

First Presbyterian Church of Racine, Wisconsin – Trustees and Incorporation

On Wednesday, February 13, 1839, twenty-two people met in an old store building being used as a school, on the west side of today's Main Street, between State and Second street. Alfred Cary was appointed clerk. A motion was made to vote whether to form a Presbyterian or a Congregational church. The vote was 15-7 in favor of a Presbyterian church. This is the date First Presbyterian Church was founded. Three elders, Herman Rice, Joel Sage, and Alfred Cary were elected to the Session. The church initially joined the Milwaukee Convention. The Milwaukee Convention was a religious association which held common beliefs rather than a parent organization.

Trustees

On November 30, 1839, Session passed a resolution to appoint a committee to draft a Constitution and Rules for the Organization of a Religious Society in connection with the Presbyterian church.

As written on the first page of the Trustee Minutes 1839 to 1867, "At a meeting of the citizens of Racine held in the evening of the 23th of December, 1839 for the purpose of organizing a Religious Society in connection with the Presbyterian Church, for the maintenance of the ordinances of the Gospel among us – Roswell Morris was chosen Chairman and Thomas Wright secretary – at which meeting a society was duly organized by a vote of the persons present under the following Constitution" A full copy of the Constitution can be found on the First Presbyterian Church web site under Archives – Our History. The Constitution explained how the financial or secular matters of the Church would work and the first Trustees were elected as a separate Board. The Board of Trustees reported to the Session. In 1992 the Trustees were merged with Session, which became a unicameral board (single legislative chamber).

Incorporation

The church would not become incorporated until 1852. A Trustees meeting was held on February 10, 1852 the for the purpose of becoming incorporated under the general laws of the State of Wisconsin. This was about three months before the completion and dedication of the then new 1852 building. Incorporation enabled the Trustees to take care of the church's finances, without putting their personal assets at risk.

A Certificate of Incorporation of the First Presbyterian Society of Racine was signed on February 11, 1852 by Elders Sylvester B. Peck and Alfred Cary. The initial six Board of Trustee members are listed in the document. They personally presented this Certificate to the State of Wisconsin, Racine County on February 14, 1852 and it was received for the record on March 3, 1852 at 10:00 a.m.

On September 30, 1976, Stanley F. Bialecki, Register of Deeds in and for Racine County, certified and attached a copy of original 1852 filing is a true transcript of the original. This certification and the copy are located in the Church Archives.

Today First Presbyterian Church is member in good standing of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The 1839 First Presbyterian Society of Racine Constitution has been replaced with the current edition of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Presbyterian Book of Order. Registration with the State of Wisconsin, Department of Financial Institutions needs to be completed.

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