

Cannon City Community Church

By Pauline Schreiber
RCHS volunteer and board member

The Cannon City Community Church has been a place where the Gospel has been spread for 153 years.

The little, white unassuming church is located at 17790 Cannon City Blvd. in the heart of the Village of Cannon City. Clayton Taylor is recorded as building the small church in 1870 at cost of \$600. On December 18, 1870, the first meeting was held in the church, according to a short history of the congregation. Prior to the church's construction, meetings were held in homes, a school-house and a hotel.

The Village of Cannon City was platted and recorded by the Sears brothers from Ohio in 1855, making it one of the earliest Rice County communities. It was named after the nearby Cannon River. It became a stage-coach town and a thriving community in its earliest years and the evangelical congregation that first met in the church would evolve into the Cannon City Community Church.

Interestingly, the village's early post office, operated from 1855 to 1880, was named "Dean" and located in a general store. The name "Cannon City" was too close to the name "Cannon Falls" that already had a post office.

The William, James and David Buchanan families, also from Ohio, were some of the first to stake out claims in the area. A relative of Mrs. James Buchanan, who was a pastor, was visiting in the summer of 1868 and was asked to preach a sermon. That sermon is viewed as the seed that became the Cannon City Community Church of today.

In the fall of 1868, another pastor visited Cannon City and held an evangelistic meeting. He was asked by some of those attending to organize a church. He consented and a group of seven people met November 13, 1868, and opened services by singing a hymn and reciting prayers. The preacher read from the Bible. Those present signed their names as charter members of the Cannon City Christian Church.

Traditional hymns and prayers and readings from the Bible continue to be the basis of services for the non-denominational community church, said Pam Wunderlich, wife of Gary Wunderlich, current-day pastor who has served the church for the past 25 years. He is a part-time pastor who also farms.



The Cannon City Community Church is open to all who wish to worship there. It stem from a congregation started in 1868. The church was built in 1870. It has been added on to and updated.

The Mission Statement of the church reads: "The Cannon City Church serves as an evangelical, non-denominational center for anyone who wishes to worship here. Our goal is to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to serve the Cannon City community."

"Regular attendees add up to 60 members," she said. "We average around 40 at services."

Back in its earliest days in the 1860s, the small congregation could not afford a pastor. At that time, there was the Minnesota Christian Missionary Society in Minneapolis that sent out ministers to small churches that could not afford a minister of its own. So, the church had many short-time ministers until it could afford its own.

Even when a pastor came and stayed awhile, he was paid only \$91 for the year, according to records of those early years. The church trustees meeting minutes did say they would try to pay him \$400 in the next year, if the money came in. Its congregation was mostly farm families who could not afford too much support of the church.

In 1923, however, the congregation was able to finish the church basement and redecorate the church, a history of the congregation states.

Christian Church of the 1920s

The Cannon City Christian Church thrived in the 1920s. A history of its early days states, "The church not only enjoyed many worship and study gatherings but social times as well. Annual Sunday School picnics were held at Jewett's Point on Cannon Lake or Mineral Springs in Owatonna for many years. Steak fries were held occasionally on the grounds of the church and at nearby Crystal Lake. Wiener roasts were enjoyed at Scott's Mill, picnics at Roberds Lake and tobogganing parties in winter. There was a warm family relationship, great hospitality, and cooperation among the members during those years."

The original church never had a baptistery. Coverts were immersed in Crystal Lake, located below the hill behind the church, or in the Cannon River near Scott's Mill.

But by the early 1940s, older members of the congregation had died, younger members of families moved away, and a decision was made to sell the church and move the congregation to Faribault. By that time, it was called the Cannon City Church of Christ and would become what is the present-day Faribault Church of Christ, 937 SW Ninth Ave., Faribault.

A stipulation the Cannon City Church of Christ trustees

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had for the sale of the church is that it could not be sold for a tavern or secular business place. The sale price was \$1,000.

Nauman Brothers Buy Church

Clarence and Harold Nauman, in 1944, generously purchased the church and deeded it to the community of Cannon City. As long as it was used as a church, it would continue to be owned by the community, Pam Wunderlich said.

The Nauman brothers had moved to Cannon City from the Alexandria area in 1913. They were sons of the Rev. Conrad and Caroline (Gonigam) Nauman. The two young farmers married in a double ring ceremony on April 25, 1918. Clarence married Florinda Bosshardt and Harold married Ruby Wunderlich.

At first they farmed, and then in 1925, the Nauman brothers started selling farm equipment and did custom harvesting. They soon added a grocery store and a machine shop. The Nauman Brothers Store became well known, and in 1934, they built a larger grocery store and machine shop building. They showed free movies on the front of the Nauman's barn, it is recorded in a history of their business.

One of the first regular pastors, after the Naumans gifted the church to Cannon City, was Willard "Bix" Nauman, son of Clarence and Florinda Nauman. He served the church for 36 years, his niece, Sue Feyereisn of Faribault, said. He is 95 years-old and lives in Ramsey.

She said her Uncle Bix remembers that in the early days of the Cannon City Community Church, services were in the afternoon. That allowed anyone in the community who belonged to a church of another denomination to attend Sunday morning services in that church, and still be able to attend services with their neighbors in the Cannon City Community Church. Eventually services were moved to Sunday mornings.

Feyereisn attended the Cannon City Community

Church as she grew up. She remembers being in a youth group with Gary Wunderlich, current pastor, who also grew up in the church. Her parents were the late Glen and Beve Nauman, who were married in the church, and strong life-long supporters of it. Glen's father was Clarence Nauman, Feyereisn's grandfather.

Bert Passer, a cousin of the Naumans, was another regular pastor for a while, Pam Wunderlich said.

In 1998, Bix Nauman was ready to retire. Gary Wunderlich and Ray Ades, both members of the church, were asked to jointly take the position as pastor. Neither wanted the sole responsibility of the job and agreed to do it together. Today, Gary serves as the head pastor. Ray leads some worship services and supports Gary in any way he is needed, and officiates, as requested, at weddings and funerals.

Members of the church have been generous in donations to keep up the church, Pam Wunderlich said. A library addition that includes bathrooms and a kitchen in the basement were added in

1978. In 1990, new pews, air-conditioning and new carpeting and other redecorating occurred.

There is a piano and an organ and both get played for Sunday services by a member of the church, she said. Traditional hymns are sung at services.

"Volunteers have organized a project to replace the large front doors of the church that have aged and are in need of replacing, and to install a better wheelchair ramp," Wunderlich added.

Members of the church hold a Fellowship Dinner in the fall and a picnic at Nerstrand Woods Big Woods State Park. In the past, there has been a Summer Bible School, a youth group organization and a women's group.

There are a few young people with children who attend the church, Pam Wunderlich said, but fewer than in past years. The hope of the congregation is that the little village church will continue spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ well into the current century and beyond.



Clarence & Florine Nauman's 49th Anniversary April 1967 submitted by Pamela Geisler Fitch



CCCC August 2015 submitted by Pamela Geisler Fitch