

ASSEMBLY @ 50 • SLIDE SHOW #1

(Reflections - Pictures from the Early Years)

(Jan 7, 2024)

NARRATION SCRIPT

SLIDE 1

1. 50 YR AGO (Literally yesterday - JANUARY 6, 1974) Assembly was BORN!!!

To put this in a larger historical context:

- The VIETNAM WAR WAS DRAGGING ON
- PRES RICHARD NIXON RESIGNED 7 months later as a result of the Watergate scandal.
- The WORLD (esp. young people) was QUESTIONING AUTHORITY AND LONGING FOR AUTHENTICITY

THIS WAS REFLECTED IN:

- Several experiments in “Making Church” that were taking place across this country and beyond:

For example:

- Reba Place, Chicago was a 15 year old experiment in Christian based communal living.

** Koinonia Farms, GA (a similar intent though set in a rural (farm) location)

- BUT HERE IN 1973 GOSHEN, new Ideas regarding how to DO CHURCH were gaining steam through:

- small group discussions
- meetings at the College Cabin with Fellowship of Hope *members*
- and constructive conversations with leaders from both College Mennonite & Waterford churches.

- **FIINALLY THE ASSEMBLY was BIRTHED** in Coffman Hall Basement on that Sunday morning with Bible & Theology Professor C. Norman Krause presenting his vision for a new kind of congregation!

SLIDE 2

2. This was one of the small groups that joined this new “church” venture a year later (Norm and Sharon’s group, w/ Tony Brown (center) and John & Rosemary Zook It of N&S)

SLIDE 3

3. Paul Zehr, an involved GC student made these insightful observations @ 1975:
 - a. ASSEMBLY was an indicator of new Spiritual strength on Campus.
 - b. While the small-group movement was fading, this new model offered small groups a significant role within a unified Congregational structure.
AND
 - c. This new structure became so effective that membership grew rapidly!
*Paul particularly noted that:
 1. The new structure offered more chance to get involved.
 2. People were attracted by the idea that small groups were an integral part of this new structure.
AND
 3. It was INFORMAL, SPONTANEOUS AND FLEXIBLE!

SLIDE 4

NOTEWORTHY ARE THESE PRECURSORS:

4. "SMALL GROUPS called "K" Groups (Koinonia) prospered at GC

AND

SLIDE 5

5. Campus Church in many ways informed the design of Assembly.
 - ("Atmosphere = ripe" for such NEW beginnings

SLIDE 6

6. This is Norm and Sharon's Small group meeting at Brunk's Cabin to hear a special presenter.

SLIDE 7

7. Eventually 2 CONGREGATIONS (CALLED CLUSTERS) developed:
CAMPUS CLUSTER & COMMUNITY CLUSTER
 - a. **Campus Cluster** gathered wherever there was a large enough space to meet:
From Coffman Hall basement ... to the old Seminary Chapel in Newcomer.... to Kratz Lounge.... to the Union Gym Stage
WHILE
 - b. **Community Cluster** met in such unlikely spaces as a downtown Dance Studio for one & maybe the Public Library... (Ask Mary Lehman Yoder for other locations).
(Unfortunately, I found NO PHOTOS to document this group)

8. For several years there were strong feelings that Assembly NOT waste \$ on a building that typically has stood empty for 6 of the 7 days in a week!

SLIDE 8

- But finally, after much discussion they came to a Hard-Won Consensus and chose to buy an old, rundown Cheerleading/Band Uniform “factory” on 11th St.

WHO WOULD HAVE GUESSED WHAT WAS TO EMERGE over the next 50 YEARS FROM THIS NEW VENTURE?!!!

SLIDE 9

9. Note: FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE HISTORY OF ASSEMBLY, WE HAVE SEVERAL COPIES OF THIS 10-YEAR-OLD TEXT IN OUR CHURCH LIBRARY!
 - I HIGHLY RECOMMEND IT! IT’S A REALLY IS A GOOD READ!!!

SLIDE 10

10. CREDITS

John Blosser