

Historical Heritage: The Harvey Free Methodist Church

The Harvey Free Methodist Church was organized early in 1892 under a grove of wild apple trees in South Harvey. The society met for incorporation on February 4, 1892 at the home of John F. Hill on Myrtle Street. The religious services were conducted for a short period of time in a pavilion stand in South Harvey. Subsequently, the congregation moved to a vacant store building, located at 156th and Center.

In 1898, as the congregation expanded, they again moved, and this time into a church building at 153rd and Turlington Streets, the former United Brethren Church building. Under the pastorate of Rev. Fred Campbell, a church building was erected in 1899 at 146th and Sangamon Streets, but the building was moved to a new location on Center Ave. in 1901. In 1933, when it became necessary to expand the present facilities as attendance continued to grow, the church was enlarged and remodeled under the leadership of Rev. E. Eldridge.

In 1955, during the administration of Rev. W.R. Thompson, a building program was launched and by September 1, 1960 the congregation moved into their new edifice at 148th and Lexington Streets. This new brick, four-level structure was capable of accommodating a congregation of 250 and a Sunday School of 300.

A few more fun facts:

- Many of the early members were people attracted to Harvey because it was known as a 'dry town'; saloons and liquor stores were prohibited.
- The early Free Methodist Church was characterized by frequent streets meetings held at strategic downtown corners.
- During the early years, the Harvey Church was a point in Englewood Circuit, the one pastor serving both the Harvey and the Englewood Churches.

Historical Heritage: The Monee Free Methodist Church

In 1977, the Harvey Free Methodist Church purchased a 5-acre parcel of land on the corner of Willow Creek Ln. in Monee. In September of 1977, Christian Youth Crusaders began on Wednesday evenings at Monee Elementary School. That November, Sunday morning worship services were held at both the Harvey Church and in Monee, in the judge's chambers of the Old Monee Court House. Some of the Harvey members came to Monee to help and hold Sunday School classes.

After 87 years in Harvey, in 1979 the church was sold, debt free. On June 3, 1979, the church held a ground-breaking ceremony, but did not hold their first service in the newly constructed building until December 27, 1982. During that time, beginning in November 1979, Sunday morning worship services and Sunday School were held at Monee Elementary School.

When services began in the new building in December of 1982, the inside was not quite complete and had a "rustic" look. The building had cement floors, which would later be tiled, and then carpeted. The platform was wooden and the church borrowed a member's piano, as all such items had been sold as a package deal with the Harvey Church. The congregation sat on folding chairs until padded seats could be purchased. Much of the inside work was completed by church attendees and many pieces of furniture, appliances, indoor and outdoor equipment were all donated.

The same man the church purchased land from later started attending the church. He felt directed by God to have "the Rock" with its message placed on the property. He donated the entire project and the church held a special outdoor dedication service in the summer of 1989. The three crosses, also a landmark on our property, were put up years later in memory of Ed Reedy.

A few "firsts" in the Monee Church:

- First Pastor: Paul Leitzke
- First Worship Service: December 20, 1981
- First Birth: James Sobotka (December 20, 1981)
- First Wedding: Tim and Debbie Thompson (May 1, 1982)