

*The  
First Presbyterian  
Church*

Pittsburg, Kansas

(organized March 12, 1879)



*HISTORICAL SKETCH*

by

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1954

On March 12, 1954, the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburg was seventy-five years old. Some preliminary meetings preceded the official founding.

On the 27th of February, 1879, by invitation of the friends of the Presbyterian Church, the Rev. Warren Mayo of Girard preached in the School House in New Pittsburg.

On March 8 a group of fifteen people petitioned the Reverend Mayo for his help in the organization of a church. This original group comprised

W. W. Watkins	Caroline A. Watkins
A. B. Bostie	M. E. Bostie
James Officer	Gertrude Officer
W. H. Davis	M. J. Davis
N. E. Wood	Mrs. C. M. Long
E. S. Eakin	Mrs. Sarah Parrott
Chas. E. Eakin	Mrs. R. C. James
	Mrs. L. Leighton

So, the church was founded. As the records of the Session have it

On the 12th of March, 1879, the Rev. Warren Mayo, the Rev. W. B. McKee of Cherokee, and Elder L. C. Cotton of the Church of Girard, by previous arrangement met these applicants at the residence of Dr. W. W. Watkins, in New Pittsburg, and finding the way prepared, proceeded to the organization of The First Presbyterian Church of New Pittsburg, Kansas.

Meetings were held in Waskey's Hall, in the room above L. D. Jernigan's hardware store, later Evans' bookstore, 317 North Broadway, now Sell and Sons. But with no regular minister interest flagged. The name

of the Reverend C. W. Price appears in the Session records twice—August 24, 1879 and July 25, 1880. Then there seems to have been no regular meeting until the reorganization of the church on May 6, 1883.

At a congregational meeting held in Waskey's Hall, May 6th (Sabbath) 1883, at 3 p. m., Rev. Francis M. Symmes, who began his labors as stated supply on this day, was called to the chair, and H. C. Bruner was chosen Secretary. The object of the meeting was to . . . reorganize the church.

There were twenty present "with good hope of more."

As far as official church records of the Presbytery are concerned, the church has had continuous existence since its founding on March 12, 1879. But the reorganization was the turning point. The crisis had been reached and passed. From then on the story is one of fairly steady growth.

Meetings were resumed in Waskey's Hall, which was rented for twenty dollars a quarter. A charter, filed under date of March 25, 1884, was granted by the State of Kansas. Here one may find the names of the twenty four people who undertook to give new life to the church.

Art. 5: The business affairs and transactions of said corporation shall be conducted and transacted by a board of Trustees consisting of six persons, the names and residences of those appointed for the year ending December 31, 1884 are as follows: C. W. Long, F. W. Henry, H. B. Shattuck, George F. Keener, H. C. Bruner, and Louis Kumm, of Pittsburg, Kansas.

The value of goods, chattels, lands, rights, and credits owned by said society is one thousand (\$1000) dollars.

In witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands this 17th day of March, 1884,

Louis Kumm  
H. B. Shattuck  
Mrs. B. McArthur  
Mrs. M. S. Symmes  
Nellie Sears  
Mrs. G. D. Officer  
Mrs. W. H. Yarcho  
James Holloway  
Mrs. Samuel Barratt  
John Howat  
George Hawley  
F. M. Symmes  
Annie Hawley  
Jas. Officer  
Mattie Hawley  
Jessie Lazenby  
Mary Mayers  
Emma C. Cade  
Evell Mayers  
Rosa Bumcrots  
Mrs. M. C. Hawley  
Mrs. John Howat  
Lulu Symmes  
Mrs. R. V. Kumm

A church building was needed. The men formed a building committee on October 29, 1883. They reported back "without much success and suggested that a committee of ladies be appointed to finish the work." The ladies tried but gave the work back to the men. By January 20, 1884, \$150 had been secured. They had now, for the first time, a minister regularly, a "stated supply" in the pulpit, the Reverend Francis M. Symmes.



*The Frame Schoolhouse at 5th and Walnut*

The last service in Wasley's Hall was held on February 10, 1884. Meetings were thereafter held, until a church could be built, in the frame schoolhouse on the northwest corner of Fifth and Walnut Streets, where the Central School building is now, though at present used only as temporary quarters for a City Hall.

On March 25, 1884, in a report to the Presbytery the number of communicants was given as 39. The hope and confidence of the group find their way into an occasional session record:

Wednesday evening, May 7, 1884.  
Held our first prayer meeting with the encouraging attendance of 20.

Sabbath, May 11, 1884. Communion service in the morning, a pleasant feeling pervading.

There was reason for more rejoicing some eight months later, for the new church at the northwest corner of Eighth and Pine was dedicated and was clear of debt.



*First Church Home at 5th and Pine*

January 4, 1885. Was a great day in the history of this church, it being Dedication Day of the new church . . . A deficit of \$185 was raised and the debt cleared off. Praise to the Lord.

The parsonage of that church still stands. It is a dwelling at 805 North Pine.

On October 26, 1885, the Reverend Francis M. Symmes resigned. The Reverend H. S. Sharpless assumed his duties on October 1, 1886. By agreement with the church at Weir, the Pittsburg church was to have half his time, Weir half. The name of Reverend Sharpless last appears in the session minutes on November 6, 1887, and that of the Reverend C. H. McCreary appears on June 3, 1888. A letter of dismissal to Mrs. Katie Sharpless to the Presbyterian Church of Condit, Ohio, in the minutes of December 9, 1888, suggests that Reverend Sharpless's new charge was in that place. When the Symmes family left, letters of dismissal were granted "wherever their lots may be cast" to

Mrs. Mattie S. Symmes, Miss Lulu Symmes, and Joseph G. Symmes. That was October 26, 1885. A little over three years later, December 14, 1888, Miss Lulu Symmes had returned to Pittsburg, was received into membership by letter, and, beginning January 1, 1890, was teaching in the Sabbath School.

The Reverend Charles H. McCreary's name last appears on April 29, 1889, to be superseded by the Reverend A. M. Mann, apparently from Louisburg, Kansas, as Mrs. Sarah S. Mann and her daughter Sadie B. Mann presented their letters from that place. On November 8, 1891, letters of dismission were granted to members of the Mann family.



*In 1899, during the pastorate of Rev. A. M. Mann, the church building was enlarged to care for the increased congregation. The addition almost doubled the available space.*

It was in the pastorate of the Reverend Gerrit Snyder that plans were made for a new church. Like Moses he was to lead them forth but the Joshua of the undertaking was the Reverend C. L. Alspach, for though the cornerstone was laid in 1907 while Reverend Snyder was pastor, the building was not ded-

icated until 1913, under the leadership of Rev. Alspach.

Perhaps a smoky stove contributed some small share in the decision for a new building.

Oct. 19, 1904. On account of the smoking of the stove, Rev. Snyder very kindly invited the meeting to adjourn to the parsonage. Rev. Snyder . . . stated the object of the meeting: namely, the need of a new church building.

And one week later

Oct. 26, 1904. Rev. Snyder called a standing vote on the question: Do we need a new church building? Unanimously affirmative . . . Rev. Snyder pledged 1/2 of a year's salary for the new church building if the running expenses are met promptly.



*The Present Church Home*

There were about 50 present at that meeting. The cost was estimated at from \$12,000 to \$15,000.

By 1906 those figures were being revised upward and a total cost of \$20,000 was being mentioned. Actually the figure reached about \$25,000. On January 19, 1906, the congregation authorized the trustees to buy the A. H. Lanyon property at the southeast corner of Sixth and Pine for \$6500. An architect was engaged from St. Louis. A permanent building committee was organized. Its members were E. F. Porter and E. V. Lanyon, trustees; L. Kumm and A. M. Bumann, elders; and Rev. Gerrit Snyder, pastor. On January 26, 1910, the old church property was sold for \$4500.

On October 28, 1911, the Reverend Gerrit Snyder resigned after nine years of service. His resignation was accepted with many expressions of regret for his leaving.

In 1915 through the efforts of Dr. Walter McCray, the director of music, the pipe organ was obtained under the provisions of a Carnegie Fund which paid one-half of the \$3500 total cost.

The Reverend J. N. McDonald, who succeeded Rev. Alspach, was the minister during the years of the First World War. In July, 1918, the boards of the First Presbyterian Church met with the boards of the United Presbyterian Church to plan jointly what might be done to further the work of Christianity during the war. Men in service on confession of faith were allowed membership in the respective churches. The influenza epidemic of 1918 was mentioned. On December 1, 1918, service was not held because of the "Flu situation."

On April 6, 1919, a budget of \$15,000 was approved and plans were made for the purchase of the manse on Euclid Avenue.

Reverend Charles J. Armentrout in 1921 followed Rev. McDonald.

In 1928 Reverend A. B. Miller became pastor; in 1946 Rev. Wallace Faris; and in 1950 the present pastor, the Reverend Homer Keith.

An important recent building is Westminster Hall with a floor space of about 40 x 80 feet. It was completed in February, 1951, at an approximate cost of \$40,000. It has as its purpose the furthering of religious education and good fellowship.