

The History of Methodism In Effingham, Kansas

The history of Methodism in Effingham, Kansas has many strands that weave together making it what it is today. The only church record books that were available for this history were the records from 1894-1914 and 1919-1928. The rest are missing at this point. This history has relied upon several secondary sources to piece the story together.

Early records indicate that the Methodist Episcopal Church work in Kansas was officially begun in 1854 when the Missouri Conference met and formed the Kansas and Nebraska Mission District. There were seven missions, not including the work among the Indians. Rev. Goode was appointed as the presiding elder over this area. A year later it was reported that there were 631 white members, and 127 Indian members of The Methodist Episcopal Church located in Cygnes, Fort Scott, Fort Riley, Nemaha, Wolf River, Wyandotte, and Delaware. Kansas was divided into two districts, with L.B. Dennis appointed to supervise the North Kansas District, based out of Leavenworth, and Abraham Still appointed to the South Kansas District, based out of Topeka. Anticipating additional migration of whites into the area, the two Kansas districts along with the Nebraska District were organized into the Kansas-Nebraska Conference. The organizational meeting took place at Leavenworth, Kansas on October 23, 1856. In 1861 the conference divided again and the Kansas and Nebraska Conferences were formed. By 1870 the Kansas Conference was reporting 103 preachers, 233 local preachers, with 10,290 members.¹

The Methodist Episcopal Church came to Atchison county when Rev. James Shaw, a prominent member of the Detroit Conference, came west looking for a new place to live. He had served as a pastor and a missionary among the Native Americans in the

Lake Superior District. He arrived in Leavenworth in March of 1856. Upon finding a Methodist Episcopal Church work already in existence, he moved further north to Atchison.² Atchison had been the scene of an ongoing conflict between the abolitionists and the pro-slavery elements that were vying for dominance in the pre-statehood days of Kansas. By 1856, Atchison was noted as being predominantly a pro-slavery community.³ Upon finding Atchison to be unfriendly toward preachers, Rev. Shaw went further north to Doniphan and Geary, both of which were free-state towns. The people of Geary welcomed him and invited him to make his new home among them. He returned to Detroit and brought his family to their new home in Geary. Shortly after he began his ministry there, he was visited by a gentleman whom he refers to as 'Brother Butts' who invited him to serve as the pastor of the Atchison-Monrovia Circuit.⁴ He agreed and was officially appointed as the pastor, beginning his ministry there in May of 1857.⁵ Monrovia was located along the Central Branch Railroad⁶ about fifteen miles west of Atchison. Services were held every other week during the summer, weather permitting, in the home of J.H. Snyder, an Evangelical Lutheran,⁷ who migrated from Tuscarawas County, Ohio.⁸ The Monrovia Circuit was organized in 1859 and included all the territory between Monrovia and Sumner. The first pastor for this new circuit was Rev. A.C. McNeal.⁹

According to the records left by Aaron Best, an immigrant from Pennsylvania, there was still no church building in Monrovia when he arrived there in 1861.¹⁰ Aaron joined the Methodist Episcopal Church, which he noted was organized in 1860. He went on to serve as steward and class leader for several years.¹¹

In 1882 a Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in Effingham, Kansas, about three miles further west of Monrovia along the railroad. Effingham was named after Effingham H. Nickels of Boston, who was a promoter of the railroad.¹² The church met in the school house until a building was built in 1894 on the northeast corner of Third and George Streets¹³. This building was used until the 1970's. Early records of the local church do not give us information regarding who the pastors were from 1882-1896, but other sources indicate that J.S. Smith of Muscotah was the pastor in 1883.¹⁴ Based upon this information, J.S. Smith could have been the pastor who helped organize the church in 1882.

The next branch of Methodism to consider is the Methodist Episcopal Church South. The roots of this part of Methodism go back to 1850 when the St. Louis Conference had circuit riders that crossed the borders into Kansas and Nebraska and began preaching wherever they found people. In 1854 the St. Louis Conference formed the Kansas Mission District with Andrew Monroe as Superintendent. The newly formed district consisted of eight preaching circuits in addition to its Indian mission work. In 1855 the Methodist Episcopal Church South reported 619 members compared to the Methodist Episcopal Church reports of 631. The Kansas Mission District was also organized into two districts that same year; the Lecompton District with William Bradford as presiding elder, and the Kickapoo District with Nathan Scarritt. With the outbreak of the Civil war, the last recorded Methodist Episcopal Church South Conference was held in the fall of 1861 on a farm located on Grasshopper Creek several miles west of Atchison. There are no records of this final session but pastors were assigned to their posts and the ministry struggled to continue in Kansas, which was now a

free state. Some of its circuits became attached to the St. Louis Conference and others became a part of the Missouri Conference. Many of the preaching points simply disappeared. In 1866 the Missouri Conference once again tried to establish the Kansas work by forming the Leavenworth District. This district did not survive its first year but some of the work continued from the St. Joseph District and others continued from the Nebraska circuit in the Savannah District.¹⁵

The Methodist Episcopal Church South organized in 1878 in Effingham. Rev. J.W. Thorpe was the presiding elder of the Troy Circuit in 1871 and included the Effingham community in his itinerary. The first appointed pastor was Rev. C.A. Sherman. A building was built in 1881¹⁶ on George Street, north of the railroad, on the west side of the street, between Main and Seventh Streets.¹⁷ There were 22 members in 1883.¹⁸ George Kurn was the pastor around 1888.¹⁹ Some of Kurn's granddaughters, Elsie Hawk and Mary Sharp, still live in Effingham. The Methodist Episcopal Church South congregation merged with the Methodist Episcopal Church in Effingham in the early 1900's.²⁰ Their building was used as a school for black children²¹ until it was purchased in 1907 by the St. Ann's Catholic Church in Effingham. The Catholics moved the former Methodist Episcopal Church South building to a location near their church and continued to use it for a parochial school.²²

The next change for the Effingham Methodist Episcopal Church came in 1939. The Methodist Protestant Church, The Methodist Episcopal Church South and the Methodist Episcopal Church merged to form The Methodist Church. This change had no significant impact upon the local church, other than to change its name.²³

In 1962, another merger occurred that did affect The Methodist Church in Effingham. The Monrovia Methodist Church was closed and all the members became affiliated with The Effingham Methodist Church. The Monrovia building was subsequently sold to Pat and Esther (Olson) Chisom of Kansas City. (Esther was a former resident of Monrovia). The church building in Effingham was remodeled with new paneling in the interior, and the exterior was repainted. Indoor plumbing was also added to the church in 1966.²⁴ Perry Garten was the chairman of the board, Kenneth Broadfoot was the lay leader and Sunday School superintendent, Al Heusi was chairman of the trustees, and Mrs. Glenn Nichols was the president of the Women's Society of Christian Service.²⁵

The last major strand of the church in Effingham began with the fall meeting of the Highland Presbytery in 1872. Rev. J.T. Whitemore was appointed to visit Effingham to preach and discern interest in starting a Presbyterian Church in that area. He came in November of that year and preached in the school house on the northwest corner of the Keplinger farm, one half mile east of town. After the service the following people expressed interest in forming a church organization: Peter Carmichael, Edward T. Ayer, Ruben and Lucy Ferguson, Alexander and Flora Cameron, Maggie and Isabell Fraser, Jane Stewart, Nancy Speedy and Sara McGillivray. Peter Carmichael and Ruben Ferguson were elected as elders, and Edward T. Ayer and Alexander Cameron were elected as deacons.

The young church had to depend upon visiting and transient ministers for their preaching until January, 1874 when the church was incorporated. Rev. S.N. St. John was secured to serve as stated supply. At this time the following names were added to the

church roll: Mrs. Lizzie Anderson, Mrs. Sarah Hawk, Miss Sadilla E. Hawk, Miss Eda V. Hawk, Francis Loomis, Alex Walker, Mr. And Mrs. Thomas Temple, and Mrs. Frances Van Wagoner. About this time the meetings were changed from the school house to the Central Branch depot.

Plans to build a church began in 1874, with three of the members conducting a pledge drive. Shortly after the pledge drive began, a plague of grasshoppers devastated the area. Plans to build were dropped until 1876.²⁶ The building was a 24'x36' one room structure, located on the northeast corner of Main and Seabury.²⁷ It was finally completed and dedicated in December of 1877. Rev. Dr. S. Hill from Kansas City assisted Rev. St. John in the dedicatory services.²⁸ This building was later sold to the Baptists and a larger building was built in 1881 between Fourth Street and Main Street on the west side of William Street.²⁹ (The Fair Barn is located there presently.) In 1911 the congregation once again decided it was time to build a larger building. This building was a spacious brick structure located on the southwest corner of Sixth and Seabury Streets. The cornerstone was laid on September 12, 1912, and the building was officially dedicated on June 19, 1913.³⁰ In the mid 1960's the building was sand blasted and a new roof was put on. The members repaired plaster and redecorated the interior.

Moving back to the Methodist side of the history, The Methodist Church began operating a food stand at the Atchison County Fair in Effingham during the 1950's. Initially, the proceeds for the food stand were used for building improvements. One of the first projects of the Homebuilder's Class was to dig a basement under the church building. The food stand also became a source for raising funds for mission projects as well as supplementing the church budget. The Homebuilders' Class built a building to

house the food stand in 1964.³¹ This building was destroyed in a tornado on April 26, 1984.³² It was rebuilt and ready for use by fair time in August.³³ Damages to the community of Effingham were between 2-2 1/2 million dollars,³⁴ and damages overall from the tornado were estimated at closer to five million dollars.³⁵

With the end of the 1960's, change was once again coming to Effingham. First, there was a merger involving the joining of The Evangelical United Brethren and The Methodist Church denominations to form The United Methodist Church in 1968. Subsequent to that merger, The United Methodist Church in Effingham came to a crisis in the winter of 1970-71. They were facing some major concerns that would force changes in their local operation. Pledge cards were mailed to the members and friends of the church for the annual pledge drive. Of the 65 cards that were mailed, only 25 responded with pledges totaling \$3500. At that time The United Methodist Churches in Effingham and Muscotah were on a circuit together. The Muscotah congregation was proceeding with plans to form a union with the Muscotah Congregational Church. If that merger took place, the Effingham United Methodist Church was going to be responsible for all of the support of the pastor. About this same time, The Presbyterian Church of Effingham was experiencing a similar problem. They had been on a circuit with The Presbyterian Church in Horton. The Horton congregation had disbanded in 1970 and their pastor was planning to retire at the end of May, 1971. Leaders from these two congregations began exploring the possibility of creating a union church which would enable the United Methodists and Presbyterians to continue to keep an effective Christian witness in Effingham. In March, 1971, after weeks of ongoing discussion with the officials of both denominations and each other, the two church boards recommended to

their congregations that they proceed with a unified ministry. The merger committee, designated as 'The Appointed Committee', was made up of Robert Caplinger, chr., (non voting member), A.C. Asher, David Bodenhausen, Gene Cashman, Duane Hawk, Alfred Heusi, Venita Jo Rader, Owen K. Strine, and Clarence Todd.³⁶ The proposed union was to be done on a trial basis for a one year period. Toward the end of that time it would be evaluated to discern if that was the direction that the congregations wanted to continue.

The following April, a poll was conducted³⁷ and both churches agreed to continue the joint ministry with plans to draft by-laws governing the structure, subject to the approval of both denominations. The By-Laws were prepared by Robert D. Caplinger, and the necessary approval was obtained. The first Annual Meeting of the Effingham Union Church was on December 3, 1972.³⁸ Highlights of the By-Laws provided for the members to continue on in their denominational affiliation if desired, or simply being listed as 'Union Church Members', with 1/2 of the members, attendance, and finances being reported to each denomination for statistical reports.³⁹ The church pays 1/2 of each denomination's apportionments request.⁴⁰ The church alternates pastors between the Presbyterian and United Methodist clergy.⁴¹ The Nominating Committee consisted of the preexisting nominating committees of the previous churches to insure fairness in representation.⁴²

Subsequent to the merger, additional improvements were made in the former Presbyterian building. Being a sturdy brick structure, it seemed natural that this building would eventually become the main building. In 1976, the difficult decision was made to discontinue the use of the United Methodist building. Maintaining and using both buildings on opposite sides of town for various activities was becoming impractical. The

United Methodist building was sold to Walter F. Sutter with the stipulation that it was to be torn down.⁴³ Following the demolition of the Methodist building, plans were laid to build an educational building adjacent to the Union Church facility. Proceeds from the sale of the United Methodist Church building and parsonage had resulted in a \$15,000 building fund to start the project.⁴⁴ A ground breaking ceremony was held for the Christian Education Building on October 30th, 1977, and the building was complete by September of 1979. A dedication and mortgage burning celebration was held on October 4, 1980. The generous gifts of God's people made a dream become a reality.⁴⁵ Not only did the people give, but once again the Food Stand at the Atchison County Fair provided some much needed income to help with a major building project.

The most recent project the church has undertaken was the building of a new parsonage in the summer of 1993.⁴⁶ The old, white-painted frame, two-story building that frequently needed maintenance was replaced with a modern one-story home with a two car garage.

Today, the Effingham Union Church is still an active Christian witness in the community and surrounding area. In the summer of 1998, the church had been without a resident pastor for seven months. Many churches experience an attendance slump during the summer, but not Effingham. They were making it a goal to have a high attendance of 90 for Sunday School. They finally made it in August, a couple of weeks before school started. Summer Sunday School is a plus that the children look forward to each weekend. In addition to the Sunday School program, the church also has four women's groups, three youth fellowship groups and a men's group.

The church is interested in missions. The people are heavily involved with the Bishop's Round-Up for Hunger in the fall. In 1998, they raised \$1200 for food, in addition to the clothing and other items that were donated. Several of the people have served as Volunteers in Mission, visiting work sites in Haiti, Mexico, and the Redbird Mission. Several of the people spent days helping with the clean-up efforts in Elwood, Kansas, following the flood of the Missouri River in 1993. They have financially supported UM Youthville, the Spofford Home, and Crosslines. In the Spring of 1999, they assembled school packets for Kelli Hawk to take on a mission trip to Mexico. She is one of their high school youth who returned for a second year to help with Vacation Bible School and to assist with some building projects that were being planned at the Mexican mission.

Appendix

EFFINGHAM PASTOR'S LIST

The following list gives the pastors in the neighboring communities which may have been responsible for the Effingham charge during the years that we have no records. Monrovia is about 3 miles east of Effingham, Muscotah is about 5 miles northwest of Effingham and Lancaster is about 8 miles north east of Effingham.

The Methodist Episcopal Church South

1888? George H. Kurn⁴⁷

The Methodist Episcopal Church

Year	Monrovia	Muscotah	Lancaster
1883,	W.C. Day	W.C. Day ⁴⁸	
1884	J.W. Penn	to be supplied ⁴⁹	
1885	J.N. Reynolds	J.C. Brainerd (Muscotah and Whiting) ⁵⁰	
1886	to be supplied	Thomas Campbell. ⁵¹	
1887	James Murray	Thomas Campbell ⁵²	
1888	James Murray	Joseph W. Warner ⁵³	
1889	not listed	L.N. Rogers	J. Massey ⁵⁴
1890	not listed	L.N. Rogers	John Trezise ⁵⁵
1891	not listed	J.L. Longdon	John Trezise ⁵⁶
1892	not listed	S.C. Lamb	Benjamin Parlett ⁵⁷
1893	not listed	T.M. Bell	Benjamin Parlett ⁵⁸
1894	not listed	E.C. Smith	T.B. Gray ⁵⁹
1895	not listed	M.L.Everett	T.B. Gray ⁶⁰

Documented years

Year	Pastor	Mem	Wor. Att.	SS Enrll	SS Att
1882	J.S. Smith	20 ⁶¹			
(Effingham and Muscotah combined statistics)					
1896	T.H. Coole	pulpit supply part of the year. ⁶²			
1896	C.F Teetor	206		124	109 ⁶³
1897	C.F. Teetor	190		136	135 ⁶⁴
(Effingham statistics only, on circuit with Muscotah)					
1898	Richard S. Finley	97		104	85 ⁶⁵
(Effingham and Muscotah combined statistics)					
1899	Richard S. Finley	230		170	110 ⁶⁶
1900	Edward L. Thomas	235		190	110 ⁶⁷
1901	Edward L. Thomas	215		200	125 ⁶⁸
(Effingham and Nortonville combined statistics)					
1902	Edward L. Thomas	190		200	165 ⁶⁹

1903	T.B. Adell	211	225 ⁷⁰	190 ⁷¹
1904	C.E. Taylor	256	320	210 ⁷²
(Effingham only listed)				
1905	C.E. Taylor	112	130	90 ⁷³
1906	C.E. Taylor	150	125	105 ⁷⁴
1907	A.J. Bruner ⁷⁵			
1907	L.B. Wiles	170	125	110 ⁷⁶
1908	L.B. Wiles	141	110	85 ⁷⁷
1909	L.B. Wiles	156	134	85 ⁷⁸
1910	Josephus Henby ⁷⁹	148	130	90 ⁸⁰
1911	C.E. Heaton	136	130	90 ⁸¹
1912	C.C. Clampitt	120	150	100 ⁸²
1913	Charles C. Clampitt	134		215 ⁸³
1914	Charles C. Clampitt	223	225 ⁸⁴	
1915	L.W. Foster	208	210 ⁸⁵	
1916	L.W. Foster	212	216 ⁸⁶	
1917	J.B. MacKenzie	239	279 ⁸⁷	
1918	J.B. MacKenzie	239	256 ⁸⁸	
1919	P.B. Knepp	46	229 ⁸⁹	125 ⁹⁰
1920	P.B. Knepp	268	255 ⁹¹	145 ⁹²
1921	P.B. Knepp	255	205	128 ⁹³
1922	P.B. Knepp	237	210	134 ⁹⁴
(Effingham & Lancaster Circuit combined statistics)				
1923	O.J. McCulloh	293	262	151 ⁹⁵
1924	O.J. McCulloh	339	303	187 ⁹⁶
1925	O.J. McCulloh	364 (E.267) ⁹⁷	403	190 ⁹⁸
1926	O.J. McCulloh	374	362	172 ⁹⁹
1927	O.J. McCulloh	380	230	165 ¹⁰⁰
1928	O.J. McCulloh	404		198 ¹⁰¹
1929	J.H. Beadle	406	434 ¹⁰²	
1930	J.H. Beadle	416	475 ¹⁰³	
1931	J.H. Beadle	400	437 ¹⁰⁴	
1932	J.H. Beadle	407	438 ¹⁰⁵	
1933	N/A, Effingham/Lancaster not listed in journal.			
1934	J. Joyce Wilson	308	362 ¹⁰⁶	
1935	J. Joyce Wilson	304	327 ¹⁰⁷	
1936	J. Joyce Wilson	309	332	165 ¹⁰⁸
1937	J. Joyce Wilson	349	308	155 ¹⁰⁹
1938	J.H. Bishop	349	308	125 ¹¹⁰
(Effingham, & Lancaster, & Monrovia combined statistics)				
1939	Phonce L. Mitchell	375	302	150 ¹¹¹
The Methodist Church				
1940	Phonce L. Mitchell	394	250	130 ¹¹²
(Effingham statistics only, on circuit with Lancaster & Monrovia)				
1941	Phonce L. Mitchell	169	156 ¹¹³	

1942	Phonce L. Mitchell	181			42 ¹¹⁴
1943	J.S. Newsom	204			35 ¹¹⁵
1944	J.S. Newsom	193			38 ¹¹⁶
1945	Clifford E. Nash	208			50 ¹¹⁷
1946	Clifford E. Nash	190			40 ¹¹⁸
1947	Ronald L. Starr	188			45 ¹¹⁹
1948	Ronald L. Starr	207			53 ¹²⁰
1949	Donald Coldsmith	186			46 ¹²¹
1950	Everett F. White	191			60 ¹²²
1951	I.C. Jones	108			64 ¹²³
1952	I.C. Jones	134			63 ¹²⁴
1953	I.C. Jones	145			63 ¹²⁵
1954	I.C. Jones	160			68 ¹²⁶
1955	Mark D. Opliger	159			75 ¹²⁷
	(Effingham statistics only, on circuit with Monrovia & Muscotah)				
1956	Mark D. Opliger	168	80 ¹²⁸		
	(Effingham statistics only, on circuit with Lancaster & Monrovia)				
1957	E. Edward Whitenett	159	76 ¹²⁹		
1958	Robert Thornburg	159 ¹³⁰			
1959	Robert Thornburg	173 ¹³¹			
	(Effingham statistics only, on circuit with Monrovia & Muscotah)				
1960	Willard A. Braker	173 ¹³²			
1961	Willard A. Braker	173 ¹³³			
	(Effingham statistics only, on circuit with Monrovia)				
1962	Willard A. Braker	128.	134		
	(Effingham statistics only, on circuit with Monrovia & Muscotah)				
1963	Willard A. Braker	138.	135		
	(Effingham statistics only, on circuit with Muscotah)				
1964	Willard A. Braker	154 ¹³⁶			
1965	Willard A. Braker	195 ¹³⁷			
1966	Joye A. Doane	200 ¹³⁸			
1967	Charles F.J. Calkins	205 ¹³⁹			
Year	Pastor	Mem	Wor. Att.	SS Enrll	SS Att
1968	Charles F.J. Calkins	197		92	45 ¹⁴⁰
1969	Joseph M. Whitsitt	177		89 ¹⁴¹	
1970	Joseph M. Whitsitt	150	47	88	36 ¹⁴²
Effingham Union Church					
1971	Harold Wise Presb.	143	45	92	32 ¹⁴³
1972	Roger D. Kappel	143	45	92	32 ¹⁴⁴
1973	Roger D. Kappel	137	67	74	56 ¹⁴⁵
1974	Roger D. Kappel	153	73	79	57 ¹⁴⁶
1975	George McCoy ¹⁴⁷ Presb.				
1976	George McCoy	150	80	92	60 ¹⁴⁸

1977	Gerald L. Vaughn	180	80	92	60 ¹⁴⁹
1978	Gerald L. Vaughn	172	65	94	54 ¹⁵⁰
1979	no pastor	173	65	94	55 ¹⁵¹
1980	Gail G. Cross Presb.	155	65	95	48 ¹⁵²
1981	Gail G. Cross	155	65	60	26 ¹⁵³
1982	Gail G. Cross	146	65	77	50 ¹⁵⁴
1983	Gail G. Cross	142	65	85	50 ¹⁵⁵
1984	Gail G. Cross	146	60	50	45 ¹⁵⁶
1985	Gail G. Cross	146	87	50	45 ¹⁵⁷
1986	Gail G. Cross	147		60	42 ¹⁵⁸
1987	Larry Bowyer	136	61	51	40 ¹⁵⁹
1988	Larry Bowyer	129	64	53	40 ¹⁶⁰
1989	Larry Bowyer	129	60		41 ¹⁶¹
1990	Larry Bowyer	123	54	47 ¹⁶²	
1991	no pastor	124	57	53	41 ¹⁶³
1992	no pastor	111	59	48	41 ¹⁶⁴
1993	Tom Henstock Presb	110	54	53	38 ¹⁶⁵
1994	Tom Henstock	117	58	67	37 ¹⁶⁶
1995	Tom Henstock	118	57	67	37 ¹⁶⁷
1996	Tom Henstock	116	52	106	35 ¹⁶⁸
1997	Tom Henstock	121	45	72	37 ¹⁶⁹
1998	Edith Funk (supply)				
1998	James L. Brackett	121	47	47	36 ¹⁷⁰

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 - ¹⁴ Andreas, History of the State of Kansas, 404.
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 - ¹⁶ The First Hundred Years, Effingham Kansas (1868-1968), 5. This is a 8 1/2 x 11 booklet assembled by the local citizens. A copy of this document is located in the Effingham Library.
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