

First Presbyterian Church History

The First Presbyterian Church of Carthage, Missouri was organized August 4, 1867. The group first met in Dunlap's Hall, upstairs on the south side of the Carthage square. In October they rented "a large and commodious room over D. S. Thomas & Co. store" on the northeast corner of the square which became known as "Presbyterian Hall".

In the fall of 1867, the organization contracted for several lots which are now in the 600 block of Grant Street. For more than two years, the little congregation worshipped in "Presbyterian Hall." Then a new and better business building (the Regan Building) having been erected on the west side of the square in 1869, a move was made into a third floor hall there where it worshipped until the first church building was completed on the lots previously purchased on Grant Street. The first church building was completed and occupied in November 1870. When this building was vacated for the current building, the original tower bell, made in 1863, was removed and transplanted to this location. The bell can still be rung from a pull cord in the basement. The original 1870 piano is still in use today for choir practice.

In 1909 plans began for erection of the present church building. Although the lot had been previously purchased, the decision to build was reached on May 7, 1914 during a meeting of the congregation. Work began on November 16, 1915 and on June 3, 1917 the current structure costing \$36,800 was dedicated, free from debt.

The church is of Tudor Gothic style of architecture, constructed of mat-faced vitrified brick, liberally trimmed with Carthage stone. The plans were drawn by John Gaisford of Memphis, TN, an outstanding specialist of his day in church architecture. The building was erected by J. E. Hollingsworth & Co., of Memphis.

The entire interior of the church except the basement is finished in oak. The oak pews were installed by the American Seating Company of Chicago, and are in harmony with the general Tudor Gothic design of the building.

The Carthage Evening Press on June 2, 1917 on the eve of the building's dedication, carried the following description of the stained glass windows by W. J. Sewall, editor of that paper and secretary of the church building committee:

"The art glass windows were supplied by the St. Joseph Art Glass Co. and many of them are memorial windows."

"On the west are three large windows. The south one of these depicts Christ at Jacob's well and the woman of Samaria. It is in memory of Thomas K. Irwin."

"The central window represents Mary at the Savior's tomb on Easter morning and is in memory of Mr. Elizabeth D. Wilson."

"The north window shows Mary at the Savior's feet and is in memory of W. W. Calhoon."

"The large window at the rear of the auditorium, the south front - has the figure of the Good Shepherd as its center piece. It is in memory of Rev. W. S. Knight, long the beloved pastor of the First Presbyterian Church. The window was provided by popular voluntary subscriptions in which a very large number of Dr. Knight's old friends, both in the church and outside of it, had a part."

"Above the entrance to the old Sunday school department is a window in memory of Gordon Butts, showing the figure of Christ among the lilies, illustrating the text, 'Consider the lilies'".

"The south window of the large Bible class room at the southeast corner of the church is in memory of Archie M. McCaughtry, son of Dr. and Mrs. J. D. McCaughtry, (pastor 1909-1926). The central figure is the bust of Hoffman's picture of Christ amid the doctors in the temple."

"On the east side are six arched windows, opening from the balcony Sunday School rooms, all of which are memorials with emblems as follows:

Easter lily and seven branch candlesticks, Mr. & Mrs. James Ornduff.

Crown and open Bible, Rev. John W. Pinkerton, first pastor of the church. This window was provided by the subscriptions of several of the pioneer residents of Carthage who were old friends of Rev. Mr. Pinkerton.

Open Bible, anchor and cross; sheaf of wheat with legend, 'I am the bread of life,' E. W. Newton.

Lamp and cluster of grapes, Rev. and Mrs. John H. Calhoun

The south window of the ladies' parlor is in three sections.

The central section is in memory of Mrs. Curtis Wright and was placed there by the Woman's Missionary Society.

The west section is in memory of Mrs. J. L. Moore, placed there by the Mary Morrison Moore Missionary Society which was named for her.

The east section is in memory of Mrs. Mattie Cassil, placed there by the Aid Society."

A downstairs kitchen, large dining room, classrooms, and restrooms were also included in the original plan and remain essentially unchanged. The boiler and fuel bins located in the northeast corner of the basement have been replaced by forced air heat.

By the end of 1923 enough money was on hand or in sight to warrant the purchase of an organ. After careful consideration the committee chose the present organ which was built to order by the Austin Organ Company of Hartford, CT at a cost of \$10,000. The organ contains 1023 pipes ranging from 4 inches to 16 feet tall, and from 1/4 inch in diameter to 1 foot square. The larger pipes are made from wood, other pipes are made from zinc. The pipes in the front of the sanctuary are fake although sound does come through the door-like openings. The sounds created by the organ range from violin to flutes to chimes. The organ was first used at a formal opening and dedication on Monday, July 7, 1924. In 2006 the pneumatic actions were removed, shipped to Connecticut to be reworked, and were reinstalled by Mid States Pipe Organ of Kansas City.

In 1963 an educational wing was completed including classrooms, restrooms, office space, a large open room in the basement and a chapel. The cost for this project was \$77,000.

A carillon is installed in the tower and chimes can be heard throughout the day.