

Oklahoma
CENTENNIAL

1907 *&* 2007





FIRST METHODIST Church met in this building at Sixth Street and Central. The current church building is on the same location established just after the Run of 1893.

First Methodist Church Began Shortly After Run

Many Methodists made the Great Land Run of Sept. 16, 1893, which opened the Cherokee Strip to settlers, resulting in the establishment of the First United Methodist Church of Ponca City on Oct. 8, 1893, just 22 days after the opening of the Strip.

A class was organized, in the Wesleyan tradition, on that day, under the direction of the Rev. B.C. Swartz with the assistance of J.E. Irvine of the Ponca Indian Mission at White Eagle, who had been appointed in 1887 to attend to the spiritual needs of both Indian and White on the Ponca, Otoe, and Osage reservations. He assisted Mr. Swartz until the assignment of the Rev. E.C. Harper on April 1, 1894, as a supply pastor. Harper was appointed to the church Oct. 1, 1894, as its regular pastor.

When Harper arrived in April 1894, a new church was in the process of being built. Located on two 25-foot lots at the southwest corner of Sixth Street and Central, the two lots had been purchased for \$50.

The church building was dedicated on Sept. 16, 1894, as the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Ponca City. Significantly, this was exactly one year after the opening of the Strip. Entirely paid for at the time of dedication — contents and all. The church was 18 feet by 43 feet, with a small tower and vestibule, and it was thought to have cost well under \$1,000.

The Rev. Mr. Harper served as pastor until Oct. 18, 1898, and during his tenure he never received more than \$250 per year against his authorized annual salary of \$500. Mrs. Harper died Aug. 5, 1898, and was buried in the local Odd Fellows Cemetery. When Harper died in 1906 he was buried beside her, the first and only one of the church's pastors to be buried in a Ponca City cemetery.

The only church informa-

tion that is available in those very early years comes from The Ponca Democrat, a weekly newspaper owned and edited by A.C. Smith 1894-1916, the father of Kathryn Smith, a former longtime News employee, and from the late Gareth Muchmore, former editor of The Ponca City News.

The pastor who succeeded Harper was E.F. Hill, who served from October 1898 until October 1901. He led the congregation in building the first parsonage at 211 South Fifth. The Rev. R. Eugene Myers was pastor from October 1901 until September 1903. It was under his pastorate that the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was organized in 1902.

The Rev. H.H. Miller pastored from Sept. 1, 1903, until October 1904, and saw the church enlargement program begun. A construction program was authorized to meet the needs of the rapidly growing congregation in January 1904, with J.A. Creel, I.N. Niebegall, E.G. Marin, C.D. Harper, and H.E. Bouton serving as the building committee.

Imposing Structure
The result of this ambitious undertaking was the construction and furnishing of an imposing structure for that period of time.

It was complete with a fine auditorium, large choir loft, pulpit recess, an annex containing three rooms, accessible to the main auditorium, a library, and a study for the pastor. This was accomplished by incorporating a new wing to the west of the original structure. The total cost for the project was \$2,180.

The structure was heated with a large 20th Century hot air furnace and lighted with electric lights. The windows were glazed with cathedral glass, and a large 1,300-pound bell, purchased from the American Bell Foundry of Northville, Mich., was installed in

the church tower. Furnishings included six dozen folding chairs, which were a gift from Chicago friends. Pulpit and communion table were given by J.A. Snyder of New Orleans, and a silver communion service given by the Nieberall family of Ponca City and Chicago.

The dedication services were held July 17, 1904, with the Rev. L.H. Murlin, D.D., president of Baker University in Baldwin, Kan., delivering the dedication sermon. Membership at this time was about 160 with a Sunday school enrollment of 200 — considered to be in keeping with the growth of Ponca City.

The Rev. C.F. McGaha followed Miller, serving from October 1904 until Feb. 20, 1906.

The Rev. A.J. Taylor served the church from Feb. 2, 1906, to October 1906; the Rev. T.J. Crumley from October 1906 to January 1908.

The Rev. G.D. Hensell was pastor from January 1908 to October 1909, and the Rev. George W. Irwin from October 1909 to October 1911. It was during Irwin's pastorate that the Woman's Home Missionary society was organized in 1910.

During the pastorate of the Rev. H.N. Gowan, who served from October 1911 to October 1912, the need for more space was recognized and met by expanding the facilities through the construction of a basement under the 1904 structure. During the seven-year period between October 1912 and October 1919, which included the war years of World War I, the church experienced a change in pastors five different times, as follows: The Rev. R.E. McBride, 1912-1913; the Rev. Oscar Smith, 1913-1914; the Rev. Marion Porter, 1914-1917; the Rev. A.D. Lindsey, 1917-1919; and the Rev. Clarence N. Hewitt, October 1919 to April 1925.

(See METHODIST, Page 7J)

First Christian Church Traces Origins to Cherokee Strip Run

A promised land, 56 miles wide and 200 miles long, was the Cherokee Outlet which lay along the northern edge of "Old Oklahoma" and south of the Kansas line. Its eastern boundary was the Osage Indian reservation and its western boundary was the Panhandle of Texas and "No Man's Land" of western Oklahoma. It had an area of more than 1,000 square miles.

On Aug. 19, 1893, Pres. Grover Cleveland issued the long awaited proclamation which declared this land to be opened for settlement and free land for those who were able to stake a claim.

From the Outlet's borders north and south, approximately 150,000 were gathered to make his famous "free-for-all race" for homes, which was held Sept. 16, 1893.

Many kinds of people had made preparation: The homeseekers, the adventurers, the rich, the poor, the good and the bad. While waiting for the eventful day, revivals were held.

In "Journey in Faith," authors William Tucker and Lester G. McAlister said, "One such revival with over 400 conversions was held near Caldwell, Kan., by James M. Monroe (1843-1925), a well-known evangelist and state secretary of the Oklahoma

Missionary Society from 1903-1911.

There is no doubt that those early Christians brought their faith with them to this new land. This observation was made in "The Disciples of Christ History" by W.E. Garrison and A.T. Groot:

"Oklahoma's situation was such that the population which rushed into it from several directions was drawn from Disciple strongholds, and Oklahoma was destined to become one of their most widely and densely occupied areas."

Disciples in Ponca City

With that background, the local church history of the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Ponca City begins. Within days after the feverish rush for new homes, the devout Christians from every part of the new land sought out one another. From the very first a few of like faith looked for those who belonged to the Christian Church.

In October of 1893, the basis for the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Ponca City was laid. "A small group of Disciples began to meet in a store building. For more than a year they continued to meet for prayer, Bible reading, the communion and fellowship without a permanent meeting place.

By 1894 arrangements were made to meet regularly in a school building at Sixth and Grand. It was here that the first organization was formed with a charter membership of less than 20 persons.

Charter members were Mr. and Mrs. Peter Velveal, Mr. and Mrs. James Powers, Lillie Powers Drummond, Mr. and Mrs. Carter, Mr. and Mrs. Steele, Mr. and Mrs. O.F. Keck, Mr. and Mrs. C.H. Holloway, Mrs. Rose, Mrs. Arla Hough, Mrs. Harper, Mrs. Neal Belveal and her two daughters, and Mr. Flitch (Lillie Powers Drummond lists this man along with her father as a charter member).

Not being content to worship without a permanent place, Mr. O.F. Keck, Mr. Peter Belveal, and Mrs. C.H. Holloway, with a "few kindred souls" purchased a church building, 32 by 40 feet, from the Congregationalists in Cross (two miles north of Ponca City). Early in 1895 the building was moved to Third and Central where it remained until 1905, known as the Central Avenue Christian Church.

Early-Day Ministers
Very little information is available regarding some of the early day ministers beyond their names, dates, and duration of their services.

(See CHURCH, Page 11J)



FIRST CHRISTIAN Church's first permanent building was purchased from the Congregationalists in Cross. Early in 1895 the building was moved to Third and Central where it remained until 1905, known as the Central Avenue Christian Church.

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Baptists Organized Locally Just Before Turn of Century

In the year 1899 a small group of Baptists was meeting in various locations in Ponca City and wanted a church home. On Sept. 3, 1899, the district missionary for Oklahoma assisted in the perfecting of the dream of the pioneer Baptists — the organization of the First Baptist Church. The Rev. Milton Reese was called as the first pastor from 1899 to 1901.

The following list of early pioneer Baptists was published in a 1922 church directory as charter members of the First Baptist Church of 1899. The list included John K. Brown, Mr. and Mrs. O.H. Hastens, Mr. H. Padgett, Mrs. J.A. Doty, Mrs. Mary Gray, Mrs. Sylvia Hoyt, Mr. W.F. Doty, Mr. and Mrs. L.C. Sweet and son William, and Mrs. Cornelia Williams.

The first services of the newly organized church were held in the old 1899 public school building, on the site of the present East Junior High School. Work on the first First Baptist Church building, located in the 200 block of South Fifth Street and donated by Jim. W. Lynch, was begun in the winter of 1901 and completed in the spring of 1902.

The next pastors who served were the Rev. Curtis, and the Rev. Keppler, who served as supply pastor. In 1903, J.D. Voce was called as pastor.

In 1899 to 1901 the Ladies Aid or Missionary Society, composed of about 15 ladies, was often called the "rescue squad." They came to the church's rescue in those early days by providing financial help and aid in other emergencies. At one time the ladies paid bills with the proceeds of bake and cook book sales.

In 1903, while Voce was pastor, the Ladies Aid paid him

\$8.65 for the light fixtures put in the church and purchased a \$20 pulpit. They also paid \$100 on the church building debt. Voce assisted by asking Baptists living in the country for food for a basket dinner and bazaar. The "clear gain" was \$95.85 on the dinner and \$61.58 on the bazaar.

During some very difficult times, the Ladies Aid also helped to finance many activities and expenses of the church by borrowing \$15 for three months. The group had the piano tuned for \$2. Food sales in downtown stores were held to make money and each member agreed to pay 25 cents.

Between the years 1903-1908, pastors Ihde, Hudson and Underwood were listed as shepherds of the flock on church rolls.

Obtained Property
At this time the church did not own the corner property south of the church building. On July 3, 1908, J.W. Lynch agreed to deed the corner lot to the church providing the church would pay back taxes as he and the pastor, the Rev. Underwood, had agreed while returning from the cemetery following a funeral service.

In 1909, the Rev. R.B. Butler was hired and through those early years, served the church twice as pastor. He presented the high school baccalaureate sermon to the graduating seniors in 1909. Butler and his wife are also credited with the building of a family home north of the church site during their first term. Later that property was sold to Mrs. L.C. Sweet. She later willed the property and house back to the church and Butler and his family lived in it again during his second term as pastor.

The Rev. H.M. Bennett served

as pastor in 1911 and 1912 and he presented the Ponca City High School baccalaureate message in 1912. Under his leadership the original church building was remodeled. A total attendance of 10-15 men was recorded and considered good since the church was considered a "woman's church" at this time.

The next pastor, the Rev. W.A. Robberson's term was very short, not over a year. At a business meeting he was asked to resign. The action was taken because Robberson "lacked the ability to preach Bible truths."

The Rev. Sidney W. Brumfield served the church for five years, living with his family in the 200 block of North Second. There were seven sons and one daughter. The city objects to the cow which the family owned to supplement the grocery bill. The congregation gave them a "pound party," and the Ladies Aid gave \$5 of his salary and finished paying insurance in the sum of \$4. Brumfield was known for his weekly columns in local newspapers.

During the term of the Rev. William Groom, a six-room parsonage was constructed on the corner property, facing Oklahoma Street. Sunday school was held in the basement rooms and the house was moved to lots adjacent to the church in 1924. It was used as a parsonage until 1932. Under Groom's pastorate an attendance goal of 200 to 250 in Sunday school was realized.

Under Groom's leadership a church orchestra was organized with Mrs. Groom on cornet. The orchestra helped attract larger crowds. He resigned to become an Army Chaplain during World War I. (See BAPTIST, Page 9J)



COMPLETED IN 1924, this First Baptist Church building was destroyed by fire in 1949.

Lutherans in Territory Early; Organized Church in 1924

"... On Saturday, Sept. 16, 1893, devout Christians from every part of the country were among those who rushed into the new land to find a home. In the course of time, those of like faith found each other and arranged for service in their homes or school. Over a period of years pastors from neighboring congregations came to Ponca City and conducted services at irregular intervals in the German language" for those of the Lutheran faith. (These words were written by the late A.E. Behrend, pastor of the First Lutheran Church for more than 25 years.)

It was not until 1924 that Lutheran synodical officers decided that a resident pastor should be placed in Ponca City, "who was to conduct services in the English."

The Rev. W. Brackensich, who had been installed as missionary-at-large for the State of Oklahoma, was requested by the mission board to "canvass and conduct" services at Ponca City. His first task was to find a suitable place to worship.

In a few days the 100 signatures required for use of the Assembly Room in the Civic Center for services were secured. Seventeen persons attended that first service and 34 the next Sunday.

"Here the people worshipped for the next 10 years. It was not until Dec. 16, 1934, that the members of this young and small congregation could worship in their own church edifice."

The congregation was organized on Feb. 5, 1924, with seven members present. The meeting was held in the office of Eugene Wetzel, 110 1/2 East Grand.

Ill health forced the Rev. Mr. Brackensich to resign

his position, and the Rev. H. Hartman succeeded. He was replaced by the Rev. Virtus Gloe who baptized 17 and confirmed a class of six.

The first major project for the congregation was to purchase property on West Ponca for \$1,000 and construct a parsonage costing \$3,500. Records show members supported this project wholeheartedly. One member gave \$600, another \$250, two \$200 each, one \$100, five gave \$50, one \$35, three \$30 each, seven \$25 each and 20 lesser amounts.

The Rev. Mr. Gloe resigned on April 12, 1931. "Despite the serious handicap of having no church building, the congregation grew both inwardly and outwardly." A letter to the next pastor reported "...The Lutheran congregation here numbers about 150 members, having 85 communicants, 28 voting members and a very fine Sunday school with an enrollment of 40 young men and women."

With bright prospects, the Rev. C.H. Vensene accepted the call, serving the Ponca City congregation from 1931 to 1940, "the longest in the 25-year history of the church."

Self Supporting
On March 27, 1932, the congregation became self supporting and the next year the congregation was accepted into membership with the Lutheran Church-Missouri synod.

In February 1934 the local congregation was granted a loan of \$10,000 to erect a church building. It was dedicated Dec. 16, 1934.

Six lots at North Fourth and Liberty, "the ideal location" which commanded "a view of the entire city," were deeded to the congregation. To secure a loan of \$10,000 from the General Church Extension Fund,

19 property owners in the church signed the notes which were repaid in four years.

The church continued its steady growth under the leadership of the Rev. Paul G. Barth, who, after a vacancy of five months, was succeeded by the Rev. Mr. Behrend. In observance of its 25th anniversary the congregation resolved to build a new parsonage on the six lots back of the church building. The parsonage was dedicated on April 30, 1950, during the anniversary service.

The second 25 years written of in the Rev. Mr. Behrend's book are primarily concerning the First Lutheran School. (See LUTHERAN, Page 9J)



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DEPICTION OF the present building of St. Mary's Catholic Church as is situated at Sixth Street and Oklahoma Avenue.

Catholic Parish Established With Run Into Strip in 1893

The life and development of the Ponca City community began with the opening of the Cherokee Strip in 1893. In that same year St. Felix's Parish was founded by the Rev. Felix deGrasse, a Benedictine missionary to the Indians and early white settlers.

The Catholic missionary was in the vanguard of those who loved the West and wanted to build their homes on the fringe of civilization and develop their own empire.

Father deGrasse was pastor during 1893-4. There was a succession of pastors for the next six years until the appointment of the Rev. Ranier Sevens who served from 1900 to 1913.

In 1916, the original white frame parish church on South Fifth and Oklahoma burned and it was rebuilt with the help of a growing congregation and the Rev. Peter Kamp, who was pastor from 1913-1936.

Changed Name

It was Kamp who changed the name of the parish church to match the school — St. Mary's. Kamp's long tenure made a strong impression on the congregation. The present St. Mary's School was built in 1928 and completely remodeled in 1980.

In 1936, the Rev. John Hall succeeded Kamp. The Rev. William H. "Pat" Reid succeeded Hall in 1945. It was Reid who supervised the relocation and building of a new parish church on South Seventh and Ponca Avenue in 1954. The cost of the new building in 1954 was \$400,000.

The Rev. Joseph B. McGurk came to St. Mary's as pastor in 1958 and remained until his sudden death in September 1967. McGurk was a popular, outspoken pastor who was always on the move and planning for the future. He built the present parish center as a convent in 1962. Unity High School was one

of his dreams. It was a cooperative educational effort with the Felician Sisters who at that time operated Assumption Villa in the Marland Mansion.

It was during the pastorate of the Rev. Joseph J. Maizaika that the ill-fated Unity High became a reality. Unity High came at a time when there was great foment in the Catholic Church in the United States and the plan was likewise never fully accepted by the congregation. For a lack of support, Unity High closed its doors in May of 1972. In retrospect it was probably too ambitious a plan for the parish.

The Rev. John A. Steichen came in 1969 as a calming influence and stayed as pastor for nine years. He left in 1978 to become pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Oklahoma City, and later chancellor of the Archdiocese.

In June of 1978, the Rev. Ernest A. Flusche succeeded Steichen as pastor. In 1980-81 he directed the renovation of the entire parish facility and grounds. Flusche became pastor of St. Mary's Church in Ardmore in the summer of 1990, after 12 years as pastor in Ponca City. During his tenure he saw the parish grow from about 750 to 975 families and a former budget of \$220,000 to \$860,000 through his leadership.

The Rev. James Greiner, former pastor of St. Matthew's Church in Elk City, replaced Flusche. In July of 1994, the Rev. John Michalicka replaced Greiner as pastor of St. Mary's Church and remains as pastor today.

In September of 2000, Spanish-speaking Catholic services began being offered in the Kay County area. The Rev. Aristeo Olvera held services at St. Mary's, St. Joseph's in Tonkawa and St. Joseph's in Blackwell.

Indian Connection

Through the years St. Mary's Parish has had a historic connection with all the Indian

tribes in the area. The pastors in the early years often celebrated Mass in mission stations in the area.

The parish purchased St. Mary's School from the Sister of Divine Providence in 1929. Those Sisters still serve in the parish. In 1980, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Wichita took over the responsibility of administering the school.

By 1982 the parish had grown to 900 families — a steady, not mushrooming growth.

The pioneering days are behind, but the present days, and the days to come, call for the same steadfastness of purpose, the same unwavering faith, the same untiring labors that Father Felix found among the pioneers of his mission.

One of the oldest church organizations at St. Mary's for women is the Altar Society. It was first organized by deGrasse after he directed the building of the first Catholic Church here in 1894.

At that time, a year after the Cherokee Strip was opened to settlement, the group was called the Catholic Women's League and was divided into six circles. The area in which a family lived determined the group assigned.

Julia Fronkier, who died here in 1971 at the age of 93, was the oldest living member of the Altar Society left in the Parish at the time of her death. She moved here from Nebraska in 1903 and belonged to Circle 4.

When interviewed in 1969, she talked about the dinners the women served and the bazaars the society held to make money to buy linens used on the altar for Mass and the vestments the priest wore. Each circle had approximately 15 members by the 1920s.

When transportation no longer posed a problem, the circles were reorganized into guilds as part of the Catholic Women's League. (See CATHOLIC, Page 9J)

Local Church a Pioneer In the Nazarene Church

Ponca City's First Church of the Nazarene was formed in 1908. Research by the historians at First Church of the Nazarene revealed the great movings of God in the early 1900s in the Ponca City area, and the raising of the proponents of scriptural holiness.

After the opening of the Cherokee Strip, the schoolhouse was the first structure to go up, but worship was also a concern, and the school building became the meeting place for the various denominations, with various ministers alternating the pulpit ministry.

The story of Ponca City's First Church of the Nazarene begins in late 1906 and early 1907.

During these decisive years in the state's formation, a series of Holiness revival meetings was held in this area under the sponsorship of the county and state Holiness Associations, and a small but powerful group of

Holiness people was formed. They met in a converted store front at Fourth and Grand and on Sept. 26, 1908, joined the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene under the pastoral leadership of the Rev. J.H. McIntyre.

Mrs. A.C. Smith, teacher of the Junior Sunday school class of the Methodist Church, was sanctified during the revival of 1903 and later became one of the charter members of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene. Her husband was saved and sanctified in 1909 and together they emerged as prominent, influential lay leaders in the early holiness movement in Ponca City.

The Church of the Nazarene was a pioneer in the holiness movement in this area.

First Church of the Nazarene in Ponca City was organized on Sept. 2, 1908, just prior to the official organization of the denomination.

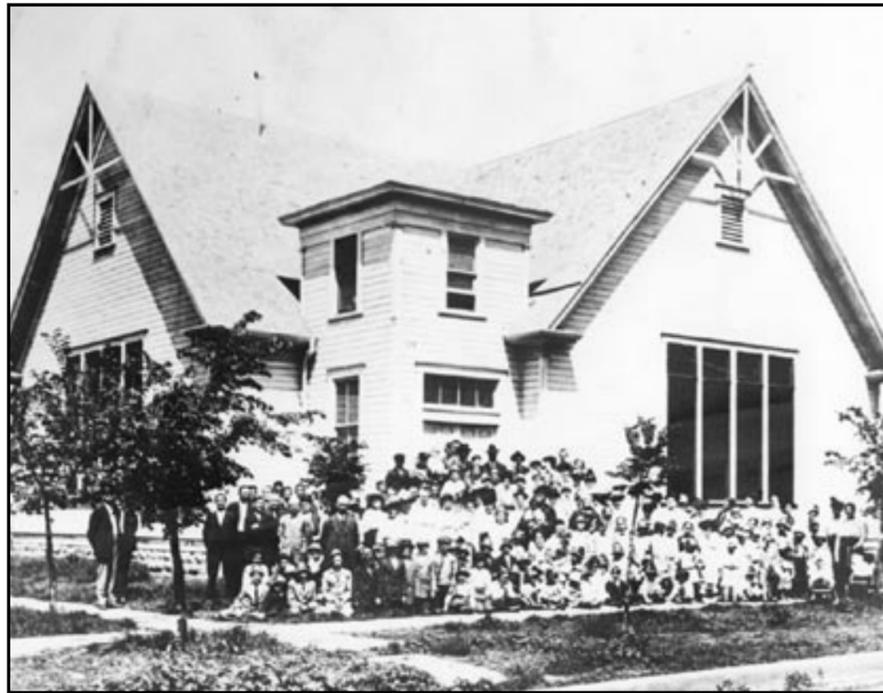
In October 1895 Dr. Phineas F. Breesee of Los Angeles organized one of these groups containing 135 members into a church with the title of the First Church of the Nazarene.

Holiness groups from the East and South of like faith began to join with this organization, from 1895 to 1908, when on Oct. 8, 1908, at Pilot Point, Texas, the Church of the Nazarene was officially organized.

The local church met in a rented building on East Grand Avenue until the construction of their first worship center, located at Fifth and Central. Dr. Breesee, founder of the Nazarenes, dedicated the building on Oct. 17, 1909.

Two major revivals took place that truly laid the groundwork for the organization of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene in 1908.

(See NAZARENE, Page 11J)



THE FIRST BUILDING built by the Nazarenes, located at First Street and Central Avenue, was dedicated by Dr. Breesee on Oct. 17, 1909.



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Presbyterians Didn't Wait To Establish Congregation

Established on Sept. 16, 1893, in Ponca City, First Presbyterian Church held its first worship service in a tent in October of that year.

According to written reports of that historical event, "People of all denominations were there. No one in particular was in charge but a Presbyterian and a Methodist led the meeting — after a fashion — and worshippers sat on planks placed across nail kegs.

"Someone started a song and the rest joined in; someone rose and spoke a moment; someone repeated a few verses of scripture; several prayed. It all seemed to be a spontaneous expression of a deep need for a religious life."

One month later on Nov. 18, 1893, a group of 18 people met with a mission worker from Perry, William Meyers, for a service. At that time, a committee was named to obtain lots to construct a church building.

The group known as the Presbyterian Society petitioned the Presbytery to organize a congregation in Ponca City.

On a bone-chilling Sunday, Jan. 7, 1894, the Presbyterians were in charge of supplying the minister for the church service in the new two-room frame schoolhouse, which was shared by three other Protestant groups.

A total of 13 people had braved the fierce weather to attend the service.

When the invitation to apply for membership was given, "they formed a circle around the fiery-red drum stove."

That day, the minister, the Rev. Mr. Duncan, who lived on a farm near Perry, baptized three people while six more presented letters.

The church continued to grow at a steady rate and usually about 25 or 30 persons attended the Sunday morning service.

The local congregation was represented at a Presbyterian meeting in Guthrie by Capt. D.J. Stiles and D.A. McHugh. They secured \$1,000 to be used in constructing a church building and an additional \$800 to pay the pastor's salary.

Contractor J.H. Smyth, who was a charter member, and other men members helped build the frame church. Dedication service was held in the summer of 1895.

In 1919 the congregation decided to raise the minister's salary from \$1,000 to \$2,500. In May 1920 the membership had grown to the extent that the need for a new building was felt.

July 10, 1920, a congregational meeting was conducted and it was voted to start work on building plans for a church to cost at least \$75,000.

Members of the building committee were L.S. Barnes, M.P. Long, George Brett, W.T. Oates, G.C. Hauschildt, William Tauer, Ellis Owen, James Hutchinson, Marvin K. VanWinkle, J.A. McNeese, E.M. Trout, C.H. Ashenhurst, B.E. Ford, Ben Dawson, W.J. McGee, L.H. Patton, W.W. Vance and the minister, the Rev. Dr. D.L. Edwards.

Cornerstone for the new building was laid Dec. 12, 1920, with Dr. Franklin G. Gill, dean of Henry Kendall College of Tulsa, delivering the address.

While the building was being constructed, services were conducted in the city auditorium.

On Oct. 23, 1921, children of the Sunday school formed a line and marched to the

new church at Fourth and Cleveland.

Under the leadership of the Rev. Charles Shedd, the membership of the church grew and, once more, the need for larger facilities became evident.

Ground-breaking ceremonies for the new \$600,000-plus church structure located on an eight-acre tract at Fourteenth and Grand was May 24, 1953.

Jay G. Paris was general chairman for the construction of the new church building. W.W. Vance was building chairman. A month-long series of dedications was begun on June 5, 1955, ushered in by the first of a series of Wednesday evening prayer services.

The first Sunday service was held June 19, 1955, at 8:30 a.m. and noon on the theme "We Dedicate for Worship."

The property at Fourth and Cleveland, where the old church structure stood, was sold to First Christian for a parking lot. A number of mementos of the old church, including some of the stained glass windows, were included in the new church. The new building was designed by Charles W. and John A. Shaver of Salina, Kan., and William R. Brown, a member of the church, was associate architect.

In the spring of 1956, the Rev. Arthur C. Young was called to serve the church as minister. He came to Ponca City from Lakeside Presbyterian in Duluth, Minn.

Young served the church until 1978 before retiring. Active in numerous civic organizations in Ponca City, Young was well known and loved throughout the Ponca City and Kay County area.

(See CHURCH, Page 8J)



THE PRESENT DAY First Presbyterian Church on an eight-acre tract at Fourteenth and Grand. The first Sunday service was held June 19, 1955.

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First Church of God Started in Early '20s

The First Church of God in Ponca City has a long history, originating with cottage prayer meetings when the William E. Plunkett family came to Ponca City in 1920.

Mrs. Plunkett with Mrs. R.E. Kinney and Mrs. Arah Wethey instigated the prayer meetings, and five years later when the Rev. E.W. Brown and his family moved from Blackwell, the group began having services in the Civic Center — the beginning of the First Church of God with 15 members.

When Lincoln Elementary School building was constructed, a community Sunday school was organized and held meetings in the school building.

The Church of God members made the decision to discontinue services at the Civic Center to assist in the development of the Sunday school.

With Brown as the first pastor, the congregation built the first house of worship at the corner of Osage and Broadway. The first service in the building was on Mother's Day in 1928, attended by 155 people.

During the Depression years the congregation continued to grow, helped along by the women of the missionary society and the sale of their homemade doughnuts, freshly baked every Thursday. In 1959 while the Rev. Chris Bachman was pastor, the present site was purchased from the Hampton Estate and plans drawn up

for the new church building indicated the educational unit with a fellowship hall/gym was to be constructed first, followed by the building of a sanctuary.

The men of the congregation built parts of the church and, to help pay expense for the new building, built houses in the area near the church, sold them and donated the money to the church.

Marched to New Home

On Oct. 23, 1960, the congregation marched six blocks from the old building to the new site for a memorable service of dedication. The Rev. Forrest Richey was pastor.

The congregation worshipped in the portion built for the fellowship hall from that time until Dec. 22, 1974.

In 1971, the congregation began a three-year building fund campaign to provide necessary funds for building of the sanctuary.

The Rev. C.H. Alford was pastor at this time and many of his ideas were incorporated in the unusual design of the new sanctuary. Construction began in May 1974.

Gale D. Partner, chairman of the board of directors in 1974-75, said, "Since all churches usually have a sanctuary there may be some people who wonder why this new sanctuary is such a special thing to us. To really appreciate the building ... one almost had to grow up in this church."

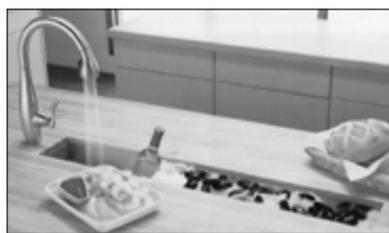
(See FIRST CHURCH, Page 8J)



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HAPPY BIRTHDAY OKLAHOMA!



ON PENTECOST Sunday, June 1, 1952, the Rev. Thomas Casady dedicated the present Grace Episcopal Church building. The old parish house on Central Avenue had been moved to the new location on the corner of Thirteenth Street and Grand Avenue and was joined to the new church building.

Episcopalians Had Rocky Early Days in Ponca City

On a rainy May 15, 1900, the Rt. Rev. Francis Key Brooke, the Episcopal Church's first resident bishop in Oklahoma, made his first visit to Ponca City to conduct services for a few Episcopalians in the new community.

That little congregation, known first as St. Andrew's, had been worshipping together in the traditional manner of The Book of Common Prayer since 1898.

Due to an unrelenting rain, however, the people were unable to meet and Brooke had to return the next month for an official visitation to conduct evening prayer and celebrate Holy Eucharist. The Presbyterian Church had generously made their facilities available to the Episcopal congregation for the Bishop's visit.

Meeting in the Masonic Hall located on the corner of Grand Avenue and Fifth Street, the congregation in Ponca City was served by two licensed lay readers from Newkirk.

In 1904, Brooke ordained H.T. Adams, one of the Newkirk lay readers, to the diaconate, and appointed him rector of the Ponca City congregation. At the same time, Brooke elevated the congregation's "unorganized mission" status to "mission," with Frank O. Vaughn named senior warden and William Yancy Tennyson as treasurer.

In 1905, the congregation bought two lots fronting on Fifth Street, immediately south of their temporary "home" in the Masonic Hall, with the intention of building a church/guildhall, but the dream of a "home of their own" was not to be realized for a long time.

After his ordination to the priesthood, the Rev. Adams served both the Ponca City and Newkirk congregations until March 1906.

George Garrett, the other Newkirk lay reader, led both congregations for the next six months, until the Rev. James J.H. Reedy, a deacon soon to be ordained priest, began his two-year tenure. Reedy was followed by the Revs. A.H. Marsden and John B. Caughey, both of whom lived in Pawnee and continued to serve the Episcopal church there as well.

Sometime between 1912 and 1914, St. Andrew's changed its name to Grace Church though remaining classified as a "mission" in the Missionary District of Oklahoma. The year 1914 saw the little congregation's hope of its own church fulfilled with the completion of a clapboard building on the South Fifth Street lots purchased at least nine years earlier. Parishioners referred to their new church home as the guildhall.

Modest Growth
Although the congregation grew modestly each year, it always vacillated between "station" and "mission" categories. Church records reveal that by 1917 there was

a vestry consisting of the Rev. Caughey as rector, E.W. Marland and Dr. W.H. Bowers as church wardens, O.A. Pantan as clerk, A.C. Mitchel as treasurer, and Earl Collier and A. Bakody as vestrymen.

Sunday services were held twice monthly, with Miss Helen Mitchel as organist, and with a Sunday school consisting of eight children.

A women's guild of 15 members was organized, and there were 29 persons listed as "confirmed members and communicants in good standing."

Caughey served Grace Church until 1919, when he was succeeded by the Rev. J. Scott Budlong, who was also rector of Trinity Church in Guthrie.

Budlong's departure in March 1921 was followed by a three-year interval during which the Ponca City congregation was dependent on occasional "circuit" visits by other Oklahoma Episcopal priests.

Grace Church had achieved "parish" status in 1920, but by 1923 or 1924 was again classified as a "mission" and remained so for more than a decade.

In 1923, the Ponca City government asked that all who owned land in the block bounded by Grand and Center Avenues and Fifth and Sixth streets sell their land to the city so that a new municipal center could be built. All the property owners complied, and the Episcopal congregation bought lots on South Seventh Street at Central Avenue and moved its clapboard building there.

Grace Church finally acquired its own official parish register when the Rev. Frederic S. Sandford moved to Ponca City and became priest in charge of the congregation on April 20, 1924.

Some entries in the register were made "reconstructively" as late as three years after the events recorded took place. The first "made at the time" entry recorded the June 24, 1924, wedding of Robert Ernest Clark and Ruth McDowell. The first burial recorded was for Ella O'Brien King on July 31, 1924. The first baptism recorded was for Carlos Douthit Wilson on March 28, 1925, and the first confirmation was for Marion Roberts Sowder on March 28, 1925.

Sandford resigned in April 1928, and was followed immediately by the Rev. Harry LeVirden, whose ministry at Grace Church continued until 1931.

During Virden's tenure, a parish house was built (at a cost of \$8,500), complete with a small stage — perhaps Ponca City's little theater tradition had its start on that stage.

Depression Days
In the grip of the Great Depression of the 1930s, the vestry determined that the congregation was no longer able to financially support a resident priest so the Rev. Harry Malcolm Kallan of Pawhuska was charged with

the care of Grace Church's parishioners. Kallan traveled to Ponca City for Sunday services twice monthly until he resigned in November 1934.

It was then, as a vestryman later said, that "the vestry resolved to make this congregation go, or close it out." The vestry invited the Rev. Gordon V. Smith of St. James Church, Albion, Mich., to come to Grace Church. Smith began his ministry in Ponca City on Feb. 1, 1935.

Under Smith's leadership, the congregation grew and gained strength. The mortgage loan incurred in construction of the parish house, which had fallen in arrears during the depression years, was finally paid off, and when the Missionary District of Oklahoma's annual convocation was held in Ponca City in January 1937, Grace Church was granted parish status.

That same year, the Missionary District of Oklahoma became the Diocese of Oklahoma, having been granted "diocesan" status by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church.

The worldwide economic depression of the 1930s was followed, in 1939, with the start of World War II. Smith was the official chaplain of the British men of the Royal Air Force who were learning to fly at Ponca City's Darr School.

His ministry as rector of Grace Church continued as well, however, until September 1943, when he resigned to begin his service as rector of St. Paul's Church in Des Moines, Iowa. Smith became bishop of the Diocese of Iowa in 1951.

The Rev. Thomas O. Moehle, rector of Church of the Ascension, Stillwater, Minn., was the next rector of Grace Church. He assumed leadership of Grace Church Feb. 1, 1944, finding a parish that at its annual congregational meeting had voted to name a committee to begin planning to build a new church. The need was evident, but the effort was not expected to be easily accomplished. Indeed, it was not, but on Pentecost Sunday, June 1, 1952, the Rev. Thomas Casady dedicated the present Grace Episcopal Church building.

(See START, Page 8J)

Local Jewish Community Has Deep Roots in Area

Ponca City has had a Jewish community since the early days with as many as 20 families living in the area as early as 1915.

The Jewish community of Ponca City met in May 1962 for the purpose of discussing construction of a house of worship. Officers elected at that time were Charles Stolper, president; Morris Rones, vice president; Mrs. Morris Dritch, secretary; and Joe Goldenstern, treasurer.

As far back as 1923, efforts were made to educate and to supplement the religious background and training of the children.

Their first Sunday school classes were held in the Chamber of Commerce offices with Mrs. Albert Buchheimer and Leah Buchheimer as teachers.

From the period 1915 to 1930, there were between 12 and 20 Jewish families who participated in religious services in area homes and other halls located in Ponca City, Tonkawa, Blackwell and Arkansas City, Kan. Services were conducted by Fred Locke's grandfather, Nachum Herzmark, who came by horse and buggy from his farm in Renfrow. The Torah which this group used is now at the Hillel House, Kansas State College, Manhattan, Kan.

To achieve community unification, a B'nai B'rith Chapter was organized by the men and a chapter of Hadassah by the women.

As a result of continuing instruction by lay teachers, the Jewish community was able to confirm a group of students in 1958, 1964, 1967, and 1971, with Rabbi Joseph Levinson of Temple B'nai Israel, Oklahoma City, officiating.

With the organization of the Temple Emanuel Sisterhood was formed in September of 1962 to assist the temple in its religious, cultural, social and financial programs. With diligent effort and community support, the Temple mortgage was burned in April 1967 at their Passover Seder.

The dedication of the temple building was held Sunday, Dec. 6, 1964.

Entering the temple, the worshipper sees, on the west

the Temple in 1962, and actual ground-breaking and dedication of Temple Emanuel in 1964, the drawing together of the Jewish community was greatly enhanced by having a beautiful and symbolic structure in which to worship God.

Charter members in the congregation included Mr. and Mrs. Ben Dritch, Mr. and Mrs. Morris Dritch, Mr. and Mrs. Norman Dritch, Mr. and Mrs. Sam Dritch, Mr. and Mrs. Martin Felsenthal, Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Fractman, Mr. and Mrs. Morris Gershon of Stillwater, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Geschmay, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Goldenstern, Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Goldenstern, Mr. and Mrs. Theo Goldenstern of Stillwater, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Katz of Stillwater, Mr. and Mrs. Max Klein of Tonkawa, Mr. and Mrs. Kornbilt, Mr. and Mrs. Abe Lee, Mr. and Mrs. Nathan Lee, Mr. and Mrs. Nathan Sam Lee, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Levy, Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Lieber, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Locke of Blackwell, Mrs. Rebecca Marko, Dr. and Mrs. Morris Rones, Mr. and Mrs. Mike Rosenheimer, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Rosenberg, Dr. and Mrs. J.B. Smith, Jack Soltz, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Stolper, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Weinshilbom, Dr. and Mrs. Leon Zalkow of Stillwater.

The cover of the Torah serves for protection. The crown and breastplate symbolize that the Word of God rules all mankind.

The small silver hand is used as a pointer to keep one's place while reading the Torah, as it is forbidden to touch the surface of the scroll.

The Jewish congregation remains active, holding High Holy Day services in the fall, Passover Seder in the spring, and regular Friday night services.

The temple stands today as a concrete example of the faith and dedication expressed by the congregation and their many friends who made this House of Worship a reality.

wall, the design of a seven-branched candelabra used in the Temple of Solomon. Directly opposite, two display cases contain Jewish religious objects.

On entering the sanctuary, the worshipper faces the Holy Ark. By tradition, the Ark is placed against the wall facing Jerusalem. Hanging above the Ark is a light which is never permitted to go out, the Eternal Light. It symbolizes the presence of God among His people and has its origins in the oil lamp which burned continuously in front of the Ark in the Temple of Solomon. To the left of the Ark is an electric Menorah. Directly above the doors of the Ark are tablets representing the Ten Commandments.

In ancient times, tables of the Ten Commandments were carried in the Holy Ark. Today, parchment scrolls containing the Five Books of Moses in Hebrew are kept in the Ark. The Hebrew name for the scroll is Torah, which means Law.

The cover of the Torah serves for protection. The crown and breastplate symbolize that the Word of God rules all mankind.

The small silver hand is used as a pointer to keep one's place while reading the Torah, as it is forbidden to touch the surface of the scroll.

The Jewish congregation remains active, holding High Holy Day services in the fall, Passover Seder in the spring, and regular Friday night services.

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Methodist

(Continued From Page 2J)

As the frequent change in pastors would indicate, there was discontent, both in the congregation of the church and in their pastors.

Memorial to Minister

The Rev. Mr. Porter was a beloved pastor here and retired while serving the local church because of failing health problems. Although he moved away, he came back to live in Ponca City for a time, and was buried in Enid. One of the stained glass window memorials on the north side of the sanctuary was given in his memory.

During the pastorate of the Rev. Clarence N. Hewitt, October 1919 to April 1925, a major building was built that still stands on the corner of Sixth and Central. This was also the site, bought for \$50, of the first structure that was built in 1894.

This new structure was dedicated on Dec. 4, 1921.

The Rev. Perry E. Pierce served as pastor from April 1925 until October 1927. It was during the pastorate of the Rev. M. Mesch that the parsonage was built at 211 South Fifth, replacing the first parsonage which was built in 1900 at the same site.

The period between October 1927 and October 1935, which included the effect of the stock market crash in the late 1920s and the great depression of the 1930s, was rather uneventful from the growth stand point at First Church. The church remained strong in spirit and dedication under the able leadership of the Rev. O.L. Curl, October 1927 to October 1928; the Rev. John A. Callan, October 1928 to October 1931; the Rev. Ray W. Ross, October 1931 and July 1934, and the Rev. Fred M. Zimmerman, July 1934 to October 1935. In 1993, during the pastorate of the Rev. Mr. Ross, the Ladies Aid Society, organized in 1896, was reorganized as the Methodist Woman's Association.

The Rev. V.A. Hargis succeeded the Rev. Zimmerman in October 1935. The Official Board voted to authorize the expenditure of up to \$12,500 for repairs, alterations, and improvements to the church property. All this work was completed in 1940, and it became the source of pride among members of the church and resulted in a considerable increase in participation in the programs and activities of the church.

Churches Unite

On May 10, 1939, in Kansas City, Mo., the Declaration of Union was adopted and joined together the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Methodist Protestant Church, becoming The Methodist Church. Thus the local church, which had been dedicated the First Methodist Episcopal Church on Sept. 16, 1894, became the First Methodist Church in May 1939. With this unification, all the work of women in all Methodist churches was reorganized into the Woman's Society of Christian Service.

The Rev. Phil Deschner, district superintendent of the Tulsa District of the Methodist church, asked to exchange positions with the Rev. M. Hargis; the board accepted as the Rev. Mr. Hargis was willing, and the exchange was made Feb. 1, 1941, and Dr. Deschner served until October 1, 1946.

The period of Dr. Deschner's pastorate at First Methodist was a challenging time. Dr. Deschner performed a commendable patriotic service during those war years by conducting religious services at the prisoner of war camp north of Tonkawa. He was favorably received by the war prisoners considerably because he addressed them in their native tongue, German.

During Deschner's tenure First Methodist celebrated its 50th anniversary with a ceremony titled Jubilee Dedication Program during September 1944. Former ministers — the Rev. John A. Callan, the Rev. Fred Mesch and the Rev. V.A. Hargis — returned for the occasion and the Rev. Don H. LaGrone, district superintendent of the Enid District, gave a special message.

During those first 50 years, the church sent forth the following full time workers into Christian service — Edith Abel, missionary to China for over 30 years; the Rev. J. Graydon Wilson, then a member of the Colorado Conference; and Ernest E. Carder, then in seminary training at Garrett Biblical Institute and pastor of the Methodist Church at Paw Paw, Ill.

No Descendants

Apparently there are no descendants of charter members in the current church membership records. However, the large stained glass window of Jesus on the north side of the sanctuary was given in memory of Elzina B. Hutchins by her son, James S. Hutchins — the only window in memory of a charter member.

Important in the early church was the music program with the first choir organized in 1903 with C.F. Niebegall directing and four members singing. At the 50th anniversary celebration, the church had seven choirs. For many years the church had a good Sunday school orchestra directed by Lester R. Maris, but war conditions and the reorganization of the total church program terminated its service.

The post World War II years from 1947 to 1964 were a time of growth and expansion at First Methodist. The church was fortunate to be assigned a competent, forceful minister, the Rev. Edwin W. Parker, to succeed Deschner. Not only did the church membership and attendance increase impressively, but also the support of the Sunday school program was outstanding.

To alleviate the crowded Sunday school rooms, the church purchased the residence at 208 South Sixth, known as the Gilbert property to use for junior and senior high Sunday school classes. However, that situation did not work out, so an effort was made to acquire the property at 210 South Sixth — a six room frame structure owned by Lewis and Jaily Adams. This was the church's first land acquisition since 1894.

Oct. 6, 1948 the Official Board decided to proceed with a building program after learning the proposed cost of the structure would be between \$150,000 and \$160,000. Lester Maris, head of the Official Board, appointed I.A. Harrisberger to head the building committee, which was composed of Clyde E. Muchmore, Lloyd W. Vickery, Merle C. Paynter, Wilfrid Johnson and Ben Branch, later adding Gerald B. Martin and Kenneth

Keller. William R. Brown, local architect, was retained to draw the plans for the proposed educational facility.

A three story building was proposed on Sept. 2, 1949, and local contractor O.W. "Doc" Williams was hired to do the work, and a contract was signed on Oct. 20, 1949. The facilities were ready for occupancy and use in the fall of 1950, and the final payment was made to contractor Williams in the month of November 1950.

The board voted to proceed with the balance of the Religious Education Building on Jan. 1, 1951.

The Rev. Byron C. Cravens succeeded Parker as pastor on June 1, 1951. The five years Cravens served as pastor proved to be a period of great activity and accomplishment. A contract was signed to complete the Religious Educational Building and the parsonage on South Fifth was sold and another dwelling, 309 North Tenth, was purchased as the parsonage.

A Methodist Men's Organization was established in the fall of 1951 and the Religious Educational Building was formally opened July 13, 1952, with appropriate ceremonies.

In the summer of 1952, Cravens suggested to the board the desirability of sponsoring the establishment of another Methodist Church in Ponca City. A committee composed of W.W. Hickman, I.A. Harrisberger, L.A. Maris, M.C. Paynter, Homer Anderson, Lowell Doggett and P.C. Eitzen undertook to accomplish this feat and came up with a report in favor of the establishment of a second Methodist Church to be temporarily located at Elm and Chestnut in the facilities owned by the Free Methodists, and to financially underwrite the undertaking.

The new church was an immediate success, and later became known as Asbury Methodist Church. The Oklahoma Conference appointed the Rev. Bill Henry as the first pastor.

An immediate success, by the year 1955 the new church was ready to build a permanent structure of its own. The First Church assisted Asbury Methodist in obtaining a loan of \$7,500 from Ponca City Savings and Loan Association to build, and the loan was paid off by Asbury before it became due.

Additional Parking

The next undertaking for First Methodist to provide adequate parking space for its members. This was accomplished by the purchase of property from Jennie W. Smith, located on South Sixth Street directly east of the church building.

At this time, Cravens was succeeded by the Rev. J. Gloe Reneau on June 19, 1951.

In the next few years the church black topped and installed rails on the "Smith Property" which served as a parking lot, dedicated the Memorial Chimes and authorized the purchase of property known as the Bush property for \$30,000, and retained Mrs. James R. Suggs as church organist on a permanent basis.

First Methodist, under Reneau's leadership assisted in the establishment of St. Paul's Methodist Church at the corner of Pecan Road and Hartford, guaranteeing a loan not to exceed \$50,000 for church construction purposes.

The Rev. Charles R. Thigpen became pastor of First Methodist on June 1, 1959, replacing the Rev. Mr. Reneau who was assigned to a Methodist church in Ada.

On Dec. 20, 1959, First Church conducted a dedication service for the Ann Yearly Memorial Handbells in conjunction with the presentation of "The Story of Christmas" by the chancel choir, a cantata by

H. Alexander Matthews. The handbells were selected as an appropriate living memorial to Ann Yearly, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. E.C. Yearly, who died September 1959. Over 320 families in Oklahoma and a number of families in other states contributed approximately \$1,700 to make this memorial a reality. These bells were cast by Whitechapel Bell Foundry in London, oldest in the world.

The Rev. Argus J. Hamilton Jr. replaced Thigpen on June 1, 1964, and the Rev. Harold Himes was appointed to replace the Rev. Mr. Van House as associate minister. The Himes was replaced on June 1, 1966, by the Rev. Don Miller who had been at Canton. He remained until June 1, 1970.

During 1962, the Kip Mohler Memorial Scholarship was established by friends and family in memory of Kip, son of Dr. and Mrs. E. Clyde Mohler. Kip was a member of First Church of Ponca City, a student in the Ponca City High School when he died following a traffic accident in 1960.

The establishment of the position of associate pastor on a permanent basis made it necessary to provide a second parsonage. This was done by purchasing property located at 143 Parkview Lane. The property at 309 North Tenth then became the residence of the associate pastor.

At a meeting in Dallas on April 23, 1968, the Oklahoma Conference of the Methodist Church and the Oklahoma and Texas Conferences of the Evangelical United Brethren Church agreed to combine into one organization and be called the United Methodist Church.

The Rev. Dr. W.C. Mathes was assigned to First Church in May 1969, replacing the Rev. Mr. Hamilton. The Rev. Don Miller was reassigned as associate minister. The construction of the office complex and the remodeling program was completed during Mathes' first year and the church staff moved into their new offices early in 1970.

The Rev. Bryan Spivey replaced Miller as associate

minister on June 1, 1970.

Mathes chose semi-retirement in June 1971 and was replaced by the Rev. Dr. Bonner Teeter who came to Ponca City from Tulsa, and the Rev. Rex Wilkes was assigned here as associate pastor. During Teeter's ministry, First Church experienced many fine achievements, including the purchase of a lithograph machine, and a church paper, designated as The Flame, was established in the summer of 1971.

A chandelier was installed in the foyer of the church in memory of the late Judge Lester R. Maris.

A reception was held in honor of Laura Billings on July 23, 1972. She was retiring from the position of director of music which she had held for more than 24 years. Miss Joyce Adams was hired as director of music and educational assistant, replacing Laura.

Teeter espoused the notion of an elevator to transport passengers from the first floor of the church to the sanctuary level. This idea was realized in 1973.

First UMC was responsible for a community project known as the School of Continuing Education in December 1973, a project popular with the entire community of churches.

Teeter was transferred to Nichols Hills UMC in June 1974 and replaced by the Rev. Richard E. Gibbens who served for five years.

In May 1975, Terry Bebermeyer of Topeka, Kan. was employed to be director of music.

The Organ Research and Sanctuary Renovation Committee, chaired by Walter Kalback, proposed the purchase of a 21 rank Reuter organ of 1,242 pipes from the Reuter Organ Company in Lawrence, Kan.

Gibbens was replaced in June 1978 by the Rev. Dr. Fisher Blanton who had just completed his fourth year as district superintendent of the Enid District.

Dolan Bayless, a native of Topeka, Kan. assumed the

position of director of music in the middle of July 1978. He replaced Bebermeyer who went to St. Stephens in Amarillo.

A new set of Whitechapel Handbells was given in April 1980 by Dr. and Mrs. E.C. Yearly in memory of their daughter, Ann.

The residential property at 1701 Christmas Tree Lane was purchased at a cost of \$122,000 in 1980 to serve as the parsonage for the senior minister, replacing the residence at 1443 Parkview.

The Helen M. Foster Memorial was established by Mr. and Mrs. Harry O. Colburn of Tulsa in memory of their daughter, in the amount of \$50,000 to be placed in trust with the income available for the support of the church's music program.

Minister Died

Dr. Blanton and the Rev. Don Crane were reassigned to First Methodist in 1981. Ironically Dr. Blanton died on the day his appointment was announced, and the Rev. Dr. J.C. Curry Jr. was appointed.

In 1982 Curry was reappointed as senior minister and the Rev. George A. Gilliland of Quincy, Ill. was named associate minister. The parking lot east of the church was extended to Oklahoma Avenue during the summer of 1982 and the house at 215 South Sixth removed. The new Jim Kelley Playground, located on the southwest corner of the parking lot, was dedicated on Oct. 30, 1983.

In May 1985 the Rev. Dr. Robert W. Van House was assigned to replace Curry and the Rev. Dawn Richards came to replace the Rev. Mr. Hamilton. Van House was not a stranger since he had served First Church as associate minister in 1962-64.

In 1987 Van House was returned to the church as senior minister, and the Rev. Dawn Richards, by her own request went to Presbyterian Hospital in Oklahoma City as a chaplain, and the Rev. John Stowe was appointed as associate minister and Mark Fowler was added as youth director.

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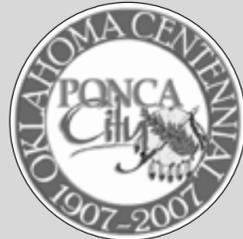
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Christian Scientists Here Shortly After Run of '93

Two years after the opening of the Cherokee Strip to settlement, a Christian Scientist came to the new field, but it was not until 1909 that a "few earnest seekers for truth" began meeting on Sunday mornings to read the lesson sermons and "to learn the principals and teachings of Christian Science as laid down by its discoverer and founder, Mary Baker Eddy."

The following year a Christian Science Society was formed with seven members. Sunday morning services and Wednesday evening meetings were held in the studio of one of the readers. A Sunday school was organized with five pupils.

Later a room in the Masonic Temple, located in the 600 block on East Grand, was used

for meetings until some of the members moved away and regular services were discontinued.

Again when there were two resident members of the Mother Church, meetings were resumed and the two resident members served as readers for a period of nine years.

In 1918, the small group was joined by other workers and regular meetings were held again, this time at 214 1/2 East Grand.

There was a Sunday school with two pupils and a reading room. In the summer of 1920 meetings were held in a public school bungalow, which continued to be the meeting place for sometime. A reading room was established in the bungalow.

(See SCIENTISTS, Page 8J)

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Start

(Continued From Page 8J)

Even the old parish house on Central Avenue had been moved to the new location on the corner of Thirteenth Street and Grand Avenue and had been joined to the new church building.

Forsyth Design

John Duncan Forsyth, a Tuslan and the architect of the Marland Mansion, designed the church. Moehle worked very closely with him as he did with all the artisans and craftsmen to execute the designs in glass, wood and stone which adorn the church.

Grace Church flourished under Moehle's leadership. In 1954, an addition to the south side of the parish house was added. The residence just north of the parish house was purchased and named Grace House and land was secured for use as a parking lot directly across the street from the parish house.

A new Moller pipe organ, anticipated and planned for in the church's design, was installed in 1967.

While Moehle was on a yearlong sabbatical in England, studying at Cambridge from the summer of 1962 until the summer of 1963, the Rev. George L. Schultz of Loc,

Tenn., was priest in charge of the congregation.

In 1966, the Rev. Robert W. Seney, vicar of the churches in Blackwell and Perry, began assisting Moehle. In 1968, Seney became Grace Church's first curate. In 1969, he left Grace to begin a new ministry in Lubbock, Texas.

After a brief interval, the Rev. Richard G. Eaton, rector of St. Alban's Church in Cushing, moved to Ponca City to become curate at Grace Church, a position he held for the next three years.

After 30 years as rector of Grace Church, Moehle retired on July 1, 1974. His successor, the Rev. B. Franklin Williams IV, served until the summer of 1978, when he accepted a call to a parish in Tempe, Ariz. In late 1978, the Rev. Lawrence Boyd came from the Diocese of Fond Du Lac in Wisconsin and served as rector of Grace Church until he returned to Wisconsin's Diocese of Eau Claire in February 1983.

During Boyd's tenure, a residence on Grand Avenue, immediately east of the parish parking lot, was purchased and named St. Nicholas House to serve as temporary classroom space for the Sunday school.

Following Boyd's departure, the Rev. Isaac Mason, a retired priest in the Diocese of Oklahoma, served as interim rector of Grace Church until the arrival of the Rev. John H. Loving of Farmville, Va., who became rector of Grace Church on Oct. 15, 1983.

During Loving's tenure, a columbarium, the Chapel of the Resurrection, was added on the east side of the nave, dedicated in memory of Thomas O. Moehle.

Loving remained until March 1990, when he became rector of Emmanuel Church in San Angelo, Texas. The Rev. Richard Allen came as interim rector in August 1990 and served until April 1991.

Moving to Ponca City after serving almost 10 years as rector of St. Luke's Church in Ada, the Rev. Kenneth L. Armstrong became rector on May 15, 1991. During these last two years, two residences and a service station on Fourteenth Street adjoining parish property were purchased and structures there removed to provide space for future expansion of church facilities. Significant changes to improve both the acoustics and aesthetics of the church interior have also been made.



PRAIRIE CHAPEL Church was one of the first country churches to be organized after the Run in 1893. It was organized in a school house near the present site.

Rural Prairie Chapel Church One of First in New Territory

The Prairie Chapel Church has stood like a beacon on the wind swept landscape for nearly a century. It stands alone, a tiny little country church, majestic in its own way.

Organized in 1895 with eight charter members, Prairie Chapel was one of the first country churches to be organized after the Cherokee Strip. It was organized in a school house near the present site.

Mrs. Olive Ferguson, who died in 1947, was the last living charter member of the church. Her husband, John Ferguson, was the first Sunday school superintendent.

Early day settlers in the area formed the first congregation in 1895, meeting in various homes. Founders of the church were members of the Pioneer Class — Mr. and Mrs. S.J. Samuels, Mr. and Mrs. John Ferguson, Mr. and Mrs. James VanWinkle, Mr. and Mrs. James Sutherland, and Mr. and Mrs. W.H. VanWinkle.

Later, during the pastorship

of the Rev. Howard Thoma-son, the first Sunday school was organized and meetings were conducted in the Pioneer schoolhouse, which was located near the present church building.

In 1898, J.C. Carder, a member of the board of trustees, gave two acres of ground adjoining the cemetery to be used for location of the new church. Community residents offered their labor and under supervision of a Wichita contractor, the church was built in 1898 and dedicated that fall. Constructed of white pine, the church cost was \$1,800.

Plans were made in 1929 to hold an annual homecoming the last Sunday in September.

In 1934 a committee composed of Vern Guyer, Floyd Ferguson and Luther Ferguson was elected by the trustees to obtain contractors to bid on building a full basement. A contractor named VanSickle from Ponca City was hired and, with the help of several in the

congregation, the basement was completed in October that year at a cost of \$2,100.

It was not until 1945 that electricity and butane gas were installed, replacing the coal oil lamps and the coal burning heater.

The church continued its modernization in 1970-71. In 1970 a new classroom, restrooms and a kitchen with running water were added to the original structure. The metal siding and storm windows were a 1976 project.

The first homecoming was planned by the Progressive Sunday school class in 1930 and has been observed each year in September.

Tire and gas rationing in 1942 made it expedient to have monthly fellowship dinners. The dinners are still being held on the fourth Sunday of each month. Other annual events are the Sunday school picnic, the oyster and chili supper on New Year's Eve and the Christmas program.

Scientists

(Continued From Page 8J)

The 16 local members became charter members of First Church of Christ, Scientist in 1924. On Nov. 24 of that year a charter was procured from the State of Oklahoma and the seal of the society was exchanged for the Seal of the First Church.

The site at Third and Chestnut was purchased June 1, 1922, and a building fund was opened. A building committee was appointed in 1927 to investigate costs and architectural plans for a permanent church structure. The reading room was moved

to the Community building.

Ground was broken for the present building on May 23, 1933, and in simple ceremonies the cornerstone was laid Aug. 3, 1933. The congregation moved into its new church building on Nov. 26, 1933.

In January 1953, the property adjacent to the church was purchased and the reading room was moved to the ground floor at 108 North Second.

The church here sponsored its first Christian Science lecture in 1916. In the late 1800s, Christian Science lectures

were introduced at a time of great public interest in the new denomination which had been founded in Boston in 1879. The lectures offered the public the opportunity to hear firsthand account of what Christian Science teaches and to learn something about their Christian Science neighbors' beliefs. The settings were public and the event was informational rather than proselytic.

These lectures continued in Ponca City until the church building at Third and Chestnut was sold in 1987 to the Pioneer Bible Church.

First Church

(Continued From Page 5J)

However, there are many who have become a part of the congregation in recent years who do understand and share the pride all have in this accomplishment.

"With the beauty, comfort and convenience we now enjoy it might be easy to feel that we have arrived. However, we should keep in mind that the building is only a tool with which to build the Kingdom of God."

"For 32 years, the congregation worshipped in its first building, for 15 years in the fellowship hall and the last 10 years in the present sanctuary. It just seemed fitting that in our 25 years at this location we gather together to reflect and celebrate the year to come," Woolsey said.

In 1962, the church began what became a tradition in the Ponca City area at Christmas — the Living Nativity Scene — the church's gift to

the people of Ponca City, telling the story of Christ's love for mankind.

The cast of 15 to 20 people range from infant to the eldest in the church — the baby Jesus, shepherds, angels, wise men, King Herod, Mary and Joseph, the innkeeper along with live animals which include a baby calf, two baby lambs, two baby goats and a donkey.

Memories of the productions are sometimes happy and occasionally sad, a spokesperson for the church said.

Church members recall that one year when the snow was blowing and deep, the cast wore boots, three layers of clothing with lots of thermal wear, but the performance did not stop.

The angels just looked healthier and fatter and the wind and snow blowing just gave the performance a more realistic feeling of what

could have happened more than 2000 years ago.

And the people of Ponca City kept coming through the snow and bitter cold.

Another year brought the cast and helpers running down the middle of Grand Avenue chasing the donkey who had gotten loose from his post during a scene with Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus. The scene continued with no interruption — just few laughs from viewers and a scene they will never forget.

Much growth is evidenced by members of First Church of God, and folks in the community.

The Rev. Christopher Smith was welcomed as pastor in 1993.

In March 2000, First Church of God welcomed the Rev. Chuck Scroggs, and The Rev. Glen Edmonson took over as pastor in the autumn of 2002.

Church

(Continued From Page 5J)

His successor was the Rev. G. Kenneth Gates who had previously pastored Presbyterian churches in Phoenix, Ariz., Wheeling W.Va., Pittsburg, Pa., and Rochester, N.Y.

A new series of stained glass window panels, honoring four members of the Presbyterian congregation, were dedicated. The windows express symbolically the sacraments and ordinances of the Presbyterian tradition.

The original design for the windows was laid out in a sketch by Gates and then redrawn and executed in contemporary glass by the Phillipe Studios in Sand Springs.

The faithful tradition of the Presbyterian Church continued under the leadership of Monty Fey who took over in

August of 1988.

The Rev. Dr. Fey came to the Ponca City church from the First Presbyterian Church of Garden City, Kan. He is remembered by many Ponca Citizens as assistant Pastor to Dr. Young from August 1967 to March 1969.

Following the Rev. Fey, The Rev. Dr. William Gifford served the church as interim minister.

Rev. Gifford was the pastor at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Oklahoma City before retiring from full-time ministry. For the few years, he served the Presbytery as interim minister.

In January of 2001, the Rev. Tom Schacher became minister of First Presbyterian Church.

He came from United Presbyterian Church in Cambridge, Ohio.

On Aug. 20 2006, the Rev. Andy Gifford was installed as associate minister. Schacher left for a pastorage in New York in January of 2007 and the Rev. Gifford assumed the leadership of the church.

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Baptist

(Continued From Page 3J)

At the beginning of the Rev. Tom Hunter's pastorate in 1921, 128 members were added. This was the period of the oil boom. At the close of his pastorate in 1926, the church membership was approximately 600.

Oil Boom Helps
The oil business brought many prominent Baptist families to Ponca City. Schools were "booming" too and great growth was seen at First Baptist. E.W. Marland donated \$10,000 toward the building fund.

Other in-trusting experiences were also happening, and some members recall the appearance of a member of the Ku Klux Klan in full Klan dress at the close of a morning service of worship. He presented the pastor an envelope containing \$500 toward the building fund.

Among the most important accomplishments during this time was the construction of a new and more adequate church building at a cost of \$110,000. The church only had a \$30,000 indebtedness when the building was completed in 1924, and was paid in full of 1930.

During the period of construction, services were held at the East Junior High School. The cornerstone of the new building was laid Sept. 2, 1923, and the first services in the new facility were held July 6, 1924.

The Rev. C.C. Bowles became pastor in December 1926. He placed strong emphasis on missions and evangelism and conducted tent revivals in this area. In 1932 the church led the Southern Baptist Convention in baptisms with 377.

In 1932 the church established several Baptist missions in the area including what is now known as Liberty Baptist Church and the Baptist Indian Church.

A Sunday school building was also purchased from Dr. Mordecai Ham, who conducted a series of revivals. It was originally planned to use it as a temporary structure for church activities. Located north of the new brick building, it was later considered to be the origin of the 1949 fire which destroyed the entire church plant.

In 1936, Bowles resigned and the Rev. A.F. Crittendon began a nine-year period as pastor. He was "an untiring worker and an unusually strong organizer and administrator." Under his leadership a number of new Baptist missions were established which today are active churches. The list includes Osage Heights in 1935, Sunset Baptist in 1937 and Marland Baptist in 1939.

Under the Crittendon's pastorate encouragements were made, including the redecorating of the church auditorium, paving and curbing of Oklahoma Avenue, landscaping and beautification of the church grounds, paying the balance of the church debt, installation and paying for the pipe organ, robes for the choir and the reconstruction of a cabin at Falls Creek Assembly camp grounds.

Fire Destroys Building
In 1946, the Rev. Dr. W.A. Carleton became pastor and on Jan. 24, 1949, the entire church plant was destroyed

by fire at an estimated loss of \$200,000. According to newspaper accounts, it was the largest and most costly fire Ponca City had ever had. A strong north wind fed the flames and firemen from Ponca City, Conoco, Blackwell and other nearby cities fought the flames in eight degree weather during the night and into the next day.

Following the fire, services were held wherever room could be found — members' residences, the school administration buildings, city offices and the Civic Auditorium.

Plans for a new building were made and the ground breaking ceremony for the new church was held Aug. 28, 1949. Low bid for construction of the new U-shaped, brick building at the corner of Fifth and Oklahoma was \$364,750, made by an Oklahoma City firm. On Oct. 1, 1950, more than 1,200 persons filled the new church auditorium to capacity for the dedicatory morning service. Nearly 3,000 persons attended the open house. Seating capacity of the new auditorium was 1,150. The basement, when constructed, had space for 16 departments and 66 classrooms. The church budget for 1950 was \$110,000 with a membership of 1,914.

The church continued to grow and expand its facilities under the Rev. Evans T. Moseley's pastorate, beginning in 1954. Under his guidance a \$40,000 home parsonage was constructed at 1515 East Grand, three buildings were purchased from St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, and a \$20,000 cabin was built at Falls Creek Baptist Assembly. It was a period of great growth during the 10 years Moseley was pastor. Sunday school attendance climbed to 1,102 in October 1955. The church staff was enlarged and the value of the church properties was reported to be \$631,000.

The Rev. Dr. Jerold R. McBride assumed the pastorate of First Baptist in August 1964. A building campaign was launched in the spring of 1966 for an educational building east of the main building. Ground breaking was in August 1966. Dedication and open house for the new building were held Dec. 10, 1967. Cost of the total building program, including building, parking lot, furnishings and equipment was \$643,000. The three-story structure consists of a basement and two floors for a total of 39,000 square feet of floor space.

Under the Rev. Robert F. Polk's leadership (1965-75) the work of all organizations of the church was strengthened and both the budget and giving to missions were greatly increased.

75th Anniversary
During the week of Sept. 1-8, 1974, the church celebrated its 75th anniversary. Several former pastors were present to participate in the services, the Singing Churchmen of Oklahoma presented a concert and an all church picnic was held. Theme was "Christ Yesterday, Today and Forever."

The Rev. Dr. Jack Johnson (1976-79) led the church to Sunday school growth from an average of 560 to 772 and

increased the budget giving by over \$100,000; the Rev. Dr. Robert Haskins, director of cooperative missions, filled in as interim pastor for about six months in 1979.

In December 1979, the Rev. Dr. Bill Austin was called and served through 1982, the Rev. Dr. C. Mack Roark took the helm in 1982 and under his leadership the church planned and put into motion the construction of a new \$3.8 million church plant to be located on the corner of Fifth and Central streets. Roark resigned to take a position at Oklahoma Baptist University and the Rev. Dr. Stephen Earle led the congregation to completion of the new building and its dedication in July 1987.

The 1993 membership roster of First Baptist totaled approximately 3,000, and Sunday school attendance averaged about 850-900 per Sunday.

An Hispanic Mission was created within the church in the early 1990s and soon grew to 100 members. A building was purchased for the church on North Union Street.

Catholic

(Continued From Page 4J)

Circle membership was based on special interests and ability.

The women's league played an important role in the building and furnishing of the new church and rectory in 1953. In 1958 the Catholic Women's League was renamed the St. Mary's Altar Society.

The care of the altar, linens and vestments remains its major purpose. But other projects gain their time and consideration, too. Through the years the Society's fund-raising events have enabled members to purchase an organ for the chapel in the convent.

Cemetery Established
Soon after the run and the establishment of a Catholic church in the new territory, St. Mary's Cemetery was established. Since there were many hardships in those pioneering days it was only natural that one of the first needs would be a burial place.

The records show that the first burial in St. Mary's was by The Rev. Decker on April 1, 1896. Records show the first few graves were those of infants, the first being a one-year-old Ponca child.

Maintenance of St. Mary's is by the Odd Fellows, whose cemetery is adjacent to the north. The same regulations concerning flowers that are enforced at the IOOF Cemetery are observed by St. Mary's.

McGurk was instrumental in having St. Mary's Cemetery incorporated Jan. 28, 1961. Glenn T. Bodman was the first chairman and was responsible for setting up the accounting and related cemetery records. There is a perpetual care fund and the records have been micro-filmed.

In 1999, the cemetery was "gussied up" and received repairs. A wrought iron fence

Lutheran

(Continued From Page 3J)

At 10 a.m. Sept. 21, 1952, ground was broken on the lots west of the church building, also a gift to the church. "Every man, woman and child came with shovel or spade to participate."

Behrend drew the plans for the first unit while vacationing.

Original plans called for having a kindergarten the first year and adding a grade a year, but a family agreed to pay the salary of a second teacher so their son could attend First Lutheran School. Despite numerous breakdowns caused by "parched ground" the north (first) portion of the new educational plant was dedicated on April 12, 1953. Cost was \$75,000 and enrollment for the 1953-54 school year was 43.

Behrend died in February 1976 at the age of 66 after serving the First Lutheran Church and the community for 27 years. He was widely known in this area for his radio ministry.

For more than 20 years, he

preached over radio station WBBZ on Sunday mornings on the Lutheran Church-sponsored program.

Following his death, the church called the Rev. Marvin Henschel in 1976. He was installed in a special service Dec. 5, 1976.

In July 1976, ground breaking ceremonies were held for the new sanctuary which is located on the North Fourth and Liberty property. After more than a decade of discussion and planning, construction began Aug. 7, 1976. The first worship service was held in the new church on July 31, 1977.

New Sanctuary
Formal dedication of the new sanctuary was held Sept. 25, 1977. The new single story addition provides 9,325 square feet of floor space and includes the sanctuary, narthex, three offices for the pastor, assistant pastor and a receptionist, also a bride's parlor.

The sanctuary seats 350 in the nave and 40 in the balcony.

In 1985 a new phase of construction began at First Lutheran.

The old sanctuary had received little use since the building of the new sanctuary. Consequently the altar, pulpit, pews and other furnishings were formally donated to a new mission congregation at McAlester, preparing the way for a \$175,000 renovation project which provided for a new fellowship hall, music/youth room, library/board room, large nursery, computer and work room.

In 1991 the congregation

turned its attention to the Christian Day School as plans were made to remove the old school narthex and replace it with a new building which provides for the school a new sixth grade classroom, a child care center, as well as a computer room.

Since 1980 three assistant pastors have been called to serve in the congregation. The Rev. Paul Johnson served in this position from 1980-1983, the Rev. George Earhart held this position from 1984 until 1988 and on July 4, 1993, the Rev. David Kuchta was installed into this office.

The Rev. Tom Ramsey was installed as minister of First Lutheran Church on Jan. 18, 1998.

He came to Ponca City from Christ Lutheran in Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif.

During the year of its 75th anniversary, 2000, the congregation set out to give 75 gifts to the community.

The gifts ranged from a fresh homemade dozen cookies for all the trash collectors in the town to cleaning up a local park and restoring a practice field and baseball diamond to a benefit basketball game and so many more. Ramsey promoted the idea of one gift for every year the congregation had been organized.

Additions and upgrades have continued. First Lutheran School began the 2007-2008 school year with new classrooms, library and cafeteria. The school offers Christian training and education for children in preschool (age 3) through grade eight.

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SMC recently purchased 53 acres of land on 12th street in Stillwater which will allow SMC the flexibility to expand much needed services. In the future, SMC would like to build an administrative annex to house Human Resources, Accounting and Business offices, Foundation, Cimarron Medical Services and Home Health just to name a few.

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Church

(Continued From Page 2J)

It is recorded, however, "The Ponca City Church was fortunate in having strong preaching and pastoral leadership in the early years. J.A. Tabor — an American Christian Missionary Society evangelist — served from 1895 to 1897, and George Prewitt — an ACMS missionary pastor in 1897-98."

These men — Bro. Anderson served the church 1898-1899, Bro. T.H. Poppelwell of Colfax, Iowa, from 1900-1902, and Bro. Monroe from 1902-1903 — were more or less evangelists who held meetings here and there.

When the Rev. Mr. Tabor returned in 1903, he found the Ladies' Aid Society of the church helping with the finances and local benevolence. In those early days no thought was given to making pledges or even to planning church budget. Paying the preacher's salary seemed to be their main concern financially. Despite the depressed economic conditions of the new land, the ladies of the church shouldered responsibility of helping with the finances necessary to keep the little church going.

The communion service was conducted in a unique way in those early days as compared to the present. An elder presided, the communion loaf was in one piece, which the ladies baked. They just stirred some cream into some flour — no yeast or baking powder — and baked it. It was called unleavened bread. The elder broke the loaf for the congregation to eat, and poured the grape juice into the pitcher, then into two goblets which were passed from one to another.

The church still has its first communion set — a silver pitcher and two silver goblets.

In April 1905, R.H. Love of Missouri was called to be pastor of this church. He found about 100 members who were "full of hope, but poor — so poor that a dollar meant much more than it does today."

In the "Golden Jubilee" book the Rev. Mr. Love was described as a "versatile pastor, who challenged the church to a larger vision when he found them wishing, hoping and dreaming about a new church but without fruition."

Through the Rev. Mr. Love's leadership and guidance and

his "example of coping with difficulty after difficulty," the congregation made progress. It was in October 1905, that the members decided to move the little frame building to Fifth and Grand. Here it was enlarged and redecorated, and a spire was added.

Full-Time Minister
The church continued to grow "in membership and dedication." The Rev. Mr. Love, who was the first minister to stay all the time, succeeded in helping to organize a ministerial association of which he became the first president.

Following the Rev. Mr. Love was S.S. Phillips, who was here about a year (1907-1908). During the year 1909 C.B. Kellems came. During the pastorate the records are scanty. In 1910 D.L. Bond, who had closed his work at Marietta, came. He noted that the fellowship was delightful and the First Christian Church had the largest Bible school in town.

In 1912 it became apparent that the First Christian Church needed more room, and a basement under the church was added with the young men of the church doing most of the work.

The Rev. Dean L. Bond was the next pastor, followed by Dr. Isom Roberts of Oklahoma City. He resigned in April 1915 — a popular and well liked minister. T.C. Perry followed Roberts on July 2, 1915, resigning so he and his wife could become missionaries to Puerto Rico.

On Sept. 1, 1918, L.F. DePoister of Cushing was called to be the pastor. The city was prospering and expanding rapidly. Oil had come to the Cherokee Outlet. Because of the increased membership and interest, the little church at Fifth and Grand no longer held in crowds that were coming, and some "shed-like" additions were built to the church to hold some of the overflow.

The Rev. E.C. Whitaker came as minister on Sept. 1, 1920. Even though there were some postwar adjustments to be made, members were enthusiastic about getting started on their new "plant." L.K. Meek, superintendent of the Sunday School, and Judge William H. England, chairman of the official board, worked out a pledging plan, and in 1922, the site at Fifth and Grand was sold to E.W. Marland for

\$8,000 and the church lots at Fifth and Cleveland were purchased for \$17,000.

New Building
"April 6, 1924, was the crowning day of the 30 years of the church as dedication services were held by the minister, F.C. Whitaker, in the new building costing \$100,000."

Following the Rev. Mr. Whitaker was Arthur Brooks who came in the middle of April 1926. He was followed by the Rev. G. Frank Sanders on Oct. 1, 1927, from Perry. He resigned in June 1931, but the board prevailed on him to stay until the first of the year. The Rev. O.L. Shelton, who had been pastor in Dennison, Texas, accepted the pastorate here on Jan. 1, 1932.

The church family realized a long held dream when the Reuter three manual organ was dedicated on March 31, 1935. Miss Neva Belle Harrod, who played the organ for 32 years, was the first to play it.

Following the Rev. Mr. Shelton's stay at First Christian, the Rev. M. Owen Kellison, his wife, Clara and their twin daughters moved into the newly decorated parsonage on Feb. 2, 1938.

Sunday, May 1, 1938, was a day that is remembered by many of the church members and participants. It was designated "Babies, Bird, Music and Flowers Day" with a special dedicatory service for babies.

The Rev. G. Gerald Sias, Little Rock, Ark., was extended a call to become minister on Sept. 1, 1942, to follow the Rev. Mr. Kellison.

From 1941 to 1945 were the war years. However, the congregation continued in its dedication to meet its obligations and to minister to the needs of its members, and continued to grow.

The Rev. Mr. Sias closed his ministry here Feb. 23, 1947, leaving the church with more than \$40,000 in hand for the new enlargement program.

From January to May 1947, Dr. I.N. McCash, president emeritus of Phillips University, was the interim minister until Loyal Northcutt was called on March 16, 1947. During his tenure Miss Bertha Scott was employed to be the director of education, and the parsonage was moved to 413 North Sixth.

The church celebrated its golden anniversary by burning the last canceled note. A building fund campaign was conducted in the spring of 1949. Pledges toward a new educational building, including a chapel, library and offices totaled \$205,000.

Ground breaking ceremonies for the new educational building took place on July 22, 1951, using the same shovel used when the present building was built in 1923. In addition to the new classrooms, a memorial chapel with a family room, and bride's room, an office unit, a conference room, and church library were in the plans.

Educational Building
The new educational building was dedicated on June 2, 1952, and at a vesper hour on Sunday Jan. 11, 1953, a special service of dedication of the

memorial chapel was held, given in memory of Louise Brant Paris by her husband and sons, Glenn Paris, Jack and Jim.

In early 1955 the church sponsored the forming of a new church, Woodlands Christian, with 51 families from First Church commissioned to help.

The purchase of property at Fourth and Chestnut from Mrs. Otho Sparks for \$25,000 was authorized by the congregation in July 1956, and was to be known as the activity center.

The Rev. Carlton D. Garrison of Independence, Kan., accepted the call to become minister in September 1957.

In July, 1958 the congregation voted to buy the property at Fourth and Cleveland from the First Presbyterian Church for \$50,000.

The Rev. William "Bill" Masters began his work at First Christian on Sept. 1, 1964. In January 1967, facilities of the activity center were offered to the Child Development Center sponsored by the Church Women United.

Believing in "person to person" evangelism, Dr. Masters urged the church officials and members to make plans to include in the staff a minister of counseling. In 1969 pastoral counseling became a reality.

Neva Belle Harrod, who served as organist from 1935-1967, was named organist-emeritus and Mrs. James Brakebill became church organist.

In 1968 the board accepted

a proposal to add a minister of counseling to serve part time, and William Gandy was named.

The church observed its Diamond Jubilee Anniversary in 1968.

Elry Jeffries came as associate minister in March 1970, responsible for membership development. In 1970 the Rev. Bruce Zellmers came to serve as quarter time minister of counseling and stayed until December 1977.

The mortgage burning on the note for \$30,000, made in 1963 on the administration building, was burned in October 1970.

Dec. 3, 1976, the Christian Women's Fellowship held a bazaar netting \$3,000 for CWF missionary projects (Child Development Center and Meals on Wheels). Marilyn Andrews and Andrea Rhodes co-chaired the event.

Mary Workman came in August 1977 as minister of education. The board accepted a modified remodeling program in September of that year, and Parents Time Off was instigated in 1978.

The remodeling of the building and its new facilities were dedicated April 22, 1979, with "a great time of rejoicing and dedication."

Mary Workman left in August 1977. Bill McGee and Randy Williams came on board in the summer of 1982 as associate ministers.

Dr. Masters answered the call to minister at Neosho First Christian Church in February 1986.

Rev. Kipp Wolfe became the minister with the Rev. Chuck Heyer as associate minister, Roberta Shaffer as director of education, and Sondra Tilsley, youth director.

Oct. 4, 1996, the Rev. Kent Dorsey answered the call as senior minister of First Christian. He joined the staff which included the Rev. Charles Heyer, associate minister, Sondra Tilsley, associate minister; and Roberta Shaffer, director of Christian education.

He accepted a new position at the Harvard Avenue Christian Church in Tulsa, leaving in June of 2004.

The Rev. Diane C. Leaf joined the staff of the church in March of 2001 as associate minister.

Feeling the need for renovation, the church decided on a \$1.6 million project to renovate and update both of the present buildings including additions of a large elevator and a main entrance on the west side.

Other additions included restrooms, classrooms, a new air conditioner and more. The total cost of the renovation was \$2.3 million and it took three years to complete. The formal dedication was April 25, 2004.

The church was served by the interim minister the Rev. Richard Newman from August 2004 until September of 2005 when The Rev. Larry Metzger accepted the call to be the pastor of First Christian Church. He was installed in October 2005.



THE FIRST NAZARENE congregation, located on Grand Avenue.

Nazarene

(Continued From Page 4J)

Evangelist I.G. Martin, who held both revivals, was the key person the church's history. The Ponca City Democrat reported on a revival in July 1908 by mentioning a trio of evangelists who were then holding a Holiness tent meeting.

The three were Freeland, Martin and McIntyre. The latter of these three, the Rev. J.H. McIntyre, was to become the founder of the Ponca City First Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene only months later on Sept. 26, 1908.

Ten charter members were taken into the fellowship, and from these members two missionaries came — Eva Rixie and Minnie Martin, both involved in the pioneer work of the church in Africa.

The church relocated at

Fourth and Cherry in 1928. After the building was completed, the Great Depression hit, church income dropped to dangerous lows and the church faced possible loss of its building. Dedicated people in the church met the mission of Christ, and many mortgaged their own homes to keep the church going.

The Rev. L.J. Minkler served the longest term of the many pastors who served the church before the Church of the Nazarene decided to move to its present location at 1900 West Grand.

The dream of a new and larger church facility was developed and work was begun in August 1983 on the 12,600-square-foot building on West Grand. The new church building provides seating space in the sanctuary for 250 at the

present time with an extended capacity of 500 people. The parking lot will currently park 88 cars. The facility is fully air-conditioned and has ample space for educational activities, and provision for dining and kitchen facilities.

The church family dedicated the Church of the Nazarene at the new location on June 8, 1984, with 164 people in attendance.



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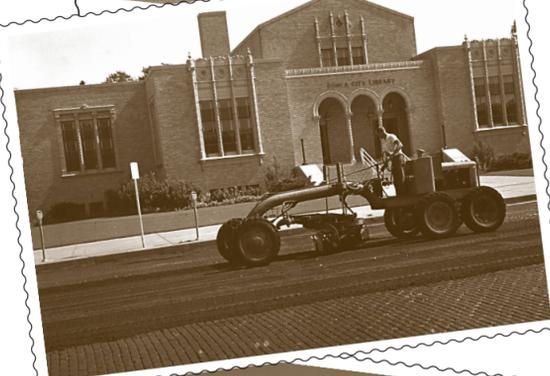


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