

A Brief History

In 1887, the Rev. James Frazier of Davenport founded the United Presbyterian Church in the village of Oneonta, as a mission. With the support of Delaware Presbytery, services were held in various places including Blend Hall, the Stanton Opera Block, YMCA, Exchange Hall, the Wescott Block and other places on both Main and Dietz Streets.

On May 19, 1889, the Rev. Leslie E. Hawk became the church's first minister. The church incorporated under its present name, First United Presbyterian Congregation of Oneonta, on September 15, 1892.

On January 1, 1890, a house occupied by the Russell Conservatory of Music at 22 Dietz Street was purchased for approx. \$6,000. Worship services were held on the ground floor while the upstairs provided living quarters for the pastor.

In August 1892, a twenty-foot strip of land adjoining the church was purchased for \$1,000 and the trustees and building committee began construction of a new church capable of seating 100 persons at a cost of \$3,950. The first service in the new edifice was held on March 11, 1894.

As the church membership grew, more room was needed. Renovations were completed in late November 1929. Then, a tragic fire completely consumed the church on December 1, 1929. The Rev. Virgil M. Cosby, pastor, announced that while the fire was raging in the early hours of the morning, he received the first contribution toward a new church when a business man, not a member, pledged \$100 toward the new edifice."

It was decided that a new site for the church was needed. So, land was purchased on the corner of Walling and Main Street for \$20,000. Construction of a new gothic style church and manse was completed in 1931 at a cost of \$150,000. Historically, the property was originally the site of the Walling mansion and for a brief time served as the first home of Hartwick College campus in Oneonta.

In 1996, the East Wing of the church was constructed in a cruciform shape using granite from the same quarries used in 1930 to construct the sanctuary. This addition houses church offices on the ground floor and the "Upper Room" on the top floor with access from Roosevelt Avenue.

The congregation looks forward to its continued Christian witness in Oneonta in the 21st century with an emphasis on worship, music, fellowship, service, and outreach.

FIRST UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH + FOUNDED 1887 +



Locally known as the "Red Door" Church
Main Street and Walling Avenue
Oneonta, New York 13820

The Reverend Dr. Cynthia L. Walton-Leavitt
Pastor