

. . . Through Heritage



1888

From a group of 20 to a membership of 200; from an orchard to a brick building . . . these are only some of the changes which have occurred to the First Presbyterian Church of Pauls Valley over the past 100 years.

Records and past histories indicate that the first official Presbyterian gathering in this area was held in 1887 when, in the fall of that year, Rev. W. J. Moffatt was assigned as the first minister of the Whitebead and Pauls Valley congregations. Whitebead had seventeen members and Pauls Valley had twenty. The Pauls Valley members met in a pecan orchard near Rush Creek located east of what is now known as South Chickasaw Street.

The first building used by the local Presbyterians was built in late 1888 at the corner of Rennie and Chickasaw which was, at that time, on the west edge of town. The land was purchased from Samuel Paul, son of Pauls Valley's founder, Smith Paul. A \$150 mortgage dated October 1, 1888, was against a 14' x 24' building thought to be the

manse. The first church building was a wooden structure measuring 28' x 40'. Records indicate Rev. Moffatt did much of the work on the building himself. He served the Pauls Valley church until 1890.

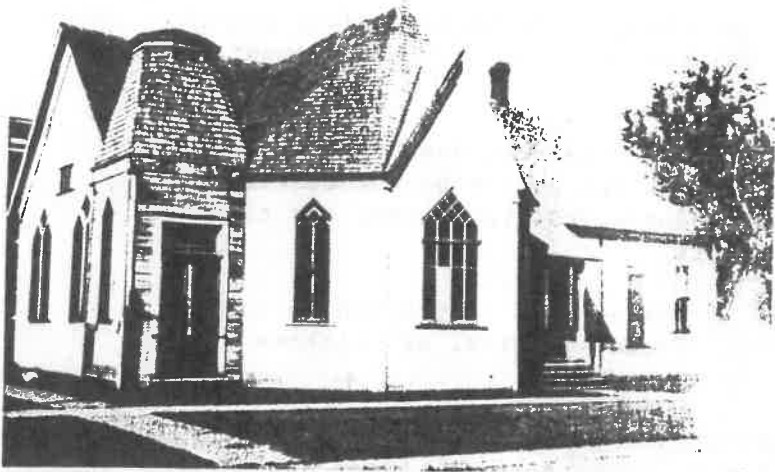
In 1894 membership showed a decrease to only four members. However, by 1896 membership was up to twelve. Even though the membership was small, the year 1896 was a very active one for the church. The first Ladies Aid and Missionary Society was formed with Mrs. A. L. Constant as President and Mrs. James Rennie as Vice-President. Also, during 1896 an organ was purchased for the church.

Other than pastoral and membership changes, little information about the church is given until 1907. At this time the church moved to a new site located at Willow and Bradley. The lot where the old Junior High School is now located was purchased from C. J. Grant in 1907. Funds for the new building were derived from contributions and fund raising efforts.

In 1908 the Pauls Valley church entered the Synod of Oklahoma, Presbytery of Ardmore.

The membership continued to grow over the following years reaching 167 in 1915. The nationwide flu epidemic of 1917-1918 infected Pauls Valley as well. Funerals were held morning and afternoon during the height of the epidemic. During this time, possibly in an effort to combat the communicable disease, an individual communion service was purchased. Prior to this purchase, communion was held with one or two common chalices for the entire congregation.

In 1919 a two-story house was purchased to serve as the manse. In April 1920 the congregation voted to purchase the present site of the church. In 1922, when the membership passed the 200 mark, the church was incorporated. The construction on the new building began and a cornerstone was laid during a special ceremony on May 13, 1923. The Ladies' Organization raised funds to purchase a pipe organ which was built into the new sanctuary. The congregation began using the new church building in the winter of 1923-24.



1907

Forty-nine years later a \$100,000 remodeling and restoration project was undertaken. On May 13, 1973, exactly 50 years after the cornerstone of the present building was laid, a special service or rededication was held.

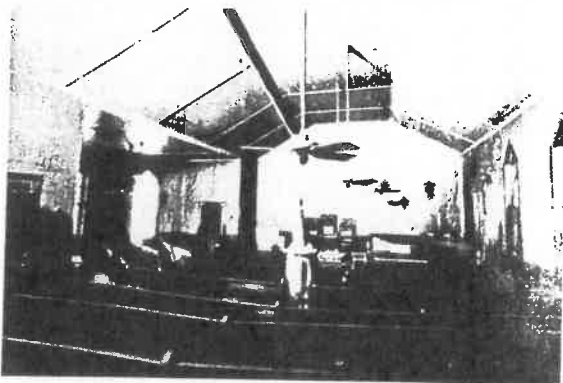
The church continues to have an active membership. There are now two ladies' organizations, the Vesper Circle and the L & F Circle. The Sunday School is active and growing. We have a faithful choir which has also shown growth. Our church has a session with nine Elders and a Board of Deacons with nine Deacons. Many of our members are active in local organizations and activities

as well as City government. Dr. Harry L. Millard is the current pastor, having served here for the past seventeen years.

The Pauls Valley Presbyterian Church is known throughout the town as the "churchy-looking" church with its beautiful "Akron" plan of architecture. It also receives compliments from other congregations for its well-kept grounds and colorful flower gardens.

The church in 1987 not only serves its members, but reaches out to the community in various ways. It serves as host church for ecumenical services during Holy Week. A candlelight Christmas Eve service is held in the church sanctuary with standing room only congregations becoming traditional. The church provides, or has provided, a meeting place for Alcoholics Anonymous and Overeaters Anonymous. It has recently begun to sponsor a new Boy Scout Troop and the Samaritans, a Pauls Valley organization whose goal is to help the local needy, is based at the church and has their food pantry there.

The First Presbyterian Church of Pauls Valley has made a great deal of progress since meeting in the pecan orchard 100 years ago. But, it is not through progressing. With God's help, the accomplishments of the next 100 years will have much to add to the 200th Anniversary of the church.



1907 INTERIOR

Our Most Recent Renovations 1987 - 1988

Our church basement was destroyed during the flood of May 29-31, 1987, when the water from the Washita River formed a temporary river on Walnut Street, just west of the church.

Although the roaring water lapped at the outside basement door and ground water seeped through the walls, the two restrooms in the basement were the culprits which caused the most damage.

When the flood waters receded, the church basement was 5½ feet deep in sewer water. The flood literally wiped out the entire basement, which housed the nursery, parlor, kitchen, food pantry, two restrooms, two classrooms, storage rooms and the fellowship hall.

Diepenbrock Construction Company, of Edmond, was contracted to begin the rebuilding project in February, 1988. Harold A. Hite, of Oklahoma City, was employed as the Architect.

There were three phases of the project: First, the construction crew had to completely "gut" the entire basement. They tore out every cabinet, every tile, all the wall coverings, and the floor coverings. This demolition phase took about 2½ months.

The second phase was designed to eliminate the possibility of a future flood causing the same disaster. In this phase, the two restrooms were moved upstairs and a water barrier, Bentonite, was installed on the basement floors and walls up to ground level.

The third phase was to completely remodel the area that had been destroyed to make it cosmetically appealing, as well as to retain the integrity of the Akron plan of architecture. (This building is one of the few churches left in the country which still retains the original Akron style of architecture ---a style that was very popular during the 1920's.)

One other addition to the building, since the flood, was the installation of the large Celtic Cross on top of the steeple. This cross was constructed by Mr. Ronnie Patton and installed by Mr. Robert Carriker and Mr. Ernest Lusk, all of whom are members of this congregation. The cross was donated in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Joe W. Curtis by their daughters and their families.

The Pipe Organ in the Sanctuary is a ten-rank instrument which was built into the building at the time of construction. It was completed and first played in 1925. It was completely remodeled in 1984. This Pipe Organ, and the one in the First United Methodist Church across the street, are the only two pipe organs of which we are aware in this area.

During a service of rededication, on December 4, 1988, the fellowship hall was designated the Ruth Rabon Memorial Hall.