

# EXPERIENCE CONGREGATIONS IN MISSION



Walking path east of the Lamoni church



Vida Smith in her later years

## ROLE OF MUSIC IN THE CONGREGATION

Music plays a powerful role in the life and ministry of our faith community, especially at the congregational level. It is a universal language that speaks to all generations and cultures. Music also reflects our own time and culture in a way that communicates our identity and passion to future generations. Some of our most powerful hymns were birthed in a congregational setting, such as "O' My People, Saith the Spirit," written and first shared by Joseph Luff at the Stone Church in Independence, Missouri.

## VIDA E. SMITH AND LAMONI'S OLD, OLD PATH

Two women significantly involved in early hymn writing were Mary Audentia Smith Anderson and Vida E. Smith. Cousins by birth, but friends by choice, Audentia and Vida partnered to create one of our faith community's most beloved hymns, "There's an Old, Old Path." The hymn was written by Vida while listening to a sermon at her home congregation in Lamoni, Iowa. She tells the story:

*I seated myself in the usual place on the north side of the church. A slight breeze moved the branches of the trees near the window; birds flitted*

*about and called or sat on some swaying branch, singing in the Sabbath softness; the choir sang and someone prayed - all as usual. The minister read his text, that old favorite... about finding the old paths and walking therein. He soon faded from my realization as my eyes rested on the swaying branches of the trees and the soft clouds against the blue sky, and I felt the nearness of congenial friends. I felt at home in the house of God, and I felt at ease before his mercy seat. The glory of the message of the ancient prophet flooded my soul and, opening my quarterly, I wrote on the flyleaf the words of the song exactly as they appear in the hymnal.*

Vida shared her new hymn with Mary Audentia, a skilled musician. Audentia soon wrote a beautiful hymn to accompany Vida's thoughts and experience while sitting in her home congregation.

Hymns like this one are continuing to be written today by church members who experience vibrant congregational life and ministry. If you were to write a hymn about your congregation today, what message would you sing?



Lamoni Brick Church

*When something significant happens in a dynamic society, the people sing of it!*  
- Roy Cheville