

History of the Brandon United Methodist Church

100 Year Anniversary Booklet

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1856 - 1956 History Of The Church

Little did the Rev. H. Allen, a lay preacher and farmer, realize when he called a group of sturdy pioneers together, in the northern part of Metomen that he was laying a foundation stone for a church which was to serve the community in a spiritual capacity for one hundred years. This meeting took place in 1848, and was held in the Union Prairie School, which was one of a circuit containing three charges.

Our records of these early years are scanty, but we know that the Methodist Episcopal quarterly conference was held in the Union Prairie School on November 24, 1855. The Rev. J. M. Walker was the presiding elder and the Rev. John Armitage, preacher.

Families were scattered and distances had to be covered, but the inner need for a place of worship was necessary to this group of Methodists. The community centered around Brandon, for this was now a railroad junction and had become a center of business. At a meeting held on December 22, 1856, the Methodists decided to build a church in Brandon. The following excerpts from an official record were: "We, the subscribers propose to build a church in the village of Brandon to be know as the M.E. Church, to be owned by the subscribers and controlled by trustees appointed by them; said church to be fifty feet long by thirty feet wide and we agree to pay the sum set opposite our names as follows..." There was subscribed at that time \$1,418.00.

This was the beginning of our present church, as it occupied the present site. The first paster to be appointed was the Rev. C. W. Slater. Under the pastorate of the Rev. Slater, the church body was moved from the Union Prairie School to Brandon. Services were held in homes, school houses, and at times in Warren Hall's Hotel.

In 1863, the church building was completed, a dream had been fulfilled. It was dedicated during the pastorate of the Rev. Henry Requa. In looking over a church record book starting in 1863, of the first baptisms, marriages, and list of probationers and members joining the church, we find the first record of baptism to have taken place on May 31, 1863, with Rev. Requa the pastor. There were 23 listed, some familiar names were: Yorty, Russel, Woolcott and others. The first recorded marriage took place on October 20, 1863, by the Rev. Requa. The parties were William M. Cole and Ellen E. Wood, Metomen.

The long list of probationers shows the eagerness of the people to become members of the church. Under remarks, we find that many were received into the church, but occasionally we find the word "dropped," "died in the army," and "a good boy, but removed to parts unknown." Some of the familiar names listed were Lockin, Yorty, Hall, Foster, Russell, Graham, Austin, Hillman and many others.

In 1868, there was mention made in the Brandon Times of June 4th that the congregation was constantly increasing, and would have to enlarge the church. In that same issue was a notice of Byron Camp meeting convening for one week. A reference was made to a neat parsonage. The Sunday School was the largest in the village, with 75 pupils and G. A. Russel, superintendent. Not only did our early membership provide for their own spiritual housing, but they also gave their horses adequate sheds in the rear of the premises.

By 1871, the small church building was outgrown, and had to be replaced by a larger church. The official board proposed to cut the church in two parts in the center filling in 20 feet, including a window. A high bell tower was added and a bell put in. The entrance on the south side and gallery were added. The church was rededicated on October 4, 1871, the Rev. G. F. Reynolds, pastor, the Rev. W. G. Miller preaching the dedicatory sermon.

In 1876 the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was organized, with the pastor's wife, Mrs. Cole, acting as president, there being ten charter members.

Also in the same year the church purchased, from Mr. R. C. Kelly, lots adjacent to the church for a site for the new parsonage. This land cost \$700.00, and the money to pay for them was raised at a morning service.

In 1880 we find a note in our church records of the general condition of the church. The pastor was the Rev. Jesse Cole, and the superintendent of the Sunday School, Col. Leander Ferguson. References were made to the comfortable parsonage and the commodious church and to the total membership of 153, which numerically exceeded any other religious organization in Brandon.

So by the year 1884 there was in Brandon a flourishing Methodist church, complete with a building, parsonage, Sunday School and Foreign Missionary Society under the able guidance of the Rev. Jesse Cole. At this time, the Methodist Episcopal Church in America was 100 years old. (1884) Women had been faithful workers in the church, and in 1890 it was voted to admit women as lay delegates to general conference.

Repairs and upkeep have always been a problem of concern. In 1888 our board decided to repair and enlarge the parsonage, and in 1891 five new Rochester lamps were installed in the church proper.

In 1895 our church was struck by lightning and seriously damaged. The loss was reported to be \$1,000.00. Meetings were held in the Congregational church. When the building was repaired, and addition of 12 ft. by 40 ft. was put on the east side, a new fifty foot tower was built on the southwest corner, and furnace was installed. The contractors were Paine and Zell. At about this time, beautiful memorial windows of stained glass were given in memory of Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Foster, Mr. and Mrs. R. W. Pride, A. H. Darrow, Mr. and Mrs. Lingenfelter, Mrs. Lodica Meagher, Alva Knapp, Mrs. Alva Knapp, John Lockin, Mrs. John Lockin, Mr. and Mrs. George Russell, J. and J. Dixon, F. P. Ferguson, Mr. and Mrs. W. B. Jones.

The Rev. I. M. Wolverton was pastor at the time of the rededication and reopening on November 10, 1895. The exercises were in hands of Dr. Haylett, who preached both morning and evening. The Rev. Lounsbury, a former pastor, preached in the afternoon.

In 1911, Ladoga and Brandon were put in the same charge, under the pastorate of the Rev. John A. Collinge.

Improvements were made through the years. Gas lights were put in in 1904, which were replaced in 1919 by electric lights. The wiring was done by the late Mr. F. A. Kemper, at a cost of \$250.00. Concrete side walks were laid by William Wood in 1912. By 1920 the church property insurance value was \$8,000.00.

Under the guidance of the Rev. Raby, a much needed improvement was started in October, 1922. A modern basement was built. The chairman of the building committee was J. E. Johnson, and the chairman of the finance committee was W. A. Turner. Much of the labor was furnished by the members, the Rev. Raby leading them with his enthusiasm and hard work. Because of this, they were able to build the basement for \$2,378.30.

Very little is found in the records on the church for the depression years except the regular business routine. During these years, the leaders of the church did very well to meet the necessary obligations.

In spite of these difficulties, plans were made to celebrate the 78 th anniversary on Sunday, June 17th, 1934, followed by a banquet on Monday evening, June 18th. The guest speaker for the Sunday morning service was the Rev. John E. Collinge, a former pastor, delivered the sermon. The toast master for the banquet was the pastor, the Rev. A. L. Tucker. "Reminiscences," by Mrs. Horace Brown, and "Brandon as I Remember It" by Mr. Albert Pride were the highlights of the evening.

For a long time, it had been the desire of the members of the church to replace the organ. In the fall of 1949, the project was started. Letters were sent out to former friends and members of the church telling them of the project. The response was very good, and gave the added encouragement which was greatly needed. Local members were solicited by a committee of twelve. Donations ranged from \$1.00 to as high as \$500.00. The "Book of Remembrance" was purchased in which the donor's names were listed, and the names of those in whose memory the contribution was given.

On March 22nd, 1950, a Wurlitzer Organ was purchased. It was dedicated Sunday, April 23rd, 1950 at 2:00pm. The dedication ceremony was conducted by the resident pastor, the Rev. Joseph Cheek. Miss Lulu Sherwin, the organist, played the opening prelude and the offertory. The guest artist was Professor Dix of Lawrence College Conservatory of Music.

In the spring of 1952, two church families purchased a new bell to replace the old one which had been damaged. Shortly after this, an outside bulletin board and brass candle sticks for the altar were given in memory of members.

By the early part of 1954, the heating of the church had become a problem. A meeting of a group of church members representing the organizations was called to see what could be done. When the recommendations were given to the church officials, and it was decided after much consideration to completely modernize the basement and sanctuary.

The plan to finance the project was to have a "Loyalty Sunday" in September, with the Rev. Alvin Lindgren, District Superintendent, as a guest speaker. There was laid on our altar the sum of \$2,656.00 and with the pledges, it totaled nearly \$8,000.00. This was perhaps the greatest offering the church has ever had. It was a day to remember.

The work progressed very nicely and in the early summer the congregation was worshipping in the church, after having held services in the High School for several months.

The consecration of the church was held Sunday, June 12, 1955. The Rev. Gary Fritz was pastor and the guest speaker, the Rev. Alvin Lindgren.

Because to the splendid efforts and co-operation of members and friends of the church, we now have a beautiful house of worship. It is a living memorial to the faithful men and women who have served in it down through the century. Like the Greek runners of old, they have handed the torch of Christian teachings from one generation to the next until we have reached the completion of the first century. "A century only serves to give a useful church its tools: In the second century may we continue to grow in ability to use them."