

The First Presbyterian Church of Falls City, Nebraska was organized in 1866 by a committee appointed by the Highland Presbytery. Members of the committee were the Rev. R.R. Ramsey, the Rev John Lilly and Elder J. McCullough. At the first meeting for organization, E.C. Cooley was elected and ordained an elder and six people were received as members of the church. The records of the early organization were lost but a document dated May 14, 1871 by Elder Cooley stated that those remaining of the original members were himself, Lucretia Miller Anderson and Sarah A. Cook. Earlier records had been kept by the Rev. J.R. Ramsey who was laboring as a missionary in Richardson County. The first house of worship was located at Fifteenth and Harlan Streets on the south side of 15th Street and facing the west. It was dedicated November 1, 1873. (Records show that session meetings were held in the church or at private homes.) In the years that followed there was an active Ladies' Aid, a Missionary Society and a Christian Endeavor Society. The church also conducted a Mission Sunday School in the south part of town with the young people of the church doing the construction work and some of the financing.

Some of the young men who worked on the building were Fred Miller, John and Joe Smith, Will R. and John H. Boose, Charles Koehler and Guy Aldrich. Young women who helped were Emma and Elizabeth Miller, Lillian Oswald, Florence and Nellie Cleaver, and Florence Boose in the teaching department, while Miss Nettie Snidow and Miss Mamie Gillespie worked on financing. Some of the later workers at the Mission were Carl Miller, Clara and Elta Boose, Mabel and Beulah Greenwald, and Dr. and Mrs. C.N. Allison. Later this building was sold to the Cleaver sisters. On February 2, 1908 the congregation convened after morning service and discussed the matter of a new building. After discussion, P.S. Heacock moved that the congregation proceed to build a new church. The motion was seconded by Carl Miller and carried unanimously when put to vote. On a motion by A. Graham, seconded by S.H. Harvey, and voted on by the group, an executive committee was created. Members of the committee were the Rev. R. Cooper Bailey, pastor; session members A. Graham, P.S. Heacock and Dr. C. Smith, William R. Holt, William Boose and Fred Brecht.

A fine brick edifice was built at Twentieth and Harlan Streets and dedicated June 19, 1910. On June 26, 1910 six infants were baptized, the first in the new church. In the new location, the church grew and prospered for 22 years before being partially destroyed by fire on Sunday afternoon, January 10, 1932. For some four years and eight months, worship services were held in the American Legion Hall, the Rev. Stephen S. Jones being the pastor. In December 1934, a committee was chosen to make plans for the construction of a new church on the same site. The executive committee members took the lead in collecting funds and pledges, adding to them insurance monies realized on the old building. A grant and loan were secured from the church Erection Department of the Board of National Missions of the Presbyterian Church USA. The total amount collected and borrowed was \$12,935.27. The committee proceeded to supervise the work with Fred Graham serving as architect and Ben Roundtree as superintendent of construction.

Appropriate ceremonies accompanied the laying of the cornerstone on Sunday, May 17, 1936 during the hour of worship. The Rev. J.W. Pressly, Executive Secretary of the Synod of Nebraska, presided. A box was placed in the cornerstone containing the roll of members, the personnel of the building committee, names of officers or organizations, a church hymnal, a Bible, a coin and a historical record of the church. The formal dedication took place at the hour of morning worship on September 27, 1936. The Rev. A.B. Keeler, secretary of the Department of Erection of the Board of National Missions, preached the sermon and the Rev. John Pressly, DD, conducted the dedicatory service.

At the evening service on that date, the Rev. Kenneth M. Keeler was installed as pastor of the church. A short time later, plans were made for the purchase of a Moeller pipe organ and, before the end of the year, the organ was installed at a cost of \$1800. All the stained glass (cathedral) windows in the church are memorial gifts and, through the years many other wonderful memorial gifts have been given to the church.

To help pay the indebtedness of the new church, the ladies of the church were divided into four sections. These sections took turns in serving dinners for the public every third Thursday in the month. On March 15, 1939, the building committee reported the actual value of the church, the equipment and the manse to

be estimated at about \$37,500.00. On July 31, 1941, during the term of Rev. Alton O. Kaul, the current indebtedness of the church property, including the manse, was \$4,135.93. In its Diamond Jubilee year, the church was re-dedicated on Sunday, September 28, 1941.

The next minister to serve our church was the Rev. David Cunningham who was installed September 28, 1944. During his pastorate, at the congregational meeting on March 27, 1945, the treasurer of the building committee reported that there were sufficient funds on hand to complete the last payment of the church debt which was due April 15, 1947. On this date the final payment was made, two years ahead of schedule.

The ladies of the church had been doing suppers as a fund raising opportunity. In the mid 1940's Mrs. Millie Hutchins and Mrs. Grace Garvey wanted to try a luncheon and Bazaar. The church women have been serving a salad luncheon with a bazaar on the third Thursday of November ever since. The last few years the men of the church have been an invaluable part of the Bazaar work.

A big change in the church was the merging of the Ladies' Aid and the Missionary Society, the two oldest organizations in the church, into the Women's Guild in 1946. The Rev. Hans Kochheim came as a stated supply minister on September 14, 1948. He was later installed as pastor and served until 1957. In 1953 the Women's Guild published a cookbook. In December 1953, Mrs. W.R. Boose and Mrs. Lester Prater were elected to the Board of Trustees and installed on Sunday, January 17, 1954. They were the first women to hold this office in the congregation.

On March 3, 1954, at the regular monthly meeting of the trustees, a committee was appointed to proceed with plans for the building of new steps for the church. The steps were completed in the summer of 1955. In January 1958, Mrs. Thomas Still and Mrs. Lester Hoban were installed as elders, the first women to hold this office in the church. The Rev. Harold Kling was installed as pastor on March 16, 1959. He resigned August 22, 1960. On June 25, 1961, the Rev. John Peck was installed as minister. It was in Rev. Peck's pastorate in the summer of 1963 that the church was air conditioned. The Rev. Robert Giles was pastor of the church from September 1965 to March 1990. It was in 1966 that the church celebrated its centennial with dinners, special services and the printing of a Centennial Book. The parsonage was sold and moved to a location near Thirteenth and McLean in January of 1971. In 1980 the women created and sold new cookbooks. Painting the walls of the church was something done by the ladies groups of the church. Presbyterian Women have been selling "Presbyterian" pecans for a lot of years. The ladies of the church donate cookies for the nursing homes one month a year. Material for the backdrop of the Christmas decorations was provided by the ladies during one of their meetings in the 1980's. In 1985 Chrismons were made for the Christmas tree in the sanctuary. It is still being decorated with them today. Each Chrismon represents the name of Jesus Christ. September 1991, the Rev. Don Wilson became our next pastor and we began our official yoking with the Presbyterian Church of Pawnee City as part of the Nemaha Valley Parish.

In the fall of 1991, we celebrated our 125th Anniversary. Rev. Wilson left in 1996. After this time, a stated supply pastor, Rev. Steve Nofel served the congregation. In 1999 we joined with the First Presbyterian Church of Hiawatha, Kansas, as part of the NEB-KAN Parish. Other pulpit supply pastors included Carla Patterson, Joe Barr and Paul Weinert. In 2001 Rev. Roxie Sullivan was installed as the first woman pastor of the parish and the congregation. The church made improvements to the roof and the stained glass windows in 2005-2006. The last five years the outside balcony has been opened to the public during the Cobblestone Parade, so spectators can view the parade as it makes the corner onto Harlan Street. New cushions on the pews are a welcome addition. A ramp to the sanctuary from the street level (where the parsonage was) is also a nice addition, especially for people who have a hard time going up and down the steps. An upstairs office and restroom have been added, as well as remodeling of the basement and kitchen. A wireless sound system has been installed in the sanctuary to help those with difficulty hearing. We are looking forward to the next 100 years or so as Servants of Christ in this community.