



33 Wellwood Street NE
Motley, MN 56466
218-352-6888

Motley Free Methodist Church

Some History of the Motley Free Methodist Church

It is very difficult to piece together an accurate historical picture of the FMC in Motley due to the lack of records and resources.

Attached with this will be a historical account of the Pastors that have been appointed here since 1892, this was gleaned from the records in Indianapolis some years ago.

While we will note some of the very earliest history from the archives in Indianapolis, there is about a 90-100 year gap that the FMC was in fact functional here in Motley, but there seems to be no records, or at least very little records left.

I will touch on those first years (1870-1890's), touch on the camp meeting years (1940's-1970's) and then give a fairly detailed account of the past 15 years that I have been here as pastor.

The early years

In 1878 Rev. E.L Smith, a young preacher in the Minnesota and Iowa Conference asked his district chairman, Rev. Wm Cusick for permission to go into north Minnesota in answer the calls he had received for help. Permission was granted and he drove 300 miles north and ended in Alexandria. He was assigned to Frazee and Sauk Centre but also traveled around the area finding new preaching points.

Brother Cusick purchased a tent, in time, and traveled through this country where there were no Free Methodist Churches.

Some time later (after the 1878 move north) Rev. B.T Roberts, our senior Bishop accompanied Brother Cusick when he held meetings in Northfield, Alexandria and Motley.

Records show that a tent meeting was held on the Long Prairie river (runs through Motley) where many were converted. "One young man fell down at the alter, the people were dreadfully frightened but the very next night many more came to the meeting and the young man prayed through and was saved."

On September 14, 1887 a northern Minnesota conference was established with the organization located in Verndale, MN.

From the records that I can find, it appears that Motley FMC was established, with a located pastor in 1892. That first pastor was the Rev. A. Keniston. There are also some records that show a gathering here in Motley as early as 1880, with S.H Greenup and J.G Norris as leaders then. It also appears that a church building was build in the 1890's. That building was later moved in about 1948 to its current location where MFMC held services in it until 2004.

There are no specific records at all that I am aware of for the next 90 years, with the exception of some old posters advertising the Annual Camp meetings at Motley FMC campgrounds. We have the broken pieces of a 1942 Camp Meeting here at Motley and several newer ones as well.

There are photos of Sunday school classes and pastors and teachers. There are a few newspaper clippings of church events. There are a few copies of "Certificate of Promotion" from the early 1950's there are some photos of the "old" church and the "new parsonage from the 1940's.

I have spoken personally to the late Rev. Leonard Covel (1942-1946) about the parsonage being built during his years here in Motley. It was actually inside the walls of the "parsonage" where the poster for the 1942 Camp Meeting was found.

It would appear, and I have been told by residents here, these Camp Meeting years were powerfully good years. The Holy Spirit of God moved on these meetings and many times pastors and leaders would literally "head into the brush and not come back until they had heard from God"

We still have several posters / flyers from the Camp meetings from 1962 until 1978.

People from all over the region came and worshipped and camped and were saved and heard from God during those fruitful years.

A typical camp meeting day had early prayer, CYC programs, Chapel hour, quiet time, sing time and Evangelistic services every evening.

In 1979 when the last meeting was held, it was called a Youth Rally, the Rev. Ray Narusawa was the missionary speaker, Bishop Emeritus Walter Kendall was the main speaker and "The Love stream" gospel singers from Aldersgate College in Moose Jaw Saskatchewan were here to lead music and share.

There were some weddings, some funerals, some Sunday school activities , some CYC time for students and more during the 1970's and late 1980's.

Since the late 1960's there have been 5 pastors here at MFMC. They were; Rev. Leslie Crider (twice), Rev. V. Donald Bundy, Rev. Mark Bateson and myself, Rev. Jim Johnson.

In 2002 when I became the Sr pastor (LMC only) of the Motley FMC , the church was elderly and very small (8 members / congregants total).

I was bi-vocational at the time and so for the next 2 years we began to pray and seek the face of God as to how to proceed with this 100 + year old building, no money and a very aging congregation.

God began to move and people began to come from the community and from my work place and from the community from which I lived.

By late 2003 we were looking for a newer building to move to, as this one was old, very limited in space and usefulness and needed much repair and updating.

After praying for some months God allowed us to buy and remodel and move into what was known as the Riverside Church, here in Motley.

We were so thankful as God gave the building to us and the 3 city lots for \$5000.

We moved into that building in the spring of 2004 and had Supt. John Grover here for our dedication service that spring.

At the time we were averaging about 60-70 people and I was still bi-vocational.

In January 2006 I became the full-time Sr. pastor of the church and left my full time management job. Shortly after that all happened we began to see near 100 people here every Sunday and people were now getting saved and becoming disciples of Jesus Christ.

Over these last years we have added bible study opportunities (currently we have 7 through out the week) , a youth group (currently we have 25-35 teens in this) a Kids Club / Awana (where we have ministered to anywhere from 45-100 children) . Each summer we have a VBS for the kids of the community (usually about 125 children).

Our women's group distributes food baskets at Thanksgiving and Christmas each year to many people in and outside of the church.

Our youth group has been involved in a mission's trip and is planning another one for 2017 or 2018. Our youth group also raised the funds to help a family in town re-roof their home.

We had physically run out of space in the "Riverside" building too and we had been praying for some years as to if we should build a newer and / or larger church building.

God blessed us with the funds to begin and be added 7400 square feet of sanctuary and foyer and bathrooms and offices and nursery space to the existing building in 2014. We moved into the new building on Christmas Eve on 2014 and we had near 300 people in attendance that night.

This was a \$750,000 project and 22 months (December 2016) that addition was paid for too. Praise and Glory to God.

Currently we are averaging almost 300 people that worship here each Sunday morning. We do many funerals for our unchurched community friends and try to minister to this community as much as we can.

Currently we also support several missionaries and their work through out the world including a TV ministry in Pakistan (Barkat TV) to dozens of countries there in the Middle East, where they hear the gospel message in their own languages. Hundreds are being saved and healed in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

There are many stories that could be told of the blessings of God. He has done many miracles here in our midst over these last years. Many people have come to faith in Jesus Christ. Physical healings have happened, marriages have been restored and disciples have been made. Each summer we go down to the river here in Motley and celebrate many baptisms each July.

Several within the church in these last few years have answered the call of God and are now either in the ministry or are working towards being pastors and / or Chaplains.

Our web-page is www.motleyfreemethodistchurch.com and on that web page you can see the pictures of the buildings and the stories and see the activities that we are involved in now.

God gets all the glory for the great things that He has done here in Motley FMC over these many years. We have dedicated this building and this ministry to Him, and may God get the Glory here until Jesus comes again.

Submitted by Sr. pastor Jim Johnson