

## **Chester Friends Church**

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The Chester Friends church has a history beginning with the first settlement of the neighborhood. In February, 1837, Robert Tomlinson, with his family, settled two miles north of Westfield. In September, of the same year, Enoch Jessup and family settled near by. In good time other families came to the neighborhood, most of whom belonged to the Friends church. There was no church nearer than Westfield. As there were no roads the mode of traveling was on foot or on horseback." This distance was traveled for a few years until they believed they ought to have a church established in their own neighborhood. To this end, on March 31, 1859, the following petition was presented to the Westfield Monthly Meeting:

"We, the undersigned members of the Westfield Monthly Meeting, request the privilege of holding a meeting for worship and a preparative among ourselves to be known by the name of Chester, two miles north of the town [page 322] of Westfield, in the county of Hamilton, in the state of Indiana. Said meeting to be held on first and fourth day of each week, except first day of quarterly and fourth day of monthly meeting weeks. The preparative meeting to be held on fourth day before the last seventh day in each month."

This petition was signed by Robert Tomlinson, Peter Rich, David Stalker, John Stalker, Joseph Moore, William Baldwin, Lydia Tomlinson, Prudence Jessup, Amy Rich, Annie Stalker, Deborah Moore, Mary Baldwin, Noah Tomlinson, Allen Tomlinson, Eli Carey, Isom Hiatt, Jonathan Carey, David Fodrea, Abigail Tomlinson, Martha A. Tomlinson, Mary Carey, Asenath Hiatt, Eliza A. Carey and Tamer Fodrea.

The Monthly Meeting at Westfield united with this request and the information of this action was forwarded to the Quarterly Meeting held at Westfield in May, 1859. The Quarterly Meeting appointed a committee to visit those Friends making the request and this committee reported to the Quarterly Meeting held in the following August, as follows:

"The committee appointed at last Meeting to visit those Friends on account of their request to hold a meeting for worship and a preparative to be known by the name of Chester, have attended to the object of our appointment and are free; said request be granted, which we submit to the Meeting. Signed, on behalf of the committee—Andrew F. Evans, Anna Baker."

The Quarterly Meeting made the following minute: '

"At Union Quarterly Meeting of Friends, held at Westfield, Indiana, eighth month, sixth day, 1859, the committee appointed to visit Friends in the north part of the settlement of Westfield on account of their request for a Meeting for worship and a preparative, report that they have attended to the object of their appointment and are united in judgment that it would be right to grant their request, with which the Meeting unites; and appoints the following named Friends to attend the opening Meeting in the tenth month next, namely: Donagan Clark, Jacob Carson, Noah Stafford, Clark-son F. Cook, Benjamin Harold, Jesse Horney, Jemima Stanley, Sarah Hiatt, Elizabeth Bray, Edith J. Commack, Phebe Cook, Eunice Doan. (Signed) Levi T. Pennington, Ellen R. Hunt, Clerks."

In accordance with the above action Chester was organized on October 26, 1859,' with Robert Tomlinson and Lydia Tomlinson as heads *of* the Meeting and Joseph Moore and Amy Rich as clerks. The first minister having a Meeting appointed for the proclaiming of the Gospel in Chester house, was Joseph Pickett, with M. Sittler as his companion, which Meeting was held October 31, 1859. The first marriage in Chester house was that of Henry Roberts and Keziah Lamm. The first minister recorded was Zimri [page 323] Kivett. Several other members have been made ministers and one made a missionary to Africa, Florence Stanbrough Roberts.

The ground upon which the meeting house was built was donated to the church by Allen Tomlinson to Joseph Moore, Allen Tomlinson and Noah Tomlinson, as trustees, in 1859. In the erection of this edifice the labor was donated by the members. A part of the house was used for a school room for eight years.

Source: Haines, John F. History of Hamilton County, Indiana: Her People, Industries and Institutions. Indianapolis, Indiana: B. F. Bowen, 1915, Bk2922

