

History of Madison Churches
Prepared by Miss Violet Crandall
(Taken from the Madison Press; April 10, 1953)

THE CENTRAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

The first organization of the Central Congregational Church was formed in the log house of Lemual Kimball in July 1814. There were nine members.

In 1819 Rev. Hyde was ordained in August and the church moved to the Middle Ridge to worship in the town house, or hall, on the northwest corner of Middle Ridge and Hubbard Road. The Congregational and Baptist congregations both used this building as a meeting place until 1830. At this time twenty-four members were dismissed from this growing church to form the Second Congregational Church of Centerville, or Madison, as we know it now. It used the log town hall building, also used as a schoolhouse, on the corner of the park, as a meeting place for several years.

As in most of our early churches, the pastorates were short and the salary meager so that until 1841 there was little progress. In 1841 Rev. Reuben Tinker who had been a missionary in the Sandwich Islands (now Hawaii) for ten years, and had returned to this country, accepted a call to become the pastor here and remained until 1845. The church was still worshipping in the Town Hall on the park. The present house of worship was built in his pastorate.

The church grew in numbers and in 1853 it became a part of the Plymouth Rock Conference. In 1858 an audience room enlarged the church building, 40 x 60 ft., on the south side of the church. In 1859 a lecture room was erected in the rear of the building. A parsonage was also purchased on West Main Street.

Rev. Fraser had one of the longest and most fruitful pastorates of the last century. He was pastor from 1878 to 1887. Under his care the church was greatly blessed and there were 185 members on the church roll.

In the years between 1887 and 1892 the building was remodeled. The old colonial frame building was changed to the more modern brick structure. The separate lecture room was sold to the colored church on Washington Street in Painesville.

In 1913 a new pipe organ was installed and the old one was sold to the Claridon Congregational Church. Rev. Heutter was pastor there before coming to Madison and they still use the organ.

Rev. Dutton and his family, who were very much loved, went from the Central Congregational Church to China where he and his wife spend many fruitful years as missionaries.

Rev. Metcalf was pastor from 1919 to 1934 and one Sunday morning while he was preaching his sermon, word came that the parsonage was on fire. He went right on preaching. The volunteer fire dept. put out the fire, but the damage was quite extensive. The present parsonage was built in 1925.

Now the church has the only chimes in the town of Madison or the township, and it is a real inspiration to hear them. This past year a new and very modern, well equipped kitchen has been built on the east side of the church, so now as for years past, bodies and souls alike are still being fed at the Central Congregational Church.

The Rev. Frank Huetter is the present pastor.

UNIONVILLE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY CHURCH

The first religious services were held in Capt. Alexander Harper's home in 1800. Rev. Joseph Badger was the first preacher. Later the log schoolhouse was used as a meeting place. In 1830 a church building was begun on a part of the burial ground facing South Ridge. While building this, Cyrus Martin let them use his barn, which stood where the present church stands. Unfortunately when nearing completion, the church caught fire (it is said from a smoker's pipe) and burned to the ground. It was then that Mr. Martin deeded the lot where his barn stood to the church and moved the barn across the road. The church that now stands there was built in the year 1834.

It was during these years that thirty-two members of the First Congregational Church in Madison asked to be dismissed in order to organize this Congregational Church in Unionville. This was granted. From the beginning they declared their religious beliefs and their convictions concerning social evils.

At the first meeting of the newly organized church this resolution was put on record: "Resolved, that we who are about to be organized into a church will not traffic in ardent spirits nor use it as a drink except as a remedy in case of sickness, nor admit anyone as a member who refuses to give the same pledge."

In 1836 a resolution was passed in favor of stricter observance of the Sabbath: "Viewing with deepest solicitude the desecration of this hold day to purposes of business and pleasure."

A later pastor felt that they needed a bell to remind the stragglers that it was church time, but there wasn't much enthusiasm about it until one Sunday when Robert Harper, a prominent member, who had one of the enclosed type pews up in the very front of the church, was made to feel very conspicuous. His niece, a lovely auburn haired young lady from Perry came to visit his family. Now she had found some black hair dye and decided to have hair to match her eyes so with the help of her cousins the black dye was applied and before they got into bed her hair was carefully covered in towels to protect the pillows. But the next morning the covering was stuck tight and it took plenty of hot water and time to get the sticky mass off enough that she could get her hair under her bonnet and to church. Mr. Harper had waited very impatiently and he ran the horses all the way but the family marched into church when the service was half over to the great amusement of the rest of the congregation. The church got the bell, 900 lbs. of it. It was shipped to Fairport by boat and hauled by ox team to the church.

During the Civil War this church was very strongly opposed to slavery and was active in helping runaway slaves to reach Canada and safety.

From time to time alterations have been made in the building. The belfry, which was open and the nesting place of many birds, was enclosed. The outside door, which was in the center of the front, opened into a wooden platform extending the full width of the building. The platform was removed; a large window put in, and the entrance door is now on the east side. The ceiling was very high and the church difficult to heat even with two box stoves with long stove pipes. Oil lamps were used for lights. The gallery was used for Sunday school rooms. In 1906 this gallery was enclosed to form a kitchen and dining room. In 1912 new seats were put in and the same year the parsonage was remodeled. In later years the sanctuary has again been remodeled and an electric organ installed.

Rev. H. A. N. Richards was pastor from 1897 to 1904. He was also pastor of the Bell Church and was much loved. He was called "the marrying parson" and many couples went to his new pastorate after he left Unionville to be married by him. Mrs. Richards, during the years her husband was pastor, conducted a Junior Christian Endeavor, the meeting being held on Sunday afternoon at 3 o'clock. This was made so interesting that all the children in the vicinity attended faithfully. At about the same time Amy Crandall had a large Junior B.Y.P.U. at the Baptist Church, which met at the same hour. Children in these churches often went to church and Sunday school and then returned in the afternoon for their Junior meeting, and some of them went to church in the evening too. They had real training for Christian service.

The Unionville Church has the distinction of having the only woman pastor. Mrs. Candy, after the death of her husband, Rev. Candy, was ordained and carried on the work. She was a really wonderful woman.

The church had the only blind pastor in the community, Rev. Swain, who is remembered especially for his violin playing.

This church is an active, working, living church. It celebrated its one hundredth anniversary (1834 to 1934) July 21-22, 1934.

The present pastor is Rev. Chas. F. Richmond.

THE BELL MEETING HOUSE AT NORTH MADISON

This church was also called The First Congregational Church and was probably formed by the remainder of the Congregational group that worshipped in the Town House or Hall on the Middle Ridge after the withdrawal of the members who formed the Central Congregational Church in Centerville.

The old church burned about sixty some years ago and when it was rebuilt it was still called the Bell Church as, in early days, it was the only church around here which had a bell.

Most of the old faithful families are gone and for some years the church was closed. About twenty years ago it was reopened as a community church. The building has been much improved inside and out and is a real beauty spot at the North Madison Corners.

Rev. Mackenzie had a very outstanding and fruitful pastorate here.

Rev. Ben Garlich is the present pastor.

ST. MICHAELS EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN UNIONVILLE

St. Michaels is another of our local churches with a history that dates back to the early days. It was in the year 1832 that several families in the Unionville area organized an Episcopal Society that met in their homes. Lay readers guided it with the assistance of the Rector of St. Peters in Ashtabula. In 1841 under Rev. Hall's capable and consecrated leadership, the present church building was erected. It was consecrated and dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel by Bishop McIlvaine.

After Rev. hall left in the 1860s the church had periods of growth and activity and years of almost closed doors. The church building stood on the East South Ridge almost opposite the Warner Farm. The Warner and Harper families were among the early members.

About 1914 or 1915 it was decided to move it to its present location, a little west of the Old Tavern. The building itself is of Early American design and the interior is finished in a simplified Romanesque style. There is a large sacristy study with a fireplace, which has a separate entrance. A guildhall adjoins the church. Formerly there was a private "Supper House" named "The Little Red Hen" and later it was a tailor shop.

For some years St. Michaels has been under the jurisdiction of Christ Episcopal Church in Geneva which in its beginning was a mission station of the Unionville church. Rev. John B. Arthur of Geneva is Vicar of the parish, and the lay reader who is in charge of the church during the summer months is Ronald A. Smith, a senior at Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio, and Postulate for Holy Orders of the Diocese of Ohio. He is a member of St. James Episcopal Church in Painesville.

THE CHAPEL METHODIST CHURCH

The first sermon delivered in Madison, or Chapintown as it was then called, to a group of Methodists was in 1815 at the J.C. Andrews home. J. C. Ayers organized the first Methodist Class in 1833. There were 13 members. In 1834 the log chapel was erected. It was a rude uncouth affair, about 20 x 26 ft., built on the site of the present church.

In 1838 a class of seventeen was formed on Dock Road at the King Schoolhouse, but it later merged with the chapel class.

In 1840 Lake County was organized into a separate county from its parent county, Geauga. Chapintown became Centerville. It contained three stores, two churches, and eighty houses. The census reported Madison Township as having a population of 2801, larger than Painesville, which had a population of 2580.

It was in this year, 1840, that the Northern Methodist Conference was organized.

The land on which the log chapel was built belonged to John and Cynthia Williams and they deeded it to the church May 8, 1848 at a cost of fifty dollars. The membership decided to build a more pretentious building than the log chapel and in 1851 the present church was completed. It was 30 x 50 ft, one large room with two doors on the west end. The men of the congregation entered through the north door, the ladies the south. The men sat on the north side of the church and the ladies on the south.

In 1884 a platform of the church and an altar rail were built along the east end of the church. In 1885 the Ladies Aid Society sold enough homemade carpet to buy ingrain for the floor and they made two dollars on the deal.

The church was redecorated and two upholstered chairs bought for the pulpit costing \$8.75.

On Feb. 20, 1906 extensive building and remodeling was planned. The foundation was raised and a furnace installed. A tower twelve feet square formed a vestibule at the northwest corner. The pulpit was placed in the South East corner of the sanctuary and the old platform removed. This space was made into a Ladies Room as a meeting place for them. Large roller doors separated it from the sanctuary. The multicolored stained glass window on the east side of the church was given in memory of Rebecca and Charles Cummings. This lovely window was a special joy to one of the much-loved members in later years, Mark Mericle. He had often hoped that a light could be placed to shine upon it. In 1948, a fund was raised by his friends to put in such a light, and so this beautiful window now gives greater joy to all who pass by.

The Chapel Church celebrated its one hundredth anniversary in 1934.

The present pastor is the Rev. Gladstone Brown.

THE PARK METHODIST CHURCH

On December 25, 1865, the Methodist Church at Centerville was dedicated. Previous to this time the village Methodists attended either the Unionville or Chapel churches to worship.

Rev. E .R. Knapp was pastor of this new church. The parsonage was on Union Street. The present parsonage was built during Rev. Culp's pastorate from 1896-1901.

During Rev. Paddock's pastorage 1925-1926, the entire church was raised and a basement built giving adequate space for a dining room, arranged also for Sunday School rooms, and a nice kitchen. In 1940 restrooms were installed.

On December 26, 1940 the church celebrated its 75th anniversary.

In 1942 the sanctuary was redecorated by Frazier Co. of Ashtabula, who painted the beautiful picture of Christ in Gethsemane.

In 1943 during Rev. Ortmeyer's pastorate the sanctuary was remodeled under the direction of Earl Wheelock. Glass doors now separate the vestibule from the sanctuary. The pulpit, lectern, communion table, and baptismal font were made. Several of these were memorials presented to the church in memory of loved ones.

In 1946 the Hammond Organ was installed and dedicated to the memory of Will Adlard who was Sunday School Superintendent for 33 years. The lamp for the organ was a memorial for Walter Adlard.

The Ladies Aid which was formed in 1876 and the Women's Home Mission Society merged in 1940 and the present society is "The Woman's Society of Christian Service."

In 1951 and 1952 improvements and repairs to the sanctuary and basement were again made.

Rev. Gladstone Brown is the present pastor.

THE SOUTH MADISON CHURCH

This little church at the "Gore" was built in 1835 by a Methodist congregation. Some of the early members and builders were Luman Wheeler, Homer Griswold, Milton Turney, Billie Marsh, Joseph Emerson, Hubbard Griswold and George Hill.

Rev. Jerome Hubbard was one of the outstanding early pastors. Others were Rev. Chalker, Rev. Steves, and Rev. Hurlburt.

One of the happy memories of this church was its fine choir and the "Day boys" were especially remembered for their splendid voices and beautiful singing. One of them, Avery Day, went from Madison to Washington, D.C. where he was a page at the Capitol for several years.

In 1930 this South Madison Church was permitted to withdraw from the Methodist Conference to form the present community church. Rev. John Ashbrook is now the pastor.

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CATHOLIC CHURCH

In 1863 a little Catholic mission was started in Madison with Father John Tracy of Ashtabula caring for its needs. The homes of the Lynchs, the Barrys and the Griffins were among those where the mission met. In 1868 the brick church on Lake St. was built. It was still a mission church until Rev. Virant came to Madison in 1934. He left in 1950 and Rev. Mulholland is now the resident pastor. Under his leadership the church that has outgrown the old building, is erecting a very fine new one, and a new parish house on the west side of Hubbard Road, a short distance south of Route 20 and North Madison.

THE CHURCH OF GOD OF THE ABRAHAMIC FAITH IN UNIONVILLE

The mother church of this belief met for the first time in Cleveland on Oct. 4, 1863 in Temperance Hall on the Square. As members moved away from Cleveland, churches of this faith, who take Galatians 3:16, 27 as their statement of belief, came into being in Salem and Unionville.

The early meetings in this area were held in the Upton, Fankboner, and Grief homes until 1922 when Jessie Titman and his family moved to Unionville. Since that time services have been held in the community house and Grange Hall. At present services are held at the community house each Sunday.

THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

The religious meetings of the Baptists were held in 1811 in the home of Asa Turney. In 1814 they, as well as the Congregationalists, were meeting in the lock schoolhouse, made of split logs and located on the northwest corner of the park in Centerville, (Chapintown and Centerville were the early name of our village of Madison.)

In 1819 the town house was built on the northwest corner of Middle Ridge and Hubbard roads, opposite where the Baptist church now stands. This town house was used for several years by all denominations.

In 1820 there were seventy members but still they had no church building. For a while it became a part of the Perry Baptist Church but in 1931 it was set apart as a separate church. Their own meeting house was finally completed and dedicated in 1842. There were one hundred members and each one of the hundred was supposed to pay 12 ½ cents a year to supply the wine for the communion table. The pastors were paid as much as they could raise on subscriptions and of course the donations of wheat, corn, potatoes, fruits and vegetables. The donation parties were a fruitful source of income. For preaching every Sunday the pastor was supposed to get three hundred dollars, his house, firewood and the donations, but he didn't always get the dollars. One especially lean, hard year, the church owed him the whole amount. No wonder pastors stayed little over a year at a time.

Drinking spirituous liquors and behaving unchristian-like would mean that a member's name would be dropped from the roll. A disorderly walker, who absented himself from covenant meetings or from communion service more than twice in succession without reasonable excuse, was held to confession and dealt with according to the gospel's teaching. One brother never entered the church again after the first reed organ was brought in.

Azariah Hanks, a great pioneer preacher whose life had been spent in organizing Baptist Churches in many parts of Ohio, even as far away as Granville and one at Euclid, came to live with relatives on the South Ridge west of Madison. He became the first pastor of the organized church in 1831. His health had been so undermined by the many hardships he had endured that he lived only a year after taking on this last pastorate. He is buried in the Old South Ridge Cemetery.

In 1876 during Rev. Fletcher's pastorate there were two Sunday Schools and two mid-week prayer meetings each week. It was while he was pastor that the present parsonage was built. It was C.W. (Charley) Searls and Dr. Stockham who were instrumental in starting the Sunday School work in this church about one hundred years after Robert Raikes started the very first Sunday School in England.

During the Rev. Kessler's pastorate the church was rebuilt (much to the dismay of colonies of bats) (literally bats in the belfry) and was rededicated in 1900. His beautiful hand woodcarving is a lasting memorial to him.

In 1922 when Rev. Tinkham was pastor, the church was raised and a basement with dining room (also used as Sunday school classrooms) and kitchen was built and a new furnace installed. Rev. Tinkham also initiated the use of school busses being hired and used to bring people to Sunday school and church.

Rev. Ryan, Bob to a host of friends, had the longest pastorate from 1924 to 1936.

During Rev. Thomas' pastorate, a pipe organ was installed and dedicated in honor of Mr. Delos Bates who spent much of his life in service of the church as organist, choir director, singing tenor in the choir, Sunday School teacher, deacon and honorary deacon. At the hundredth anniversary in 1931, Mrs. Delos Bates was the member of the most years continual membership in the church. Rev. Thomas went from the church to become a Chaplain in the Navy during the Second World War.

During Rev. Roper's pastorate, fine classrooms, choir rooms, the new educational plant with fine classrooms, choir room, pastor's study and restrooms was built. An oil furnace has been installed this past year so that the rooms rented to the Public Schools for two first grade classes could be more adequately heated. Moveable partitions have also been installed in the dining and recreation room making for better classroom conditions. Rev. James Boyd is the present pastor.

THE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

This church was organized at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Fred Numbers of Madison on December 8, 1917. The president of the Ohio Conference of Seventh Day Adventists, elder E. K. Slade, was present. The same day the group went over to the Baptist Church and held a baptismal service when Elder Mel Fairchild baptized seven persons.

They continued holding their meeting in the homes of members until the spring of 1923 when they rented the Madison Grange Hall. Sabbath School and church services have been held there regularly since then.

On August 15, 1952 ground was broken for the construction of a new Adventist church on river St. on a part of the Earl Scott property.

During these years laymen from the Madison Church have been instrumental in organizing Adventist Churches in Willoughby Ashtabula and Rome. This church has also helped build and maintain the Ashtabula District Church School, which is a modern school with grades from the first through junior hi. Fourteen students are transported from Madison to this school daily.

The Church has been most active in Missionary work and although a church small in numbers, they have given gladly and very generously in the past ten years to help carry on the work of Christ in 200 countries and 714 languages and dialects.

Elder E.W. Offill is the present pastor.

CLOSING REMARKS

Isn't it wonderful and remarkable that there are six churches in this Township and Unionville that are over one hundred years old and they are all of them in this year of 1953 active, serving churches? We have been charting the courses of these separate groups of Christians over seas, which have not always been calm and beautiful but often hard sailing and tempestuous. Naturally in telling the history we dwell on the temporal and physical, the building and remodeling of church buildings, the services rendered by pastors and people, but there is one sure thing we must not forget and that is the power and leading of Almighty God in the hearts and lives of these people. They are His true church among those called out by Him from all kindreds and peoples over all the world.

The early days were difficult in many ways but they had their compensations. The roads were bad and horses low. Sermons were long and the whole day was set apart for the Sunday services with the picnic dinner afternoon. At the end of the day they went home spiritually and physically refreshed for another week. Some found it hard to contend with some of the discomforts, like one dear Baptist lady who took her membership to the Perry Church because when she drove from her home in the west part of the Township to the church on the Middle Ridge the sun shone in her eyes all the way and when she went home in the afternoon she had it

in her eyes too. We may laugh at her now, but who are we to judge, we who have automobiles that can take us this same distance in a matter of minutes that took her an hour or more to travel.

Thru the years there has been a spirit of real Christian fellowship and cooperation among the several pastors and peoples of these our churches. In 1897, during Rev. Sanford's pastorate the great evangelist and singer, P.P. Bilhorn with this tiny folding organ came to hold meetings at the Baptist church. The crowds came not just from one church but all churches and it was a real spiritual awakening for the whole community. In later years all the Protestant Churches joined a school of Christian Education with several outstanding teachers from out of town. Our Union Lenten services too, bind us together as one body in Christ.

A person may wonder why so any separate churches and denominations? I am reminded of one good answer to this question, a remark made by Rev. Huetter. He said something like this, that he felt a smaller church of four hundred or fewer memberships functioned better and had more people working than one big church would. It was Booker T. Washington who said that the races of mankind were like the hand...when closed into a fist they were one tight unit but when open each finger was separate but united to the palm of the hand and that was the way races should be, united and one in God and our Lord Jesus Christ and as separate as the fingers in the physical lives.

Are these the reasons that these churches, six of which are over the century mark in age, are being used of God to further His kingdom in the lives of men, women and children in this community? We are one in Him but each separate in working out our bit of special services for Him. See how many people are active in service as deacons, trustees, Sunday school officers and teachers in these eleven churches. These churches are our spiritual homes and we love them and work in them being grateful to our God and master for the privilege of being a part of his church founded upon the Rock, Lord Jesus.

I wish to sincerely thank these who have been so kind in helping me with data concerning the churches: Miss Elizabeth Kimball, Mrs. Alden Johnson, Mrs. Victor Chaffee, Rev. Brown, Mrs. Howard Wright, Mr. Jerome Emerson, Rev. Arthur of Geneva, Ronald Smith of Gambier, Ohio, Rev. Mulholland, Mrs. Harry Titman, and Mrs. Theo Penrod.

Violet Crandall