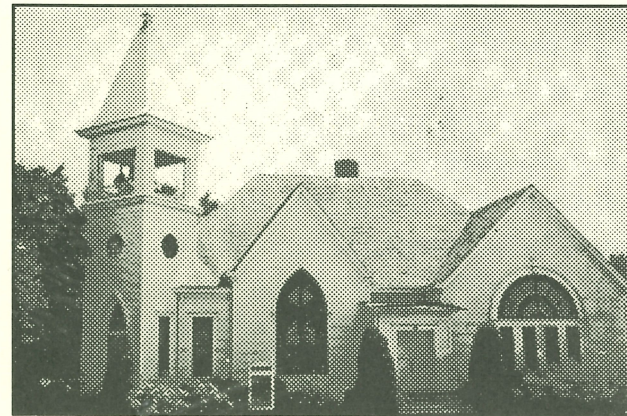
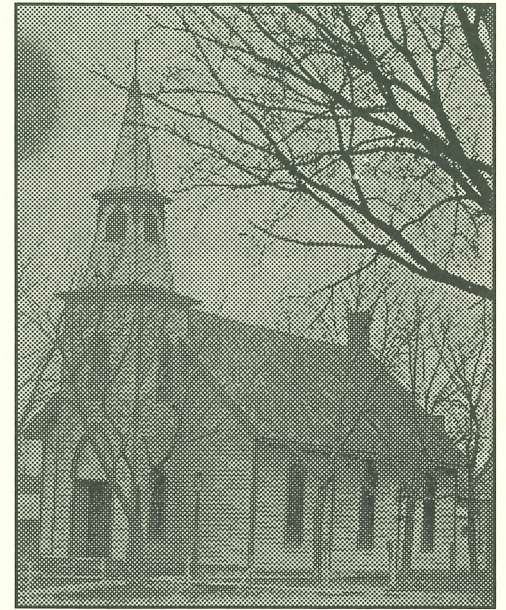


*Celebrating*  
*125*  
*Years*

1878

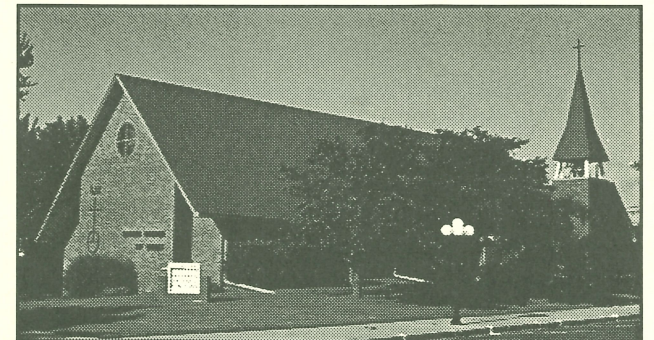


1913

*United*  
*Church of*  
*Christ*

*Friend*  
*Nebraska*

2000



## *A Brief History of the First Congregational Church United Church of Christ*

With the completion of the Burlington Railroad in this area in 1871, the little prairie settlement of Friendville was established.

Early records of the First Congregational Church of Friend reveal, in the early 1870's, a sincere desire on the part of Christian people in the community to gather for worship. For some time, the worship services were held in the school with the Reverend G. B. Page of Dorchester as pastor.

On May 15, 1875, three couples met at the schoolhouse in Friendville to consider the advisability of forming a church as there was none in the new community.

On June 15, 1875, a meeting was held at Franz Hall where those present voted unanimously to organize a Congregational Church with the following charter members: Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Harrison of the Congregational Church of Exeter, Mr. and Mrs. Herman F. Moeller of the Congregational Church of Gape Grove, Illinois, Mr. and Mrs. Anson Paine of Dorchester, and Henry Harrison on profession of faith.

The newly organized church with Rev. Page as minister continued holding services at the schoolhouse until the fall of 1877. In October, the contract for the building of the new church was let - the carpenter work, with the exception of the window frames to be done for \$295.00.

From 1877 to 1879 with many prayers and much sacrifice, the little church was paid for and in December, 1880, it was dedicated. A new bell was purchased and a tower built for it in 1881. In 1883, an addition was built to the church to be used as a prayer room and the pastor's study.

By this time, the membership had grown to 50. In 1886, 37 new members were added and the church assumed self-support. In 1894, crops failed and the church was so crippled financially that for six months in 1895 it was unable to employ a minister. Mr. H. F. Moeller, Mr. H. M. Smith, and Dr. H. W. Hewitt took turns conducting services and reading sermons thus holding the church together. It is recorded that a deacon or trustee

once hauled a load of wheat to market to pay church accounts when collections were small.

In 1901, it was decided to build a new church since the old church needed much repair and was inadequate for the needs of the congregation. The old church was relocated on the lot and a new sanctuary was built at the cost of about \$7,000.00. This church was dedicated in 1902 free of debt.

In 1905, Mr. W. O. Southwick made it possible to purchase a pipe organ which was in use for about forty years. In 1906, a home for the pastor was built at the cost of \$3,000.00.

By its Fortieth Anniversary, the church had grown to 174 members and the history states: "some very strict rules for church membership were recorded".

Revival meetings were held at various times resulting in the strengthening of the church, the last being held in 1931 in combination with the Methodist Church.

In 1933, the German Congregational Church joined with the First Congregational Church.

In 1945, new pulpit furniture was purchased as well as chimes, a cross, candlesticks, vases, new Bibles, and a baptismal font.

In 1960, Reverend Marvin Williams began to serve the Exeter Church in addition to his duties in Friend. On August 14, 1961, he met death in a tragic automobile accident. His wife, Winnie, and their daughter and son-in-law, Kay and Marvin Kraus, continue to be active members of our church.

When the Congregational Christian and the Evangelical and Reformed Churches united by mutual consent and official proclamation in 1957, the church became the Friend United Church of Christ.

In 1962, the old parsonage was moved and replaced by a new split-level brick home on the same site at the approximate cost of \$21,000.00. The building has ten rooms, a utility area and attached garage. Two rooms are used for office space. On June 12, 1962, the mortgage was burned and the facility became free of indebtedness.

As part of the Friend Centennial Celebration, a combined open-air Sunday Service was held on August 29, 1971 at the city park with the pastors and congregation from all five Friend churches participating together for the first time in the history of the town.

In 1969, a congregational meeting was called to discuss what action should be taken regarding a remodeling or building program. It was decided that the cost estimates for repair made remodeling impractical; so a Building Committee was formed to look into the possibility of building a new structure. A building committee composed of Kenneth Chab as chairman, Ben Weber, Ruth Southwick, Beverly Vlcek, Laura Swanson, Kathy Stewart and Willard Johansen was elected.

On August 18, 1974, the final service was held in the old church building. Demolition started on September 3, 1974, and on September 4, 1974, the Ground Breaking Ceremony for the new building was held.

The Moore Funeral Home Chapel and the Friend Grange Hall were used for our services of worship until the church was completed. A new Rodgers Jamestown 100 Electronic Organ was installed in the new church building and the large brass bell, which had been carefully removed from the old church building, was cleaned and polished into a thing of beauty and hung in the new belfry.

We worshiped in the new building for the first time on September 14, 1975. It was a memorable day in the history of the church. The worship service opened at the Grange Hall. After prayer, Pastor Bob Peters and Liturgist Kathy Stewart, bearing the Christian and American Flags respectively, led the congregation to the beautiful new church sanctuary with everyone singing "Onward Christian Soldiers". Worship then continued with a sermon and the rest of the service. The dedication of the church was held the next week, September 21, 1975. The total cost, approximately \$228,000.00, was paid by the close of 1979.

The church flourished under Rev. Peters leadership. He

began worship services at the Friend Annex, now the Friend Manor.

The Rev. Randy Middleton arrived to serve our yoked parish on October 30, 1977. Shortly before the arrival of the Middleton Family the parsonage committee and trustees completely refurbished the parsonage inside and out. Rev. Middleton organized an active chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes which involved many young people in our church and community.

A dedication service was held May 30, 1982, for the stained glass window originally sold to Dr. Clarence Zimmer, then given back to be kept and displayed. Ruth Southwick and William Yokel arranged for the releading of the window and having it installed in a lighted cabinet built by Sam Shutts. The project was completely financed with memorial gifts.

Rev. Douglas Ostland was installed January 9, 1983. While in Friend the Ostlands celebrated their 40th anniversary with an Open House hosted by the Friend/Exeter Churches.

The 1984 annual report listed Aline Easley as the oldest living member and she had been a member for 77 years.

Rev. Jack Scavo was called to be our minister on January 26, 1984. Among other concerns, Rev. Scavo advocated a strong choir and supported donations for the County Food Pantry. The congregation was officially informed in January of 1994 of his retirement plans. Members were happy that the Scavos had purchased a home in Friend. They continue to be active members of our church family and community.

Rev. Bob Brauninger candidated for the minister's position on December 4, 1994, and said yes after a favorable ballot. A large crowd attended his installation in March, 1995. At this time his wife, Rev. Dee Brauninger, was installed for a special ministry of writing. Reverend Bob organized and led a Conference Work Camp Trip to Ghana in 1996. We are pleased the Brauningers are continuing to lead our church family and are here to help us celebrate 125 years of service.

Through the years members of our congregation have been inspired to enter the work of the broader Church. Albert Becker,

Robert H. Hamilton, JoAnn Cassiday, and Jerry Cassiday have been ordained. Perry Blanchard has served as a lay minister. Lucile Krebs was active in mission work in the U.S.A. Erma Hamilton was active in christian education. JoAnn Ackerman is currently a student in the Nebraska Conference Education for Lay Ministry Training Program. Eunice Yokel was conference moderator during the 1960's and attended General Synod. She was instrumental in organizing the "Work Day For Christ" which became a national project. Sue Scavo currently serves as moderator of the Nebraska Conference of the United Church of Christ.

The Church has a rich tradition in music, christian education, women's fellowship, quilting and in youth ministry continuing in the shadow of strong Pilgrim Fellowship and Christian Endeavor groups. Choir directors for the last half of the 20th Century, ?-1957 Nonearl Volz Ohs, 1957-1959 Gwenda Cogswell, 1959-1974 Sam Ramp, Edith Cogswell, Bruce Blanchard, Betty Hromodka, 1978-Present Gloria Riley, assisted by Glady Weber. Our ministers have led worship at the Friend manor for at least 20 years. They have also helped continue a tradition of ecumenical worship services.

Mary Cogswell served as Church Historian for many years prior to her death in 1999. She wrote or helped write several church histories.

At the present time (June, 2000) Murval Thompson is the oldest living member of our congregation. Verda Stewart has been a church member the longest and at least two families have had an active membership for six generations.

This brings our church to the Year 2000 and the beginning of a new century. During our 125 years we have seen a lot of change. Buildings have been raised and rebuilt, ministers have come and gone, loved ones have lived long or short. One thing remains constant; we are God's children and are proud to be a part of a church with such a fine heritage. Let us continue as a church, going into the future together for many more generations.

**GOD BLESS OUR CHURCH.**

## *Ministerial Record*

- Rev. B. G. Page, June 15, 1875, to June 29, 1878
- Rev. Fred Alley, June 1, 1878, to October 1, 1878
- Rev. B. J. Chase, November 8, 1878, to June 1, 1879
- Rev. Jacob Winslow, October 15, 1879, to March 6, 1883
- Rev. Orville Clark, July 1, 1883, to May 1, 1885
- Rev. Sidney Strong, August 18, 1885, to May 1, 1887
- Rev. Wm. E. Davidson, October 10, 1887 to May 27, 1888
- Rev. James Sharret, October 7, 1888, to April 14, 1889
- Rev. E. T. Dada, June 14, 1889, to June 14, 1894
- Rev. Amos N. Dean, October 1, 1895, to January 1, 1897
- Rev. Wm. E. Payne, October 1, 1897, to October 1, 1900
- Rev. W. W. Hart, October 18, 1900, to April 18, 1903
- Rev. Perry A. Sharp, June 1, 1903, to June 30, 1906
- Rev. J. S. Hamilton, October 1906, to April 14, 1910
- Rev. Edwin Wright, August 1, 1910, to June 1, 1914
- Rev. H. H. Price, September 1, 1914, to December 13, 1917
- Rev. Leon Moore, February 1, 1918, to April 1, 1920
- Rev. G. R. McKeith, May 1, 1920, to August 31, 1923
- Rev. Ralph Pinkham, November 1, 1923, to July 29, 1928
- Rev. Wm. Becker, November 1, 1928, to June 1, 1935
- Rev. Moore Bell, June 16, 1935, to December 8, 1940
- Rev. P. Friesen, March 23, 1941, to December 28, 1944
- Rev. Wm. Becker, March 4, 1945, to November 10, 1947
- Rev. E. T. Settle, November 1947, to May 1948 (interim)
- Rev. F. E. Stemme, June 1, 1948, to July 31, 1949
- Rev. F. W. Leavitt, August 1, 1949, to November 30, 1949  
(interim)
- Rev. Henry Demler, December 1, 1949, to June 1, 1953
- Rev. John Knight, September 1, 1953, to September 1, 1954
- Rev. Marvin Williams, November 1954, to August 14, 1961
- Rev. Donald W. Cassiday, Mach 4, 1962, to November 19, 1967
- Rev. Daryl Williams, November 20, 1967, to May 31, 1968

Rev. Robert J. Peters, June 1, 1968, to December 26, 1976  
Rev. Edwin Eiben, May 28, 1977, to October 29, 1977 (interim)  
Rev. Randy Middleton, October 30, 1977, to June 6, 1982  
Rev. Howard S. Danner Jr., June 27, 1982, to November 6,  
1982 (interim)  
Rev. Douglas Ostlund, November 7, 1982, to November 11,  
1984  
Rev. Paul Bock and Rev. John E. Scavo, November  
18, 1984, to February 28, 1986 (interim)  
Rev. John E. Scavo, March 1, 1986, to June 30, 1994  
Rev. Robert Brauning, February 1, 1995, to present