visited, that the incident of his drinking his colleague’s wine occurred. Supposedly wine and cake were provided as refreshments, over which the other preacher insisted on offering thanks. During the lengthy prayer, Elder Smith, already renowned for his humor, drank both glasses of wine, and later reminded his companion “to also watch and pray” as the Scriptures commanded.

The courthouse on the Public Square continued to be used for services by different denominations. A recent National Register listing, the Wurtland Union Church (Greenup County, NR 2008) recalls a similar story in eastern Kentucky: a building that served for a time as the county poorhouse, and later as the house for multiple groups’ Sunday services.

A Disciples of Christ congregation was organized in West Liberty in 1854, reportedly by a “Dr. Dillon” (McGuire n.d.). He is unidentified, but was presumably a prominent Disciples official, perhaps brought in by Rev. Nickell, who was still actively ministering in the 1850s, and indeed would still be doing so until his death in 1874.

Still-later reminiscences of prominent Kentuckians indicate there was no church in West Liberty during the next two decades. That lack was noted by the editor of the *Greenup Independent*, K.B. Graham, who rode on horseback into the town in 1875. It was also mentioned by Kentucky jurist Edward C. O’Rear, long a member of the Kentucky Court of Appeals, who came to West Liberty at age seventeen to work as a young “printer’s devil,” or apprentice, for the *Mountain Scorcher*. O’Rear remained to study law, and became a practicing attorney for some years before going to the state capitol. He stated that, when he arrived in town in 1881, there were no churches, and worship services were still conducted in the Morgan County courthouse (Stacy and Nickell 1973, 102, 171).

This situation was confirmed by a long-standing member of the Christian Church, Florence McGuire, who wrote: “There was no church in West Liberty for any denomination until the early eighties when the Christian Church was built. Both the Christian and Methodist churches held service in the court house.” She adds that “O.W. Burns, a Methodist, was possibly the first Sunday School superintendent for the two churches, and held Sunday School in the court house,” as well (Florence McGuire, n.d.).

The courthouse that doubled as a church was a two-story brick building that replaced the original frame courthouse built by Morgan County’s prominent early builder, Edmund Wells (1777-1846). This second courthouse was destroyed by fire—along with much of the town—as part of Civil War strife. A

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third courthouse, all brick and with shuttered windows, was completed in late 1870, and continued the tradition of serving as the town's interdenominational church.

It is easy to speculate that people in the county's formative years saw a strong identity between the county's primary building, in which justice was meted out, and the place where Sunday services were held. The common themes of morality and punishments for inappropriate behavior are hard to overlook. However, no diary accounts or editorials are known to document just how conscious this association might have been at that time. The choice to meet in the courthouse might have been more out of convenience than clear intent. The choice to erect a purpose-built structure for Sunday services could signal a time when the people of Morgan County felt a need to establish two separate arenas, one for public legal and social codes and another for religious moral codes, or the courthouse simply ceased to be all that convenient for weekly meetings.

West Liberty's First Church

In the early 1880s, work began on the Disciples church in West Liberty. As Florence McGuire (n.d.) related, a prominent citizen named Henry Clay Turner, who in 1880 had built a large brick home on the northwest corner of Prestonsburg Street and Broadway, was persuaded by Mrs. B.F. Carter, wife of a local physician, to provide land for the building. The property—located on the southwest corner of the same intersection—was Mr. Turner's barn lot. Land records refer to it as his "stable" property; no doubt it held a horse barn. At Mrs. Carter's request, Turner tore down his barn and gave both the lumber and the land to the Disciples congregation. The transfer was made on June 23, 1883, by deed of H.C. Turner to the Christian Church (Morgan County deed book 8, p. 403; McKinney and Wells, n.d., 26–36). The parallel has not escaped notice (e.g., Nickell 2010): the Morgan County church made from a barn, and Luke's account (2:1-20) of the Christ child's birth in an animal shelter.

The social importance of this structure is signaled by the prominent people remember as its builders. Much of the construction work was done by Isaac Newton Phipps who went on to become a serious Kentucky poet—author, for example, of *The Lay of the Wraith and Other Poems* (published by John P. Morton & Company, Louisville, 1895). Church furnishings included a pulpit fashioned by Ned Wells—a local artisan and grandson of county founder Edmund Wells. Additional carpenters on the project were members of the Wells clan, also direct descendants of Edmund Wells. Wells himself built the town's first tavern and mill, as well as the county's first courthouse and jail. Judge Edward C. O'Rear would later characterize this first church as a "quite serviceable" frame building (1950).

The Current Building, 1910

The Disciples church made of barn lumber lasted a quarter of a century, then gave way to a new church. In 1909 a corporation was formed by five trustees (Clay Wade Womack, W.G. Blair, A.N. Cisco, W.H. Gevedon, and Charles M. Keyser) for the purpose of building a new larger church. On April 7, an additional parcel of land was acquired (Deed Book 34, p. 174). The old structure having been torn down by this date, a basement was dug for the new church.

Cost was an issue, and the minister, Rev. J. Wesley Hatcher, suggested that using brick veneer instead of standard brick construction would save money, cutting the number of bricks used in half.

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This was approved by the congregation, and so the church became “the first brick veneer building in West Liberty” (Stacy and Nickell 1973, 175). The clay for the bricks was obtained from a site across the street from the church, behind a present-day store building, where a pit has remained into modern times. There the clay was burned into bricks. A similar near-site brick-making process was used in 1913 for the Methodist Episcopal Church that replaced the one lost to fire in 1911, located at the northeast corner of Main and Prestonsburg streets. The Christian Church’s brickmakers, who were also the bricklayers, were Saul Gross and his sons, Bill and Saul (Nickell 2008).

Another cost-effective element was the use of native stone for the basement foundation. The stones were cut from a quarry located just south of town, across Licking River, and were hauled to the church site by wagon. As soon as the basement was completed, services were conducted there until the remainder of the church was completed (Stacy and Nickell 1973, 175; Nickell 2010).

Still another economy measure was used. A photo (Stacy and Nickell 1973, 175) shows the partially-completed wood-frame structure before the bricks were added—wide dark rough uneven planks, like those from the previous church which came from Henry Turner’s barn. Tradition confirms that the current building is supported by the original timbers, providing a clear and direct link to the first church in West Liberty (Nickell 2010). Another link stems from the fact that the current church’s builders were another generation of the Wells clan, descendants of Edmond Wells: Joseph Monroe (“Joe Roe”), John David, Frank, and Boone Wells. Carrying on the family tradition, these men also built numerous local houses and buildings, as well as the original swinging bridge that spanned the Licking River near the historic old Wells Mill site (Stacy and Nickell 1973, 175, 232; Johnson 1974, 257–258). Foremen for the church construction project were Abe Smith and Tom Daniels who ran a planing mill north of the town (Nickell 2008).

The church was dedicated on “Lord’s day, September fourth, nineteen hundred and ten,” according to what is believed to be the only surviving copy of the printed invitation, issued by J. Wesley Hatcher, Pastor and now displayed in the church foyer. Guest speaker at the ceremony was R.H. Crossfield, president of Transylvania College in Lexington. *The Licking Valley Courier* stated in 1911 that it was church trustee Clay Wade Womack, to whom “more than any other one man, the credit for the building of the magnificent new church belongs . . .” (Nickell 2008).

Like the building’s interior and exterior, the church’s ministers have changed as well. They have included J. Wesley Hatcher (beginning in 1909), J.T. McGarvey (1912), J.R. Miller (1914), T.S. Tinsley (1922), W. Graham Walker (1925), and a Rev. Marshall (1925). According to local historian W. Lynn Nickell (2008):

In 1925, Rev. Harlan Murphy was called to preach two Sundays a month. In 1937, Gabriel C. Banks, a graduate of Transylvania, and a past Christian Missionary, became a teacher at Morehead College. He was called by the church as a minister serving two Sundays a month. This was to be a temporary arrangement but lasted until 1947. During this nine-year period, the Methodist and Christian churches had an excellent relationship and for a time had joint youth services and choirs. During the winter of 1948–49, they had joint evening church services.

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While a graduate student at Lexington's College of the Bible, Franklin McGuire became minister (1947), followed by Fred Penninston (1951), Joe Ryan Nevius (1954), John Stumbo (1962), Joe Nevius again (1964), and Steve Bliffin—the longest-serving pastor, from 1969 until his death in 1999. Subsequent ministers were Larry Chouinard (January–October 1999), Tom Thomas (October 1999), and the present preacher Paul Casteel (2004).

Evaluation of the Significance of the Christian Church of West Liberty within the context “Social Organization of West Liberty, Kentucky, 1823--1918”

Former minister Franklin McGuire's observation in 1951 (p. 6) does not differ from some ways of defining success among American churches, focusing on size: “Of the three churches eventually erected” in West Liberty—including the Methodist Church completed in 1913 and the frame Baptist Church dedicated in 1917—the Christian Church “has been and is the largest and most adequate for practically all needs. Such an edifice is a monument to those responsible for its erection.” Beyond size, the arrival of 3 churches in the community, at roughly the same time, and just on the eve of the first World War, give evidence of a community that had left behind its emergent phase. West Liberty had grown complex enough to offer its citizens some variety within this social institution.

While the site contained two important “firsts” from the settlement era of West Liberty's past—site of the first church, and using lumber from that church—the property also offered a number of firsts that gave new definition to the local concept of “church” as a type of construction:

- It was the first church built in West Liberty in the twentieth century.
- It was the first brick church built in Morgan County.
- It was the first brick-veneer building in West Liberty.
- It was the first church in Morgan County to have stained glass windows.
- It was the first church built in Morgan County to later acquire an internal baptistry.

Like any church, the Christian Church of West Liberty gives a specific congregation a distinct sense of place. It has served not only as a meetinghouse and a house of worship, but it has been central to the baptisms, weddings, funerals and other rites of passage of its members. But in keeping with the 19th-century way that West Liberty's buildings performed multiple social functions, this 20th-century church has also been extensively involved in the community affairs beyond its own membership. One of its great assets was its large, full basement—called Fellowship Hall—which has made it ideal for many purposes.

McGuire states that “the church came to be represented in district and state meetings, such as the Kentucky Missionary Society. The entire church had contributed for a number of years to the Widows and Orphans Home in Louisville, Kentucky, as well as other occasional benevolent offerings (1951, 13).” The church building has served as the meeting place for organizations including the Woman's Club, Kiwanis Club, and others, including the Boy Scouts which remains chartered by the church. Other gatherings have ranged from quilting bees to covered-dish dinners.

The church has been pressed into service for innumerable community needs. For a time in the 1930s, school classes were held throughout the building while a new public school was being built; a graduation ceremony took place in the sanctuary.

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In various emergencies, the church has opened its doors—serving the cold and hungry during floods, for example. On at least one occasion it contributed uniquely to a disaster-relief operation: After a boating accident on the Kentucky River in 1967 claimed the lives of six prominent Morgan County citizens, the church set up a sandwich-making assembly line to provide food for rescue workers, and family members keeping vigil, on site.

Surely no church in Morgan County has done more to serve—not only its own members but, without reservation, the citizenry at large. Considering the old-fashioned quilting bees that were held there yesteryear, the church can be seen as a large, bright-red piece in a metaphoric quilt—truly a patchwork of history and family and service to people shared by the entire community. This great quilt has been gathered about many—of differing faiths and of no faith—as an enduring warmth.

Evaluation of the Integrity of Christian Church of West Liberty within the context “Social Organization of West Liberty, Kentucky, 1823--1918”

A church in West Liberty that meets Criterion A must have sufficient materials to support the association with the important event, in this case, the emergence from the frontier period into the more settled phase of the county’s development. That church will possess those associations if it retains integrity of location and a modest amount of materials and design. If it has at least these qualities, it will be said to possess integrity of association, and thus will be eligible for the National Register.

The Christian Church of West Liberty retains its integrity of **location**. Its location is an important part of its identity and demonstrates the urbanization of the community. The building is near the main crossroads of the community, occupying a lot along the main travel corridor between this seat of Morgan County and Prestonsburg, seat of Floyd County, to the southeast. The decision to site the building so close to the heart of the community suggests an integral relationship between the community and this place of worship. Different from many Kentucky counties, Morgan County’s government building does not occupy a courthouse square. It sits 2 blocks away from the Christian Church; both buildings stand on their sites, serving as local landmarks of the county’s most prominent town.

The building has retained little of its historic exterior **materials**; those bricks were replaced with new bricks in 1984. The building does still have its historic stained glass windows, under large wooden arches, signaling its basic identity. The change was deemed necessary by the church membership at that time, and is regarded as equivalent to the replacement of deteriorated historic roofing materials or weatherboards—new fabric of the same kind of material.

While somewhat lacking in integrity of materials, it retains a much higher degree of integrity of **design**. One of the markers of the church’s material identity, and its design, is its brick veneer structural system. Local members of the community recall that aspect of the property today, if not from knowledge of the historic fact, perhaps then from observing that quality during the 1984 work. The removal of historic brick and replacement with in-kind material reminded people in 1984 that their ancestors, in 1910, had adopted brick veneer, a non-traditional approach to the church’s construction. The use of brick veneer transmits some of the message that West Liberty had emerged into a new period, a relationship standing at the heart of this Statement of Significance. Also, the bell tower’s

Christian Church of West Liberty
Name of Property

Morgan County, Kentucky
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design was restored in 1984, having been radically changed through enclosure some time after World War II. While the bell tower's design was returned in 1984, two concurrent changes marked a lowering of integrity of design: the covering of the building's foundation stonework with brick, and the multi-room addition on the south side of the building. As both of these change the historic architectural appearance of the building, they change its design.

Looking at what the church retains in its location, design, and materials, and easy to see it as a reincarnated version of its 1910 self, the building can be credibly said to retain integrity of **association**. With it being significant and possessing an integrity with that significance, the building can be said to meet the National Register eligibility Criterion.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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Christian Church of West Liberty
Name of Property

Morgan County, Kentucky
County and State

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Trimble, J. Green. N.d. *Recollections of Breathitt*. Second printing 1949. Jackson, Ky.: The Jackson Times.

Internet Sources:

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<http://www.epodunk.com/cgi-bin/genInfo.php?locIndex=4380>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akron_Plan

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): MO-WL-5

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than 1 acre

UTM References, expressed according to 1983 NAD values, obtained via <http://kygeonet.ky.gov>, a GIS service West Liberty Quad

1	<u>17</u> Zone	<u>301 485.47</u> Easting	<u>4199 503.67</u> Northing	3	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing
2	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing	4	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

The area proposed for listing is defined by the Morgan County Property Valuation Administrator (PVA) as a property of 90' x 170', with identification PVA map number 106-03-14-001.00.

Boundary Justification

The area proposed for listing is the lot historically associated with the church. It is an urban lot, and relatively small. The entire lot is the appropriate area because the church occupies most of the lot.

11. Form Prepared By

Christian Church of West Liberty
Name of Property

Morgan County, Kentucky
County and State

name/title Nickell, Joe W. Lynn Nickell L. Martin Perry/National Register Coordinator
organization Kentucky Heritage Council date March 17, 2010
street & number 440 Riverside Dr. 300 Washington St. telephone _____
city or town West Liberty Frankfort 40601 state KY zip code 41472
e-mail NA NA marty.perry@ky.gov

Photographs:

Name of Property: Christian Church of West Liberty
City or Vicinity: West Liberty, Kentucky
County: Morgan County **State:** KY
Photographer: Kent Nickell
Date Photographed: March 24, 2010

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

0001 of 3 official images: West side façade, camera facing east
0002 of 3 official images: South (back) façade, camera facing northeast
0003 of 3 official images: East and North (front) facades, camera facing southwest
1 supplemental image: PVA photograph of the back side addition.

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Christian Church of West Liberty
street & number PO Box 1 telephone _____
city or town West Liberty state KY zip code 41472

First Christian Church
4200 Morgan County, Ky
West Liberty Quad
Zone 17

NAD 27

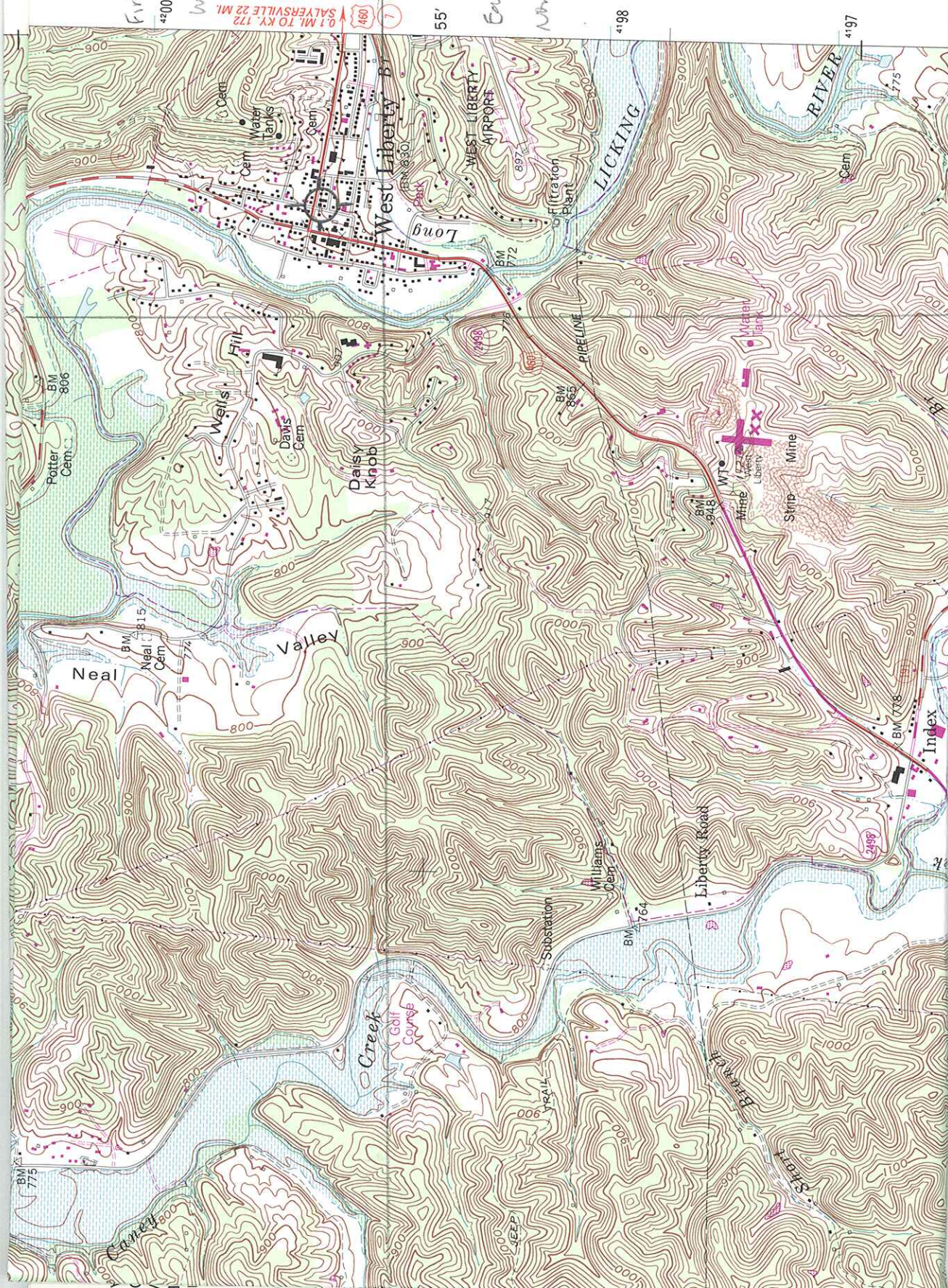
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Northing 4199 288

NAD 83

Easting 301 485.47

Northing 4199 503.67



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Balcony Above This area
For overflow

← N S →

Stairs To Balcony

Stairs
To
Basement

Restroom

Opens to
Present
Baptistry

Storage

Doors Along Walls
To Class Rooms

(Front)

42'0"

12'0"

First
Baptistry

Stage

54'0"

(Back)

Stained
Glass
Window

Stained
glass
Window

Stained
Glass
Window
above
Doors

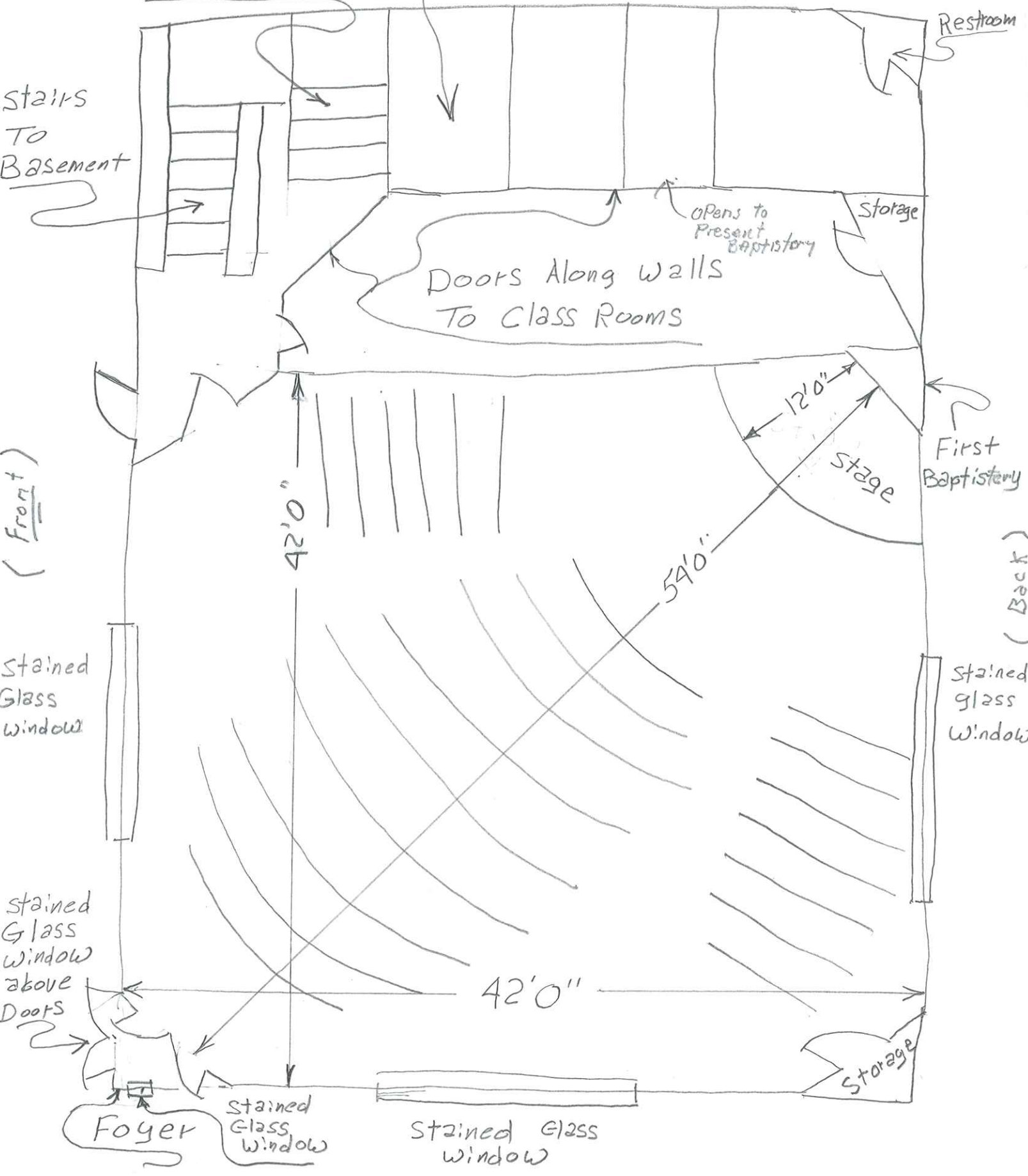
42'0"

Storage

Foyer

Stained
Glass
Window

Stained Glass
Window



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Christian Church of West Liberty
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NA
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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Page 1



Figure 1: photo of church taken ca. 1910

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Figure 2: Two images of Modified bell tower

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Figure 3: Church annex

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Figure 4: Church being re-bricked

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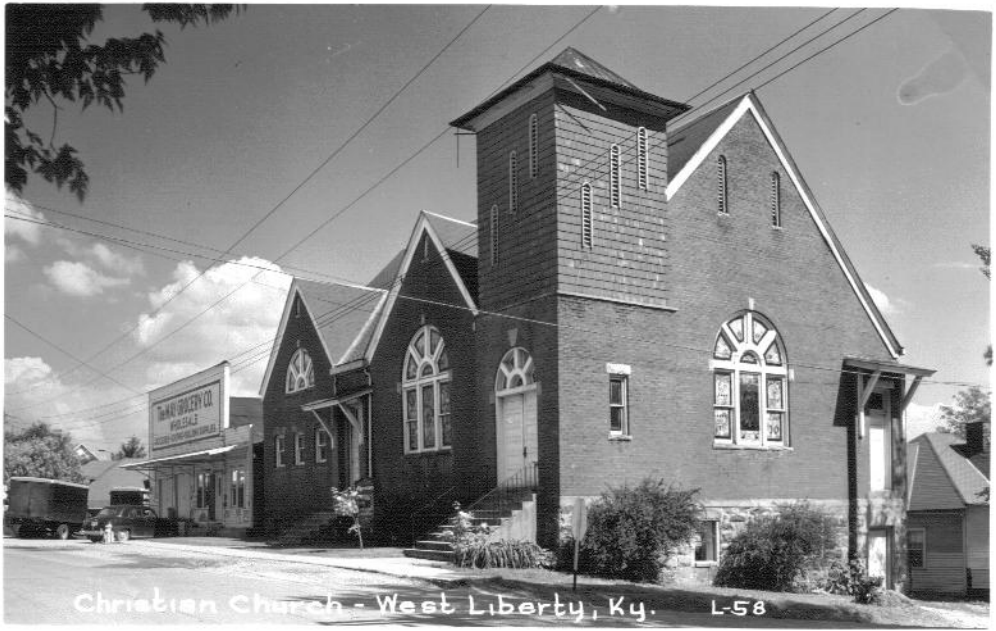


Figure 5: May Grocery, shown beyond (east of) the church



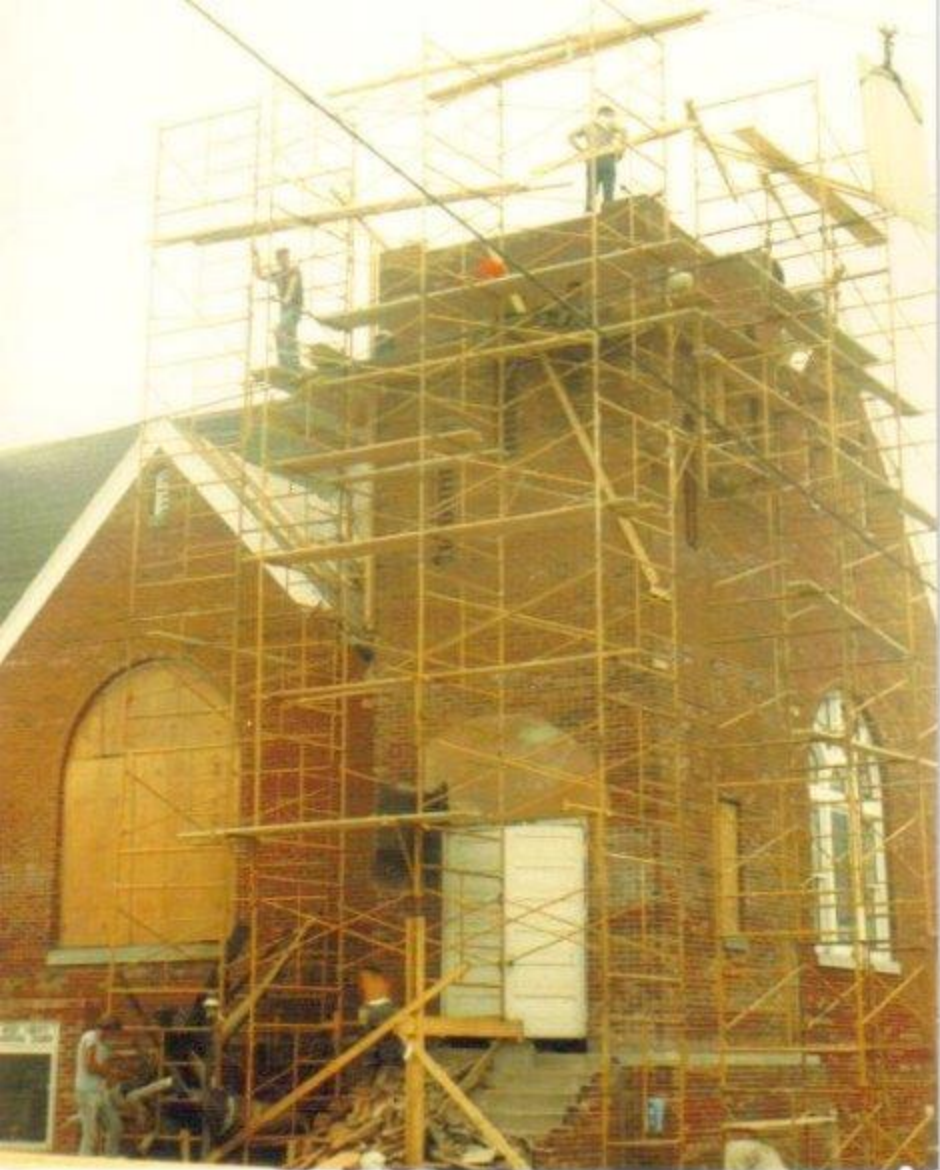






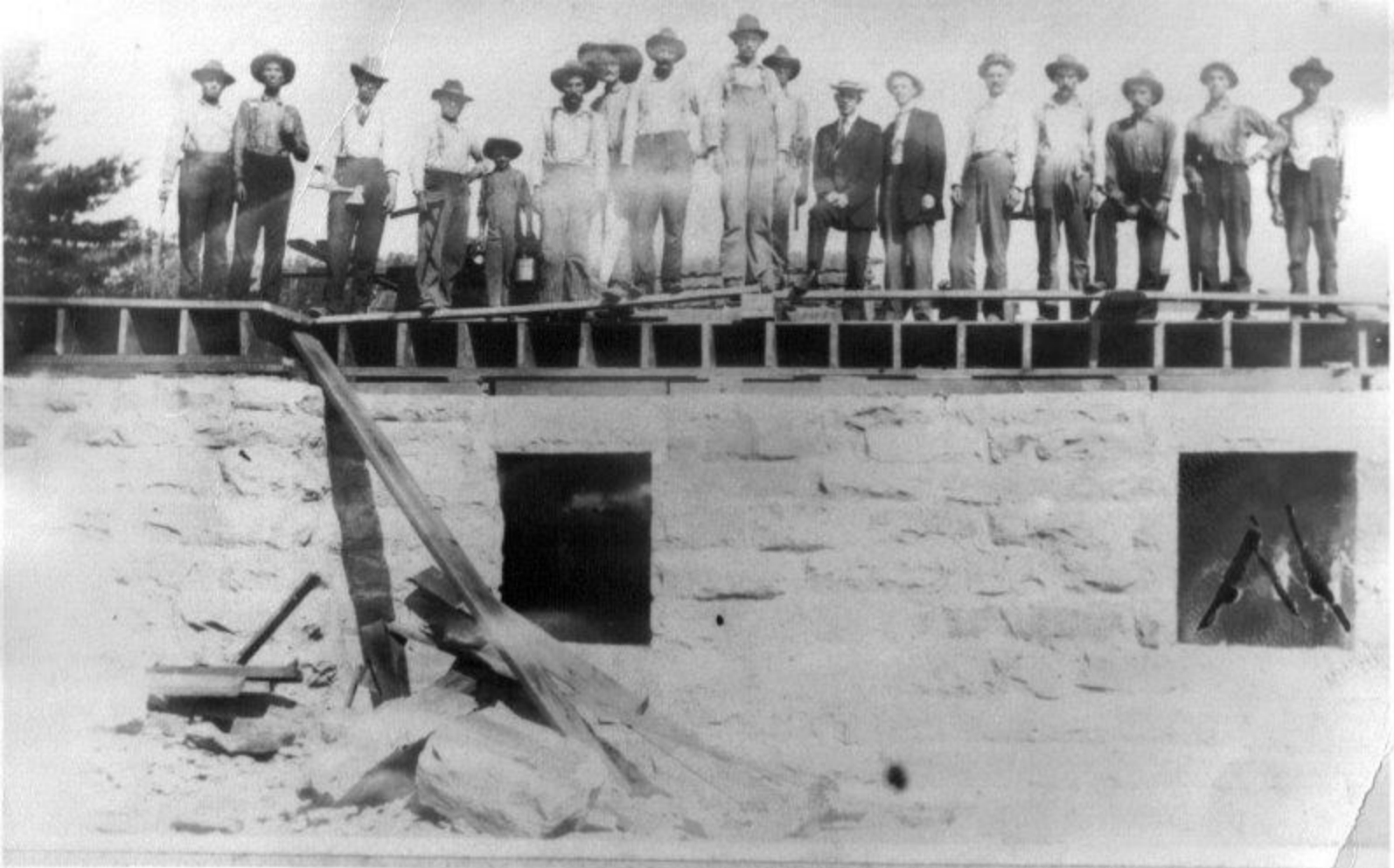




















You and your friends are cordially invited to be present

at the Dedication of the

West Liberty Christian Church,

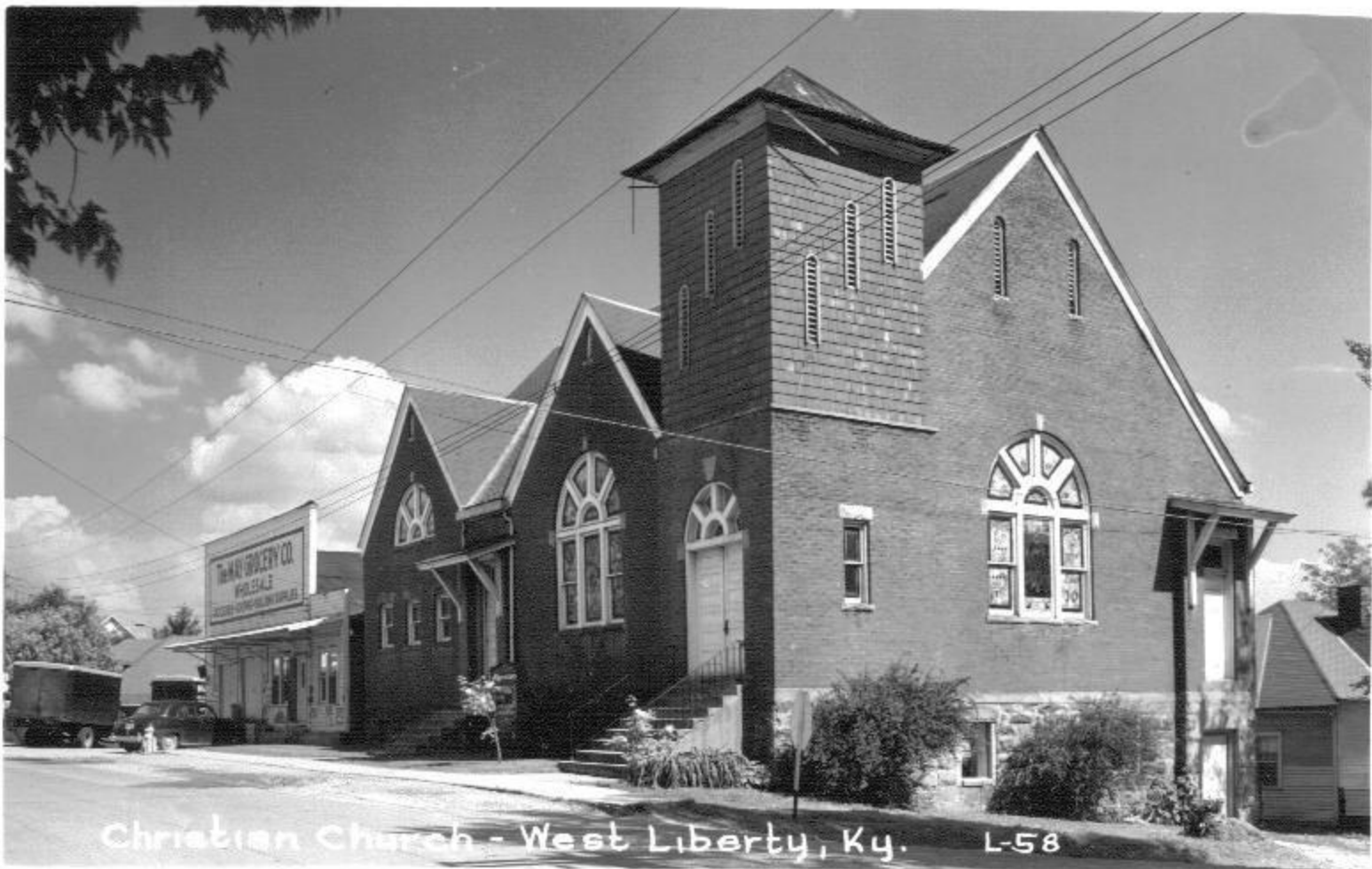
West Liberty, Ky.,

Lord's day, September fourth, nineteen hundred and ten.

On behalf of church.

J. Wesley Hatcher, Pastor.





Christian Church - West Liberty, Ky. L-58



