

First Congregational United Church of Christ's history

Caitlin Nearhood, Sandusky Register, February 16, 2019



First Congregational United Church of Christ is celebrating its 200th anniversary this year. The church's cornerstone was placed in 1819, when the congregation formed.

First Congregational United Church of Christ's history was one of Sandusky's first churches and it's celebrating its 200th anniversary this year.

Its history, [according to the church's website](#):

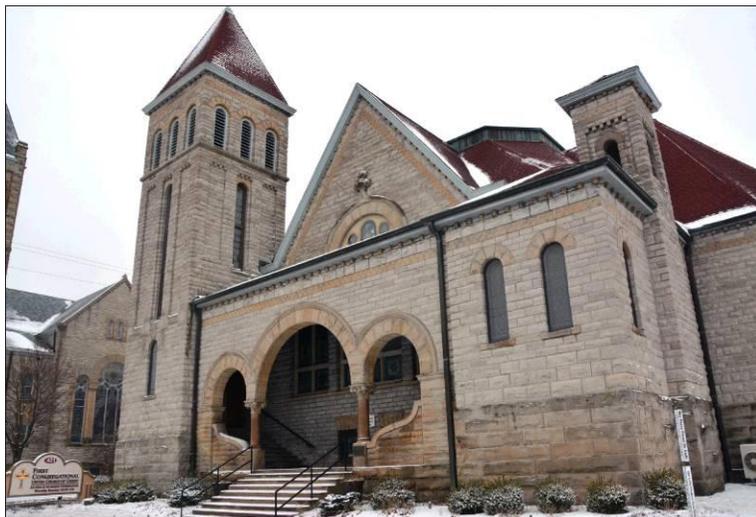
“Our church was founded under the Plan of Union on May 28, 1819, making us the second oldest congregation in Sandusky (the Methodists were established a few months earlier). The Plan of Union was a cooperative effort between the Congregationalists and Presbyterians out East to establish churches in the advancing frontier. For that reason, we began as a “mixed” congregation of Congregationalists and Presbyterians, named the First Church of Christ.

Previous names: First Church of Christ, First Congregational Society of Sandusky, First Congregational Church, First Congregational Christian Church.

Previous locations: Members' homes, the schoolhouse, The Academy (this was located on the east side of Columbus Ave., just north of where Emmanuel United Church of Christ is today. It was built by the City in 1828 for educational purposes.), the 1835 church built on the corner of Columbus Ave. and Washington St., the 1855 building constructed at the same location, the Mahala Block (temporary location while our present building was being constructed in 1895-1896).

Significant past history

Since the Presbyterians in the congregation were pro-slavery and the Congregationalists were abolitionists, and many participated in the Underground Railroad, the slavery issue eventually split the church. First (in 1846) the most radical of the abolitionists left to form the Free Congregational Anti-Slavery Church, also known as Second Congregational Church. They met in a small building on the west side of Wayne St., just south of Grace Episcopal Church. In



1852 the Presbyterians left the congregation and established First Presbyterian Church. At that time the radical abolitionists rejoined the congregation and sold their building to Zion Lutheran Church.

The present building was dedicated in 1896 as an “institutional church” to serve the needs of the community from sunup to sundown, seven days a week. In addition to worship services, the sanctuary was used for community events. The downstairs originally had lecture rooms, a public library, employment agency, and a gym

and showers. The Sandusky High School basketball team first practiced there.

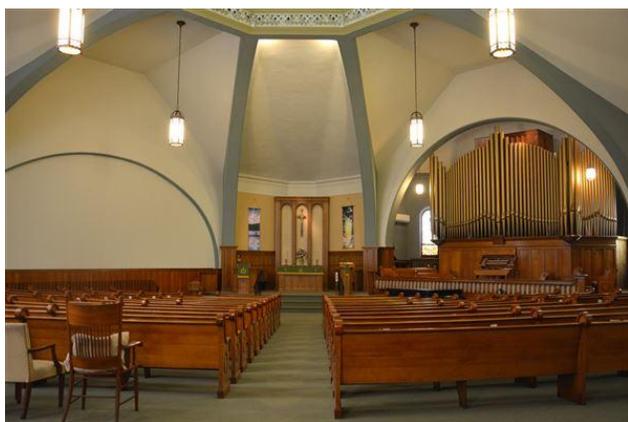
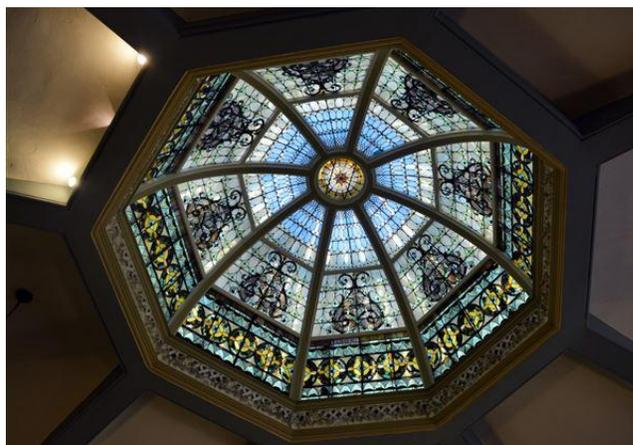
The church building

This building is the third “home” for the congregation, which formed in 1819. The two previous buildings were on the Town Square where the sunken garden is now located. When the city decided to clear the square of all buildings in 1894, the property was purchased. After renting temporary facilities for 18 months, this building was dedicated in May 1896.

Situated just south of the old commercial district among many grand stone residences and houses of worship, the building was designed by architect Sidney Badgley. Like many of the neighborhood buildings, the church was constructed of Sandusky blue limestone.

It was designed to be an “institutional church” to serve the needs of the community. In addition, to worship services, the sanctuary was used for community events. The downstairs originally had a public library, employment agency, and a gym and showers. (The Sandusky High School basketball team first practiced here).

The church had two major capital campaigns in the almost 17 years that Rev. Lenore Kure has been the pastor. The first project, costing \$250,000, was for our elevator and handicap accessible restroom dedicated in 2000. The second, in 2004, a \$200,000 project, was for redecoration and restoration projects.”



Get to know

First Congregational United Church of Christ

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