

FAITH MENNONITE CHURCH HISTORY

Sep. 22, 2016

To give a history of Faith Mennonite Church you will need to know why it started and how. I have often been asked, was this a church split from another church? *no theory - or personalities* NO it was not a split; it grew from a need for another church in the Newton area because Bethel College Church and First Mennonite Church were full. At an annual meeting at the First Mennonite Church the question was raised regarding the influx of rural people moving to Newton for employment in the early 50's. There was a new Mobil home factory and all the supporting business coming to town. First Mennonite Church passed a motion to meet with Bethel College Church and Western District conference minister to study the situation. This was in 1956.

In September of 1956 the Western District Home Mission Committee was asked to call a meeting of all Pastors & church board members located within a radius of 35 miles of Newton.

From that meeting in October of 1956 the HMC was asked to take the necessary steps to establish and organize the third Mennonite Church in Newton. W. F. Unruh assumed the major responsibility for organizing the new church.

Area pastors were sent a form to list members living in Newton.

W. F. Unruh invited eleven key families to meet to further organize a church.

February 24, 1957 a public meeting at Sister Frieda Chapel was called for a worship service and reporting. It was reported that 300 Menno's living in Newton were not attending either Bethel or First Church. Which meant that many were driving out of town to attend churches in the surrounding area. At this meeting a temporary planning committee was elected. Fifty people signed the list of commitment. Approximately 40 more were identified.

Planning continued and on June 30, 1957 the first morning worship service. ^{was held} As plans continued worship service with Sunday

school were held. October 10 1957 Rev. Howard Nyce accepted the call as the first Pastor, starting in April 1958. Rev. Nyce's daughter Jane Voth is currently an active member of Faith Church. The group continued and grew and on September 7, 1958 a charter service was held with 104 members. I was one of those charter members. There are still 9 original charter members attending. There were a number of children that came with parents of which 6 are active attendees.

After meeting at Sister Frieda Chapel for 4 years we had a ground breaking service for the church on September 3, 1961. The cornerstone was laid in January 1962. Dedication was on Palm Sunday April 1962. Total cost of the project was \$97,650 including furniture. ^{↓ hand} The church continued to grow and we needed more space so we built a house across the street for Sunday school space. The house was built so that it could be sold as a livable

house. In 1978 we added an addition for Education and offices and the Amphitheater. The house was sold.

Our membership in 1958 was 108 it grew to 375+ in 1983.

In 1981 WD asked Faith Church to partner with the Walton Mennonite Church for support. Some of us attended there for several months and rotated with others. As a result of this there was a nuclear group that formed at Walton consisting of people from Faith, Walton and others. When Walton Mennonite Church closed the group continued to meet with us at Faith. Our church was overflowing and a member living across the street moved to retirement center and we assumed the ownership of this house for SS space. With our church being full we began to consider the idea of starting another church in Newton. Thus Shalom was started with the nucleus from Walton and others from Faith Church. Edna Dyck and Stan Bohn gave major leadership to

Shalom. Approximately 30 people from Faith transferred to Shalom. They are today a vibrant active congregation.

The next project for us was a fellowship hall. This started with the need for an elevator to get people to the basement fellowship hall which was getting to be too small. Our congregation members were getting a little gray and steps were difficult.

In 2004 we decided that it would be better to build an addition with fellowship hall on main level and use the basement for classrooms. This addition made it possible for a larger more adequate fellowship hall, youth room, better kitchen, elevator, and a large foyer. On your way in you passed a special sculpture in the foyer of the Open Hand. We commissioned John Geaddert to make a sculpture from a log coming from a tree that was removed to make way for the fellowship hall. This hall has served us well and we are able to share it with other groups such as yours.

The most recent project was the replacement of the sanctuary windows that were deteriorated. Once you start a project it seems to grow, and this project ended up not only new windows, but new wood decor under the windows, a new sound system, improved lighting, and video.

We have had numerous Pastors one of which was Myron Schrag a Swiss Mennonite from Bethany Mennonite Church in rural Kingman. Our present pastor is Rachel Siemens and continues to lead us in the direction of our beginnings.

I hope you enjoy your evening here.

jim