

A Chronology of North Church

- 1843 Rev. Lucien Berry, Methodist Circuit Rider, called at the log cabin home of Delanson Slawson and preached to six families, “among the maples trees”. The settlement in this area by farmers was known as Sugar Grove. It later became known as Mapleton. As the number of people grew, the congregation met in the log school house.
- 1855 Rev. H. J. Meck, assisted by a local preacher, George Havens, held a revival meeting. Enough persons made commitments to justify building a church (one-room) called the Sugar Grove Mission. A church building was erected on what later became 38th Street between Illinois and Meridian Streets. The bell, currently housed in our courtyard, rang from the belfry. Men sat on one side and women sat on the other. In the summer, acres of cornfields were seen between Sugar Grove and Fall Creek.
- 1869 First organ installed, though some opposed this action saying it “was the work of the devil.” The popular gospel song book *Pure Gold* was the source of enthusiastic singing.
- 1884 Original building remodeled and expanded. Now there was no longer a center aisle in the sanctuary, so the men began to sit with the women.
- 1900 Continuing growth called for this building to be replaced with a larger building, dedicated as Mapleton Methodist Episcopal Church. The little farm village had grown to be called Mapleton.
- 1920 North Church was organized by eight founders and Bishop Frederick Leete. The present lot was adjacent to the Mapleton Church and was purchased in 1921. The Mapleton Church voted to merge with the new church. To show good faith, families interested in the new church joined the Mapleton congregation, which served as church home for about 350 members from 1920-1931.
- 1925 Foundation poured at a cost of \$40,000. Because the building committee was committed to a “pay as we build” policy, the bare foundation stood for three years.
- 1928 Walls began to rise on the foundation.
- 1931 Dedication of the beautiful church after 10 years of commitment and effort.
- 1951 The education wing was completed and dedicated.
- 1962 The beautiful inner courtyard was developed.
- 1995 Construction begins for the chapel, new West Entrance and Community Room



The Building - Historical Review

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Organizing North Church

Two men, John Esterline and Fred Hoke, had a dream for a new Methodist church north of Indianapolis.

In 1920, Bishop Frederick Leete was assigned to the Indiana area. He was an expert on church location.

The Bishop advised that the lot on the northwest corner of Meridian and 38th Streets be the site for the new church. The was only 50 feet from the Mapleton Methodist Church.

The church was organized at a meeting held at the home of C.F. Lesh on May 8, 1921.

On May 8, 1922, the name of the new church was chosen. Three names were proposed – Lincoln, North Meridian and North.

The Building of North Church

Mr. Charles Hopson of Atlanta, Georgia was selected as the architect for the new building. It was to be in the English Gothic style. When he began his work, Mr. Hopson, who had designed many fine churches, was instructed to make North Church his masterpiece.

In 1924, the church hired its first secretary. It was recommended “that a good woman be employed, wages of \$12.50 per week, to take care of collections, statements, etc.” The first secretary was Miss Ethel Brown.

Over a 15-year period, some \$90,000 was raised by the Ladies Aid Society.

In 1925, the foundation of North Church was laid. There were insufficient funds to begin the superstructure. For three years the bare foundation stood as the only sign of the church of the future.

The Building of North Church , cont'd

In 1928, the walls were erected. Again, there was not enough money to complete the building so the stately walls stood for another two years as a reminder that one day a completed church would be on the site.

Many people were interested in seeing the church completed:

The president of State Life Insurance Company informed the building committee that his company would be willing to lend North Church \$250,000 to complete and equip the church.

An almost daily visitor to the site was Quaker-born Arthur Newby, a retired bicycle manufacturer and one of the four owners of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. One day Mr. Newby was missing. The pastor of North Church went to visit him during his illness. Mr. Newby bequeathed \$52,300 to the building fund. A bronze plaque was set in the church narthex in appreciation of this gift.

Early in 1931, the sanctuary was completed.

The building committee employed an organ architect to work with the Kimball Company in designing the Holt Organ for North Church. The Kimball people sent an organist to play a concert on the new organ. There was only one person in the audience – Sterling R. Holt, the donor of the organ.

Josiah K. Lilly, a Presbyterian and founder of the drug company, made possible the Italian amber travertine chancel rail.

Sunday, May 10, 1931, was the Day of Dedication.

In 1951, the Christian Education wing was completed.

In 1962, the beautiful inner courtyard was developed.

The chapel was added in the late 1990's along with extensive infrastructure updates and the addition of the West Entrance and Community Room.