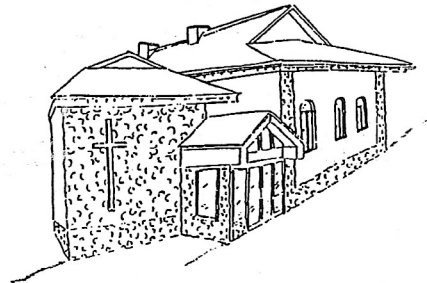
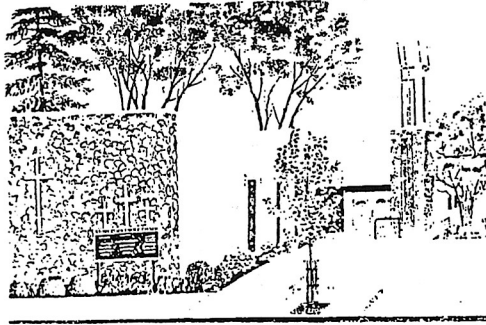


A HISTORICAL  
SKETCH  
OF  
STONY PLAIN UNITED CHURCH  
1995



## HISTORY OF STONY PLAIN UNITED CHURCH

The history of Stony Plain United Church can be traced back to the early Methodist missionaries who braved the unknown Canadian Northwest.

In 1840 Rev. Rundle arrived in Fort Edmonton, travelling with the fur traders and ministering to both Indians and whites. He established a mission on Pigeon Lake, now the site of a log building, built in his memory and used for many functions by the United Church.

In 1860, Rev. George McDougal was appointed chairperson of the Hudson Bay Missions of the Methodist church, visiting Fort Edmonton in 1862, and envisioning it to be the site of a great city. Early in 1871, he was invited to open and take charge of a new mission there. His was the first white family in Alberta, three of them perishing in the smallpox epidemic. The Original McDougal church built before 1875 is preserved at Fort Edmonton Park.

David McQueen arrived in Edmonton in 1887. He became supervisor of schools of the Northern District which included the district of Stony Plain. The oldtimers held him in high regard. He baptised their children, buried their dead and in 43 years of ministry married over 5000 persons.

The first church in Stony Plain was the Methodist Church, completed in 1907. It was one of the points of the Methodist Mission begun in 1906, and included Holborn and Brightbank.

The church was situated on the same location as the present United Church, and the first service was held before the windows were in. Railway construction workers brought plants and nail kegs for seats.

Early ministers were generally students who travelled on horseback, or with horse and buggy or cutter, staying at country points with members of the congregation. There was a stable at the back of the lot in Stony Plain for the horses. According to the minutes of May 9, 1908: "It is the opinion of

the Board that \$50.00 this year is as large a sum as can be reasonably raised for ministerial support and horse-keep". By 1920, \$150.00 had been allotted for horse-keep, indicating a rise in the price of hay and oats.

Ministers in the early years included: Mr. Hopkins, H. Haddon; W. Wyman, A.A.Holzer, T.W.H. Armstrong, Radcliffe Clegg, Ernest Heywood, Herbert Gosman, F.E. Townsend, David Simpson, J. E. Heald, Mr. Holstead, Mr. Law, Mr. Powell, Fred Wilson, and George Sauder, who was a student minister here about 1915, and returned in the late twenties after he was ordained.

Mrs. Catherine Gates, who came from England about 1912-14 to visit her brother, Mr. Hardwick, decided to stay, and started the first Sunday School in the town. Many people have memories of her faithful efforts and valuable guidance in that Sunday School which she conducted for 32 years. It was first held upstairs in the town hall. Later when an addition was built onto the original church, it was called the Catherine Gates Sunday School Room, and served that purpose. It sometimes served as living quarters for the minister.

Mr. Hardwick was also active in the church, and a talented singer. The first secretary-treasurer was J.D. Meisner, followed by Simon Witmer, then Dr. Oatway who held the position for forty years. Mrs. Oatway was organist for as many years.

Some early members of the church were Donaldsons, Mallocks, Michaels, Lorys, Mrs. Wood, Mrs. Wight, Zuchts, Yeatses, Smiths, Dr. Walton, Pidgeons, Mrs. Umbach, Scotty Robertsons, Willies, Kowenskis, McGillicuddys, and McCullas.

A house bought from Mr. Schlitt in 1920 on Railroad Avenue (now 50th Ave.) served as a manse for many years, where many of the mid-week groups met. Rev. Holzer was the first resident minister.

The Stony Plain Methodist Church was served by Mr. George Sauder as lay minister at the time of church union in 1925. This entailed uniting three Canadian churches - Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregational as "The United Church of Canada".

The minister served several smaller country churches with Stony Plain as the central point. The pastoral charge included Spruce Grove, Holborn, Brightbank, Wabamun, Onoway, Heatherdown, Alberta Beach, at different times through the years.

In 1952 the Stony Plain United Church burned to the ground, destroying most of the records. Worship services were held at the Good Shepherd Church and when the new Community Center became available, it served as the church.

The people desired a special place to worship God, so a new church building was erected. This was done by volunteer labor under the direction of a paid carpenter and a few special contractors. About the same time a modern manse was built adjacent to the church.

May 12, 1957 marked the dedication of the new church. At the same time Rev. Vipond also dedicated the new memorial organ. The church steeple was also added.

Holborn church held their final service in June, 1967 and amalgamated with Stony Plain, marking the end of Holborn as a point in the Pastoral Charge. Their famed fall suppers have been carried on as an annual tradition in this congregation, last year's being the 49th.

Brightbank church closed in 1970, but still stands as a landmark along highway 627. At this same time Mewassin Reformed Church joined the United Church of Canada, and is the only other church in the pastoral charge at present.

**Young people have been of paramount importance over the years, with dedicated Sunday School teachers who instill Christian knowledge in our children. Canadian Girls In Training (C.G.I.T.) and Explorer groups were active for many years, also Tyros, youth groups, and couples clubs. Confirmation Classes have been conducted by the ministers preparing the young adults for a Christian life. Vacation Bible School was also offered by volunteers during summer holidays.**

**Social events are an integral part of the church; Christmas parties and concerts, pot-luck suppers, social evenings, picnics, and family church camps at Moonlight Bay on Lake Wabamun.**

**The choir has performed a very important function, adding support to the inspirational messages of the minister. We have had senior choirs, junior choirs, and a combination of both. Many choir leaders and organists have offered their talents over the years.**

**Board members have directed the business matters and also provided guidance in the spiritual work of the church. Many have served for long terms as stewards or elders. More recently, committees form the board; worship, finance, Christian development, mission, stewardship . . . Members show the same dedication and commitment to service in the church.**

**Women have also played an important role in local responsibilities. A "Ladies Aid" was formed as early as 1925 in Stony Plain, and along with the Women's Missionary Society, provided much needed financial assistance through many projects: offerings, bake sales, church teas, bazaars, quilt raffles, catering for weddings and other functions, serving lunches for funerals, also visiting the sick, and entertaining at Senior Citizen's Homes. The name "Women's Association" was adopted in 1938, but since 1962 is known as United Church Women (U.C.W.).**

Plans for an extension to the church building have been long standing, in the late '70s and early 1980s with all receipts from catering designated to the building fund. Fall suppers and wedding banquets were the main sources of revenue, also a thrift shop operated by the U.C.W. in the basement of the manse.

The decision to proceed with an extension to the existing church was made by the congregation early in 1993.

A Building Committee was formed to assist with fundraising, financial planning and to direct the stages of construction. The manse was sold and moved to allow for the expansion, and with Shaul construction as general contractor, and many sub-contractors, the structure covering the entire lot (where the manse stood) was underway in the spring. Wet weather hampered work on the basement, but was soon remedied. Construction proceeded rapidly, and by fall, the building was closed in against the elements and at lock-up stage.

The many hours of volunteer labor by the people of the congregation can never be measured, and we are extremely grateful to them. This included installing drywall, painting, varnishing, in fact, a good portion of the interior finishing. Most Saturdays were spent as a carpentry crew, with hearty lunches supplied by the women.

The sanctuary was sufficiently complete to hold the first service in 1994, before the departure of Rev. Dr. Neville Smith and his family, after six years of ministry here.

The building costs were approximately \$400,000 assisted by a grant from Alberta Community Enhancement Program, and another from the County of Parkland to cover half the cost of the elevator. Along with generous donations from the congregation, we are debt free.

Over the past few months, renovations to the old sanctuary have converted it into a multi-purpose room, a chapel and library have been improvised from the previous altar area.

New furnishings have been added to the sanctuary, new pulpit, communion table, baptismal font, offering stands, registration table, padded pews, also a beautiful cupboard in the narthex, crafted by our own skilled workmen; and finally the stained glass windows.

It has been a tremendous undertaking for the congregation, and we can be proud of our accomplishments.

Our challenge for the future is to continue to provide an atmosphere where increasing numbers of the faithful will gather to worship God.

\*\*\*\*\*

United Church ministers from 1925 to the present include:

Rev. W. J. Whelen	1925-1927
Rev. G. A. Sauder	1928-1931
Rev. W. E. Sieber	1932-1934
Rev. L. G. Sieber	1935-1939
Rev. G. A. Kettlys	1940-1943
Student Minister	1944
Rev. A. W. McGee	1945-1948
J. G. Kaye (lay supply)	1949-1951
Jack Ward	1952-1953
Rev. L. W. McArthur	1954-1957
Mr. Naherney	1957-1958
Rev. R. E. Eskdale	1958-1960
Student	1961-1962
Dr. K. C. McLeod	1962-1965
Mr. Ken Jordan	1965-1966
Rev. W. H. Steele	1966-1977
Rev. B. B. Lyle (second minister)	1974-1975
Rev. W. Barkwell	1977-1978
Rev. J. Pereboom (second minister)	1977-1978
Rev. W. Shortt	1978-1986
Rev. John L. Pressey	1987-1988
Rev. Dr. Neville L. Smith	1988-1994
Rev. Cyril Cutting	1995