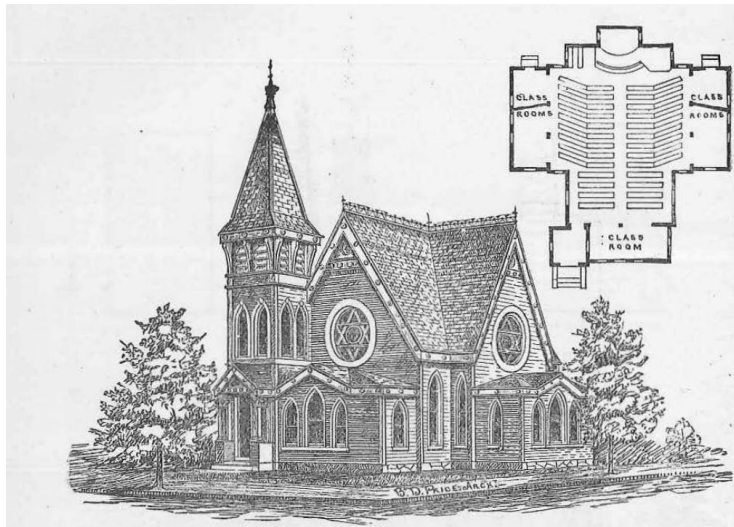


Laity Minute

May 2021



It has been sitting quietly waiting on us. Silently and patiently. Centenary UMC, the building, has been doing this for over a century. Imagine all it has seen in the 150+ years. The historic events, growth of Morristown, weather, cultural change and technological advances have all been witnessed by our beautiful, old building.

We all know the physical beauty of our church. The stained glass, the rich, red carpet, and the intricate woodwork in the sanctuary are all architectural elements we associate with Centenary. But, I believe, as many of you do, there is something a bit more intangible about our church which makes it unique and special.

Above is a drawing from the Methodist General Commission on Archives and History *Catalogue of Architectural Plans for Churches and Parsonages* (p.40). I bet the drawing looks vaguely familiar to you! The page from the catalog gives dimensions and other information. However, I think we can see so much more from the small visual at the top of the pew placement.

Apparently, I sit in what was once a classroom. It got me to thinking about all the people over the years and where they sat. I remember exactly where Grayson Chandley sat. I bet many of you remember, too. Or, I know right where Lilly Belle sat. I bet many of you can point on that drawing which pew it was. Same for Norma, Hildred, and Peggy. And we can visualize where we all sit now, as well. Think about your church family and where they sit every week. I don't think there are many churches out there who possess the gift of being able to do this.

The drawing also reminded me our building not only has a long-storied history, but it has something just as important. It has a soul. Just like a person, our church has been through all

kinds of experiences. Some experiences have saddened it. Other experiences have made it joyful. But, in the end, the soul has endured.

The drawing above gave our founders a guide and a plan to build the church we love today. They gave us a gift we still enjoy today. But, what isn't shown on that architectural plan is the soul of our church. You have to look a little closer to see it. I know you can see it. I know you can feel it, as well.

And now, even through a pandemic, it is still standing. The soul is enduring another experience. However, with our love and support, our beloved church will see the end of this, too.

It is well with my soul.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Kelly', written in a cursive style.