

The History of Calvary Baptist Church Cambridge, Nebraska

The floods of 1935 and 1947 hastened water control measures for the Cambridge area. In 1947, a number of lives were lost and many more were made homeless because of this disastrous tragedy. In 1949 work began on a dam to protect the town from future flooding and also to provide irrigation to the farms in the area but God in His infinite wisdom had an even better protection plan for the people of Cambridge.

Gerald Olson, an accountant with the firm hired to build the dam, and his wife Lillian were among those who moved to this area. From a BGC Conference church in Sioux City, Iowa they were warm hearted, ardent workers for the Lord who saw the need for spreading God's word to the town. Mrs. Olson began holding child evangelism classes in her home which soon became too small for the many youngsters who came to hear the Good News. Furniture was moved out of some rooms to make way for all the children, there were no chairs but it was fun when everyone sat on the floor and listened to the Bible stories told by Mrs. Olson. Boys and girls accepted Christ as their Savior, hearts were touched and parents stirred.

When the capacity limit of their home had been reached, Mr. Olson went scouting to find something more suitable. The I.O.O.F. hall above Thorndike's store could be used on Sundays and the first meetings outside the Olson home were held there. The child evangelism class turned into a Sunday School and the Olsons wondered just where the Lord was leading them. The need seemed to be great; not only among the children of the construction crew, who were transients, but also among the people of the town. A number of adults began attending the Sunday School and at their request a morning service was started and the Lord blessed the ministry with any conversions.

As the construction of the dam neared completion and the time for the Olsons to leave drew close, the people attending the services wanted the Sunday School and service to continue. To this end BGC District Missionary of Platte Valley, Rev. David Hammar, visited here and was favorably impressed with the possibilities and the enthusiasm of the people for the work involved. A request for aid was presented by the Cambridge group to the Platte Valley Baptist Conference Board, (now known as the Heartland Baptist District), which met in Gothenburg, November 17, 1949. The men on the Board decided to heed the request to begin the work here and the young people of the conference threw their support behind the project with some cash, which was needed.

In 1950 the first pastor, Rev. George Ohsberg came to candidate and soon began his ministry here. The Ohsberg family arrived in Cambridge on December 27th of that year. After their arrival a more suitable meeting place was sought for worship. The church purchased a lot from Leonard Rogers and they borrowed a large tent from the Conference in which they met on this land for a short time. This lot was in the same block northwest of our present church. While using the tent they held revival services and "God's Invasion Army", now known as the "Evangelism Corp", met with them for a week at this time. The Evangelist for that event was Thurman Scott, a graduate from Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California.

Shortly after these revival meetings, the "Blacktop Schoolhouse", northeast of town, was purchased for \$700. This building was moved onto the lot and raised on blocks so the church could use it for services while a basement was dug underneath it. The members did the work and finished the basement into living quarters for the pastor and his family and also for Sunday School classes. A garage was added to the back of the building which later was converted to classrooms for the Sunday School.

Rev. Ohsberg ministered here for approximately five years, followed by Rev. Winston Sherwich as interim pastor who stayed until the fall of 1956, when Rev. Charles VerStraten and family assumed the pastorate.

Many trials were experienced by the church in those early years due to dry weather and some of the members moving away, but God blessed the work and the church continued to grow. In 1956 the Holbrook Baptist Church and the Cambridge Calvary Baptist Church began sharing a pastor. A new front was added to the old church building in 1959. Shortly after this Rev. VerStraten felt called to move to another church and the Rev. Winford Headrick and family came from Iowa to begin their ministry here. They stayed about five years and were followed by Rev. Roger Burke and family in July 1964.

During this time the need for more space was great and the church decided to erect a new building. The property that the present building stands on was originally purchased for a nursing home but the owner Mrs. Lorntina Berg donated the land to Calvary Baptist Church and work was started. The people of this church were faithful in the giving of their time and money to the building program. The Lord led and blessed in providing a beautiful building which was dedicated on September 28, 1969.

Approximately 2,000 hours of donated labor, the loan of large and small construction machinery, and gifts of money aided in the completion of the present church building. The total cost of building the church was approximately \$35,000 while the estimated value of

the church was over \$70,000. The church had two mortgages on the building totaling \$22,000.

In 1964 a home was purchased on Park Ave. for the parsonage. Rev. Burke and his family were the first family to have a parsonage owned by the church. That home was sold in 1973 and a larger house was purchased on Nelson St. which served as our parsonage until it was sold in 1988.

Rev. Duane Harms followed Rev. Burke as pastor in 1973. He was ordained in this church on November 12, 1974. During his ministry the church had a mortgage burning ceremony on February 12, 1978. The ten-year note had been paid off in either a year and a half years. It was also during this time that the pastor sharing agreement with Holbrook was discontinued. Rev. Bob Pier then served as interim pastor during the Spring and Summer of 1978, commuting from his home in Holdrege each week.

Rev. Paul vanGorkom was called and moved to Cambridge from Lansing, Michigan in September 1978 and served the church until March 1984. During this time a "60+ Club" was started and was a good thing for the older adults of the church and also some from the town. A monthly covered dish dinner was held with a short program following.

Rev. Peter Todd filled in as interim pastor from April to November of 1984, coming each Sunday from near Stratton, Nebraska.

In the fall of 1984 a call was extended to and accepted by the Rev. Rob Weeks. He and his family moved to Cambridge on November 1, 1984 and were with us until November 1987. During his ministry the brick sign on the southeast corner was erected by Wayne DeVries. This enabled us to post appropriate messages in the glassed-in area, such as time of Sunday School and Church services. After Pastor Week's resignation, the Rev. Tim Burke filled the pulpit as interim pastor from December 1987 until March 1990. Tim was also attending college in Hays, Kansas during this time.

In June 1990 the Rev. Jerry Meyer accepted our call as pastor and served the congregation until May 1995.

Interim pastor Dennis Sundeen arrived in August 1995 for a one-year tenure but was asked to extend his stay until August 1997.

After Pastor Sundeen's departure, the Rev. Carroll vanAnda and his wife Bernice filled the pulpit for 5 months prior to their departure to serve as interim missionaries in Japan. Rev.

Phil Terrill and his wife Doris then served as interim pastor from March 1998 until August 1998. During Pastor Terrill's stay a yoke with the United Baptist Church in Wilsonville was formed.

In July 1998 Rev. Rick Morgan of Platte, South Dakota accepted the call the church extended to serve as our pastor and the family moved to Cambridge in August 1998.

In the Fall of 2021, Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Plummer of Jacksonville, Florida accepted the call of the church to serve as the new Senior Pastor. Pastor Plummer and his wife, Katherine, moved to Cambridge in December 2021 and continue to serve the church.

We, of Calvary Baptist Church, are very thankful to God for the way He has wonderfully blessed us through the past 70 years.