

# Church of Christ Celebrates Fifty Years



On January 29<sup>th</sup>, the Church of Christ located here in Anaconda will be officially fifty years old. The congregation plans to celebrate this milestone with an open house on Sunday, February 1<sup>st</sup> from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. All are invited to stop by and share in this time of remembering.

Members of the Church of Christ here in Anaconda actually began meeting in July of 1957 probably in a residence in Opportunity. The first members included the Guy Collins family and the Joe Wyant family. Joe Clay, the preacher serving the congregation in Butte, held Sunday afternoon services for these families when he could. In August of that year Clinton and Faye Brazel, Kent and Adelia Hall and Ken and Carolyn Samuel moved here to help establish the congregation. Since the congregation had no building they arranged to meet in the Anaconda Junior High School, and the first business meeting was held on the banks of the Big Hole River following a day of fishing and fellowship.

On January 29, 1959, at a meeting of the men of the congregation, formal Articles of Incorporation were approved and application was made to the Secretary of State for recognition as the Anaconda Church of Christ. Three months later the house at 400 Poplar Street was purchased by the church as both a parsonage and meeting place. The congregation soon outgrew the house and began plans to purchase property for a building. Initially, plans called for building on the lots which were still available near the house on Poplar Street, but through the generosity of the Anaconda Copper Company land was purchased on the corner of Washoe and Evergreen for one dollar.

The lower level of the church building was completed in March of 1960 with the first service held there on March 8<sup>th</sup>. The upper level of the building was completed by the summer of 1962. In May, 1960, Kent and Adeila Hall moved to a new work and Joe McBee and his family joined the team here. Some time later the Brazels moved on but Joe and his family worked here until 1965.

T.J. Thompson and his family moved here to begin working with the congregation and serving the community in 1966 and continued until 1968 when he died of a sudden heart attack. He was followed by Phil Burrows who ministered in the area until 1970. From 1970 to 1972 it appears that the church dwindled in number and may have stopped meeting altogether. Clinton and Eletha Goben moved here to work with the church and community in 1972. Clinton once recalled that the building was empty and unlocked when they first arrived and that he was surprised that there had been no vandalism. The MayFair Church of Christ in Huntsville, Alabama, encouraged and strengthened the congregation with a Campaign for Christ in 1973. The Goben's worked with the congregation here until December, 1979, when ill health forced Clinton to leave the ministry.

Daniel and Bonnie Fraser moved to Anaconda in March of 1980 to continue the ministry. The congregation at that time numbered only about fifteen and with the closure of the Smelter the church continued to struggle just to survive. By July, 1988, the congregation had grown to include more than thirty with a peak attendance of sixty-one. On July 20, 1988, Dan Fraser passed away suddenly during a Wednesday evening Bible study.

In January of 1989 Eldon Leep of Bozeman began coming to Anaconda to work with the congregation every other week and continued to work with them until March, 1990. On March 17, 1990, Mike and Gloria O'Rourke and their two children, Jeff and Erin, moved to Anaconda to take up the ministry here. Gloria grew up in Anaconda, in fact just down from the church building on Washoe Avenue. Her father, Larry Enloe, was a supervisor with the smelter. Mike and Gloria have served with the congregation here for the past nineteen years. The congregation now averages about fifty in attendance most Sundays and has an effective outreach to the Job Corps Center offering many of the students the opportunity to enjoy "family style" worship and fellowship services.

Through the years the congregation, like the community, has overcome numerous challenges, but with an eye to the future we look forward to continuing our ministry to this fine community "Where Main Street meets the mountains" for many years to come.