

## History of Garden Community Church

The majority of the first members were from several churches in Bavaria and Germany and migrated to America in 1851 and 1859. They settled first in Iowa and Illinois and in 1874 migrated to Kansas. The first church was established in Halstead KS on March 1875. Later the First Mennonite Church of Christian in Moundridge KS was organized from members of the Halstead Church.

It had been the desire of a number of the families living in the Garden Township for a place to worship, since it was so far to go to Halstead or Moundridge for services; the means of travel was with horses or mules hitched to a lumber wagon. On grounds of driving distance, the group from the Garden Township area came from both of these churches. In May 1887 about 15 families met in Liberty school house to undertake organizing a church. A constitution was drawn up and a committee elected to solicit funds and find a place to erect a building – which was 26x37x14. The land was donated by Katie Krehbiel of Halstead. The next year the church was dedicated with 51 members. This was the beginning of the little church at Garden.

In 1898, a year later, the church was too small to accommodate all of its members and 16 feet was added. Soon after Sunday School was organized and the ladies Sewing Society which continues to meet the needs of missionaries and the Homeless Shelter in Newton.

In the early 1900s the Garden Church with the Halstead, First Christian and West Zion Churches were co-owners of the Hertzler Hospital in Halstead and 160 acres of land south of Halstead known as the Leisy Orphan Society.

Until 1923 all church services were in German.

63 years later, 1951, ground-breaking services were held for a new church building with a full basement and kitchen, 39x70 ft with a cost of approximately \$26,000.

20 years later came an addition to the south. 5 years later an addition to the north for a library, classrooms and enlarged kitchen. 11 years later 1987 an addition to the east to support the growing AWANA program and other needs.

The church offices are on Main Street in Hesston, used also for youth meetings and Bible studies.

Garden Church has a strong Missions program presently supporting five couples on foreign soil and four couples in the U.S.

Gary Janzen is the current pastor. Average attendance is 170.

The Garden Church purpose statement sets three goals: to glorify God, edify and build up one another toward Christ-like maturity, and involve ourselves in world-wide evangelism.

Congratulations to the people of Garden Community Church for their faithfulness to God through 125 years.

■ From History information presented at Garden Church on Sunday, August 24, 2013