

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

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

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

Appropriate ceremonies accompanied the laying of the cornerstone on Sunday, May 17, 1936 during the hour of worship. The Rev. J.W. Pressly, Executive Secretary of the Synod of Nebraska, presided. A box was placed in the cornerstone containing the roll of members, the personnel of the building committee, names of officers or organizations, a church hymnal, a Bible, a coin and a historical record of the church. The formal dedication took place at the hour of morning worship on September 27, 1936. The Rev. A.B. Keeler, secretary of the Department of Erection of the Board of National Missions, preached the sermon and the Rev. John Pressly, DD, conducted the dedicatory service. At the evening service on that date, the Rev. Kenneth M. Keeler was installed as pastor of the church. A short time later, plans were made for the purchase of a Moeller pipe organ and, before the end of the year, the organ was installed at a cost of \$1800. All the stained glass (cathedral) windows in the church are memorial gifts and, through the years many other wonderful memorial gifts have been given to the church.

To help pay the indebtedness of the new church, the ladies of the church were divided into four sections. These sections took turns in serving dinners for the public every third Thursday in the month. On March 15, 1939, the building committee reported the actual value of the church, the equipment and the manse to be estimated at about \$37,500.00. On July 31, 1941, during the term of Rev. Alton O. Kaul, the current

indebtedness of the church property, including the manse, was \$4,135.93. In its Diamond Jubilee year, the church was re-dedicated on Sunday, September 28, 1941.

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

The ladies of the church had been doing suppers as a fund raising opportunity. In the mid 1940's, Mrs. Millie Hutchins and Mrs. Grace Garvey wanted to try a luncheon and Bazaar. The church women have been serving a salad luncheon with a bazaar on the third Thursday of November ever since. In recent years, the men of the church joined the work and the Bazaar became a full church effort. In 2018, the Bazaar moved to a Friday in October.

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

On March 3, 1954, at the regular monthly meeting of the trustees, a committee was appointed to proceed with plans for the building of new steps for the church. The steps were completed in the summer of 1955. In January 1958, Mrs. Thomas Still and Mrs. Lester Hoban were installed as elders, the first women to hold this office in the church. The Rev. Harold Kling was installed as pastor on March 16, 1959. He resigned August 22, 1960. On June 25, 1961, the Rev. John Peck was installed as minister. It was in Rev. Peck's pastorate in the summer of 1963 that the church was air-conditioned. The Rev. Robert Giles was pastor of the church from September 1965 to March 1990. In 1966 the church celebrated its centennial with dinners, special services and the printing of a Centennial Book. The parsonage was sold and moved to a location near Thirteenth and McLean in January of 1971. In 1980 the women created and sold new cookbooks. Material for the backdrop of the Christmas decorations was provided by the ladies during one of their meetings in the 1980's. Chrismons were made in 1985 for the Christmas tree in the sanctuary, and they are still used today. Each Chrismon represents the name of Jesus Christ. In 1989 a ramp to the sanctuary from the street level was constructed where the parsonage had been located. It was a wonderful addition for people who could not manage the steps. In September 1991, the Rev. Don Wilson was installed as pastor and the church was officially yoked with First Presbyterian Church of Pawnee City as part of the Nemaha Valley Parish.

In the fall of 1991, the congregation celebrated its 125th Anniversary. Rev. Wilson was called to another congregation in 1996, and a stated supply pastor and part-time pastor, Rev. Steve Nofel, served the congregation. In 1999 the congregation joined with the First Presbyterian Church of Hiawatha, Kansas, as the NEB-KAN Parish. The Parish enjoyed recognition as the first yoke to cross presbytery, synod and state lines! In 2001 Rev. Roxie Sullivan was installed as the pastor of the parish. She was the first woman to serve as pastor of this congregation. The church made improvements to the roof and the stained glass windows in 2005-2006. In 2004 the outside balcony was opened to the public during the Cobblestone Parade, so spectators could view the parade as it turned the corner onto Harlan Street. New cushions on the pews were a welcome addition. An upstairs office and restroom were added, and the basement and kitchen were remodeled. A wireless sound system was installed in the sanctuary to help those with difficulty hearing. Rev. Sullivan retired in 2015 and Rev. Carolynn Winters-Hazelton served as interim parish pastor for fourteen months. Rev. Nancy Tuma was ordained and installed as parish pastor on September 25, 2016. After Rev. Tuma's pastorate, the yoke between the Falls City and Hiawatha congregations was dissolved. The two congregations continue to meet socially and to cherish their relationship. The current pulpit supply in Falls City is Richard Kent Martin. We are looking forward to the next 100 years or so as Servants of Christ in this community.