



*History of the
First Church of the
Nazarene
Monte Vista, Colorado*



1937

- During the summer of 1937, a meeting with Reverend Dave Severin and another Pastor was held to consider the possibility of organizing a Church of the Nazarene in Monte Vista.
- Later that year, Reverend Paul R. Cobb (of Elkhart, KS) was sent by the District Home Mission Board to establish a church.

1938-1939

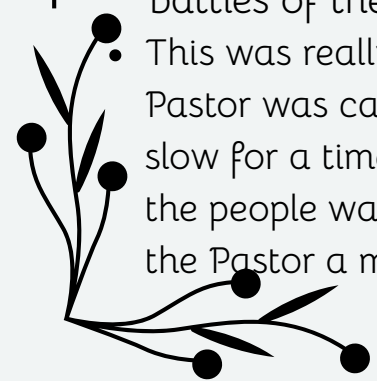
- Mennonite families from Elkhart came to live in or near Monte Vista and began to worship at this church plant and took a big interest in church growth. The first services in Monte Vista were held in Woodman Hall, upstairs rooms of the old Woodman building on the northwest corner of 2nd and Adams St. It was in 1938 that the church charter was officially signed by Vic Thompson, Walter Grannis, Sr., and Ben Mahl.
- The church began increasing rapidly and reached an attendance of 142 on Easter Sunday 1939. This number would not be reached again until 1983.
- A permanent home for the congregation was needed. The District Superintendent, Reverend C.W. Davis, urged the people to pray for the Lord's clear direction in finding an adequate site on which to build. The congregation had drawn plans for a small church building to be built on property already serving as the parsonage for the Cobbs. Reverend Davis encouraged the congregation to seek the Lord for something "bigger and better." They did just that and prayed for the Lord's will to be done.
- Times were very hard - work and money scarce. Reverend Cobb received no set salary; agreeing to take what came in the offerings. After paying the \$5/week to rent the Hall, little was left for his salary. He took on outside work as much as time allowed.
- As the congregation was praying, a Christian couple named Cornell (not part of the Nazarene congregation) was prompted by the Lord to donate two lots for the purpose of a church building. This is where the church is located today.
- Throughout 1939, money was raised and materials gathered for the building. The Lord provided what was needed in many ways! Mr. Louis Backhaus, of the Backhaus Lumber Co. donated all the trees needed for lumber. He also owned a sawmill in the mountains southwest of Monte Vista. If the people of the church would cut the trees and get them to the mill, he would cut the trees into lumber for free. Volunteers from the congregation went as a crew to cut the trees. There was excitement and a contest to see who could get their tree cut down first! Someone shouted "There goes the first tree for the First Church of the Nazarene in Monte Vista!" So began many days of long and hard work.
- The walls of the church would be made with adobe brick. Thousands of bricks were required. The bricks were made with the bare feet of the congregation - mixing mud with straw in puddles - then by pouring the mixture into molds to dry. The bricks were made near the little town of Lariat, a Spanish settlement. People of all ages were recruited to come and help; it was hot, hard work, but everyone rejoiced in helping.

1938-1939

- Members of the congregation formed a potato picking crew to work for various farmers in the area. The money earned in the fields was put into the building fund. The potatoes were picked off the ground in baskets and carried to the sorter, then put into sacks. Each sack weighed 100 pounds and was worth 14 cents. Unfortunately, the crop was poor that year, so not much money was earned. The Pastor even took his own car and two-wheel trailer across the Valley, asking for donations of money or potatoes. Any potatoes were taken to the warehouses and sold. During the potato picking days, the Granni's would bring hot meals out the field.
- Much of the actual construction was done by Reverend Cobb, with volunteer help from the congregations as time from their jobs allowed.

1940

- Sometime in the summer of 1940, the first service was held in the new building. The building was far from complete. The roof was in place on the south side, but not on the north side. Of course, it rained that morning! Temporary seats were made from one by four-inch lumber in eight-foot benches. They were very uncomfortable and hard on the ladies' nylons!
- The first heating system was a coal fired heater which had to be kept red hot, and had to be started a long time ahead of service. Hot coals once fell out onto the floor and there was quite a blaze when discovered. Thankfully, no great harm was done.
- These early years were blessed by revival and by several being called to full-time Christian service.

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- During *World War II*, many people from the church left to go work in defense plants all over the country. In early 1942, Reverend Cobb enlisted in the armed forces as a chaplain and ended up seeing some of the worst battles of the war during his time in the service.

- This was really the hardest time for the church. A new Pastor was called and the work went on although rather slow for a time. Many changes were made, but the spirit of the people was wonderful and the church was able to pay the Pastor a much better salary.

1944

- In 1944, additional lots and a parsonage were purchased.
- The small building on the back of the lot served as parsonage much better than the one on 3rd and Jackson, which was sold at this time. This served for several pastors with some remodeling and additions.

1960'S

- The property north of the church was bought in the 1960's.
- People struggled financially during the 1960's and pastors, once again, needed to find second jobs to support their families. The congregation remained faithful and supportive. Food poundings and love offerings were frequent. Members of the church shared with and cared for each other.
- While difficult, it was also a time of spiritual strength. Wednesday night Bible Study and Prayer meetings were well attended and often turned into several hour prayer sessions. People pulled together and the congregation developed into a close-knit Christian family full of love and support. In spite of hard times, the church family would have ice skating parties, picnics, and mountain outings that encouraged their close ties.

1970'S

- During the seventies, there was involvement from all age groups! There was a small but involved group of teens and an active children's department. Homemade donuts were made and sold to give to Alabaster and the youth were encouraged to find ways to support missions.
- Fellowship was an everyday event, driving growth and enthusiasm. During the late 1970's, the church began to grow spiritually and financially. The building of a new parsonage on Pine Street and a fellowship hall were undertaken.



And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.



1980'S

- The 1980's were an explosion of growth and blessing! It was during this time that the first Children's Quizzing Team was started as the church began becoming more involved in the Colorado District.
- In the spring of 1985, the church broke ground for a new Fellowship Hall. The "Annex" which had been purchased in 1976 was moved from its spot adjacent the original sanctuary to where it is now.
- The church continued to grow so rapidly, a new Sanctuary was also needed. It was built in the late eighties without any financial debt, due to God's provision through His faithful and sacrificial saints.
- The first service in the new Sanctuary was held in the fall of 1989.

1990'S

- Easter Sunday, 1990 had over 300 souls in attendance!
- The church held a celebration in recognition of its 50th anniversary in the summer of 1990!
- In the winter of 1990, work began to remodel the original sanctuary into what is now the Foyer, library, and nursery. The church continued to grow in size and in outreach to the community. Multiple Sunday morning services were held in the late nineties.

2000'S

- In 2002, the church purchased the lot on the corner of Madison and 2nd Avenue from San Luis Valley Federal Savings & Loan. The lot had originally been owned by the church, but was sold to the Bank in 1973. When the bank moved to a new location west of Monte Vista, the church purchased back the property and began using the bank building as its Administrative Building.
- In February of 2009, the church purchased the property at 730 1st Avenue from Ray Skeff. This building was to become the home of the Nazarene Thrift Store. As the ministry of the Thrift Store grew, the garages across the alley from the Store – 712 1st Avenue – were purchased.

This material was gleaned from a document created by Suzi Rawls, a typed church history stored in a photo album, and the "Celebrating 50 Years" booklet. Much of the material was obtained by Carolyn Sullivan in preparation for the 50th anniversary celebration. Additional date details were taken from the County Assessor records for the Nazarene Church properties.