

THE EMCC NEWS

TO INVEST IN THE LIVES OF ALL IN MARTINDALE-BRIGHTWOOD



EDNA MARTIN CHRISTIAN CENTER: FOUNDATIONS (1941-1950S)

In 1941, Edna Mae Barnes Martin began her ministry of serving families in Indianapolis. After reading a report on youth delinquency in the Circle City's Martindale neighborhood, Martin started a daycare service for working mothers who needed childcare. The first few years of Martin's ministry were rocky. An eviction from her initial location at 1475 Roosevelt Avenue. A short stint operating in a-

rented circus tent. A forced move after the condemnation of her rented space at 1519 Martindale Avenue. Martin's Christian faith sustained her through the ministry's difficult early years. She referred to her faith as her "Solid Rock." Visitors sometimes saw Martin at her desk, praying at her "Rock" for a divine miracle.

The "Solid Rock" formed a firm foundation for the ministry's programming. Martin peppered daily lessons and activities with Bible scriptures and stories. Gospel hymns and prayer recitals opened and closed each day's activities. She was "out to win-



Edna Martin instructs a class at the center, circa 1955



East Side Christian Center at 1537 Arsenal, circa 1949

children for Christ." Martin's ministry did not go unnoticed. In 1945, the All-Baptist Fellowship began sponsoring her work, and the East Side Christian Center was born.



As a teenager, Edna attended Shortridge High School

A GROWING MINISTRY AND COMMUNITY (ESCC: 1940S-1950S: RELOCATION)

In 1945, World War II ended. Martin's ministry entered the postwar period with a new name, the East Side Christian Center, and a new source of organizational and financial support from the All Baptist Fellowship. After the All Baptist Fellowship disbanded in the mid 1950s, the Indiana Baptist Association took over sponsorship of ESCC. New relationships were also formed with Edith Stokely Moore, daughter of Stokely Brothers and Company, and Crooked-

-Creek Baptist Church. By 1949, Martin's ministry had moved to a new home at 1537 North Arsenal Avenue. The new location provided more indoor and outdoor space for the growing ministry. During the 1950s, ESCC expanded its programs to include adults. A new seniors club and Bible study group attracted more local residents and brought a new intergenerational dimension to Martin's ministry. The Martindale community began to notice-

-ESCC's impact on local children and families. Support for Martin's ministry began to grow. Local grocers donated bread, meat, and snacks, while residents contributed clothing and household items. Martindale's churches also began supporting ESCC, including St. John's Missionary Baptist Church, St. Rita Catholic Church, and Witherspoon Presbyterian Church. Woodruff Place Baptist Church also became a supporter.



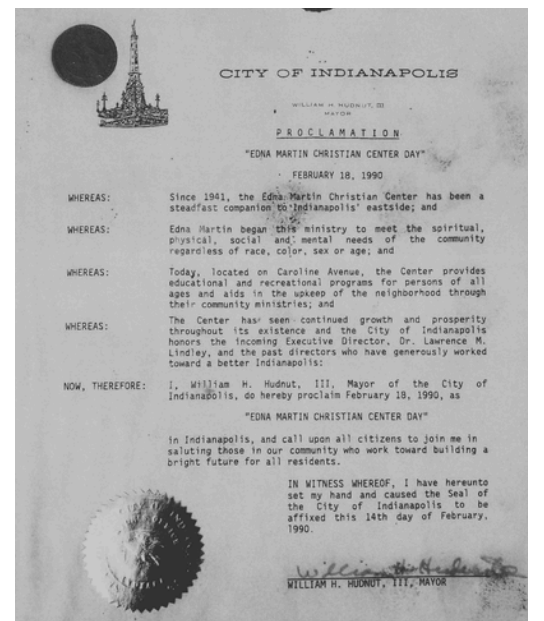
EDNA MARTIN WALKING FOR HER DOCTORATE

One honor that was special to Edna Martin was the honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters conferred on her by Franklin College on 6 June 1965. From that time on, she preferred to be called Dr. Edna Martin, Edna is shown with Earl Sr. (Her husband) on the right and Earl Jr. (Her son) on the left.



THE BARNES' MIGRATION

Edna Mae Barnes' parents migrated in 1896 from Paduca, Kentucky, to Mars Hill, Indiana. Edna was born in 1897 in Mars Hill. The Barnes family later migrated to Evansville, then in 1901 settled in Indianapolis.



DID YOU KNOW, EDNA MARTIN CHRISTIAN HAS AN OFFICIAL DAY?

Edna Martin Christian Center has its very own day. It's true, Edna Martin Christian Center Day is officially on February 18; the mayor of Indianapolis in 1990 William H. Hudnut III, proclaimed it!



Escc bible study group, circa 1950s. (Edna is setting in the front left with the patterned dress)

THE 1960S: EARTHLY RECOGNITIONS FOR A HUMBLE SERVANT

The ESCC experienced many successes during the 1960s. One of the greatest sources of joy for Edna Martin was the opening of the newly constructed East Side Christian Center on June 20, 1962. Located at 170 Caroline Avenue, the new building represented a fulfillment of God’s faithfulness. It also reflected the support of Martin’s longtime supporters, as well as new partners such as the Lilly Foundation. The following year, ESCC acquired a new bus, fulfilling a dream Martin had held for many years.

In 1965, Franklin College awarded Martin an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters. The honor held special meaning for Martin because Franklin was one of several Indiana towns where she had quietly experienced racial indignities while traveling to meet supporters. Soon, students from Franklin College would begin volunteering at ESCC.

Ironically, small-town Indiana provided some of Edna Martin’s most dedicated supporters. Women from Baptist congregations formed Edna Martin Circles to organize volunteers, collect material and monetary donations, and support other ESCC activities. These circles also gave women opportunities to organize and lead efforts for ESCC outside of their churches’ male-dominated leadership structures.

Like many women of her generation, Edna Martin held traditional political and social values. She did not participate in the social demonstrations of the turbulent Civil Rights era, instead allowing her faith and work to speak for her. At times, however, Martin joined other local faith leaders in addressing issues such as fair housing. She also supported the center’s youth volunteers when they participated in local demonstrations for equality. On the night of April 4, 1968, ESCC volunteers traveled with children from the center’s youth program to 17th Street and College Avenue to hear Democratic presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy deliver a campaign speech. During the speech, Kennedy informed the crowd that Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had been killed in Memphis, Tennessee.



The end of the 1960s also brought Interstate 70 (I-70) through Martindale and surrounding Eastside neighborhoods. While the highway increased traffic across Indianapolis, it also devastated the communities it cut through. Demolitions and construction disrupted the neighborhood, and families living south of ESCC had to change their routes to the Caroline Avenue site. For many children, walking to the center became nearly impossible. Despite these challenges, Edna Martin continued serving Martindale’s children, providing faith based activities and a safe place for those in need.



Edna Barnes Martin was a member of Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church (top image, circa 1930s) throughout her adult life.



The children at ESCC’s 1519 Martindale location, circa 1950s.

HER FAITH CARRIED HER, HER SERVICE CHANGED LIVES (EDNA MARTIN’S STORY)

In 1972, Edna Martin traveled to the Middle East to visit the Holy Land. She was thrilled to see the places she had learned about through a lifetime of reading the Bible. That same year, the East Side Christian Center’s Speakers Bureau grew to eight volunteers. The group visited local organizations to share the story of ESCC’s founding and growth under Edna Martin’s leadership. The 1970s also brought two new ESCC programs. Sales House served as a clothing store for local residents, while Soul Ark provided recreational programs for young men in Martindale. The 1970s also brought two new ESCC programs. Sales House served as a clothing store for local residents, while Soul Ark provided recreational programs for young men in Martindale. The beginning of the 1970s also marked a decline in-

-Edna Martin’s physical strength. Thirty years of devoted service, along with increasing health challenges, began to take their toll. Yet she continued to show up at the center, reminding the young people she served of God’s love and faithfulness. Edna Mae Barnes Martin’s life came to an end on May 25, 1974. Thirty years of service had not gone unnoticed. Expressions of sympathy poured into ESCC from across the United States. Community leaders and everyday neighbors alike shared what Edna Martin and her mission had meant to them: reminding people of God’s love when they needed it most, providing meals for children whose homes had little food, teaching the basics of good manners, and quietly supporting local ministers on the front lines of the Civil Rights movement. The East Side Christian Center was then renamed in her honor to the Edna Martin Christian Center (1974).

East Side Christian Center Enlarges Speakers Bureau

Eight more volunteers have joined the speakers bureau of the East Side Christian Center. The center now has speakers available for missionary, church, school classes, men's, women's, association meetings and work services. Any one of these volunteers would be happy to visit your church to tell the story of this inner-city mission project.

To secure a speaker write to Mrs. M. Martin, 1970 Caroline ave., Indianapolis, IN 46218. Suggest at least two dates for a presentation if you can.

The volunteers are giving their time freely with churches and groups. Therefore, it is requested that seven dollars per mile be paid to the speaker for transportation and that a gift be made to the work of the center.

Volunteers for the speakers bureau are: Mrs. John Burns, Gosport; Jon Wilson, Fort Wayne; Mrs. Charlene Smith, Crawfordsville; the Rev. Howard Doney, Jeffersville; the Rev. Arnold Erickson, Salem; Mrs. Kenneth Hunter, Terre Haute; Gordon Hyde, Bartlettville; Mrs. Edred Kinner, Monticello; the Rev. Ronald Kerr, Vincennes; Miss Terry Mathew, Indianapolis; Mrs. Albert Neher, Alexandria; the Rev. Milo Riggs, Greenwood. The center staff members are also available on a limited basis.

Speakers are (front, l to r): Edred Kinner, Miss Terry Mathew, Dr. Edna Martin, Mrs. Edred Kinner, Mrs. Kenneth Hunter, the Rev. Ronald Kerr and Mrs. John Burns. Back row: the Rev. Ed Doney, Joshua Cutler, Milo Riggs and Mrs. Gordon Hyde.

The American Baptist/Indiana Baptist News Section, May, 1972

Interstate 70's (I-70) construction in the 1960s-1970s separated the ESCC from communities south of Martindale.

Edna Martin’s first daycare operated out of a rented room in the Norman Court Apartments, near Roosevelt Avenue and Sheldon Street.

Children’s Circus Set for Wednesday

Children of East Side Baptist Church, 1519 Martindale Ave will participate in a children's circus program Wednesday in tent erected at 16th Street, a Columbia Avenue.

Miss Edna Martin, director of the center, will supervise the children who will participate in parade and side show features. Small admission fee will be charged for the benefit of the summer program for the center, project of the All-Baptist Fellowship.

Fun Fact: Edna Martin once held a circus where children made costumes of elephants, tigers, and giraffes, then donned the garments and performed a “circus” for family and fiends.

The “East Side Christian Center” appears for the first time in Polk’s City Directory of Indianapolis, circa 1951

(Top) ESCC’s sales house and main program building at 1537 north arsenal avenue (bottom) children on playground at 1537 North Arsenal Avenue.

FORMER EMCC LEADERS:

Rev. Frank Alexander (1974–1979)	Rev. Richard K. Padrick (1980–1988)	Rev. Lawrence Lindley (1989–2008)	Mrs. Tysha Hardy–Sellers (2008–2019)	Mr. Barato Britt (2020–Present)
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NEED ANY ASSISTANCE? CONTACT EMCC TODAY!

The Edna Martin Christian Center (EMCC) is a community focused nonprofit serving Martindale Brightwood neighborhoods. Founded in 1941 by Edna Martin, it began as a small Christian daycare and has grown into a community center offering programs for people across generations. We offer education, workforce opportunities, senior programs, social services, and community development to support children, families, seniors, and neighbors at every stage of life.

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