



Arthur offers many options for worship

The Union Church

Worship of God was important to the early citizens of Arthur. The first church services in the community were held 150 years ago in the upstairs room over a hardware store operated by J. P. Ray.

Located on the southwest corner of Vine Street and Railroad Street (now Progress Street) in 1873, this was the only two-story commercial building in town.

But the people still wanted a real church building. So, in 1880, Robert G. Hervey, the railroad president, donated land at what is now the 200 block of South Beech Street for a church building.

By subscription, which is paying in advance in order to receive or participate in something, the Cook School House, located one mile west of Arthur, was purchased and moved to the Beech Street location.

The building was owned and maintained by the Village of Arthur and was governed by its Board of six elected trustees.

Members of all faiths attended the regular and revival services as well as other community events held at this church. There were also various entertainment events held to obtain funds for the purchase of wallpaper, paint, and a bell for the church.

Some of today's local churches had their beginning organization at Union Church until the construction of their own buildings.

Lincoln Street Christian Church

On Sept. 25, 1871, a Christian Church was organized by Ed. A. Harshberger. At first, services were infrequent, but by 1881, regular services were being held at various locations until the church was reorganized in November of 1883.

Services were then held at the Union Church until their own church was completed in

1894 on the northeast corner of Lincoln and Pine streets.

The members of the Lincoln Street Christian Church eventually merged with other churches in town and the building was demolished in the 1940s. The blocks of the structure, however, were re-used to build the American Legion Hall at that same location. That building was used by the Legion and by the community as a youth center, pre-school, for church services, and as a meeting place for the Arthur Boy Scouts until 1996 when it was finally demolished as well.

Vine Street Christian Church

The Vine Street Christian Church was organized in 1881 with W.F. Black of Chicago holding a meeting in the E.B. Snyder Implement building at 113 S. Vine.

In 1883, five lots in the Murphy Addition to Arthur were bought for \$150 to construct a church building. The building was completed that same year and was known as the East Side Christian Church.

The Ridge Church, located three miles South of Arthur, was a feeder for the Arthur congregation.

Early on, the church filled the pulpit with traveling ministers, evangelists and faithful Sunday school teachers. At one time the Moultrie County Superintendent of Schools, B.F. Peadro Sullivan, filled the pulpit, having to come on horseback when the roads were bad.

Early in 1900, a revival was held on the ground where the church now stands.

In March 1909, the East Side Christian Church bought this 100- by 103-foot lot on the northwest corner of South Vine and Park streets. It was considered to be "the best lot to be had in the city" for a church.

The existing frame building on East Illinois was to be moved to 249 S. Vine, remodeled, and veneered with brick. However,

the move did not materialize and it was decided to erect a new building instead.

The congregation then started a building campaign, and dedicated a new church building on Dec. 16, 1909, with the lots, buildings and furnishing costing \$8,110.

The old church building was sold and the lumber used to build a residence on the northwest corner of Columbia and Pine streets.

During the Flu Pandemic of 1918, the town was quarantined and services were not held for several Sundays.

In 1938, the Edwards house next to the church was bought for a parsonage, and in 1964, a new parsonage was built on Walnut Street. In 1972, the old parsonage was torn down and plans began to build a new Sunday school addition.

First Baptist Church

On Aug. 30, 1885, eighteen Christians met with the Rev. W.C. Barker for the purpose of organizing a Baptist Church in Arthur. Thirteen of the charter members came from the West Prairie Church, two came from the Bourbon Baptist Church, and one came from the Arcola Methodist Church.

Church meetings were held in the Union Church. Collections were taken only at business meetings and in 1886, the July collection amounted to 35 cents, August 23 cents, and September 45 cents. In 1887 records, it was noted that the March meeting was not held due to the door being locked.

A committee was formed in 1887 to look for a site to build a house of worship. John Sears, who built the first house in town, was a member of this committee. They secured the Reeves Second Addition of Arthur, located on the north side of the railroad, and dedicated a new church building on the second Sunday of May, 1889. The original plans called for



Fleming Funeral director's horse-drawn hearse circa 1900-1915

a brick church but were later changed to a wooden structure.

In 1890, the church was struck by lightning twice, the second time knocking the spire to the ground. It was rebuilt. In 1891, the C. & E.I. railroad was built through Arthur and passed directly in front of the church door. There was talk about moving the church. At this time, John Campbell offered the lots where the current church stands at 120 E. Park St. as a gift from him and his wife.

Groundbreaking for the new church took place on Oct. 12, 1907. The cornerstone of the new church was laid by members of the Arthur Masonic Lodge. In 1911, the church procured a parsonage.

Due to a diphtheria outbreak in the community, in January of 1912 the church closed, and later in December of that year closed again due to an outbreak of scarlet fever.

On Dec. 12, 1940, the congregation suffered a great catastrophe when the church burned to the ground. Very little could be salvaged. However, on Sept. 28,

1941, the cornerstone was laid for the new First Baptist Church of Arthur.

United Methodist Church

The First Methodist Episcopal Church was organized by the Rev. M.H. Ewers in the Union Church in November of 1893. The initial organizing group had 20 members. They held their first Sunday school on Oct. 17, 1895.

Subscription to buy property for a church began on Jan. 29, 1896, and on October 29, 1899, a new church was dedicated by the Rev. E.M. Smith, president of Illinois Wesleyan. The church was located on the northwest corner of Luke and Walnut streets.

On Oct. 20, 1903, the pastor moved into the parsonage on the northwest corner of Palmer and Walnut streets.

A new church was dedicated at its present location at 128 E. Illinois on April 2, 1916, and the \$16,000 building was opened free of debt.

In 1938, the church became the First Methodist Church. The church congregation was fed

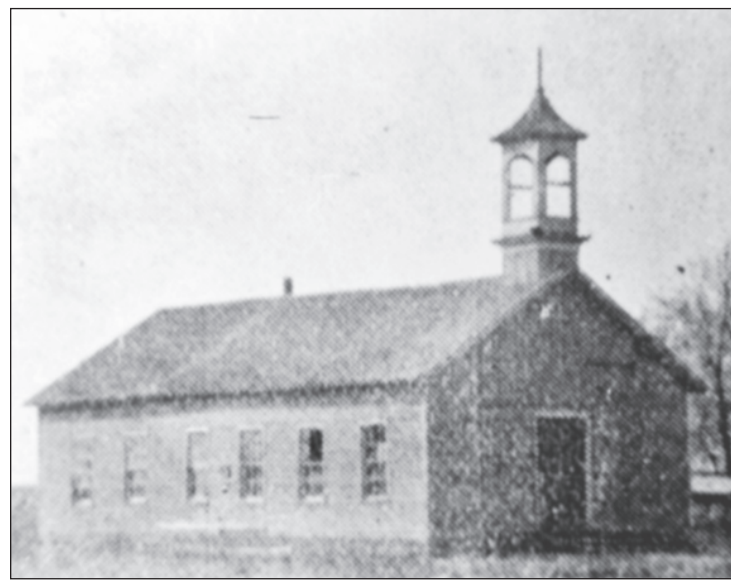
by the Cadwell and Rosedale churches, which disbanded in the 1950s.

In 1964, a new addition and complete remodeling of the church began, which also included the addition of a new sanctuary. In 1968, the church became the Arthur United Methodist church when the Methodist and United Brethren conferences merged.

The first parsonage on Illinois Street sat just east of the church. A new parsonage on the southeast corner of Illinois and Ash streets was purchased in 1954 and served that purpose until it was sold in 2002 and the present parsonage on Park Street was purchased.

The church began hosting community meals in 2009 for Lent. However, the meals continue today because they were so successful and served not only to feed people, but also to nourish them in other ways. Between 200 and 300 meals are served every Wednesday.

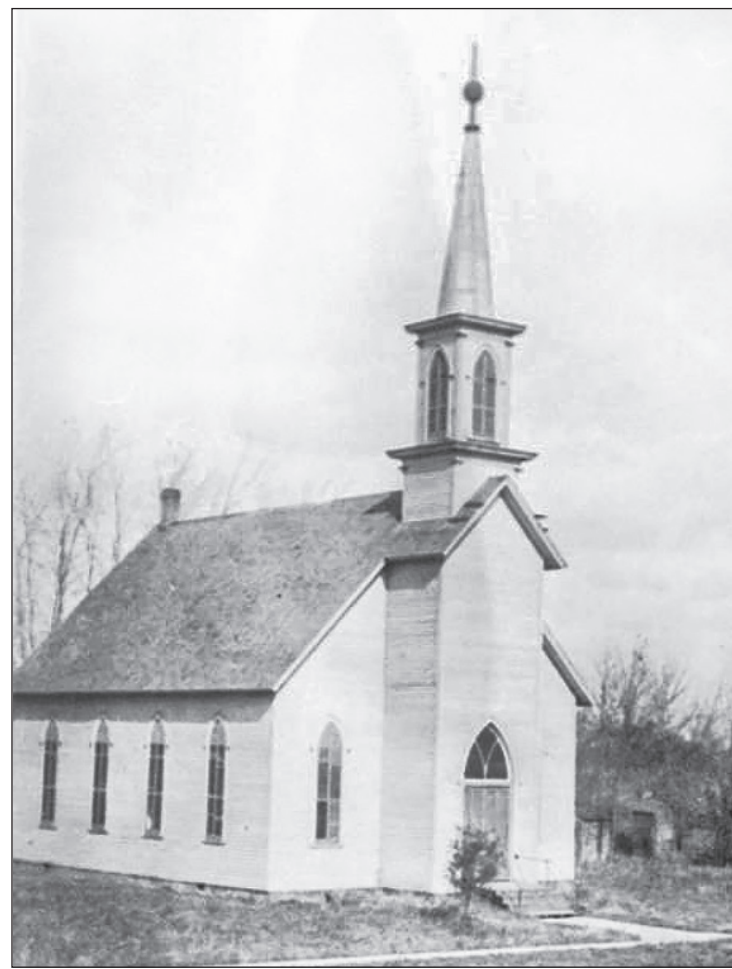
Groundbreaking for a large new fellowship hall was held in July of 2016. There was a celebration in September of 2021 when the building was paid off.



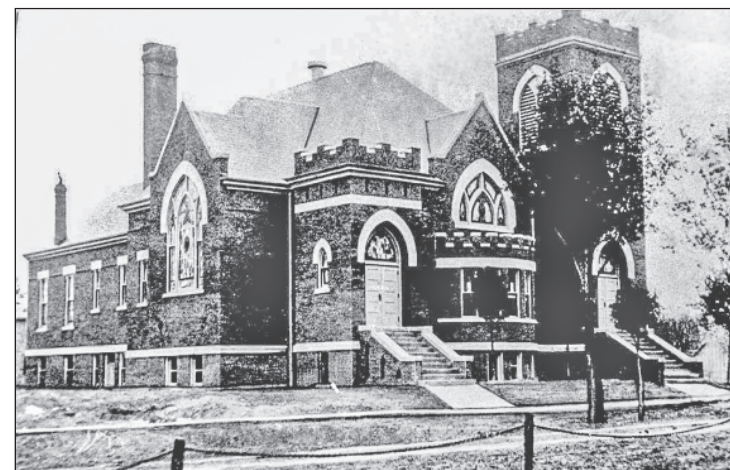
The Union Church



Lincoln Street Christian Church



First Baptist Church



Vine Street Christian Church