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### First Presbyterian Church Anniversary

First Presbyterian Church

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# ANNIVERSARY

*Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,*

*Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*

*Ephesians 3:20-21*

## THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS OF OUR CHURCH

Our church was designed to have ninety-nine stained glass windows in its exterior walls. In addition, it has eight interior leaded glass windows and a huge eighteen-foot-diameter dome art glass window over the sanctuary. Six of the exterior windows have been replaced with clear glass in areas now used as offices. Thirty-four others of the windows are memorial windows to honor loved ones, prominent figures of our past, or the memory of meaningful classes that were in existence in the early 1920's when this church was being erected.

We are indebted to Miss Isamore Bennett, who has the second longest term of continuous membership in this church, for doing the following research. It is good to be reminded of the contributions that lie behind each of the people memorialized in a window. Surely each one is a tribute to the love and faith that was cultivated in the life of this congregation. Our Lord himself set the goal before each of us when He said,

"Let your light so shine before men,  
that they may see your good works,  
and give glory to your Father  
who is in heaven."

REV. NAHUM GOULD

1798-1875

The Plymouth Rock of the First Presbyterian Church was Rev. Nahum Gould. He had come to Kearney with a faith so strong that he might build one more church in his lifetime. In the spring of 1872 he came with his family locating on a homestead of 82 acres at the north end of Lake Kearney. He and the new Methodist minister Rev. Morse were preaching alternately to the little group of Christian followers. His first sermon was in April 1872. His commission as a missionary to this field was granted at the first meeting of the Presbytery of Omaha in November 1872. On March 2, 1873 Rev. Robinson preached. He helped organize the seven members present who arose and pledged their faith and became the First Presbyterian Church of Kearney. Meetings were held in various places--even in homes, a saloon, or the Times Building. He died two years later in 1875.

REV. N. C. JOHNSON

1848-1918

Ordained as missionary at large Rev. Johnson and his wife were residents of Kearney from about 1900. He served first as an elder of the church and moderator of meetings when a new minister was chosen. He and Mrs. Johnson had four children, Mildred (Mrs. George Lantz), Mable (later Mrs. Frank Flack), a daughter, Mrs. Stella Strand of Shelton, and a son. They took a grandchild Phyllis at her father's death and raised her from an early age. Phyllis married Alvin Panek and lived in Denver until her death. Rev. Johnson was a very quiet man who was a great aid to this church.

## REV. GEORGE T. CRISSMAN

The young Presbyterian Church was growing in numbers and a larger house of worship was a necessity. Rev. George Crissman was called in October 1879 to become its pastor. He was energetic in the building of the new church at Twenty-third Street and Second Avenue. It was Gothic in architecture and about 38 x 56 feet in size. The windows of stained glass were Gothic in design. The large window on the north side was a memorial given by the children of Rev. Nahum Gould. The beautiful window on the south side was dedicated by Charles B. Finch later in 1896 to the memory of his wife, Sadie Leskey Finch. The church was dedicated in November 1888 some years after laying of the corner stone in 1880. There were hard years after the crop disasters of 1874-76. Rev. Crissman served until 1883 as pastor of the church.

## SADIE L. FINCH

Sadie Finch graduated from the University of Nebraska in 1919 and became a teacher in Ravenna. Her father Charles Finch owned the Empire Department Store and had married Miss Sadie Leskey about 1894. It was a very happy marriage but his wife died at the birth of their daughter. She became a member of the family of her two aunts, Delia and Anne Leskey. She had an attractive personality and was a greatly loved teacher. The window in her memory was given by her aunts. The south window in the first Presbyterian Church was given by Charles Finch in memory of his wife Sadie Leskey Finch.

WILLIAM F. LESKEY  
WILLIAM D. LESKEY  
CATHERINE C. LESKEY

William D. Leskey and his wife Catherine were early landowners in the Airport area and died many years ago.

Later Henry Leskey a son farmed this same land. There were two daughters also, Miss Delia and Miss Anne Leskey. The two sisters never married but were active in the church and lived last at 202 W. 22nd St.

Henry Leskey had two children Hazel (Mrs. Kenneth Brandt) and Glennie, married to a Methodist minister in Ohio.

Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Brandt have a son Gayle Brandt who is the present owner of the same farm land. There are also two daughters Miss Lorraine Brandt of the faculty of the University of Nebraska and Joan who is married and living in Red Feather Lakes, Colorado.

William F. Leskey was a brother of Henry Leskey who died many years ago.

E. M. VAN CLEAVE

J. C. STEVENSEN

1856-1922

A window in memory of J.C. Stevenson was given by his widow, Mrs. Stevenson. She was a niece of an early minister of the Kearney Presbyterian Church, Rev. George Crissman. At the seventy-fifth anniversary in 1948, Mrs. Stevenson was the oldest continuing member of the church.

MARY M. CARPENTER

1838-1930

The mother of Mrs. W.J. Scoutt was Mrs. Mary Carpenter. She made her home with them in her later years. She was a very beautiful elderly woman and a good friend to everyone. Mr. and Mrs. Scoutt had four children, Margurite (Mrs. E.J. Gildner), Dorothy (Mrs. Doe Lantz), Gerald Scoutt and Ruth (Mrs. Ted Buttrey) all of whom are living.

HELEN ADAIR

1870-1921

Helen Adair was an active early member of the church. She was a well educated person and after her father's death in 1913 became a member of the faculty of Bryn Mawr College. She died in the east a few years later. Helen Adair gave the four memorial windows of the Adair family.

WILLIAM R. ADAIR

1840-1913

JAMES S. ADAIR

1901

William R. Adair and James S. Adair were founders and officers of the City National Bank. William Adair was president. He had two children Helen and a son Will Adair. He was an active supporter of the church in the early 1890's and 1900's.

James S. Adair was one of the officers of the City National Bank. He and his wife lived at 620 W. 22nd St. They had one daughter Daisy.

JAMES E. DICKERMAN  
1846-1890

KATE W. DICKERMAN

3-15-1854--6-2-1923

MORTIMER E. DICKERMAN

1883-1901

Mr. and Mrs. James E. Dickerman came from New York out to Nebraska and established a bank at Miller. They were members of the Episcopal Church in Kearney but were active socially and civically in the town. Due to a close friendship with one of the early ministers of the Presbyterian Church, the windows were given by their daughter Katherine in 1921.

Kate W. Dickerman, born in Watervliet, N.Y. March 15, 1854 was the wife of James Dickerman. Their daughter Katherine was active in the Episcopal Church, the Daughters of the Revolution and the Kearney Woman's Club.

Mortimer Dickerman, their only son, died as a young man after a long illness. His mother and sister gave the window in his memory.

ELIZA HUNTER

1848-1913

This window given by Mr. Hunter in memory of his wife Eliza was only part of Mr. Hunter's generosity in helping build the new church at 22nd St. and 2nd Ave. In 1926 when finances were rather low he gave \$1000 additional to his previous pledge. This was shortly before his death in 1927. They made their home at 6th Ave. and 20th St.

PRATT

One of the most tireless workers of the Women's Auxiliary in helping pay for the pipe organ and in raising other money for the church at 2nd Ave. and 22nd St. was Mrs. Warren Pratt. Mrs. C.D. Bessie, treasurer of the women's organization, reported they had contributed \$14,000 in the five years 1922 to 1927. Mr. and Mrs. Pratt always remembered moving to their new home built on a large lot at 22nd St. and 8th Ave. during the blizzard of January 1888. They had three daughters Helen, Ruth, and Marjorie born in the 1890's. Ruth Pratt now lives in St. Petersburg, Florida.

L. B. CUNNINGHAM

Among the seven people who were the charter members organizing the First Presbyterian Church in 1873 was L.B. Cunningham. Mr. Cunningham came from the church at Unionville, Iowa. On March 2, 1873, the seven were present at the morning service. They had received letters of dismissal from their former affiliations. Two of them were installed as elders; L.B. Cunningham was elected a Deacon for 2 years. He built the building on 23rd St. in 1889 for his newspaper "The Buffalo Co. Journal" later called "The Kearney Daily Journal". The building now houses the Kearney Laundry. In 1884 he was listed as a trustee of the first brick church which had been built in 1880 and 1881. In 1887 the church built an addition to this original house of worship known as the chapel. It housed the Sunday School and was used for prayer meetings, Christian Endeavor, and any social functions. Later that year they excavated the basement for a kitchen and put in a pipeless furnace and gas lights in attractive chandeliers were placed in the sanctuary. It made the church more comfortable and usable at all times

## LADIES AUXILIARY

### FRIENDLY BIBLE CLASS

The Friendly Bible Class was organized in 1922 about the time the new church was built. It had a fine teacher in Mrs. J.C. Miller who led a lively discussion. There were usually fifteen in attendance. Their meeting room was the west lounge.

Each month the class had a party in a different home. Interesting games and a lunch were thoroughly enjoyed. So many of these women had so much to contribute. They were good Bible students and ready to express their opinions. There were several who were most active in raising money to pay for the new organ and other expenses. Perhaps women function best when they are earning funds--church dinners, food sales, and rummage sales were their favorite ways.

The earlier members were:

Mrs. J.C. Miller	Mrs. Coke
Mrs. W.J. Scoutt	Mrs. W.S. Whitney
Mrs. C.S. Merriam	Mrs. J.C. Stevensen
Mrs. T.D. Martin	Mrs. C.E. Wilson
Mrs. C.D. Bessie	Mrs. F.L. Whedon
Mrs. N.C. Johnson	Mrs. Maude Peters
Mrs. Emma Hartzell	Mrs. Warren Pratt
Mrs. Mary Manion	Mrs. J.L. Bennett
Mrs. Ruth Burch	Mrs. John Cavenee
Mrs. R.P. Drake	Mrs. John Dunn
Mrs. Gardner	Mrs. Mable Flack
Mrs. Henshew	Mrs. John Gordon
Mrs. Harry Crawford	Mrs. V.C. Chase
Mrs. John Hill	Mrs. Ethel Plunkett

and later years Mrs. Eubank and Mrs. Kannow.

### FLORA DILDINE

Dr. C.T. Dildine was one of Kearney's early physicians and a trustee of the First Presbyterian Church. At the time the brick church on the corner of 23rd St. and 1st Ave. was built in 1880, he and his wife Flora were very active members. Their brick home was located at the corner of 28th St. and 3rd Ave. They had a son Harry who had one of Kearney's good jewelry stores in the early 1900's located on the west side of Central Ave. The window in her memory was given by Harry Dildine.

### BLANCH ECK ROBINSON

1892-1918

Mr. and Mrs. Eck had three children, Blanch, Margurite and Angur. Blanch on her marriage became a member of the Presbyterian Church in Kearney though they lived on a farm near Amherst. She died of the flu in 1918 because she was not able to leave her family and come in to a hospital. This window was given by her husband.

### NORMA GORDON

1893-1917

Norma was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Gordon. They also had a son Paul who was born about 1896. Norma graduated from Kearney State College and taught in the Gibbon Schools. She was killed in a car accident in Gibbon. Mrs. John Gordon was an active member of the finance committee in 1920 when the women assumed the raising of \$14,000 for the new church. John Gordon and his wife were both natives of Canada. His business experience in Kearney was for many years as station agent for the Burlington Railroad. Later he was a dealer in coal.

JANE G. ADAIR  
1841-1911

Jane Adair was the wife of Wm. R. Adair. They made their home at 20 W. 27th St. in the house now owned by Mrs. O.D. Johnson.

REV. JOHN W. HILL  
1855-1920

When Rev. John Hill retired from the ministry in 1910 he came to Kearney to make his home with his wife and two children. Robert was a boy in high school when he died in 1912. Ethel Hill and her mother were very active members of the church for years. Ethel taught in senior high school and for several years she taught English and Spanish at Kearney State College. When Spanish was dropped from the curriculum she went to Washington D.C. where she gave lessons in English to Spanish speaking members of government offices and the diplomatic groups. She died in 1971. She was regent of the D.A.R. Chapter in Kearney and also in Washington D.C. As a founder of A.A.U.W. in Kearney she was active in the state group as well.

TEED

John Teed came from Gibbon. In order to lower the price of a contractor's bid of \$125,000, Rev. Willis offered to assume the position of general foreman of the new Presbyterian Church in 1920. By purchasing materials direct from various companies and by hiring labor the building was completed and furnished for \$92,000. John Teed in the spring of 1921 became carpenter foreman along with a brick foreman and a steel structure overseer. By his good work and supervision a very solid structure was erected.

JOHN E. CAVENEY  
1851-1919

Mr. and Mrs. John Caveney came to Kearney about 1911. He had retired as County Treasurer of Custer Co. They made their home at 801 W. 21st St. although their first Kearney home was the old Curry home east of the Tuberculosis Hospital. They had two children. "Spot" Caveney has a daughter Mrs. Don Standage and a son Gordon still living here. Mr. Caveney spent some of his time back at the ranch in Custer Co. Mrs. Caveney was an active member of the Delphian Society, an important study club; the Friendly Bible Class and other Presbyterian societies. Mrs. Caveney died in 1928.

MEN'S BIBLE CLASS