

A HISTORY

OF THE LIFE AND WORK OF

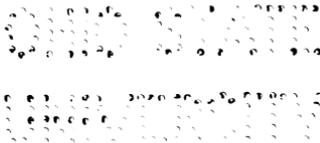
The First Presbyterian Church

OF MIDDLETOWN, OHIO

(DAYTON PRESBYTERY)

From Its Foundation in 1819 to 1919

Prepared Under the Direction of the Boards of the Church
in connection with the
Centennial Celebration held in the Church
October 19th to 26th, 1919



Middletown, Ohio, November 1, 1919

*“I was glad when they said unto
me,
Let us go into the house of the
Lord.”*

—Psalm 122:1

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appreciation, not in words, but in deeds of devotion to the institution that they held dear.

The Story of A Hundred Years has been told. We cannot alter it and would not if we could. The story of the second hundred years is unwritten and it is our blessed privilege to make the future. The Church of God marches on. The First Presbyterian Church of Middletown shall move with it. "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, to you have I given it." Our Lord and Master is possessing the land. We will step forward with Him.

Sincerely, your pastor,

BERNARD J. BRINKEMA.

Rev. Joseph W. Clokey sent the History Committee some facts relating to his ministry in our Church and stated that he had many pleasant remembrances of his pastorate here which he would be very glad to give us. This was prevented by his death which occurred a few days later, early Sunday morning, August 17, 1919, at his home in Oxford, Ohio. Many of our members were looking forward with pleasure to see and hear Mr. Clokey during our Centennial. We do not want to miss having a message from him and so we are submitting here a letter written to the Church by Mr. Clokey at the close of his ministry, July 3, 1878.

For the members of my congregation and for their historical archives, I have prepared the following sketch of my ministerial labors in the church of Middletown. It is submitted humbly and with the hope that future readers may deem my labors not altogether vain.

As I look back over the years intervening between my installation and my release, my mind recalls a multitude of scenes and incidents that have awakened and always will awaken in my heart thankfulness to the kind Father who directed my footsteps to Middletown as my home. As I look back my mind also recalls a multitude of scenes and incidents of a different character, which for more than four years have kept my heart under a burden of anxiety and have often caused me to ask the question, "Why did the Lord send me here?" Our congregation has passed through the severest trial in all its history. It is not proper for me

to sit in judgment as to who have been responsible for that trial. It is proper for us all to humiliate ourselves before God and pray him that the dark shadows of the past may not be prolonged into the future. I am, in making my review, exceedingly grateful to the Kind Providence that has kept His grace in our hearts and preserved us from absolute coldness and death in the midst of our dissensions. We have not been a dead church. To a stranger looking in on our work we have given every evidence of thrift. The attendance both on the services of the Sabbath and at prayer meeting has continued unbroken to the end, our Wednesday evening gatherings averaging no less than 100 the year round, and often running up to 140 and 150 persons. During my ministry here our congregation has been blessed of Heaven with two gracious outpourings of the Holy Spirit, the one occurring at the beginning of the year 1875 and continuing for nearly two months, the other in the spring of 1877 and continuing over one month. The first of these awakenings was remarkable for its results among our adults, and the second for its results among our children. Can we ever forget in the spring of '77 that beautiful sight of the children from seven years to fourteen crowding the study for special prayer? Out of this same awakening came our Young People's Association. This Association has been indeed a phenomenon. Ninety-seven of our youth and children have signed its constitution. Its meetings have now continued for nearly one year and a half, the attendance seldom falling below fifty, and often running up to 70 and 80. The splendid socials of the Young People, the facility they have displayed in doing all kinds of church work and especially the advance they have made in all the exercises of public worship have caused many particularly among parents to consider the last as the best of the five years of the pastorate just closed.

The statistics of my pastorate make the following exhibit. Two hundred and twenty-seven have been admitted to membership in the church. Of these, one hundred and fifty-six (156) have been admitted on profession of their faith in Christ; and of these latter sixty-four (64) have been baptized. Among those admitted on profession, I find

at the time of reception 53 married persons, 26 of these being the couplets of 13 families, who came as couplets into the church. In looking over the list of all these 227 new additions, I have asked myself the question, "Where are they? And how do they now appear in their relation to the Church?" I hope I will be excused for expressing myself as most highly gratified as I begin at No. 261 in your church roll and pass along over the names to No. 487. Here is according to my best judgment the result of the review. Thirty-five have been dismissed upon certificate to other churches; fourteen of them have died, and I trust are in Heaven; eleven are absent without certificate. This leaves one hundred and sixty-seven (167) on the ground to be accounted for. Of these, I regard not more than ten (10) as being now lost to the church, and not all of them are so living that they would disgrace the church if they were still in regular membership. Looking over the entire roll of our present membership, and leaving out those, who have lost membership by long neglect, I find among the balance more than fifty persons who, though they are not lost to the church, yet are now and have been for months in very irregular attendance on the ordinances of divine worship. I have called these the unreliaables. It is with something of pride that I can say that not more than fifteen of this number come in the list of those who have come into the church within the last five years. Deducting the lost and the unreliaables, you have at this moment as the result of our common toil during this last pastorate, a clear gain of more than 140 good substantial members of the church, persons who may be found with great regularity at their posts of duty. Surely we have reason to praise the Lord for His goodness to us. The church of Middletown has now all the elements needed for future success, and if the members preserve the peace and secure the utmost fellowship in the Lord Jesus Christ, this success will be assured by the grace of the Holy Spirit. As your retiring pastor, I wish you the most abundant harvest under the new shepherd the Lord may send you. Compose your differences, confess each his own sins to the Lord, humble yourselves at the mercy seat and Heaven will grant you its benediction.