

## North American Baptist Heritage Commission

## Church Histories

**First Baptist Church, Emery, South Dakota**

*Multiplication!* This was the hallmark of the First Baptist Church of Emery, South Dakota, in its early years. Having been organized on February 24, 1886, as the German Baptist Church, by 1895 the membership had grown to eighty from the original sixteen charter members, a remarkable feat considering that:

- 24 members were sent to Unityville in 1890 to establish the church there;
- 24 organized the Avon church;
- 28 organized the Chancellor church, and
- 12 organized the Corona church.

The first meetings were held in a country schoolhouse in Taylor township. One of the original members, Ottje Olthoff, was ordained and became the first pastor of the church. In 1891, the first church was built four miles southwest of Emery on land donated by John Martin. In 1902 the old school house was bought in town and served as a church building for those members living there. For nearly twenty years, services were held in both the town and country locations. Soon the town building was deemed unfit, “as in the overcrowded room the air became too oppressive and the trouble of carrying in planks for seats and the disturbance caused thereby was more than could be contended with any longer.” As an offer had been made for the old building, it was decided to erect a new one. On November 15, 1908, the new church building, which cost \$8008.93, was dedicated with great rejoicing. This terse comment ended the report of the event: “The Building Committee is feeling real good, thank you. It is all over now.” The work of the building committee may have been over, but the working of the church through the Holy Spirit’s power has continued strongly through the years.

Other significant events in the life of the church were:

- 1917—German language discontinued in Sunday School
- September 7, 1940—church name was changed to First Baptist Church of Emery, S. D.
- March 24, 1963—groundbreaking for the present building

## 1886

- March 22, 1964—19,000 sq. ft. building is dedicated
- 1969—new parsonage built and dedicated
- 2011—new addition completed (multipurpose room, restrooms, a lift to the next level plus two additional rooms)
- 2011—125<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrated

Sons and daughters who became pastors, missionaries include names such as John Olthoff, Randy Tschetter, Dan Edzards, John L. Terveen, Rick Weber, Ken Ontjes, Myrtle Weeldreyer (Schaub), Oryn Meinerts, and Lucille Wipf (Dalzell).

Written by Lucille D. Lengefeld, NAB Heritage Commission [July, 2015]

### **Bibliographical sources: [Published articles – Baptist Herald & Other]**

Friesen, Stanley R: “Planting the Seed: A History of the Growth and Development of the First Baptist Church, Emery, South Dakota, from 1886-1936”

### **Archival sources in North American Baptist Heritage Center:**

Typed history—German Baptist Church Dedicated: A Short Historical Sketch of the German Baptist Church, November 15, 1908

March 22, 1964—Dedication Program/Booklet of First Baptist Church, Emery, SD

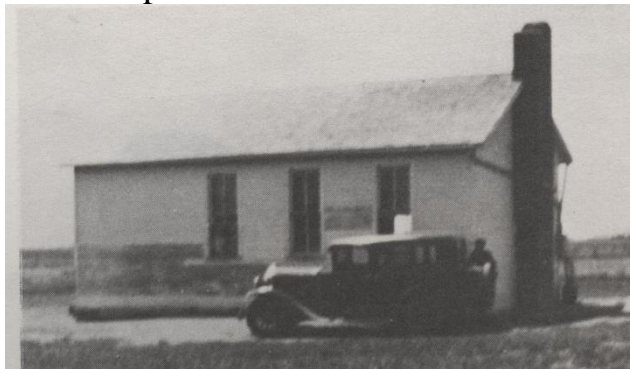
1886-1961—Diamond Anniversary of the First Baptist Church, Emery, SD

1886-1986—Centennial History of the First Baptist Church, Emery, SD

1886-2011—125<sup>th</sup> Celebration of the First Baptist Church, Emery, SD

Souvenir booklets and programs

Assorted photos



Schoolhouse used for worship



First church as church 1908