

Our History

In February 1874, a frontier preacher, E. T. Russell, rode a yellow Texas pony into the village of Salina. He was a Godly man, a fine singer, and a fluent speaker. He came from the adjoining county of Ottawa, where he had recently "filed upon" a piece of government land which he called his "claim". He visited all who had ever been members of the Christian Church so far as he was able to hear of them, and arranged to return and hold a "protracted meeting" a few weeks later.

In this meeting, which began about the middle of March, he was assisted by A. D. Goodwin, a minister who then lived in St. George, Kansas. He was the son of Elijah Goodwin, the great pioneer preacher of Indiana. The meeting was held in the Swedish Lutheran Church, which stood on South Seventh Street. During this meeting, nine persons were baptized in the Smoky Hill River near the Iron Avenue bridge. On the fourth Sunday of March 1874, the Christian Church was organized here in Salina with twenty-nine charter members, and with J. C. Rash, E. Hedenberg, and Dr. S. J. Daily as officers.

For the first four years, services were held mornings and evenings on two Sundays a month in various Salina churches, including the Swedish Lutheran Church, the Episcopal Church, the Baptist Church, and the English Lutheran Church. After the second year, a lively, active Sunday School was organized to meet every Sunday afternoon. Prayer meetings, family-like in fellowship, were held in the homes of members every Wednesday evening. In 1876, at the Christian Church Kansas State Convention, A. D. Goodwin, our first minister, and Howard C. Rash, a member of the Salina congregation, were two of a committee of three named to "memorialize the General Convention" through the creation of a church building fund. Their subsequent work was the forerunner of our entire Brotherhood's Church Extension Fund program.

During the year 1877, the congregation felt an urgent need for their own building as the churches in town owning buildings wanted to use them. A building committee was named, consisting of C. R. Underwood, J. C. Rash, and R. A. Lovitt, with Howard C. Rash as secretary and solicitor of subscriptions. The work was begun promptly and pushed vigorously. On the last Sunday in March, 1878, the fourth anniversary of the organization, the main part of the new church building was dedicated. This white frame building with a tall spire, situated on the east side of Eighth Street (between Iron and Walnut), was rededicated on November 30, 1902 upon completion of a north wing, pastor's study, and other improvements. J. H. Garrison, editor of *The Christian Evangelist*, of St. Louis, delivered the dedicatory sermon.

The first pastor was A. D. Goodwin. He was succeeded by L. N. Whaley, who served only a few months, being compelled to discontinue his work on account of the inability of the church to secure a house in which to meet. The first minister after the house was built was E. D. Barclay, a polished graduate of Bethany College. He was succeeded by D. C. Christner, whose failing health compelled him to discontinue the work at the end of three months. He was succeeded by Dr. S. T. Dodd, a preacher from Ohio, who had been a practicing physician. Later, A. D. Goodwin moved to Salina and was pastor of the church and superintendent of the Salina schools. The length of his two-term pastorate was about five years. Then, followed in order, G. P. Peale, the orator from Indiana; Paph Julian, graduate of Kentucky University; W. S. Priest, graduate of Bethany College; C. F. Mortimer, who had been educated as a Catholic priest; J. M. Vawter; H. Milner Black, a native of London, who came to us from Melbourne, Australia; E. N. Phillips, an enthusiastic Y.M.C.A. athlete; David H. Shields, graduate of Eureka College, who was elected Mayor of Salina in 1905 and later State President of the Kansas Christian Missionary Society; and Benjamin L. Smith, a graduate of Bethany College and for many years Corresponding Secretary of the American Christian Missionary Society, who remained about three years. Then, A. O. Kuhn and G. W. Burch, graduates of Drake University, each remained a little more than a year. C. V. Dunn began his pastorate on January 1, 1915 and continued nearly two years. After his resignation, the church was without a pastor for some six months when J. Arthur Dillinger, a graduate of Drake University, was called from a pastorate in Altoona, Iowa to lead the congregation. Guy Findly succeeded Rev. Dillinger. During his

pastorate, the church membership increased considerably through the additions that come from The Reyburn Union Meetings in which almost all the Salina churches participated. Findly was followed by M. Lee Sorey of Beatrice, Nebraska; Leonard A. Brumbaugh; George I. Myers, who continued in our Brotherhood work to become Secretary of the National Benevolent Association of the Christian Church, a position from which he retired in June of 1973; Dr. L. V. Freeman; Charles Lee Wilson; Cecil Swindle; Onan Yale, associate minister; Forrest Wyman, interim minister; Robert G. Minshall; Lee Martin; Robert D. Belew, from Harrisonville, Missouri; Dr. D. Wayne Montgomery; Paul Robbins, interim minister; Greg & Kim Rea, co-ministers coming from Smartsburg Christian Church in Crawfordsville, Indiana; Greg Rea, serving twenty-three years, the longest pastorate in our history; and our present minister, Josh Kilsch.

In the original Salina Christian Church building was held the first State Sunday School Convention of the Kansas Christian Churches in 1881. Howard C. Rash was then President of the Kansas Sunday School Association of the Christian Churches and served many years in that capacity. In 1893, the use of Easter as a special state and national "Decision Day", especially in Sunday School, was developed through a recommendation by Howard Rash and our congregation, becoming a worldwide practice adopted by almost all denominations. On June 24, 1906, Mr. Rash organized the Rash Bible Class, which has the distinction of having received the first charter issued by the International Council of Religious Education. No history of our Sunday School would be complete without a record of the long, faithful service of Miss Bertha Ziegler who served as Secretary-Treasurer of the Sunday School continuously, except for one brief period of less than a year, from 1920-1966. Other members who have taught Sunday School for over forty years are Mr. Owen E. Hodgson, Mrs. N. T. Stewart. There are numerous other members of our congregation, both past and present, who have served our Sunday School and church untiringly in varied capacities for a quarter of a century or more. Because limited space precludes naming all of these people specifically, we can only extend our grateful thanks to the many lay members who have developed and carried forward the program of our church for the glory of God and pointed the way to a better life in Christ.

Beginning with the school year in 1922, a plan of teaching the Bible to the grade school pupils of the Salina Public Schools was put into operation. Every Salina Protestant church had regular classes under competent teachers for Wednesday of each week. Our church conducted this Week Day School of Religion for several years.

During the ministry of David Shields, talk of a new church building was begun; but it was during the pastorates of J. Arthur Dillinger and Guy Findly from 1917 to 1924 that plans were drawn and funds pledged and started. Mrs. Ida V. Underwood gave the first contribution, an amount of \$5,000. On May 17, 1919, Mr. and Mrs. Howard C. Rash and Mrs. Margaret Rash Miller donated the warranty deed to their property on the southeast corner of Eighth and Walnut as a site for the new house of worship. The land was the former home of the donors and their parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Rash, who were charter members of the Salina church. On July 25, 1922, the Building Committee and the Church Board signed a contract with Charles W. Shaver, a Salina architect; the congregation approved the plans on March 21, 1923; and the cornerstone was laid on September 21, 1924. M. Lee Sorey, newly called minister as of September 7th, delivered that day's sermon. On a Sunday morning in February 1925, the members moved into the new building, occupying the basement for two years while the sanctuary was being completed. The church building was dedicated on Sunday, January 30, 1927.

In a few short years, the depression period made it all but impossible to reduce the debt on the building. However, during the ministry of George I. Myers, \$15,000 was raised to refinance a loan through the Board of Church Extension for the church building and the purchase of a parsonage. In 1944, the original mortgage was burned; and at the annual meeting December 1, 1948, during Dr. L. V. Freeman's ministry, it was possible to have a mortgage burning, symbolizing the total clearance of debt on both the church and parsonage.

While Charles L. Wilson served as pastor, a need was felt for expanded church school facilities. In 1957, the former Charles Lee home and carriage house was purchased and converted into church school facilities for the youth of the church and a meeting center for all.

On January 28, 1962, after several years of planning with our minister, Cecil Swindle, twelve member families (38 members) were commissioned from First Christian Church to form the new Disciple congregation to be known as Belmont Boulevard Christian Church and to be located in southwest Salina. First Christian Church purchased the land site for the new church; and their congregation held services in their house parsonage (2438 Drake Place) from February 4, 1962 until October 20, 1963 when the first unit of their church was dedicated. The beautiful octagonal sanctuary was completed later and was first used for worship on Mother's Day, 1975.

Shortly after minister Robert Minshall and his family came on January 26, 1964, a new parsonage for the First Christian Church was purchased at 913 Manor Road. This remained the minister's home for many years and it, too, was debt-free.

In March 1973, thanks to memorials and congregational subscription, a newly refurbished 21 rank pipe organ was installed.

The years that followed brought growth and blessings, along with some challenges. By 1982, a Conservation Committee had been formed to look into the needs of all the church buildings (the church itself, the Fellowship House, the Recreation House, and the parsonage). From this and the updates needed to all the buildings, by August of 1987, a committee was formed to look at the long-range needs and options of the church facilities. A three-year building fund campaign was started at this time. During this time, the church worked closely with the Board of Church Extension. By 1988, the parsonage had been sold and the use of the Fellowship House and Recreation House had been discontinued with talk of selling both properties. A Site Committee was formed by 1989 to look into land options to move the church facility.

The Site Committee ultimately chose the land of our current facility, 2727 E. Crawford. A sign setting ceremony was held in August of 1991. Victory Sunday was held at the end of September 1991 to celebrate reaching the \$200,000 goal of the Building Fund Campaign. September 11, 1994 was an exciting day in the life of our church. The congregation held a groundbreaking ceremony, a joyous event celebrating several years of planning, prayer, and preparation for the future of the church. A year later, on October 1, 1995, the first service was held in the new facility.

In keeping with Jesus' teaching of the importance of children in God's kingdom, we have called Religious Education or Youth Directors to work with our young people. Some of those who have served our church in this capacity include: Jack Larson, Bill Salmon, Jack McCall, Martha Washington, Wallace Peckham, and Mr. and Mrs. David Klaus.

Throughout the history of our church, the work of its women has had a very important part, especially in support and development of the World Missions program. In the early days of the church, there were two groups: The Ladies' Aid Society and the Women's Missionary Society. In 1929, these two merged into one organization known as The Women's Council. Since 1949 and the historic founding of the Christian Women's Fellowship, both at a national and international level at Turkey Run in Indiana, the organization of women of Salina's First Christian Church has been developed as the Christian Women's Fellowship, now known as Disciples Women. Their purpose is service and study and is open to all women of the church.

One of the great joys in the life of a church is the dedication of a member to full-time Christian service. Some from our congregation who have been ordained and gone forth to serve as ministers of the Gospel include: Clifton E. Rash, Harry G. Hedden, Lee Woodward, J. Rex Smith, Donald F. Clingan, Harlan Johnson, Jack D. McCall, Lee Roy Shank, and John Philip Clark. We are proud and appreciative of all our Timothy's.

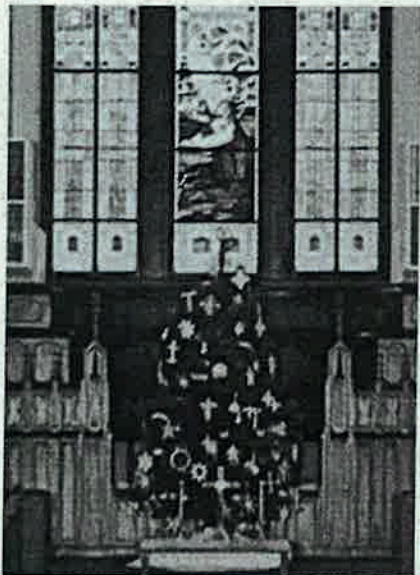
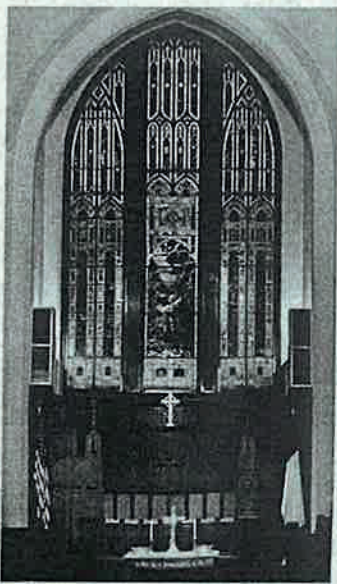
As we look back over our first 150 years, there have been many challenges and blessings that have come to Salina's First Christian Church. We anticipate many more in the years to come as we work together in the service of our Lord.



OUR FIRST CHURCH
Home of Salina Christian Church from 1878 to 1925



FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH - SALINA, KANSAS



FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
WORSHIP SERVICE 10:15
CHURCH SCHOOL 9:00
YOUTH SERVICE 6:30
SERMON 8:00
THE JAY OF MEMPHIS
ROBERT MINSHALL
MINISTER