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United Presbyterian Church, Hamilton

125th Anniversary, 1816-1941

After the close of the Revolutionary War, a period of emigration brought many groups of people into the western and southern parts of Ohio. One of these, a group of Scotch Presbyterians from the north of Ireland, settled in Hamilton, Ohio, and in the year 1816 organized a church which was known as the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. They met for worship in the old fort, sometimes in private homes, and when the weather permitted out-door services were held.

The first church building was erected jointly with the First Presbyterian Church, and was located on the east side of South Third Street between High and Court Streets. In 1828 this joint ownership was terminated, the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church purchasing the lot at Court and Water Streets, now Monument Avenue, for \$100, which site has been the location of their house of worship for the past one hundred thirteen years.



**United Presbyterian Church,
1891,
in use from 1852-1902**

The church erected was a modest brick structure facing the river, with a cupola at the west gable, two entrances at each end, with an elevated pulpit between the front doors. The enclosed high-backed pews prevented a ten-year-old child from even seeing the minister. The wood stove in the rear of the church required the addition of foot-warmers to keep the worshippers comfortable.

In 1852 an additional lot was purchased and a larger building with the tallest steeple in town was erected at a cost of \$7,500. In 1854 the Sabbath school was organized by Dr. Davidson, and was so successful that it was not long until six mission schools were carried on in country districts, and one among the colored people of Hamilton.

In 1858 the union of the Reformed and Associate Reformed Presbyterian Churches took place at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and the local church became known as the United Presbyterian Church of Hamilton, Ohio.

In 1867 the two-story addition for Sabbath school and class rooms was added, at which time the present parish house was erected as a parsonage.



United Presbyterian Church, in use from 1902-1934

In 1902, because the building was in much need of repair, a beautiful new auditorium was erected and the Bible school room remodeled, the structure being dedicated June 28, 1903. This building was destined to carry its members through very troublous times -- flood, war, pestilence, and finally, the church was consumed by fire on March 12, 1934.

The present church, dedicated June 23, 1935, rose out of this disaster -- beautiful, inspiring and impressive. As we review the four churches in which this congregation has worshiped, we must pay tribute to the various building committees who have each time built "more stately mansions."

The first resident minister was Dr. David MacDill, who was called in 1817. The sound foundation he laid for the present church shows what an able man he was. His influence was felt all over the county. He served the church for thirty years.

Dr. William Davidson became the second minister in 1848. The church was never more prosperous nor influential in the community than during his pastorate, his eloquence finding expression "In thoughts that breathe and words that burn," holding his hearers spellbound. Dr. Davidson resigned in 1874, having served nearly thirty years. During this ministry the Ladies' Aid Society was organized in 1854 and the Women's Missionary Society in 1857.



Dedicated June 23, 1935

The ministers that followed these two long pastorates were able, faithful leaders, each one serving the congregation well and adding to the spiritual growth of its members. Rev. J. W. Clokey followed Dr. Davidson, and was here two years; Dr. J. W. Bain, a strong, rugged thinker, served five years. Dr. E. C. Simpson gave Hamilton eleven earnest, fruitful years. During his pastorate the first pipe organ in the denomination was installed, and the first society of Christian Endeavor was organized. Rev. Mason W. Pressly remained three years, and during that time the Fortnightly Bible Club and the Young Men's Lyceum were organized. Rev. G. W. Robinson was also here three years. During the pastorate of Dr. E. M. McFadden the third church was built.

Rev. J. H. Moorehead served eight years, and during that time the indebtedness on the church was paid. Rev. G. W. Bovard was the pastor for seven years, and experienced with the congregation the 1913 flood and the World War; the outstanding event was the one hundredth anniversary of the church. While Dr. J. B. Cavitt was the pastor, the World Wide Missionary Movement was inaugurated by the Boards of the Church, the Hamilton church raised \$25,000; also a debt of \$1,500 was paid to the Board of Church Extension for their help during the flood. Dr. Cavitt was here eight years. During the pastorate of Rev. J. P. Sturgeon the parsonage was made into the parish house to take care of the departmental work of the Bible school. It was during his pastorate that the church was burned to the ground, and the present church was built and dedicated. Mr. Sturgeon ended a pastorate of nine years in 1937, when Dr. J. Hoy McElhinney began his pastorate. He has reorganized the young people's work into two groups, the Builder's Fellowship and the Pioneers, and with his wife is carrying on a very efficient and successful work.

So ends the long list of thirteen pastorates in one hundred twenty-five years, all of them with special characteristics, and all of them building for the "Church Triumphant."

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