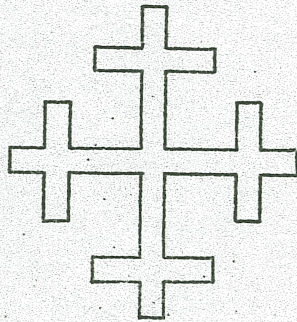


"REFLECTIONS OF THE PAST"
from the records of the
German and English Congregational Churches
now known as the
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



Historical Data Compiled By
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"Reflections of the Past"

Think back with me, if you will, 100 years-a century, a relatively short space of time, yet half the age of our great nation. Think of our little town 100 years ago. There were very few streets - none graveled or surfaced, no electricity - so of course no electric lights, no telephones, no radios or televisions. Native Indians still roamed on the prairies and camped along the creeks and rivers where they hunted and fished. With the completion, in this area, of the Burlington Railroad in 1871, the little prairie settlement and postoffice of Friendville was established and with the establishment of the town, Christian pioneers, feeling a sincere desire to worship, realized that the community must have churches. This desire to gather together to worship resulted in a group of people meeting in the Frantz and Brickley Hall that had been constructed in this three year old settlement. Out of this meeting came the organization, on June 15, 1875 of the First 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 the Congregational Church of Dorchester and Henry Harrison on profession of faith. (First Picture-Charter Members)

That afternoon the congregation met in the schoolhouse with representatives of nine Congregational Churches in this area, in council. This group assisted the charter members in the formalities of organizing a church and immediately held a service of recognition.

(2nd picture-The Rev. Page) The newly organized church secured as their first minister, the Rev. Benjamin Greely Page, a 40 year old pastor who with his 35 year old wife and small son had bought land adjoining the town of Friend - 40 acres - the northwest one fourth of the northeast one fourth of section twenty-three. They lived in a dugout and experienced the difficulties of pioneer life. He afterward plotted his land and the lots became known as Page's Addition to Friend, part of which became the Warren property where their dugout was located. This land was later deeded by Mr. Norman Warren to the city for the Warren Memorial Hospital. History tells us that the Rev. Page was remembered as a man of "kindly disposition, very considerate with sick people, having wonderful executive ability and preaching powers". He was interested in everything for the betterment of the new town and community and the uplifting of the people. He was instrumental in having the first church building erected in Friend. The Rev. B.G. Page and his wife Amanda Page presented their letters for membership from the Dorchester Congregational Church to the first annual meeting of the Friendville church held February 19, 1876, thus, Mr. Page became a member of the church of which he was already pastor.

The Rev. Page arranged for special courses of lectures on Temperance and also spent a considerable amount of time planning for the musical part of his services. One evening while seeking help for the musical part of the program he had occasion to cross from Maple to Main streets along where someone had, during the day, dug a large hole in the ground about twenty feet square by eight feet deep for the purpose of storing ice, but had failed to put a covering over it or to effect any protection. Mr. Page happening along in the dark, fell into the hole and was so badly injured that he could not extricate himself. He remained there throughout the cold night and caught such a severe cold that his death was finally attributed to it. Because of his accident he was unable to attend the third annual meeting of the church and with declining health he tendered his resignation as pastor but he was so highly regarded by his church members that they were reluctant to accept his resignation until it was finally evident that it would be impossible for him to carry on his ministry. His wife had died the previous August and his baby boy in October. Other ministers came and filled his pulpit and he lingered on until November 14, 1878, dying in his 44th year.

During his three year pastorate the church membership increased from the seven charter members to twenty-nine.

In his memory a stained glass window was placed in the East wall of the second church edifice. It's emblem on a medallion was that of a crown rising above the clouds into a clear blue sky and facing the East, indicative of the hope that the soul of the good man, who had borne so many crosses during his pioneer life, had gone to his reward to wear the crown of eternal life.

(3rd Picture-1st Church Building) The newly organized church, with the Rev. Page as Minister continued holding services in the schoolhouse until the Fall of 1877. In October, the contract for the building of a church was let, the carpenter work, with the exception of the window frames to be done for \$295.00.

When the location of the church was considered, there was a great deal of discussion and much opposition to the site as most people were certain that the town would not grow beyond Sucker Creek but instead would grow to the North and West. Remember, as we stated before, at this time, there were only a few streets in our town and a few scattered homes, most of which were North of the church location.

During the fall and winter while the church was being constructed, the meetings were held in the Frantz and Brickley Hall. In the spring the church was plastered and painted.

From 1877 to 1879, with many prayers and much sacrifice the little church was paid for and in December 1880 it was dedicated, but even then it was not complete. 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 pastor's study.

(4th picture-2 deacons negotiating loan with banker) The generosity and dedication of those early pillars of the church was demonstrated again and again. History records that two of the trustees, Robert Sands, Sr. and H. F. Moeller, negotiated a loan for \$225.00 at 10% interest in advance for one year, giving their personal note for \$250.00 to pay for the addition to the little church. Also in 1894, when crops failed and the church was crippled financially, so much so that it was impossible to employ a minister, for 6 months, 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 the collections were small. For several years, because of financial depression and crop failures the church had a real struggle but the faith and courage and generosity of those pioneer Christians carried them through.

(5th picture) After all these difficult times, in September, 1895, a minister, the Rev. Amos Dean of Crete was called to preach every Sunday morning, at a salary of \$250.00 a year. For a year and a half he served the church, still making his home in Crete although it was hoped he would move to Friend. Whenever he was unable to come, he would send President Perry of Doane College, or some of the college students who were preparing for the ministry. Since Deacon and Mrs. Moeller and their fine family lived three miles east of Friend, on the road from Crete to Friend and these young men usually came by horse and buggy it was most convenient for them to stop at the Moeller home to be entertained to dinner.

(6th Picture) By 1900, the congregation was growing enough to cause the old building to be inadequate for their needs and the old church was badly in need of repair so they began to talk about building a new building. In 1901, it was decided to build the new church and a building committee was appointed and given full power to sell or use the old building as they deemed best. Thus the old building was moved west and turned to face the North and became the chapel or Sunday School room. The sanctuary was then built to the east and a small basement with kitchen and dining room facilities was built under the chapel. This basement was also used for Sunday School classes.

The cost of the new church was about \$7000 and it was dedicated September 21, 1902 free of debt (after additional pledges of \$600 were raised at the dedicatory service). The old bell was sold and a larger bell purchased at an additional cost of \$300.00. About this time the B. and M. Lumber Company gave the church the two lots which they then owned and Dr. F. C. Hinman, owner of the other lot west of the church, kindly transferred it to the church thus making the church the owner of the complete half block on which the church and parsonage now stand. In 1905 a pipe organ was purchased, which was used for about forty years being replaced in about 1948 with a Hammond electric organ. This organ along with chimes and chancel appointments were dedicated November 6, 1949.

In 1907 we find recorded- that a new lighting system by electricity was installed in the church.

In 1931 the basement was enlarged and remodeled, and a new heating plant was installed.

The only mention in our history of the first parsonage is that it was sold in 1906 and a more commodious structure was built at an approximate cost of \$3500.00. The new parsonage was ready for occupancy when the Rev. J.S. Hamilton family came in October 1906. This parsonage was extensively remodeled and redecorated around 1950 but in 1962 it was decided to sell the old parsonage and it was moved to the east part of town. A new brick parsonage was built on the same site at an approximate cost of \$21,000.00 and on June 12, 1963 the mortgage on the new parsonage was burned thus the facility became free of indebtedness. The Rev. and Mrs. Donald Cassidy and family moved in the new facility April 18, 1963.

(7th picture) The minister's wives and families, as well as the ministers have added a great deal to the spiritual life of the church through these many years. They have assisted in the organization of youth, Sunday School, choir and women's groups and have taken active parts in the leadership of the same. We especially note that Mrs. Hamilton, wife of the Rev. J. S. Hamilton, organized the Women's Missionary Society of which she was president until they moved away. Our first record of an existing women's group was in 1894 when it is noted in the history that "even though the failure of crops crippled the church financially and they were without a minister for the last half of the year - thanks to the Ladies Home Circle, they were almost out of debt. After the Women's Missionary Society the women's group was known as the Dorcas Federation and, since the merger with the Evangelical and Reformed denomination, it has been the Women's Fellowship. No one can quite conceive of the value of this group to the life of the church.

All through the years the women of the church have contributed liberally both with personal aid and financially to the youth groups, the Sunday School, the Christian World Mission and to the church budget itself.

(8th Picture-S.S. Teachers and pupils) Through the years the Sunday School has been a very vital part of the church. Faithful teachers, superintendents and leaders have devoted many years of service to this part of the church's ministry. Our first Sunday School was organized soon after the founding of the church. Let us remember that the founders were not elderly people, as you see them pictured in our histories, but were young people with small children who were concerned about the religious education of their families. The Herman Moeller family consisted of the young parents, Cora, three years old Rosa and baby Carl when the church was organized. We like to feel that the teaching and religious training of our Sunday School has played an important part in the lives of our young people and the decisions they have made. The Sunday School has not been for children only, but has offered classes for all age groups. The Bible study and class discussions have been a source of enlightenment and interest for the young people, the young marrieds and the elderly.

(9th Picture) It would be most interesting and quite unbelievable, I'm sure, to know how many willing and sincere Christians have offered guidance and fellowship to the youth of our church. In the earlier years when there were no radios, no televisions, no theaters or other entertainment the social life as well as the religious life emanated from the church. The youth group in this church was first known as the Christian Endeavor Society. The letters "C. E." on the beautiful stained glass window at the front of the sanctuary of the new church stand for Christian Endeavor. This round "C.E." was a part of the large east window in the former church sanctuary and has been a reminder, to many who understood it's meaning, of the importance of youth to our church. Later the youth group was known as the Pilgrim Fellowship. It was during this time that our church had a large, active group and under devoted and efficient leadership the "Work Day For Christ" was initiated in this church and, because it was such a success here, was later adopted as a national project. Each Pilgrim Fellowship member devoted a day of labor and donated the proceeds to the Fellowship to be used for others. The youth group is now known as the Youth Fellowship.

(10th picture) The music department of the church, both vocal and instrumental, has efficiently functioned due to the many devoted and faithful directors, organists and choir members. The music produced by these people beautifies and enriches the service of the church.

Tribute is due the many, many musicians whose untiring hours of practice have resulted in soothing and uplifting music being produced for the enjoyment of the congregation. With able leadership, faithful choir members and the addition of the new Rogers electric organ, we are anticipating great and beautiful things from our music department as we begin worshipping in this new edifice.

(11th picture-Bride wearing wedding gown) All through the 100 year history of the church we find joys as well as sorrows recorded. Some of the most joyous occasions have been the weddings that have been performed within its sanctuary. So far as we know, only one of our ministers, the Rev. Moore Bell came to us before his marriage, shortly afterward was married and brought his bride, Marian, from Iowa to establish their first home in our parsonage. Beautiful brides on the arm of their fathers have walked down the aisle of our church. In the candle light, at the altar, many brides and grooms have exchanged their wedding vows. A great number of these couples remained in Friend and established their homes. A few short years later the children of some of these couples have also been married in the church and received its' blessing. Other happy times experienced, have been when young people have dedicated their children and presented their babies for baptism. Some of the most joyous occasions for the church as a whole and in the sight of God, I feel sure, are the times when young or old having the ability to make their own decisions accept Christ as their personal Savior and unite with us in church membership.

The church has been a solace in sad and stormy times. Hundreds of funeral services have been conducted from our church and though we are apt to think of these occasions as the sad times simply because of the pain we feel at parting, we know that it is truly a time for rejoicing when our Christian friends go to be with their Lord. Three of these funeral services were for former pastors, the Rev. B. G. Page, the Rev. Wm. Becker, and the Rev. Marvin Williams, who death claimed while they were serving our church.

(12th Picture) Through these 100 years this church has been served by thirty-three pastors and interim pastors whose influence has guided us and directed us in depression and prosperity. These dedicated servants of God have been good shepherds to their flocks. At the present time our pastor is the Rev. Robert Peters and he with his fine family have faithfully served this church for the past seven years. Their family is an integral part of the community reaching out to those in need of help and offering assistance in any capacity.

The Rev Peters has led us through the trying times of de-commissioning the old building, the planning for and actual construction of the new building. We express our love and gratitude to our Pastor Peters and his family.

(13th picture-New Church Building) We bring to a close these 100 years of history of the church, established by a handful of dedicated persons. Little did they know all the hardships and successes that would come to pass because they had a vision and answered the call. This church here in Friend was established in the faith and did increase in numbers. It became a refuge and a bulwark, a place where love has prevailed, whose members have been drawn close together in joy and hardship but most of all where people have found Christ. Tonight in this beautiful new edifice we are ready to embark on another one hundred years. May we as members of the Christian faith dedicate ourselves to do God's will, to carry on His work in love, to reach out from this church into homes, into the town of Friend, into the community and into the world for Christ's sake.

Sing: "The Churches One Foundation"