

FRIEND
CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH
HISTORY

PRESENTATION
FOR
FRIEND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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PREPARED
BY
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Presentation
given at
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Historical
Society
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Narrative
compiled
by Mary
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Overview of history of Friend Congregational UCC (excerpts from Stories of Nebraska and previous church history articles) It seems a long way back to those days when early comers saw nothing but a huge sea of waving grasses. The plains life was the prairie dog, the ground squirrel, the jackrabbit and meadowlark. Native Americans still frequented the area. Many of the early founders lived in dugouts near where the old hospital stood. C.E. Friend came to the area in 1870. The railroad came in 1871 and was key to the development of Friend. As there was likelihood of there being a town in the area, Mr. Friend pre-empted 80 acres north and purchased 160 acres south of the railroad. He opened a store and postoffice immediately north of Main Street. He named the place Friendville, though due to the land agents, who objected to the use of "villes and burgs", the name was eventually changed to Friend. The town was laid out in 1873.

Mr. Friend donated two lots each to each of the following churches Congregational, Methodist, Catholic and Baptist. He also donated land for a school. Some key events in our church journey:

--1875 our first minister, B.G. Page met with a small group to discuss forming a church as there was none in the community. On June 15, 1875 a unanimous vote was taken to organize a church and it was to be the Congregational Church. Early services were held in the school house and in Frantz and Brickley Hall, located on the East side of Maple Street.

--1877 fund raising and construction was started for first church. There was much discussion about where the church should be located as there was considerable opposition to the present site. However, it has proved to be an ideal one. If one could picture the town as it was then, with only a few streets, scattered buildings, most of which were north of where the church stands, a large draw to the south and east of it, one could more fully realize the wisdom of depending on the Lord for guidance.

--1878 Rev B.G. Page provided leadership for the new church and led the church until his untimely death in 1878. Rev. Page was an early pioneer in Friend, living in a dugout home, on the slope where the Warren Memorial Hospital used to stand. One evening while seeking help for the musical part of his services he crossed from Maple to Main streets 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. Rev. Page happening along in the dark, fell into the hole. He remained there all night and died from his injuries. He died at the age of 44. His wife and baby boy had died the previous year. He and his family are buried in the Friendville Cemetery north of Friend.

--1880 first church was dedicated on the lot where our present church is located

--1883 addition built to the church to be used as a prayer room and pastor's study

--1891 special meeting called and voted to build a new church

--1894 first record of an existing women's group when it is noted 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". The women's group was later known as the Women's Missionary Society, Dorcas Federation and presently Women's Fellowship.

--1902 the new church was dedicated free of debt. The 1880 church was turned to face the north and moved west to be connected to the new structure. The cost of the new church was \$7000. The 1881 bell was sold and a new, larger bell was purchased which is being used today. During that time the

members decided it would be a fine thing if the church could own the entire half lot. The B & M Land Company donated the land south of the church and Dr. F.C. Hinman donated the land to the west. Dr. E.A. Watson thought it would be a good idea to plant trees to give the area south of church a park setting which we are still enjoying today. The new church provided space for Sunday school and the youth group Christian Endeavor later known as Youth Fellowship. In those days there were no radios, no televisions, no theaters or Internet. The social life and religious life emanated from the church. Our records speak of the Christian Endeavor Society sponsoring events like a "Work Day for Christ" when individual members would donate a day of work in return for the proceeds donated to the Society. Events were also hosted for all youth in the community.

--1905 new pipe organ installed, donated by W.O. Southwick. Giving praise through music has always been an important part of our worship service. We have been fortunate to have the talents of many musicians and choir members over the years.

--1906 new parsonage built at a cost of \$3500

--1907 electricity installed

--1931 church remodeled and basement expanded. Membership 339

--1933 German Congregational Church dissolved and members joined our church

--1935 Rev. Wm. Becker resigned to become Superintendent of the Peoples' City Mission in Lincoln

--1949 Dedication of choir seats, alter and communion table, pulpit, rostrum chairs, brass cross and candlesticks given in memory of members by their families. These memorial gifts can be found in our present church alter.

--1950...75th Anniversary with 325 members

--1957 Congregational Christian, Evangelical and Reformed Churches merge to form United Church of Christ. This church became United Church of Christ, Congregational

--1960 first 50 year members honored. These members would have joined the church in 1910

--1962 old parsonage sold and moved to 1507 Second Street where it stands today. A new parsonage was built at a cost of \$21,000

--1965 Discussion and planning toward new building. Discussion included conversations about renovation of the old building and adding an addition or constuction of a new building.

--1974 Final service held in the 1902 church. Many of us grew spiritually within this church and have fond family memories.

--1975 new church dedicated and Centenial Celebration 1875--1975

--2000 celebration of 125 years

--2016 Prayer Garden dedicated. The garden is located south of the church continuing the 1902 tradition of the park setting on the south side of the church. The garden was established in memory of a young church member, Lenna Weber, who passed away in 2013. The Garden honors the support given to her family. The garden is given to the community for all to enjoy.

We would like to share with you the meaning of our stained glass windows which are a part of our spiritual history as they were brought from the 1902 church to our present church. This presentation is being made by youth from this years confirmation class.

WINDOW PRESENTATION

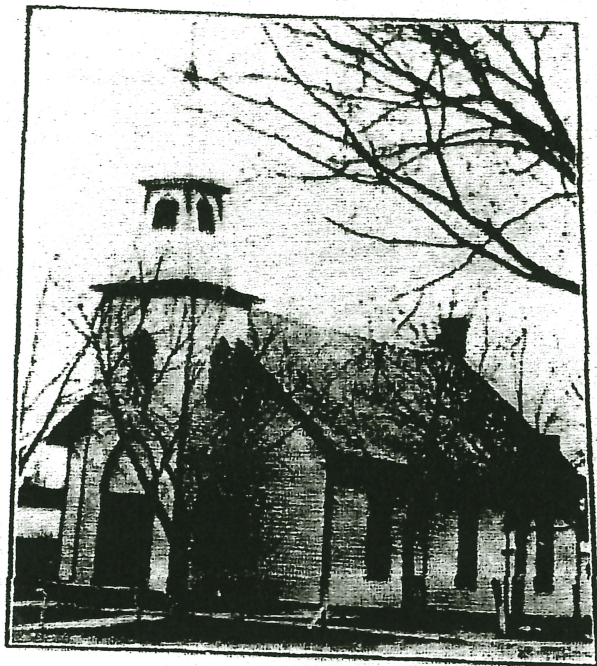
--During our 142 years we have seen a lot of change. Buildings have been raised and rebuilt, ministers have come and gone, loved ones have lived long or short in this life. Our constant is that we are God's children. Our history is really about the faith and grace of our members. We have several active members from 4th and 5th generation families. We are pleased to recognize our current 50 year members, our member with the most years of membership Floyd Johansen 88 years and our Pastor Emeritus Rev Jack Scavo.

We bring to a close these highlights of the history of our church, established by a handful of dedicated Christians. Little did they know what the future would hold as they sought to do God's will.

The Spiritual Journey of The UCC/ Congregational Church

Information taken from Stories of Nebraska and church historical materials compiled and summarized by our church historians who have included Henry and Mabel Zieg, Pearl Benson, Francis Warner and Mary Cogswell.

First Congregational Church
Friend, Nebraska



**The First Congregational Church of
Friendville, Dedicated 1880**



**Rev. B. G. Page
First Minister
1875-1878**



The New Church Dedicated in 1902

← The 1880 Church was moved west facing north

All of the stained glass windows in the 1975 church came from the 1902 church.



1902 Church
renovated 1931



1975



Parsonage built in 1906
Sold and moved in 1962
1507 2nd St



FRIEND'S NEW PARSONAGE

Rev. and Mrs. Donald Cassidy moved into the new parsonage pictured above this summer. The new home was constructed on the old site at an approximate cost of \$19,500. It has ten rooms, a utility area and attached garage. Two rooms are used for office space.

from April 2017
Friend Historical Society
Presentation by M. Losh

FRIEND UCC (CONGREGATIONAL) History of Stained Glass Windows

All of the stained glass windows in the 1975 church came from the 1902 church. These windows reflected both a spiritual significance and were intertwined with the historical experience of being a pioneer in the community of Friend.

Christian Endeavor-- The first known youth group in our church was known as the Christian Endeavor Society. A round stained glass window is displayed at the front of our present church sanctuary on the East side. The window has the letters CE in the center which stand for Christian Endeavor to remind us of the importance of youth in our church

Crown--On the north wall of our church the first window is a crown in memory of our first minister Rev. Page. This window displays a crown rising above the clouds into a clear blue sky indicative of the hope that the soul of this good man, who had borne so many crosses during his pioneer life, had gone to his reward to wear the crown of eternal life.

Chalice--The next window has a chalice entwined by grapes and wheat. The chalice and grapes are symbols of the cup of forgiveness and the new covenant we have in his blood. The wheat is the symbol of the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us through his broken body in death.

US flags--The last window on the north wall is of two U.S. flags. The flag affirms our Christian heritage and pays homage to all of those who have sacrificed for it. Interestingly, most of the early leaders of Friend had served in the Civil War and the war experience had greatly impacted their lives.

GAR--On the west wall above the balcony is the top portion of a larger window which was sold at the auction of items unable to be used in the new church. The larger window depicted an encampment scene of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). The GAR was founded in 1866 composed of veterans of the Union Army who served in the Civil War. The fraternal organization provided camaraderie and political support for assistance to veterans. In 1868 the GAR called all local Posts to set aside May 30th as a day for remembering the sacrifices of fallen comrades, beginning the celebration of Memorial Day.

Congregational Church--On the southside is the window which hung over the main entrance to the old church. This window has the name Congregational Church which eventually affiliated with other church groups to become the United Church of Christ. The window was originally sold in the auction but was returned by Dr. Zimmer, physician in Friend, who had purchased many of the old windows. Later it was repaired and framed for display in the new church.

Bees and Hive--The next window on the south wall is the beehive with lots of busy bees. Bees and the hive are symbolic of industrious, Christian men and women working together for the common good.

Wheat--The bundle of wheat known as a sheaf is displayed next. Wheat is rich with Biblical meaning. Wheat is a primary grain used to sustain life and is made into bread. The sheaf of wheat is representative of an abundant harvest. The field of wheat is representative of the church. The hymn "Bringing in the Sheaves" is seen to be symbolic of bringing people to Christianity. Thus, the meaning is tied to the giving of life, charity and love. In pioneer Friend wheat was the major crop and is mentioned in our church records as being used by members as a gift to the church to pay debts.

Dove--The last window is a dove descending from the clouds. The Bible speaks of a dove descending at Jesus baptism symbolizing peace with God. The white dove is used to symbolize peace, innocence, love and the Holy Spir

