

Religion

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Church retires van

By BOB COUPLAND

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HOWLAND — After many years of getting local children and some adults to church, community events and to summer camp, a 1975 van used by Bolindale Christian Church has been retired.

Pastor Ray Blasko of the church said he purchased the van in 1994 for \$3,000 from John Krauss, who was then the Christian education director at Second Christian Church, where the two were both members. At the time, the vehicle had 89,000 miles on it, Blasko said, noting he is the third owner of the van.

"It was in fairly good shape for many years, although it had to have repairs done," he said.

He used the van to drive children to Sunday school, youth events, Wednesday evening services and to church.

His wife, Sue Moody, previously a youth leader at Champion Christian Church before she came to Bolindale, often needed her husband's help in transporting and getting children to the Champion

church.

"We took the children in sixth to eighth grade to summer camp in Delaware, Ohio, once and used the van," he said.

From 1994 to 2009, the van was used in transporting children from Scouting, Warren, Niles and other communities to church. Blasko first used the van at Second Christian Church when he was youth leader before coming in 2004 to Bolindale Christian Church.

"At one time we transported anywhere from eight to once about 20 people in it. Many of the children lived locally in the neighborhood so we could pick some up easily and drop them off and then go get others," Blasko said.

On the final day for using the van, the children painted their names on the sides during a church youth event.

"I knew the van had passed its usage," he said.

Blasko said the vehicle had many repairs over the years but had finally reached the point where it is too far gone to get it repaired.

Part of the allure of the van is the children get to talk with one another when they are coming to and from church. While other vehicles have been used to get people to church, most of the children wanted to ride in the old van, Blasko.

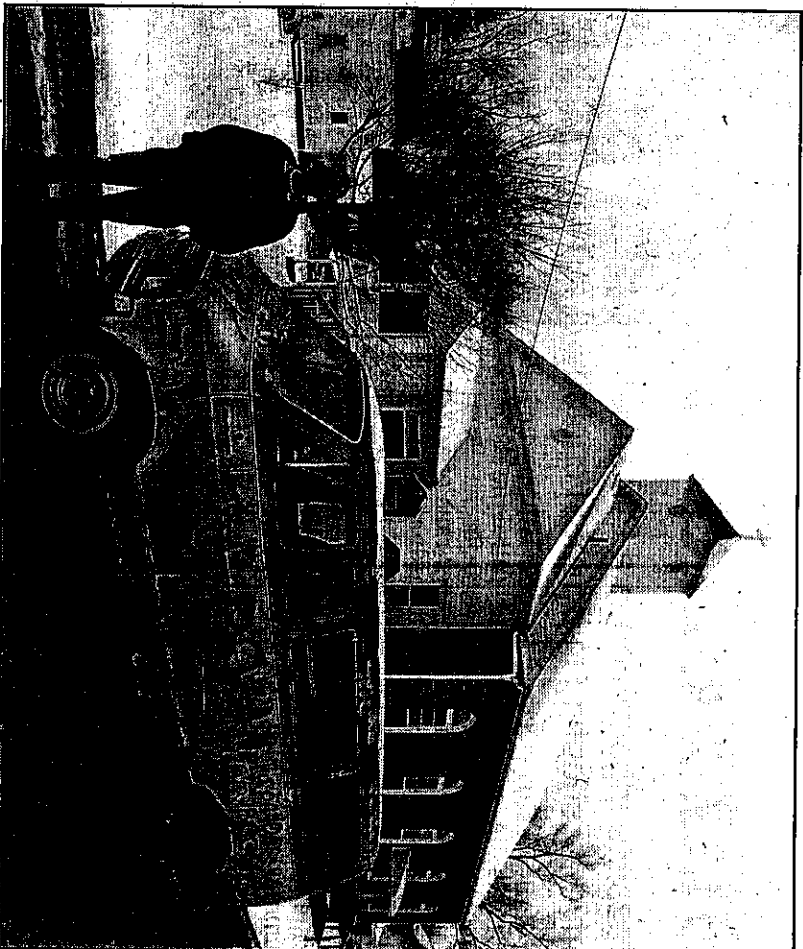
He said he remembers once at Champion Central Christian, all the vehicles were lined up to take children to summer camp and all the youth wanted to ride in the van.

"The kids were having fun in the van. There is a special kind of fellowship-ping that takes place," he said.

"Even children who lived within a walking distance also wanted to ride in the van because of the fellowship. Some even said they wanted to be dropped off last so they could ride longer. They all wanted to be the last ones dropped off," Blasko said.

Helena Gostovich, a Bolindale Church member, said on a recent Sunday there was a 30-second pause in memory of all that the van had done.

She said Blasko had great ambition to get the



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A van that for many years provided transportation for local children and some adults to get to Bolindale Christian Church and other area churches has been retired. Pastor Ray Blasko stands by the 1975 vehicle, which was spray-

children to church and es the church had the money port children to church.

camp and would help so for a new van but it does not. Plans are to obtain another van, but in the meantime, cars are being used to transport.

Painted by the youth of the church on its last ride. The vehicle has become too expensive to repair and is not in good condition. The church is searching for a replacement. To see or purchase this and other photos, visit cuthribtoday.com

For more information, call 330-369-3452 or 330-979-8265.