

Today will be the first of brief messages given at worship as part of the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the Mentor United Methodist Church. Through the past two centuries, our congregation has seen the growth of the community from a township of a few hundred to the city it is today. We can trace our roots back to four families on a circuit rider, Rev. Ira Eddy who established the Society of Methodists in 1818, only 21 years after Mentor's first inhabitant, 1797, by Charles Parker, a land surveyor with the Connecticut Land Company. The name Mentor came from Greek literature. Mentor was the tutor of Telemachus, the son of Odysseus. Early American's were fascinated with the ancient world. Solon, Euclid, and Macedonia were also named for Greek literary figures.

Rev. Eddy, a native of Vermont, was sent to this area by the Ohio Conference. The four families, the Nowlands, the Brasses, the Wilsons, and the Jewet's would meet with Rev. Eddy went he came through on his circuit at their homes.

While a church is its' people, it does need a building in which to meet. The new Mentor Methodist Episcopal congregation starting meeting in a church they shared with a Baptist congregation. That church was located at the northwest corner of Mentor Ave. and Center St., a location that was later used for a school.

Eventually, in 1842, a Board of Trustees was elected. A half acre of land along Mentor Ave. was donated to the church by William Kerr and Captain Parker, a relative of Mentor's first resident. This land is part of the footprint upon which our current church stands. The building of the first church was spearheaded by Isaac Sawyer. At first pews were planks laid on blocks. Later, regular pews were made and more woodwork completed. The upper floor housed the sanctuary. An octopus-like furnace heated the church. Finally, on February 13, 1848, the church was dedicated by Bishop Joseph Perry. The choir numbered eleven. Extensive repairs were done to the church in 1866. In 1867, an organ was added and parsonages were built in 1853 and 1881. The 1881 parsonage was built for \$1440. By 1883 the church had 136 members. Some of the groups formed were the Women's Missionary Society in 1881 and the YMCA in 1884, demonstrating early our church's involvement in missions and community outreach.

The 1848 church established our congregation as one of the most important institutions in the Mentor area. A single picture of this church exists in our safe room. While the Mentor Methodist Episcopal Church was now firmly established, it has just begun to serve its members and community. We will look how the congregation continued to grow in future bi-centennial moments.