



AVERY CHURCH BELLEVUE, NEBRASKA



CELEBRATING THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD & GOD'S PEOPLE

History of Avery Church

Historically, Avery Church is a neighborhood church and has had a long-time connection with Avery Elementary School. In 1900 a young woman named Helen Fletcher and some other students at Bellevue College (which was then funded by the Omaha Presbytery) established a Sunday School at Avery School. These young people (some of the men were seminary students) walked 2 ½ miles through the woods each Sunday to teach the neighborhood children. (Think how rural the area must have been at that time.)

This continued for over a decade until 1913, when William Skillcross began a series of evangelical meetings each evening for two weeks. On the final night a blizzard raged, making it difficult for

people to attend, but God prevailed, people were able to get through to the streetcar, and 75 people came forward during the invitation. These people decided a church was needed in the area.

Miss Fletcher was asked to contact the Presbytery on their behalf, but they were slow to respond. One of the men offered to contact the Baptists, at which point the Presbytery in Omaha quickly sent their approval. On May 24, 1914, Avery Presbyterian Church was organized and for many years afterwards was the only church between South Omaha and Bellevue. By 1916 Avery School had outgrown its small frame building so they sold it to Avery Church and built a large brick school just to the west which is still standing on the corner at the bottom of the hill. One of Avery's current members, Dee Barber, was baptized in the original church in 1954.

Over the years our congregation has flourished and by 1956 plans were being made to build a new building in our current location at a cost of \$200,000. The 50 Boy Scouts who held their meetings in the church kicked off the building program by raising money and donating a bell which is still in use. On Sunday, May 3, 1959, as the new church bell rang, the congregation walked up the hill from the old, converted schoolhouse to their new church home. By 1961, a new Fellowship Hall in the basement was completed and dedicated.

In 1992, a "Mission in Motion" project almost doubled the size of our building, adding the north seating section and the foyer. The kitchen was moved upstairs and the area (which is the current fellowship hall) was built for the offices and some meeting rooms. The basement was also enlarged underneath the new north addition. The congregation performed most the demolition, new construction, painting and staining; working these many hours together formed an even tighter bond within the Avery family. In the early 2000s the building was reconfigured to its current use – offices and classrooms were moved downstairs and we were able to have a much larger fellowship hall.

Before the renovations on the church building, the bell tower was above the entrance of the church on the north side and a large cross was attached to the outside of the building above the entrance. The cross was built by a church member who owned a machine shop and the Bellevue Fire Department helped raise it into position.

When the exterior of the building was changed so drastically in the late 1900s, the cross and bell were removed and stored. For many years the cross lay in the backyard of members Dave and Dee Barber and then was moved to the basement of Joe Tess Place, a seafood restaurant in South Omaha which specialized in fried carp. In 2001 church laymen built a new Bell Tower near the street. The bell is usually rung on Sunday mornings before church. In 2013, the old cross was erected and the water feature was built on the hill beside the parking lot. The garden area provided a place to display the cross in a beautiful setting.

In May 2014, Avery celebrated its 100th anniversary with a “homecoming” including a large banquet and return visits from several of the former pastors and members. A picture of those attending the Sunday service was taken in front of the cross.

Interesting sidenote –

Emery Zimmerman, one of the young men who had taught Sunday School, later returned to Bellevue with his two young children after his wife died. He married Helen Fletcher and was called as Avery Church’s first pastor in 1916.

OUR LONGEST-TENURED ACTIVE MEMBERS

Dee Smith Barber joined 1954

Louise Burmeister joined 2/27/57

Dave Barber joined 4/5/59

Glen Skovgaard joined 4/10/60

Ilene Watts joined 6/9/63

Bev Hrdy joined 10/4/64

440 Total Years at Avery

THEY STARTED THEIR LIFE TOGETHER AT AVERY . . . and are still going strong!

Dave and Dee Barber – Sept 20, 1959. All three of their children married at Avery, also.

Ralph and Laurel Unstad – June 1973 They had two ceremonies, one in church; the other “hippie” wedding was outside and Laurel rode a horse.

Al and Cindy Crisp – Feb 15, 1975

Roy and Arla Bennett – Sept 22, 1977. Arla died in 2010

Scott and Angie Burmeister – June 6, 1992

Dan and Bea McVicker – Oct 26, 1996. They had a beautiful wedding banner made which was also used at their son Graham’s wedding this year.

Steve and Glenna Quinn – June 22, 2002. Met at a young adult group at Glenna’s church (King of King’s Lutheran). Steve was a member at Avery. Glenna started attending Avery when they started dating in 2001.

Mark and Lori Lawson got engaged at Avery but married in her church in Iowa in June 1995.

MEMORIALS

Windows

Round stained-glass window on east wall of main foyer in memory of Rick Kieser. Son of George and Betty, long-time members. Died of cancer.



Round stained-glass window on north wall of main foyer in memory of Ernst Skovgaard (Glen's dad).



Round stained-glass window in west foyer in memory of Gary Plambeck (Linda's husband).



All stained-glass windows along south wall are memorial windows. When renovation was done the extra stained-glass windows were stored in the basement. (There were around a dozen.) A few years ago, they were offered (free) to any members who wanted them. The Fullers got three and had them installed in their sunroom.

Front of auditorium – The Chancel



Cross – memorial to Mr. Huntley (long-time member, father-in-law of Barber’s daughter)

Stonework – memorial to Jane Huntley (long-time member, mother-in-law of Barber’s daughter)

Stained glass windows beside pulpit chairs – memorial to Dee Barber’s parents (number of rays same as number of children)

Wooden cross on the east wall is the only constant from original building. It started there and stayed through renovation and expansion projects. It was made by a now-deceased, but long-time member, Monte Montgomery.



Watts Room – in memory of Paul Watts, Ilene’s husband and Cindy Crisp’s dad. It is used as the choir room and is a general-purpose room.

The west wall area where the choir loft is was originally the front of the auditorium. Off to the side was a stairway. The pastor and worship assistant waited downstairs until time for church to start, then made their entrance onto the platform.



Outside

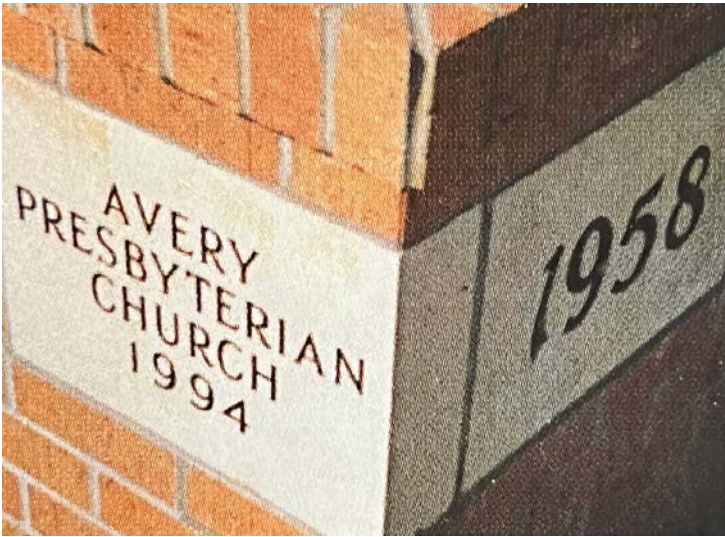
Cross by the water feature was originally on the bell tower of the church before renovation. It was given as a memorial to Glenny Barber (Dee’s dad).



Memorial stone to Bud Oltman outside by cross. He was Dee Barber’s brother-in-law. He and his wife were Episcopalian but always liked Avery. She used memorial money to install the stone.



CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS



The east side where the parking lot is now.



North side – main entrance. The long window is above the choir loft now. The new addition was built inside the “L”

1992 – “MISSION IN MOTION”



Drastic changes outside!

A whole new look!



Early 2000s – updating use of inside space



Construction Zone – STAY OUT!

The coat closet, looking into the kitchen.



Looking out through the kitchen serving window into the fellowship hall.



New fellowship hall – this area had been the church offices, classrooms, choir room, and conference room. The kitchen had been moved upstairs earlier.

Avery Hispanic Church was established in early 2017 due to the growing Hispanic population in



Bellevue and South Omaha. Concerned members of the Anglo church reached out to Pastor Juan Bueno through the Presbytery to help plant this new church. With the Presbytery's support, Pastor Juan was responsible for finding a pastor to lead this important mission. He chose Pastor Abiud Lope, a Mexican pastor from Monterrey who relocated with his lovely family to start this new journey.

The story of this church starts, like many others, with God's desire to bring people closer to Him.



Pastors John and Abiud worked tirelessly to share the gospel through outreach activities. Their main goal was to connect with families, especially those with children. Because of their efforts, new families began to join this lovely church.



In late 2017, we started Bible studies with four families. Over time, more families joined us. In 2018, we began our first official Sunday church services, initially held in the office of the Hispanic

church and led by Pastors Abiud Lope and Alma Maldonado. As our community grew, we moved our services to the sanctuary for more comfort and space.

In 2019, Pastor Juan Bueno completed his mission as a church planter and retired. He passed leadership of the Hispanic church to Pastor Abiud and his wife, Alma. The church grew, reaching over 40 members, including young adults and children. In 2020, when the pandemic spread in the United States, the congregation had the blessing of having started Bible studies in members' homes just a month earlier. This allowed them to continue gathering in small groups while the worship services were held via Zoom.



In 2022, we hosted our first Summer Bible School at Everett Park, just a few minutes from the church and surrounded by many Hispanic families. Our Summer Bible School lasts a week, allowing us to reach out to more community members. It's filled with joy, where children learn about the Word in a fun way. This event has become the Hispanic Church's most important annual outreach activity.

In mid-2023, we began a weekly Club Kids activity aimed at children. Our mission is to share the gospel with kids aged 3 to 12. At the same time, we also organized Bible studies for adults.



In November 2023, the pastor and his family had to leave the country because their work visa expired. After that, the leadership team stepped in to manage the Sunday activities and services. The support from all the congregation members has been essential in keeping this excellent work going.



La Iglesia Hispana Avery fué establecida a principios de 2017 debido al crecimiento de la población hispana en Bellevue y South Omaha. Los miembros preocupados de la iglesia anglosajona contactaron al Pastor Juan Bueno a través del Presbiterio para ayudar a plantar esta nueva iglesia. Con el apoyo del Presbiterio, el Pastor Juan fue responsable de encontrar un pastor para dirigir esta importante misión. Eligió al Pastor Abiud Lope, un pastor mexicano de Monterrey que se mudó con su encantadora familia para comenzar este nuevo viaje.



La historia de esta iglesia comienza, como muchas otras, con el deseo de Dios de acercar a las personas a Él. Los pastores Juan y Abiud trabajaron incansablemente para compartir el Evangelio a través de actividades de extensión. Su principal objetivo era conectar con las familias, especialmente aquellas con niños. Debido a sus esfuerzos, nuevas familias comenzaron a unirse a esta encantadora iglesia



A finales de 2017, comenzamos los estudios bíblicos con cuatro familias. Con el tiempo, más familias se unieron a nosotros. En 2018, comenzamos oficialmente con nuestros Servicios Dominicales, inicialmente celebrados en la oficina de la Iglesia Hispana y dirigidos por los pastores Abiud Lope y Alma Maldonado. A medida que nuestra comunidad creció, trasladamos nuestros servicios al Santuario para mayor comodidad y espacio.

En 2019, el Pastor Juan Bueno completó su misión como plantador de iglesias y se retiró. Pasó el liderazgo de la Iglesia Hispana al Pastor Abiud y su esposa, Alma. La iglesia creció, llegando a más de 40 miembros, incluyendo adultos jóvenes y niños. En 2020, cuando la pandemia se extendió por los Estados Unidos, la congregación tuvo la bendición de haber comenzado los estudios bíblicos en las casas de los miembros solo un mes antes. Esto les permitió continuar reuniéndose en grupos pequeños mientras los servicios de adoración se llevaban a cabo a través de Zoom.



En 2022, celebramos nuestra primera Escuela Bíblica de Verano en el Parque Everett, a pocos minutos de la iglesia y rodeado por muchas familias hispanas. Nuestra Escuela Bíblica de Verano dura una semana, lo que nos permite llegar a más miembros de la comunidad. Es una semana llena de alegría, donde los niños aprenden sobre la Palabra de una manera divertida. Este evento se ha convertido en la actividad anual de extensión más importante de la Iglesia hispana.

A mediados de 2023, comenzamos una actividad semanal del Club Kids dirigida a los niños. Nuestra misión es compartir el evangelio con niños de 3 a 12 años. Al mismo tiempo, también organizamos estudios bíblicos para adultos.



En noviembre de 2023, el pastor y su familia tuvieron que abandonar el país porque su visa de trabajo expiró. Después de eso, el equipo de liderazgo intervino para administrar las actividades y los servicios dominicales. El apoyo de todos los miembros de la congregación ha sido esencial para mantener este excelente trabajo en marcha.

