

Park Meadows Baptist Church

A Brief History

Park Meadows Baptist church grew out of a small group of young people meeting for prayer and Bible study in 1974. One of the members, Otto Fritz felt led to start a new church in the city. He approached the Alberta Baptist Association and over the next 2 years we came into being.

Our first Pastor was Bruce Merrifield and the first service of 24 people was held in a swimming pool facility 12 March 1976. The church grew to 75 people within the first year with our first baptism taking place in the pool in October 1976 in front of a surprised group of “public” swimmers.

In 1979 a congregation of 200 people moved into Phase I of our new church building at the current location in north Lethbridge. Pastor Barry Seifert was hired as associate pastor in 1982 and became lead pastor in 1985 with the retirement of Pastor Merrifield.

The period 1985 to 2011 saw Park Meadows become one of the very significant churches in our community. It was a period with solid, steady growth in attendance, giving, pastors, programming, community outreach, missions, and building expansion.

In 2011 we had attendance of 650 people in two services on a Sunday morning and 5 full time pastors. There were home groups and bible study groups, very successful children’s programs (Awana, VBS, Children’s Church) and youth programs, attracting non-church family children and teenagers. We had developed a Christian Play School, active men’s and women’s ministry, young adults programming, a 12 step addictions programs, missionary and mission support with mission trips to Mexico, Kenya, Russia, and Brazil.

On the local community front we reached out to the north Lethbridge community through community meals and events, a benevolent program, clothing programs, school supplies and student food programs and Soup Kitchen volunteering. We supported/hosted a number of whole church community events including Promise keepers, fund raising, a hospital pastor and Indigenous peoples church support.

In the late ’00’s a season of substantial pastoral turnover began, highlighted by the 2012 departure of Pastor Barry after 30 years of ministry at PMBC. The season following Barry’s resignation was a challenging one for staff, leadership and congregation alike. Attendance and giving declined as families stepped away, taking with them a significant amount of bench strength and emotional energy, yet the areas of children’s ministry, youth, young adults, and small groups remained relatively steady. Associate Pastor Del Bertch served as the Acting Lead Pastor for three years as the congregation determined it’s next steps. In 2014 Lorne Willms was recruited to be our next Lead Pastor, serving until spring 2019.

Despite new families joining our church family, contraction continued through the 2010’s, and a season of review in 2018 led to a formal season of transition that began in the summer of 2019 and continues today, where we find ourselves to be a gathered community of 275 each Sunday (pre-COVID). Guided by Transitional Pastor John Estabrooks and aided by a congregation that is ready to move forward, we are hopeful and excited about the vision God has given us. There is still much to do, but we believe that with the Spirit’s enabling we are up for the challenge, and eagerly look forward to learning who God has in mind to join us in perceiving and pursuing the new thing He is doing in us and through us.