

Spirit River, Alberta, Canada



Spirit of the Peace United Church

Our Pastoral Charge is a one point charge. Our church is Spirit of Peace United Church in Spirit River. Spirit of Peace became our new name when Westminster United in Spirit River and St Paul's in Rycroft were amalgamated in 2006.

This area was served by the Presbyterian Church from 1902, until the union of the Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists into the United Church of Canada. A church was first built at the Spirit River Settlement with permanent ministry being established in 1913. The historical quilt displayed in Spirit of Peace was made in that year and commemorates many of the community founders. In 1916 the Spirit River Settlement moved nearer the railway with the church being moved as well. Two lots were purchased for the sum of \$200 from the Edmonton Dunvegan and British Columbia Railway company. This transaction was completed on May 29, 1916. These two lots in Spirit River are still the location of Spirit of Peace and the manse today.



A new church was erected in 1916. The original plan

was to build two towers at the front of the church so it would be a small replica of Westminster Abbey. The tower part of the plan never was carried out. 1920 saw the Ladies Aid Society purchase a large bell from the United States. Due to its heavy weight it was not practical to put it up on the church building. Instead a wooden frame was built to hold the bell. In later years a sturdy iron frame was constructed to replace the wooden one. It still stands today, now in front of our church on the street corner. Our plans are to have our new church sign attached to the iron bell stand. This past winter we joined in solidarity with churches around the world, by taking a stand against environmental pollution. At more than thirty below we rang our bell 350 times in “Ring 350 for Copenhagen”!

The last annual meeting of the Presbyterian Church was held on February 6, 1925. The United Church was inaugurated in June of that year. Our church was part of this union and became the United Church in the area. There were United Churches and preaching points in Eaglesham, Rycroft, Broncho Creek, Northmark, Spirit Valley, and White Mountain to just name a few places. In 1951 Broncho Creek ceased to be a preaching point and in 1956 Spirit Valley and White Mountain also ceased to be preaching points. Time has certainly kept changing our church. Can you believe that there were 100 children in Sunday School in 1959? We now have about 5 children in Kid’s Church on a regular basis.



October 26, 1969 was an important date. Our new sanctuary was dedicated on that day. In 1970 the remaining portion of the church basement was finished and the United Church Women (UCW) began to operate a Thrift Shop on a continuous basis. Visit the basement of Spirit of Peace today and you will find - a thriving, bustling Thrift Shop!

Our Centennial Year was 2003 and we celebrated it with historical vignettes at Sunday services where we were most enlightened and entertained by the pioneering spirit of our past church members, leaders and ministers. They were a hardy lot, with ministers serving up to five preaching points at times - on horseback or horse-drawn buggy.

This year, the 85th Anniversary of the United Church of Canada, we are a strong United Church presence in Spirit River and area. Every Sunday, worship services are provided by our part time ministry or our four Licensed Lay Leaders. Christian education, fellowship opportunities, visitations and pastoral care to our members, and to those who come to us in need, are an essential part of the life of our church. We work at being an open and welcoming, family-oriented church, and in recent times are happy to have youth groups and other community groups using our building. With the Sunday service, Thrift Shop on Friday afternoons, monthly Soup and Sandwich events, musical gatherings and other fund raising events, plus the occasional funeral service, Spirit of Peace is a busy place. If you are near, come and join us at Sunday worship at 10:30 am, or at other advertised events. We'll put the coffee on!

Rycroft, Alberta (Historical)

