



First United Methodist Church

313 Montgomery St. Knoxville, IA 50138

Phone 641-842-3712



History

There was only the broad prairie, cut diagonally by the Des Moines River. Then in the year of 1843 there was the first settlement in Marion County, which took its name from the Revolutionary War General, Francis Marion. Marion County marks its legal birth date as June 10, 1845, and its official county seat was designated as Knoxville. The town's name also harkens back to the days of the Revolution, having been named in honor of General Henry Knox.

The influence of Methodism has existed in Knoxville since the 1840's when the circuit riders served the wide spread population of the county. They braved the elements and sacrificed their personal comfort in order to bring the gospel to the settlers of the plains. Following buffalo paths and Hazel Brush trails in order to reach their destinations. They traveled on horseback to hold meetings in log cabins, homes, and even in the open more times than in the churches

As in most early communities, the building of a church was early in the minds of the area residents. The first such activity was spurred on by a Methodist minister, the Reverend Neur, in the year of 1845. He visited the area and formed an organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church. They erected a building in the 800 block of east Main Street. Reverend John Jay formally dedicated it on May 28, 1856.

The Methodists had bigger things in mind, however, for they sold their building two years later to a group of Presbyterians. Soon a larger two-story building, measuring 40 by 60 feet, was built one block south and one block east of the public square (the southwest corner of our church's present lot) at a cost of \$6,000.

Reverend Hugh Gibson was the first resident pastor in our area, which bore the official name of the Knoxville Mission, Des Moines District, of the Iowa Conference. Following the Civil War, life in this area was made much easier by the arrival of the railroad in 1875. The horse was no longer vital to transportation, and new pastors now coming to Knoxville could now arrive by train in relative comfort. The first pastor to do so was a Reverend Barton in 1876.

When the second church became inadequate, the congregation had a successful church revival meeting and made a very big decision: to tear down the existing building on Fourth & Montgomery to make way for a much more impressive larger Church. By the year 1895 the congregation had the finances to build a new church, with its grand sanctuary and impressive steeple at the cost of \$20,000. The new Church was something to be justly proud of and on the day of dedication in April, of 1896, the building was debt-free. There was a lot of sacrificial giving by the congregation, some of whom mortgaged their own homes to contribute. This third Methodist church, the one that we still have today, was built on the southeast corner of the same lot that contained the second church building.

The Presbyterian building stood on the southwest corner of this same block, and in 1960, when they decided to build their new church on Park Lane; our congregation bought the old building for \$30,000 and tore it down.

The third church building served the congregation well with few modifications until the early 60's when the congregation, under the leadership of Reverend Crandall, undertook the addition of a new \$220,000 educational wing and chapel. The upper two floors of the education wing housed classrooms, while the basement gave us the much-needed West Fellowship Hall and a much bigger and well-equipped kitchen. The addition was dedicated on Monday, March 14, 1966, and Bishop James Thomas was here to speak at the ceremony.

Once again the membership felt that they now had a building that was complete, one that would probably not require any more changes. They were right, but only for about three more decades. We took in more members (25 all at once in 1975 when the little Eden Methodist Church closed), and we added more programs, activities, and mission projects. The start-up of the preschool (1970's) was just one of the new uses, and demands, for our building space. Technology was also catching up with us: the electronic organ we purchased in 1970 was failing, so in 1989 we bought a new Reuter pipe organ for \$160,000. This is a marvelous instrument that still serves us well. To accommodate the new pipe organ with its 1202 pipes required extensive remodeling of the front of the sanctuary.

As we approached our 150th anniversary (1995) the congregation again saw the need to do repair and renovation work to our aging building. We needed handicap accessibility (an elevator entrance and restrooms), complete remodeling of the east basement, and the sanctuary would have a new paint design, carpeting and creations a new altar platform,. We called this work Phase I, part of a three-phase project extending into the next few years.

Phase II followed a couple of years later; this remodeled and enlarged the kitchen as well as addressed the need for updated communications systems. We now have a modern phone system, answering machines with multiple-choice voice mail, internet service, networking computers, and we can project digital images on the sanctuary screen.

Phase III moved the office area to the west wing, installed new windows and a roof for that wing, and replaced the boiler. Behind the sanctuary are a new library and a cry room with new windows and adjustable sound from the sanctuary.



In 1999 we purchased the two vacant buildings to the north of the church for outreach programs – Tom Young's Produce building is now the Almost Free Shop, operated by the UMW. It has been completely remodeled inside and out into a retail clothing and house supplies store.

The Cunningham Motors building has also been completely remodeled inside and out into a Community Activity Center. It is used for our outreach mission center to serve the needs of the community such as a home for KAMA, SHARE, Good Samaritan Free Clinic, Habitat for Humanities and other numerous community organizations,

The Almost Free Shop

312 E. Robinson Knoxville, IA.

The Almost Free Shop operated by the United Methodist Women (UMW), provide clothing items for all ages, toys, seasonal decorations and household merchandise for sale (most items are 50 cents or less - free to those in need). Profits from the shop are distributed by need to different community service projects, Helping Hands Food Pantry, KAMA, as well as to purchase kit supplies for missions, and building upkeep. The UMW organize, package and deliver these donated health kits, school kits and layettes packages to UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief). These kits are donated to Countries in need and the American Red Cross for distribution to victims of fire, hurricane, and earthquakes. Each year hundreds of kits worth thousands of dollars are sent to those in need.

Phone number 641.842.5002

The FUMC Activity Center

308 E. Robinson, Knoxville, IA.

Home for these Out Reach Ministries

The Activity Center provides office space for Habitat for Humanity of Marion County Inc., The (KAMA), the Knoxville Area Ministerial Association, (SHARE), Self Help and Resource Exchange and the Good Samaritan Free Medical Clinic.

The Activity Center provides meeting and work space for many community activities and organizations such as: Al-Anon, Alcoholic's Anonymous, 4-H Clubs, the Boy Scouts, Optimist Club, Kiwanis, Knoxville Chamber of Commerce, Dollars for Scholars, Living Windows, Montgomery Street Preschool, United Methodist Women, Marion County Historical Society, and the Knoxville Historical Preservation Commission.

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Present projects: the video/sound system is being replaced and a new sound booth constructed in the northeast corner of the sanctuary. We are also in the process of updating the computers and designing a new web site for the church.

We intend to keep growing in faith as we carry out the mission statement of the First United Methodist Church of Knoxville.

“Invite persons to come to God through Jesus Christ and to help them become His disciples, empowered by the Holy Spirit.”

Our Vision:

Grow as an involved Body of Christ reaching out to youth, families, inactive members, and the unchurched community, encouraging Christian educational opportunities through youth activities, small groups, workshops and outreach events serving the needs of the church and communities.



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