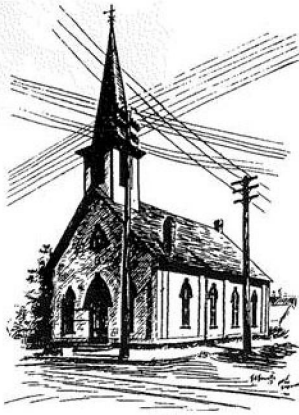


135TH Anniversary

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

1873 – 2008



1877

Sunday, December 28, 2008, marks the 135th birthday of Joplin's first Presbyterian Church. On December 28, 1873 thirteen people met at the home of Mrs. A.V. Allen on Mineral Street to form First Presbyterian Church. Perhaps the number was symbolic: the Twelve Disciples plus Jesus equaled thirteen!

FPC was launched in 1873, the same year Joplin was incorporated.

A brick church building, located on the northeast corner of Seventh and Main Streets, was dedicated in September, 1877. It cost \$4,000.

Membership stood at 35 .

The growing congregation moved to a larger building on northeast corner of Sixth and Pearl Streets, which was dedicated February 11, 1902. A manse (pastor's residence) was located directly east of the church.



Much of that structure was destroyed by a fire on February 13, 1923. A rebuilt and enlarged sanctuary, with classrooms, offices, and dining hall, was dedicated June 29, 1924.



As Joplin grew, so did the church. By 1955, when the Rev. Dr. Otto Seymour was Senior Pastor, FPC claimed 1,718 communicant

members, with 701 members in Sunday Church School, and ranked as the sixth largest Presbyterian (USA) church in Missouri.

Faced with a deteriorating building, the congregation decided in the 1960s to acquire the property north to Fifth Street and erect new facilities. Educational classrooms, the chapel, offices, John Knox Hall, and kitchen were dedicated October 12, 1969. The first service in the new colonial style sanctuary was held on Palm Sunday, 1975. It was dedicated September 7, 1975.

A three-manual, 23-rank Moeller pipe organ is located in the sanctuary balcony. Long known for its fine choirs and music program, FPC cosponsored the Joplin Ecumenical Choir Festival from 1987 to 1997.

To meet expanding youth and mission activities a rural site on Shoal Creek near Diamond, Missouri was purchased in 1985 and named “Shoalkirk.” In 1989 the building at 502 Pearl Street was acquired.

Local mission projects have included Crosslines, Souls Harbor, Lafayette house, the Community Clinic, Habitat for Humanity, Children’s Haven, Boy Scout Troop 10, Cub Scout Pack 10, Ronald McDonald House, Deacon’s Christmas Baskets, and a Stephen Ministry, among others.



The “Kidstuff” Preschool and Mom’s Day Out, housed on the FPC campus, currently serves about 50 children per day.

First Presbyterian Church has supported international mission work in Mexico, Chile, South Africa, Kenya, Lesotho, Hungary, India, and China, among other places.

Over its first 135 years, FPC has been served by 23 pastors, 15 assistant or associate pastors, and five interim pastors. Two of the assistant pastors have been women. Dr. Seymour held the longest pastorate: 28 years (1932-1960). In the 1980s the staff included three fulltime clergy.

As the world observes the 500th birth anniversary of reformer and theologian John Calvin in 2009, First Presbyterian Church ranks as the second largest church in the John Calvin Presbytery (after First & Calvary, Springfield). FPC looks to the future with confidence, dedicated to encouraging this community of faith and reaching out with God's love through Jesus Christ to Joplin and beyond.