

Faith & Values

QUESTIONS? Contact community@timestoday.com or (309) 346-1111, Ext. 651

A look at the Free Methodist Church

The Free Methodist Church was organized at Pekin, New York, in 1860. The founders had been members of the Methodist Episcopal Church but were excluded from its membership for too earnestly advocating what they saw as the doctrines and usages of authentic Wesleyan Methodism. Under the leadership of the Rev. Benjamin Titus (B.T.) Roberts, a graduate of Wesleyan University and an able and eloquent preacher, the movement spread rapidly. Societies were organized, churches built and the work established.

The name "Methodist" was retained for the newly organized church because the founders felt that their misfortunes (expulsion from the Methodist Episcopal Church) had come to them because of their adherence to doctrines and standards of Methodism. The word "Free" was suggested and adopted because the new church was to be an anti-slavery church (slavery was an issue in those days), because pews in the churches



Frank Borror
East Peoria
Historical
Society
President

were to be free to all rather than sold or rented (as was common) and freedom from secret and oath bound societies (in particular the Freemasons).

The Free Methodist Church of East Peoria was organized in February, 1882 through the efforts of Rev. J. Marsh, pastor of Peoria First Church. Rev. Marsh walked from Peoria to hold services in the three-room Central Grade School. The first church was built the following year, and at the dedication 30 candidates received baptism and united with the church. Rev. Manley, district elder, preached the dedicatory sermon. A parsonage was constructed east of the church in 1887.


In 1922, the church was moved back from the street to a foundation with a full basement and a new belfry and entrance. A building pro-

gram was launched in August of 1953 to provide an addition to accommodate the growing congregation. This addition expanded the sanctuary to seat 316 people and accommodated 20 Sunday school classes. The \$45,000 project was dedicated June 27, 1954.

Pastor Harold Timm served the congregation from 1961 until 1975 at which time the congregation relocated to 800 Springfield Road. Pastor Ralph Park led the congregation until 2000 and later Harold Timm's son, Pastor Ike Timm, led the congregation for five years. Steve Clason took the reins in January of 2009 and serves in that capacity yet today. The church while remaining a Free Methodist

Church changed its name to The Encounter. The name was chosen to reflect the three stages of growth in Christianity in the Free Methodist Church — engage the culture and community through a conversation or activity, to build relationships with pre-believers and ultimately share the message of the Gospel, establish people in Christ through deliberately and systematically laying biblical foundations in all newborn believers. The goal is to make them permanent in biblical convictions as they keep on growing in their love and obedience to God, so that they can do the same and equip every believer with the understanding and heart to be able to minister.





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BAPTIST

Pastor Rev. Simeon Raddatz