

A Moment in History

The following paragraphs appeared in *The Messenger* on Sundays, in the weeks leading up to the 175th Anniversary Celebration, as a way to share and recall the history of Midway Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

May 5, 2019



Midway Christian Church traces its roots back to a few area churches: Grassy Springs, New Union, or Georgetown. "Today, these places can be reached in ten or fifteen minutes by car; however in those days the only means of transportation was by horse and buggy. In good weather, the drive was enjoyable, but tiring. At other times, cold-driving rains made the trip terrible...[So a group of people from the Midway area] decided to try to establish a church of their own here. Since they had no building, they began having services in an unfinished woolen mill on a site now occupied by a brick building at 206 Main (Railroad) street. The church was originally known as the Midway Church of Christ. The first meeting was organized on Saturday, before the third Lord's day in July, 1844."

[from *If These Walls Could Talk: A History of The Midway Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* by Margaret Ware Parrish, July 1998]

May 12, 2019

The first minister chosen to lead Midway Christian Church was Dr. Curtis J. Smith. He had been educated as a Presbyterian minister but later changed denominations. The church was started with 32 charter members. As the membership grew, so did the desire of the people to have a church of their own, so work was begun and the building was finished by December, 1844. It was of Greek Revival design and had four pillars across the front.



May 19, 2019

In 1859, something happened that threatened the very existence of Midway Christian Church. In the early days of the Disciples, no musical instruments were allowed in church. In many things, Dr. Pinkerton was an innovator and he believed music could enhance the spiritual life of the church.



In some way, he managed to procure an instrument known as a melodeon which he intended to use for services. In order to prepare his people he informed them that their singing was so bad that even the rats were fleeing the church. Shortly thereafter, the instrument was moved in and was played by Tom Parrish, son of James Ware Parrish. There was much controversy concerning this as many people considered it the instrument of the devil and the church was rapidly becoming divided. One man, Adam Hibler, decided the only way to end the discord was to have the instrument removed, so one night he and his servant Reuben took the melodeon out of the building. All accounts seem to agree that it was taken out through a window. The melodeon was never seen in the church again, but it did reappear years later and is now on display at Midway University.

This is what we refer to as the "melodeon incident" and would eventually lead to a split in what is now the Church of Christ (non-instrumental) and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

(For more information: www.midway.edu/about-midway/our-story/the-melodeon)