

## First Mennonite Church addition to history story – for SMCHA Annual Meeting

March 10, 2019

Our Church is glad to host the Swiss Mennonite Cultural and Historical Association annual meeting this year and to be a part of this organization. We hope you enjoy your time here this afternoon. Restrooms are just around the corner and upstairs. Make yourselves at home.

First Mennonite Church of McPherson began as a church plant with blessing of Western District Conference in 1945 with the first pastor, fresh out of seminary, Roland R. Goering and his wife Fern (a faithful SMCHA member). The original church constructed in 1949 burned in 1963 and the current structure was built in this location in 1966. Members ranged from approximately 180 in 1986 to 50-60 who currently attend in 2019. The church is currently member of MC USA and WDC. From 1945 to today, some very capable pastors and interim pastors, both men and women, served this congregation. After Edna Dyck served as interim pastor in 1998, the church selected its first full-time woman pastor, Kathy Neufeld Dunn, in 2006 and in 2018 Rose Marie Zook Barber became pastor.

Members have over the years been involved in many mission causes ranging from

- supporting an overseas mission person or family,
- working the verenike booth at the Kansas Mennonite Relief Sale in Hutchinson,
- MCC meat canning,
- serving supper at local Loaves and Fishes,
- meals on wheels,
- CROP walk,
- Omega House,
- PET (Mobility carts for disabled overseas), and
- Mt. Hope Sanctuary for women.

In 2003 the church embarked on the conference First Fruits effort, and currently we donate over \$17,000 annually to a variety of charitable organizations. Projects include the

- annual German supper in our church,
- church retreats at Camp Mennoscah,
- Fish Fry,
- MCC school kits,
- comforter blitz, and
- small groups.

The quilters always sew beautiful quilts for the MCC sale.

Our primary outreach effort in recent years has been the ReUse It Center that was born through a Lilly grant award and a vision of a team of eight members. Beginning initially in 2011 collecting donations of building materials and selling them, the ReUse It Center has steadily

grown each year. Now located in the former TG&Y Building west of McPherson, annual current revenues exceed \$250,000/year. The organization utilizes over 100 volunteers and has only two paid managerial employees. Items currently being donated and resold include furniture, cabinets, appliances, hardware, lighting, plumbing, tools and many miscellaneous items. The ministry has received extraordinary support from the community. The Board of Directors, all originally from First Mennonite Church, has expanded to include many prominent community leaders. Since the beginning, in November 2011, the ReUse It Center has donated over \$250,000 to 17 local charities and MCC. This ministry has been truly amazing being blessed through many prayers and thousands of hours of volunteer help.

An almost 55-year old church building has required some updates. The church recently installed a new HVAC system, a new roof, improved women's bathrooms, and is now working on kitchen revamp to aid our hospitality interests, thankfully aided by a couple of estate gifts.

Other additions were an elevator installed in 2000, installation of a projector, and the new church sign in front of the church.

The core of the church has remained loyal to Anabaptist theology and Mennonite traditions. We maintain a fund to support youth in Mennonite-related colleges and AMBS.

Recent Transitional Pastor Randy Smith helped us to develop a gifts-based structure of leadership. Current focus is 5 E's: "Embracing all of God's people; Empowering our leaders; Encouraging each one's gifts; Enhancing our care giving; and Extending outreaching hospitality."

Current Pastor, Rose Marie Zook Barber, encouraged us with the words, "Small churches have just as much to offer as mega churches; they have both unique strengths and challenges...Our challenge, our calling, as a congregation is to let our light shine brightly, rejoicing in what we have to offer."