

## **Chapter 5**

### **ROELAND PARK CHURCHES**

The Shawnee Methodist Mission was established in 1839 to educate and bring the teachings of Methodism to the Shawnee Indians. At about the same time the Baptists established a mission in the vicinity of what is now 55th and Walmer Streets in the City of Mission, Kansas. Elsewhere in the Johnson County area, the Quakers established a mission. These were the earliest forerunners of churches in Johnson County although none were in the area that is now the City of Roeland Park.

#### **SOUTHRIIDGE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

The first church congregation organized in what is now the City of Roeland Park was the Southridge Presbyterian Church. Its story goes back to before 1909, when some groups of people in the vicinity were using the Southridge Station of the Strang Line for a religious meeting place.

The Station stood about a half-block east of the present City of Roeland Park City Hall on a spot known then as Santa Fe and Walnut Streets, now 51st and Granada. It was an attractive, roomy structure with overhanging eaves. It was equipped with wooden benches built around the wall where passengers waited for the Strang Line cars.

One of the families brought a portable organ for church use, and other needed articles were donated. In the center of the room was a big stove to provide heat. Members of the congregation saw to it that there was always a plentiful supply of wood on hand. They took turns in cutting the logs into the proper lengths and piling them beside the door.

Most important of all, a volunteer committee saw to it that a minister or a leader was on hand for each Sunday service. It was a zealous group, that early congregation, who laid a solid groundwork for the wide range of service the church is doing today.

In 1914 the site of the Roesland School was changed from its original location on part of the old Indian Mission grounds to its present spot, and a new school was erected. The spot was centrally located for the members of the group who were worshiping in the Strang Line Station and since the new school building offered better facilities, permission was asked, and granted, to hold church services in one of the class rooms.

Up to this time there had been no organized church - just a handful of people meeting together for weekly worship. Now they began to feel more and more the need to be identified as a church group. So they went to work in earnest with plans toward that end. The result was a petition for church affiliation which was presented to the Topeka Presbytery.

According to the earliest records of the church, it was at noon on January 10, 1916, that the Presbytery met in called session in the Carnegie Library in Kansas City, Kansas to consider the petition. After hearing the various representatives, the meeting adjourned to convene again on January 23, 1916 in the Roesland School building in Southridge "to consider the whole matter fully, and 'if the way be clear' to organize a church."

On that date, January 23, 1916, the church was duly organized with 29 charter members. Soon thereafter, the infant congregation selected as its first official pastor the minister who

had been serving them and who had been a leading spirit in the church's formal organization, Dr. D. B. Whimster.

The church was now on its way as an official unit. The members began looking for a site to accommodate their own church building. The site chosen was immediately across the street from the school in which they had been meeting.

The site was acquired. No time was lost in starting construction of the church. By October 1916 the cornerstone was laid, and before the end of the year the people were worshipping in their own first church. Yet, for some unexplained reason, the congregation did not get around to dedicating its church formally until November 23, 1919. In 1923 the manse was built.

As the membership grew, larger quarters were needed. In 1941 that need was met by enlarging, remodeling and improving the church building. While sufficient at the time, a few more years passed, and again more room was needed. In 1948, ground was broken for a larger and better church which is the present building. Dedication services were held on June 4, 1950.

Southridge Church was founded with the purpose of serving its individual members, the community, and any other part of the world it might reach. Early it adopted its slogan - "A Friendly Church With a Vital Message" - and the slogan has remained through the years.

#### **UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH**

The first church building to be constructed in the Roeland Park area was the Shawnee Place United Brethren Church. It was conceived by a Mr. Haraford, who was the Kansas City Star newspaper carrier in the area in 1911.

The congregation met in various homes in the area until the church site could be secured. In May 1912 service was held in the building at what is now 4718 Canterbury Street (Then known as Quapaw). The church at that time had twenty-four Charter Members.

Services continued to be held in the original building. In 1922, the congregation was ready to erect a church building and selected a site near 48th Street and Mission Road. Ground-breaking occurred in May 1923 and the cornerstone was laid on June 10, 1923. When the basement was completed, a decision was reached to use it for services until such time as the building fund was large enough to permit further work. By this time membership had reached one hundred.

In the spring of 1927, a decision was made to relocate and a site at 47th Street and Lewis Lane was selected. This decision was based upon the belief that the direction of growth was to be north and west, an error in judgement that was not apparent for several years.

The cornerstone for the 47th and Lewis Lane church was laid on October 23, 1927. The first service in the building was in observance of Christmas on December 24, 1927. Services continued in this church until 1947.

During the war years, the church developed a building fund with the intention of erecting a Church building on the 47th Street site. However a way opened for larger growth in the rapidly developing community of Roeland Park. This opportunity resulted from the offer of Charles E. Vawter to donate a tract of land for a church site. This tract is located at what is now the corner of 51st and Cedar Streets.

The cornerstone for the new church was laid in 1947 and the present social room and Sunday School classrooms were completed at that time. In 1950, the Parsonage was constructed, and in 1952 the Sanctuary was completed.

Prior to the move, in 1946, the Evangelical and the United Brethren denominations merged, adopting the name, "Evangelical United Brethren Church." Twenty-four years later a second merger occurred, this time with the Conference of Methodist Churches.

The United Brethren Church began in Shawnee Place, an area that is the northeast corner of the City of Roeland Park. It moved for a period of time to Wyandotte County. It returned to the Roeland Park area at the time the area was expanding. Eighty-four years, and two name changes, after Mr. Haraford conceived the idea and necessity for a church, the present United Methodist Church continues to serve the residents of the City of Roeland Park and Northeast Johnson County.

### **ST. AGNES PARISH**

In 1923, as homes were being built in Mission Hills and other areas in Northeast Johnson County, Catholics living south of 43rd Street in the Rosedale district thought that they were too far away from Holy Name Church on Southwest Blvd. Bishop Ward scanned the territory and sensed that it was time to begin a new Parish. He appointed Father James H. Ording to be the First Pastor of the newly organized parish. At first a tract of land was considered at 43rd and Lloyd, but the Holy Name parishioners complained that this location would take too many families from that Parish. In the meantime, Mass was offered in the home of John Nunnink at 4424 Lloyd. Finally a tract was purchased on 47th Street between Booth and Adams.

The new church building consisted of one story and a full basement. Work began in July 1923 and was finished by November 1, 1923. The Chapel was in the basement and seated 260 persons. Three Loretto Nuns were engaged to teach the school children. The Pastor lived on Booth Street for three years and then a residence was purchased on Adams in 1926. As the Parish grew, a second story was needed, but finances for expansion were not available.

To complete the expansion, the Roe Sister, Miss Isabella, Miss Margaret and Mrs. Ellen Bryan donated nine acres of land. The proceeds from the sale of the land were sufficient to defray the cost of the addition. The Chapel was moved to the second floor in 1927 where seating capacity was 380 persons.

For several years there was little progress because of the Depression. When World War II started, economic conditions improved and more Catholics moved into the area. Again it became evident that a more central location was needed. Again the Roe Sisters were on hand with their charity. They donated five acres to the Parish on the corner of 53rd Street and Mission Road. Construction started on the new church but was delayed because of the war. Steel beams for the structure were not available. Finally, redwood beams were selected for the construction, but they, too, were a long time in arriving. The stone walls of the unfinished church stood for quite some time without a roof.

The Church was completed and solemnly dedicated on Thanksgiving day, 1943. Subsequently Catherine Roe donated an additional five acres to the Parish on which a school was constructed. This was followed in February 1948 with the completion of a new Convent for the Sisters who were teaching at the school. On August 24, 1952 a new Rectory was blessed by Bishop Hunkeler. Subsequent construction in the Parish was for the purposes of a separate high school and upgrade of elementary school facilities.

### **TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Although Trinity Lutheran Church is no longer in the City of Roeland Park, it had its beginnings in the small church at 57th and Nall Avenue. The church was established almost by the will and efforts of one man, the Reverend Harlan Hartner.

Reverend Hartner came to Northeast Johnson County in September 1939. Going door to door and visiting patients in hospitals, he surveyed the community and believed that a Sunday School and worship service should be started in the Mission, Kansas area, then the heart of the Northeast section.

In October 1939 the Kansas District Lutheran Mission Board visited the area and realized that they must make plans for building a modest chapel. This resulted in the Mission Board purchasing a 120 x 140 foot lot at the corner of 57th Street and Nall Avenue.

During the months of October, November and December 1939, Rev Hartner continued to canvas the area. Then, on January 28, 1940 interested Lutherans gathered and with nineteen communicant members, organized the congregation. A week later a call was extended to Reverend Hartner to serve as the pastor of the new congregation.

The building of the new chapel began in March 1940. The chapel was completed July 7, 1940 at which time dedication services were held. Actual service began a week later on July 14, 1940 with 34 in attendance and with ten persons in the Adult Bible Class. By March 1942, a parsonage had been constructed, and occupied by the Hartners. At that time Reverend Hartner's salary was \$70 per month and housing.

By the end of World War II, membership in Trinity Lutheran had increased to 190 with 235 in Sunday School attendance. Church contributions were \$19,000. It was soon apparent that more space was required. In May 1945, the church purchased four acres of land at Highway 50 and Nall Avenue for future construction. Ground breaking began in October 1950. The cornerstone for the new church was laid on May 20, 1951 and the new church was dedicated January 20, 1952.

A small church, with its roots in what is now the City of Roeland Park, which began with just 34 in attendance had grown to the point that 2,000 persons attended the dedication of its new building. Though located in Mission, Trinity Lutheran Church continues to serve Lutheran residents of the City of Roeland Park.

#### **FULL MISSION GOSPEL CHURCH**

After Trinity Lutheran Church moved from the Chapel at 57th and Nall Avenue, the building was occupied by the Church of Christ and later by the Mennonites. In 1964, Reverend Lena Walker of the Full Mission Gospel Church was driving by and noted that the church building was for sale.

Acquiring the building soon after, the Full Mission Gospel Church has occupied the building ever since. Reverend Walker and her husband served as pastors until 1987 when they gave up their ministry because of ill health and age. The current pastor is the Reverend J. L. Dockery who has served the church since 1991.

#### **KANSAS KOREAN MISSION CHURCH**

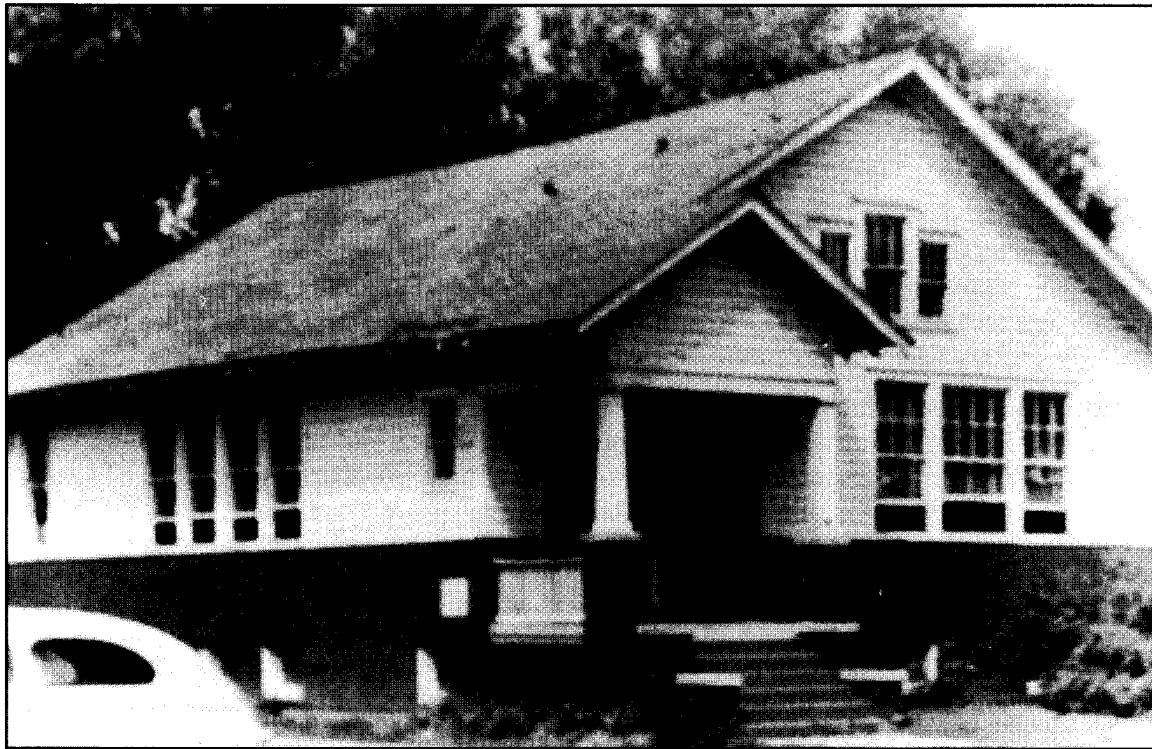
The most recent church to be established in the City of Roeland Park is the Kansas Korean Mission Church located at 4740 Mohawk. This church was established in 1990 in the church building that had been constructed by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons).

The Kansas Korean Mission Church serves people of Korean descent living in Johnson County. Services are attended by about 200 persons. The church is self supporting. It is affiliated with the American Baptist Association.

#### **THE NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH**

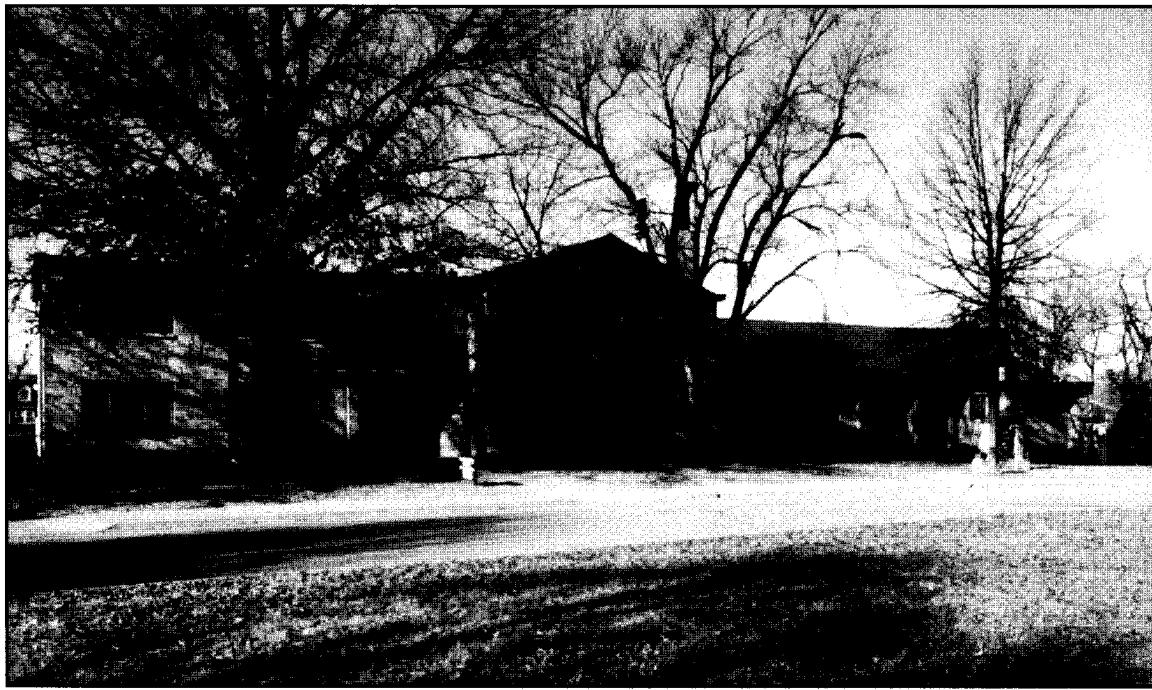
No longer in existence in Roeland Park, the New Hope Baptist Church served the area until about 1980. The church was located at 4709 Fontana. It consisted of a church building and a separate chapel, which may, also, have been a manse.

The chapel is now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Phil Bollinger. Mr. Bollinger reports that the building may be about 80 years old, based on old newspapers he found in remodeling. He states that the church building was located on a terrace behind the building that is his home. However the church building had been razed before the Bollingers moved there.



*The Southridge Presbyterian Church*

*This is the second church building constructed by the Church.  
It was occupied from 1930 to the 1950s*



*Southridge Presbyterian Church - 1995*



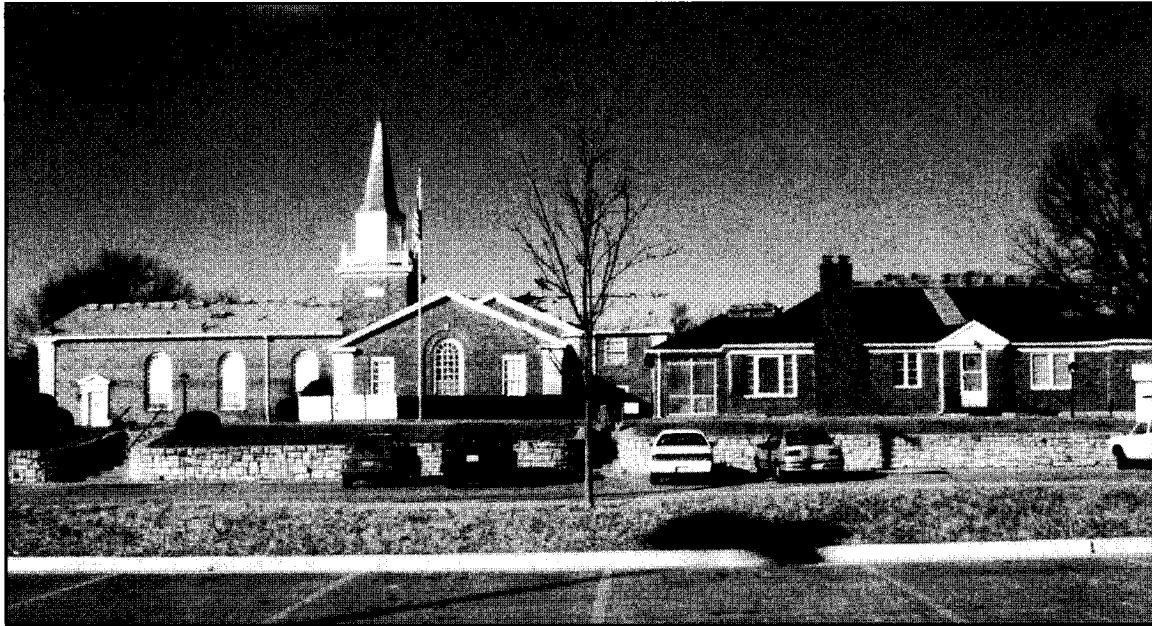
**United Brethren Church**

*Located near 47th and Canterbury Streets, this is the original church building of what is now the United Methodist Church. It was constructed about 1912. It is now occupied as a residence.*



**United Brethren Church**

*Located in Wyandotte County on County Line Road and Lewis Lane (opposite Reinhardt), the building was used as a church from 1927 to 1948*



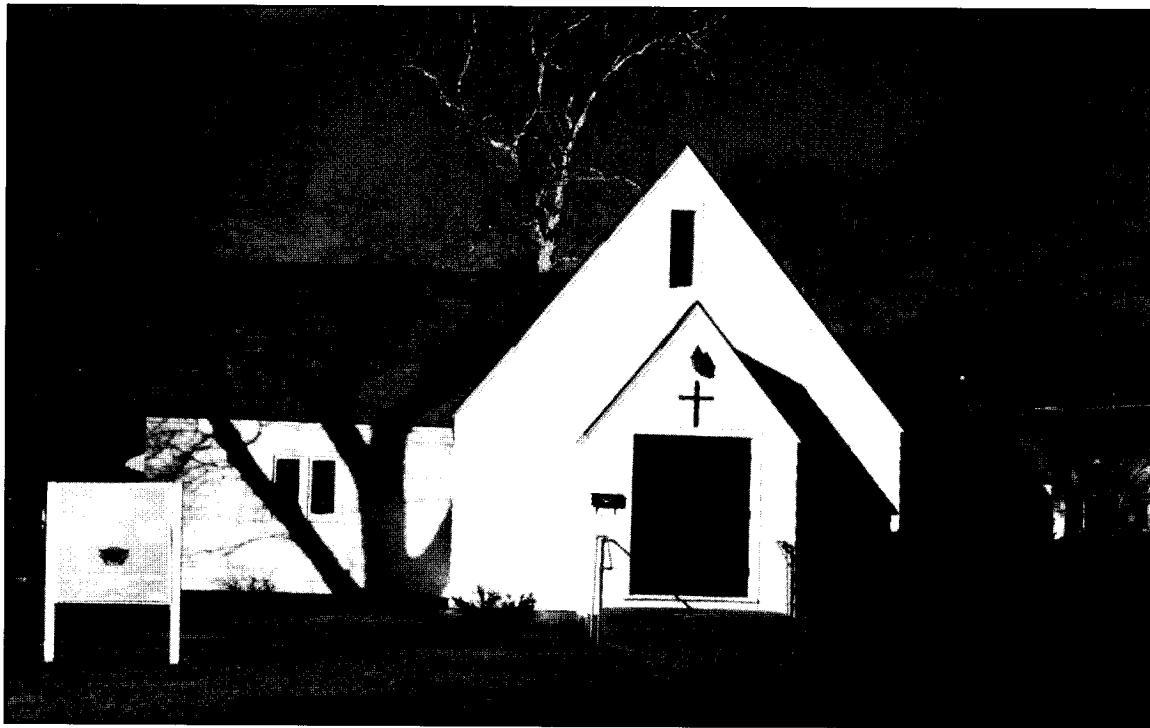
***United Methodist Church***

*Constructed in 1947 as the Evangelical United Brethren Church at 51st and Cedar Streets, it was renamed the United Methodist Church when the Evangelical United Brethren and Methodist Churches merged.*



***St. Agnes Catholic Church***

*Located at 53rd Street and Mission Road, the church was dedicated on Thanksgiving Day, 1943.*



**Full Mission Gospel Church**

*The Church, located at 57th and Nall Avenue, was originally constructed and occupied by the Trinity Lutheran Church in 1940. It has been owned by the Full Mission Gospel Church since 1964.*



**Korean Mission Church**

*The Church, at 48th and Mohawk Streets, was constructed by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It has been occupied by the Korean Mission Church since 1990*