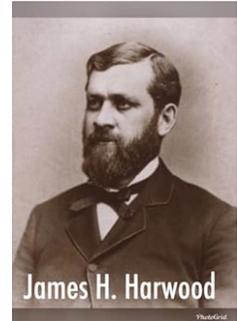


First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ Lebanon, Missouri Celebrating 150 Years

This year First Congregational Church, UCC of Lebanon, Missouri, celebrates its 150th Anniversary. Under the spiritual leadership of Reverend James H. Harwood, twelve citizens joined in covenant establishing the First Congregational Church of Lebanon on January 18, 1869. The small congregation met for worship in a shared building, the Union Brick Church. Disputes between the different organizations using the building led the congregation to build their own place of worship. Members dedicated the building on March 27, 1870.



The coming of the railroad in 1869 created a new center of business in Lebanon, and residents migrated toward the new commercial area. In 1873, the congregation voted to move the building to its present location on Harwood Avenue (named after the Rev. James H. Harwood) to be closer to its membership. Over the years, the building saw many changes and improvements to its structure but the original sanctuary remains.



While changes were made to the building, the cornerstone upon which this church was established has remained constant. Founding members pledged to “actively seek peace, purity, and edification; to aid in turning others to Christ; and to submit to Christian discipline.” Through prayer and faithful endeavor, they sought “growth in grace and...a likeness to Christ...” The church voted to join the United Church of Christ on November 12, 1961, retaining its name, First Congregational Church, adding the words “Member of the United Church of Christ.” Through this union, First Congregational Church has lived out the covenant upon which it was founded.

Throughout its history and still today, the church has been active in service and caring for others. Several members of the church have been recognized as “Hometown Heroes” for their work in helping families, in establishing an art guild, and in education. Through its Quarters Ministry, the church maintains a Crisis Food Pantry. Members and the pastor actively support and participate in organizations that combat domestic abuse (COPE) and that aid the impoverished (Crosslines and Festival of Sharing). Over the years, the church has opened its doors to provide a meeting place for several community organizations. Each year, the church conducts a Vacation Bible School program and pays the fees to send children to Camp Aurora, a camping ministry in which the church shares ownership with Central UCC, Jefferson City, MO. The congregation has been steadfast in its commitment to support our Church’s Wider Mission and special offerings as a “5 for 5” church yearly.

In 2008, the church welcomed its first female minister, Pastor Ellen Martin. She served part-time while attending Eden Theological Seminary. Reverend Martin graduated from seminary with a Master of Divinity and was ordained in 2009 and became the full time minister. She is dedicated to ministering to the needs of individuals, both congregants and others in the community. Rev. Martin is in her fifth year of a radio ministry funded by the church. A new message of hope and God's extravagant love airs weekly.

For 150 years, First Congregational Church, UCC of Lebanon, Missouri has sought to: Love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves; to seek a just world for all; and to welcome all to experience God's grace.

