

Prairie Home Methodist Episcopal Church South
Prairie Home Methodist Church
Prairie Home United Methodist Church
Prairie Home, Missouri 65068

Marlene Arnold, Pastor
10:00 a.m. Sunday School
11:00 a.m. Morning Worship

Township:	T-47-N	Organized:	1881
Range:	R-15-W	Disbanded:	No
Section:	20	Active:	Yes
Map:		Updated:	March 8, 2020

Cemetery: There is a cemetery associated with this church.

Area: Prairie Home, Missouri

Records: The location of the church records is unknown at present.

History:

Prairie Home Episcopal Church, South

From "History of Howard and Cooper Counties Missouri", 1883

Prairie Home M. E. Church-Organized in 1881 by Rev. Vandiver. Church built in 1880-81 and dedicated August 1881, by Rev. Phillips. First pastor, Rev. Vandiver; second, Rev. Cross; present pastor, John Anthony. Original members, Sarah Tompkins and Mrs. Eleanor Huff. Soon after the church was organized with the two members above named, the following persons united: William Kirschman and wife, James Wilson, wife and family, James Jones and wife, Alonzo Meredith, Mrs. Kate Smith, Samuel Jones, Andrew Rankins, Mrs. Kelly M. Hobbs and Miss Jessie George. Present membership, thirty-five. Value church property, \$1,500.

Prairie Home Methodist Episcopal Church

From "History of Cooper County Missouri" by W. F. Johnson 1919

Prairie Home Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1881, by Rev. Vandiver. The church building was dedicated and organized in 1881 by Rev. Phillip. The original members were Sarah Tompkins and Eleanor Huff.

With Kindred Spirits, Two Beloved Women Instigated Church at Prairie Home

Prairie Home Methodist Church

From "Memorabilia of Cooper County", 1990

Two humble, godly women originated the idea of what has grown to be one of the most thriving rural churches in Cooper county, the Prairie Home Methodist church. They were Mrs. Sarah Robertson Thompkins and Mrs. Eleanor Huff, who lived within a few miles of each other and as neighbors soon found they were kindred spirits, and would often meet with each other when the pressing duties of their lives would permit and hold prayer meetings. Sometimes other neighbors would drop in to enjoy the "feast of reason and the flow of soul."

These two women were Methodist by conviction, and while there were churches within a radius of a few miles roundabout, an Evangelical (founded in 1848) and a Lutheran (1855) at Pleasant Grove on the north, a Baptist church at Pisgah (1823) on the south a Presbyterian at New Salem (1821)

and a Christian church at Walnut Grove (1862) both on the northwest, there was no Methodist, and their hearts yearned for a church of their own belief. The "wish was father to the thought" so they called in the Rev. Lewis Vandiver, a Methodist pastor at Jamestown for his advice and counsel.

Organized in 1880

The good pastor encouraged the idea and with his help what was originally wishful thinking became a concrete plan and the church with this humble beginning was organized, it seems some time in 1880. Soon thereafter this nucleus was increased by the following members: William Kirschman and wife, James Wilson and wife, James Jones and wife, Alonzo Meredith, Mrs. Kate Smith, Samuel James, Andrew Rankins, Mrs. Kelley M. Hobbs, and Miss Jessie George, twelve in all.

(Mr. and Mrs. Kirschman were the parents of B.F.W.C., and E. M. Kirschman, and Mrs. Eunice Dishion, all now active members of this church and several of them officers).

At first they met at homes for worship, but that was not a satisfactory arrangement. "Now we are organized, have a preacher (the Rev. Mr. Vandiver), next thing that we must have is a church house," said the members.

There was no church building at that time in the village of Prairie Home (the Baptist church was built about 16 years later) Coincidentally the local Masonic order was casting about for some headquarters and they decided to pool their interests. Dr. A.J. Lacy, physician in the community, himself a prominent Mason, became interested in the project to the extent that he donated a lot in the southeast section of the village to the Masons and the church trustees jointly. There a building was erected, the upper story for lodge purposes and the lower floor for a church.

Building Is Realized

Much of the labor was donated by church and lodge members. To Wm. Kirschman went the honor of hauling the largest loads of lumber as he owned the largest wagon, and gladly donated the use of wagon, team and self to that end, hauling the lumber from Bunceton, 15 miles away over worse than indifferent roads, through the heat and the dust or the rain and the mud. Therefore with cash in hand (\$1500) and hope in their hearts the building was completed.

In August 1881 these pioneer Methodists dedicated their part of the building to the service of God. This was a short time as time goes, after the church was organized, less than a year: The Rev. Mr. Phillips had charge of the dedication services. These godly folks rejoiced over their House of God, even though it was a simple unpretentious building with beauty of neither line nor adornment, but it was theirs in which to worship God "according to the dictates of their conscience." Membership at the time of dedication numbered 35.

Solicited For Organ

The first minister, the Rev. Vandiver, was followed by the Rev. Mr. Cross. It was decided that a musical instrument would add to the services, so two young girls, recent converts and early members. Eolo Franklin and Hattie Hornbeck, (afterward Mrs. J.W. Poindexter and Mrs. John Milt George) went about soliciting funds for an organ. Response was generous and a "brand new" organ was purchased and installed. Some of the members objected to this innovation. "An organ is an instrument of the devil," quote they. One of them, Will Lacy, having the courage of his convictions walked out, to return no more. The others finally submitted and the organ remained.

"Old Time" Revival Held

The church grew steadfastly in numbers and influence, augmented as to membership with an occasional protracted meeting. One outstanding revival in the early history is proudly remembered by the older members today and was held by the Rev. Mr. Mock. Though a Presbyterian himself

the Rev. Mock fulfilled all the requirements for a real Methodist evangelist and held a meeting that probably has never been equaled in this community as to fervor and results. Folks from far and near attended regularly, and each night great numbers of them became convinced of their sins and came forward to the altar for confession.

Many of the present older members came into the fold at that time.

Inevitably this church which had so humble a beginning should out-grow its quarters and an agitation for a new building started early in the century and culminated along about 1914 under the preaching of the Rev. Mr. Pollock. The half interest in the building was bought by the Masons for \$500 and the money put into the present modern commodious structure, centrally located on the Jefferson Road in the eastern part of the village. (The old building burned about 1924 when the lower floor was being used as the grade school, and another one similar as to structure and plan, only larger, was built.) The grounds for the new church were donated by the late Mr. and Mrs. J.P. Huth and the cornerstone was laid in May, 1916, with appropriate rites under the auspices of the A.F. and A.M. order. The Rev. C.H. Briggs, high in Masonic circles and a presiding elder in the denomination, was master of ceremonies. It was dedicated in October 1916, by the Rev. C.C. Wood, a high dignitary in the church and editor of the church paper, "The Christian Advocate." Rev. Wood presented the congregation at this time with a handsome pulpit Bible.

The Rev. C.F. Pryor was the pastor at the time of dedication. The building committee was R.A. Carey, Fred Schilb, Sr., R.B. Smith, Geo. Morris, H.K. Gilbreath, Louis Sutton and F.L. Schilb; finance committee, T.O. Haley, B.F. Kirschman and Louis Sutton; contractors, J.M. Ramsey and sons. The cost was around \$7,000. The first service held in the building was the funeral of Dr. D.W. Poindexter in September 1916.

The present church has an auditorium with a seating capacity of 500 with a full basement underneath, containing Sunday school rooms, kitchen and furnace, the whole electrically lighted and equipped. The grounds have been beautified from time to time with shrubbery and annual blooming flowers.

Off Circuit And Back

At first the church was on the circuit with Jamestown, Bethel, Splice Creek and Point (since demolished by fire) with services one Sunday in each month, but as their finances improved and membership enlarged, they were given full time. However, during the early '30's - depression time - they were again put' on a circuit, this time with Splice Creek alone, and now services are held three Sundays each month, with Splice Creek having the remaining Sunday. The pastor for the past two years has been the Rev. Dr. Frank Banyard of the faculty of the Conservatory of Music at Central college, Fayette. He has done outstanding work keeping the church up-to-date and alert even with the handicaps that come in time of war. However, Dr. Banyard is leaving soon to take up U.S.O. work.

The church has owned two parsonages in its time. The one at present has been providing a source of income from rent as the pastor is a non-resident.

The present officers are: Trustees, C.H. Bodamer, H.K. Gilbreath, E.M. Kirschman, J.W. Kirachman and Joe W. Haldiman; stewards, G.C. Toler, Luther Simmers, Silas S. Dishion, H.K. Gilbreath and W.G. Chappell; Mrs. J.G. Poindexter is treasurer; and Miss Lola Mae Sullins, keeper of records.

The present membership is 193. The service flag of the church bears eleven stars, one gold, honoring the memory of Marvin Earl Carpenter who lost his life in Africa late in 1942.

Two of the church pastors through the years later became presiding elders, the Rev. Fred Haines and the Rev. L.M. Starkey. Two of them were presiding elders prior to their service here, and Rev. A. Noble James and the Rev. J.T. Ricketts.

The longest residential pastorate was that of Rev. Mr. James, who served five years.

The Sunday School is graded. F.L. Schilb is superintendent of the schools, a position he has held for 47 years, with a brief respite of three years, at which time Silas B. Dishion assumed charge. Mr. Schilb has a record of a perfect attendance at Sunday School for 20 years. R.A. Carey, Sr., also holds a record of being church trustee for 40 years through now resigned.

Live Wire Women's Society

A history of this church would not be complete without deference being paid to its live wire women's organization. The society was started during the pastorate of the Rev. Mr. Pollock, in 1914 or 1915. Mrs. Pollock being instrumental in its organization, which took place at the home of Mrs. E.L. Schilb and was at first an independent society called the "Ladies' Aid." The late Mrs. R.B. Smith was the first president.

Later it became known as the Women's Missionary Society and was affiliated with the district conference. Now it is the Women's Society of Christian Service. But regardless of name, it has come down through the years working valiantly and praying conscientiously for the advancement of the cause it represents, the welfare of the church. These women have added to their treasury by annual Thanksgiving and Christmas turkey and chicken and oyster suppers, catering at banquets, school and civic, serving farm sale dinners, holding bazaars, rummage sales, Easter markets, etc., and have spent their profits on painting the church inside and out, helping to re-roof the building, refurnishing auditorium and basement whenever needed, doing charity work etc., working always primarily to lift the morale of church and community.

Present officers are: Mrs. Carl Rahn, president; Miss Helen Kirschman, vice-president; Mrs. W.L. Odneal, secretary; Mrs. Carl Bodamer, treasurer. They meet once a month, usually at the homes of the members; their membership numbers forty.

About "Aunt Sallie"

Now a few words to tie up the early history of the church with that of the village and a bit about one of its founders, "Aunt Sallie" Thompkins. At the time of the organization of this church, the village had few houses and fewer stores. The first store was probably established about 1865 and was owned and operated by James Boswell, father of Mrs. Myra Gilbreath. The Boswell family lived just east of what is now Prairie Home on a farm now owned by the heirs of the late Ben Meyer. Mr. Boswell would walk back and forth each day to and from his store. He called his store his "prairie home" and thus, according to tradition, did the village get its name.

Mrs. Sarah Robertson Thompkins, "Aunt Sallie," was one of the two women, whose spiritual hunger and determination to do something about it, were responsible for the organizing of the Methodist church, and was of the "stuff of which heroines are made." She at the age of 24, came with her young husband, Albert G. Thompkins, from their native Virginia to Cooper county, Missouri, driving all the way in a one horse wagon which contained all of their worldly goods. This was in 1831, and they settled a few miles southeast of what is now Prairie Home. They soon afterward entered 80 acres of land and endured all the hardships of early pioneers living for a time in a cabin with no chimney and doing their cooking out of doors.

Mr. Thompkins died about 30 years later leaving an estate of \$25,000 even though they had lost sixteen or more negroes owing to the exigencies of the times. He kept a stage stand on the Jefferson Road, a place called "Midway" and where a post office was established. Here the horses for the trip from Boonville to Jefferson City or vice versa were changed.

Some of the older citizens recall the excitement when the conch shell, forerunner of the automobile horn, would herald the approach of the stage coach and was the signal for the horses to be made

ready for the relay. The passengers would stop for a bite to eat as the enterprising Thompkins ran a boarding house or eating place, too, and then go merrily on their way bouncing in the springless vehicle over the ruts, or being literally dragged through mud or dust, according to the season.

After Mr. Thompkins death, in 1862, his widow, true to her energetic and capable self, carried on with the duties of boarding house, postoffice and stage stand. The Midway post office was the forerunner of the one at Prairie Home. The latter was kept at first in what is now the Langkop drug store. James Jones was the first postmaster and the late Mrs. Lou Carpenter was the assistant.

Ernest Kirschman, Sr., who is now 92 years of age, tells of going twice each week to Midway to get the family mail. The Thompkins place which is now the John J. Kempfer farm. Mrs. Thompkins is buried on that farm, as is probably her husband, who was also a Methodist of many years standing at the time of this death. They had no children Mr. Thompkins was the nephew of the Hon. George Thompkins who founded in St. Louis the first law school west of the Mississippi river.

by Mrs. George S. Stemmons
