

ST. PAUL'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH ELGIN, IOWA

The Rev. J. C. Cameron, the first Methodist minister to visit this settlement, conducted services in the home of Samuel Conner in 1850. The Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1852 in charge of Rev. Cameron. A town lot was donated and, with the help of other members, a church was built. The building was occupied by the Methodist Society for 21 years until 1878, when it was sold to a group of German Baptists. Methodists then held their meetings in the United Brethren Church located on the lot of 217 Main Street (across the street from the rear of the present bandstand in the Elgin City Park).

In the 1880's, a new Methodist church was constructed on one corner of the school ground and it was dedicated in 1884. This location is now occupied by the playground equipment in Schori Park. This building served the people of Elgin for 31 years, and as the community grew, there was a need for a larger and better structure. The old church was sold for \$500, and the lot where the Methodist Church now stands was purchased for \$600. The old church building was later used by the school for a shop area and later as a bus barn. It was destroyed by fire in 1967. The last pastors to serve that church were Rev. R. V. Porter and the Rev. J. S. Liney.

The Rev. James Harlow Graham conceived the idea to build a new church. Plans were made, bids were let to M. C. Kiple, a local contractor, and work was soon underway. On July 15, 1915, the cornerstone was laid. The following articles were placed in the cornerstone: the Bible, a copy of The Elgin Echo, a set of the church's building plans, a complete list of members at that time, names of official board members, a hymnal, minister's name, a program and the Ladies' Aid Society membership list. Work progressed rapidly and on April 9, 1916, the church was finished and dedication services were held. The new church was built largely by the citizens of the town who thought it important to have a larger church where sermons could be delivered in the English language. The only other church in Elgin at that time was the Baptist Church, where sermons were preached in German. It must also be remembered that this was the time of World War I and any association to Germany was not considered desirable if you were an American.

The pulpit was given by an Elgin lodge, The Odd Fellows, in memory of Rev. Cameron. The inscription reads: "Erected by Elgin Lodge No. 290 Independent Order of Odd Fellows in Memory of J. C. Cameron, Elgin's Pioneer Preacher."

In the tower hangs a bell with an interesting history. Many years ago, in 1873, Rev. Martindale built a church in Elgin of the United Brethren denomination. Practically all of the work in erecting this structure was accomplished by the reverend gentleman himself. When this church was completed, he solicited funds for the purchase of a bell. For many years it hung in the belfry of his church, until his church was dismantled and the bell came into the possession of the Methodist Episcopal Society. It was placed in the tower of the little white Methodist Church. As the new church was being built, a daughter of Rev. Martindale visited Elgin. Learning of the history of the bell for which her father had solicited funds, she

requested it to be transferred to the bell tower of the new Methodist church. And so, to this day, the bell tolls out, calling listeners together in the service of God.

The beautiful stained glass windows on the east side of the sanctuary were installed by donations of the Sunday School classes, with the class names included on the windows. The first church organ was purchased and dedicated in 1948, and the chimes were added in 1949. In that same year, the brick bulletin board on the church yard was installed. A new Conn organ was purchased in 1975 with money from an estate bequest and many memorials.

The storeroom over the church entry was converted into the pastor's study in 1957 and, the same year, the front porch was removed from the parsonage and its brick was sandblasted and tuckpointed. It was a pleasant surprise when the original brick, which had been painted over many times, came into view as having lighter-colored brick trim and the date over the front door showed 1874.

In 1967, the aging floor of the Sanctuary was carpeted for the first time. At this time, the original pews were replaced and the basement was remodeled, adding a suspended ceiling to cover the heat ducts and folding walls to accommodate the Sunday School classes.

In 2000, a ground level entry was added to the east side of the church. This provided space for an elevator and much easier access to the basement and sanctuary. The old narrow winding stairs to the basement were then removed and the room under the original west entry became the pastor's study. The study over the west entrance reverted to its original use, that of a storeroom. In 2006, an addition to the parsonage was completed. This provided a ground floor master bedroom, a spacious family room, and a bath with laundry facilities. In 2011-12, the upstairs bath of the parsonage was enlarged and new fixtures were installed. The previous bath was extremely small with an undersized tub. The new room provides space for modern fixtures and additional storage.

Previous owners of the present Methodist parsonage, built in 1874 by August and Henry Holzer, were August Holzer, Fred Gehring, M. M. Monohan, Arnold Bauman, and Charley Boyle.

The Elgin St. Paul's United Methodist Church is proud of its commitment to the Elgin community, and will continue to serve the area with the dedication and faith of our pioneer leaders.

METHODIST WOMEN'S SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE

The following signed cards to become charter members of the Methodist Women's Society of Christian Service on October 10, 1940:

Circle A: Mesdames R. P. Strauch, Chair; Ern Schori, R. W. Muehlethaler, T. W. Doan, F. W. Hughes, H. M. Ash, F. R. Bert Max Thoma, R. V. Brand, John Johnson, Robert grimes, L. T. Jones, C. J. Robinson, H. W. Helms, Albert Schori, Mary Coor, Norris Capper, W. R. Steward, and Miss Celia Lehman.

Circle B: Mesdames Sam Lehman, Chair; B.H. Brackin, Emma Knudtson, Ethel Kohler, Emma Bunting, Gordon, Mosby, Chris Wenger, C. J. Mulford, H. B. Golson, Walter Follett, Mary Skarshaug, Ray DeSart, Fleet Frieden, Geo. N. Schori, N. M. Fritz, J. C. Wharton, H. H. Wolf, and Clifton Powell.

Circle C: Miss Elma Pollock, Chair; Mesdames Ed Medberry, Chas. Feller, Max Hunsberger, Maude Peters, W.R. Blake, M.V. Kiple, Leo Schori, Will Pollock, Lulu Schmid, C.B. Schori, H. S. Steele, Herbert Dummermuth, Mel Kohler, S.W. Juster, Ed Klingman, Mary Bakeman, Walter Bovis, and Mis Della Chapman.

PASTORS OF ST. PAUL'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. James Harlow Graham ----- 1910-1916
Rev. Thomas Stewart Cleworth ----- 1916-1918
Rev. George Gaide ----- 1918-1918
Rev. Ray Galer ----- 1918-1919
Rev. Floyd Hillman ----- 1919-1922
Rev. D. V. Butler ----- 1922-1924
Rev. Ernest J. Starr ----- 1924-1928
Rev. J. J. Snyder ----- 1928-1938
Rev. J. C. Warton ----- 1938-1946
Rev. Bruce D. Jones ----- 1946-1951
Rev. E. G. Steinman ----- 1951-1957
Rev. Donald T. Casper ----- 1957-1962
Rev. Lee Roy Collins ----- 1962-1968
Rev. Delbert H Dawes ----- 1968-1975
Rev. Robert Parris ----- 1975-1977
Rev. John McCorkell ----- 1977-1981
Rev. Tom Parrott ----- 1981-1986
Rev. Richard Kretzschmar ----- 1986-1993
Rev. Judy DeWeber ----- 1993-1997
Rev. Arley Ellingson ----- 1997-2007
Rev. Rick Johnson ----- 2007-2013
Rev. Sylvia Kennedy ----- 2013-2014
Rev. Hyuen Mee Kang ----- 2014-