

## West Heights History

The idea for West Heights United Methodist Church was born when a religious needs survey was taken in the mid-1950s in the villages of Westlink, Rolling Hills, Country Acres and the surrounding area. The study showed that it was time to start a new church in this west Wichita suburban area.

Preliminary meetings were held on two successive Sunday evenings, July 22 and 27, 1956, at the Peterson School, to consider starting a new Methodist church in this area "west of West Street."

The Rev. Joe Riley Burns, Pastor of Trinity Methodist Church, and President of the Methodist Wichita District Union presided at the sessions. Morning worship services began August 5, 1956, at Peterson School. This was followed, in five weeks, by Church School classes for all ages.

On September 9, 1956, the Rev. Gene S. Seeley assumed his duties as the first minister for West Heights Church. Dr. Otto F. Volkland, District Superintendent, conducted the official organizational meeting on November 5, 1956, which included reception of 18 charter members and the election of officers. This was the first meeting held at 9812 Birch Lane, a residential property which had been purchased as a meeting place with an eye to its future use as a parsonage. On October 20, 1956 the Rev. Irvin A. Unruh became the new minister for the fledgling church.