

Ribstone Congregation is 115 in 2023!



To celebrate, each newsletter we'll be sharing some historical highlight from our amazing congregation's long and exciting history!

Here's How it All Started!

While living in Manitoba, Tom Smith read about the Prairie Provinces and how they were open for homesteading. So, in the spring of 1905, Tom and his family and Tom's son-in-law, George Burton, and his family loaded two railway cars with their possessions and started West. They came as far as the railway did at the time which was North Battleford. From there they travelled by oxen to Lloydminster, where they turned south and travelled until they came to the Ribstone Creek. Here they settled. Their only neighbours were a small band of First Nations people living east along the creek.

Annie Burton, George Burton's wife, wrote to the church periodical, "The True Saints Herald," telling about the open prairie in the west. This letter was instrumental in the decision of others to move to the Ribstone area.

Beginning in 1907, other families began to move in, including Levitts, Cliffords, Wildes, Walraths, and Beckleys.

From Tom Smith's diary we know that the first church service was held in the Levitt home on July 8, 1906. The group continued to meet in various homes of church members for some time. At this juncture there were three men in the priesthood: Elder William Levitt, Elder James Beckley, and Clyde Walrath.

On the cold evening of February 3, 1908, a meeting was held in the home of William and Edith Clifford to organize a congregation (known in those days as a "Branch") of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now named Community of Christ). So, February 3rd of 2023 marks the 115th Anniversary of this historic event. The pastor elected on that day 115 years ago was Clyde Walrath, who had just been ordained an Elder.

In 1913, a place of worship was built on the south-west corner of George Burton's land. Five years later, in 1918, the men loaded the church building on sleighs and, with horses, they moved it to just north of the railway track in Ribstone. Later, in 1933, it was moved again to its final home which is now the site of the Memorial Peace Garden in the yard of the present Community of Christ building. Ribstone Community of Christ is the oldest church of any of the denominations in the Chauvin/Ribstone/Edgerton area and it is the oldest Community of Christ in Alberta that is still open.

The great work of the Lord continues to be carried on by the people of the Ribstone Congregation after 115 years! And the adventure continues. Stay tuned!



Tom Smith and his wife

