
Celebrating the 150-year History of Crawford Memorial United Methodist Church

The First Services

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Lucinda Elizabeth Mason, nee True, can be said to be the founding mother of our church. The Mason house, at 10 Hillside, was where the first meetings took place that formed the church.

In the journal that Lucinda wrote in 1887, she looked back on the founding date of April 15, 1871. She writes that “M. Owen [Mr. James S. Owen] and myself, feeling an interest in the subject of having Methodist meeting in this place, made arrangements to have preaching in Union Hall.” Notices were read in the Unitarian, Congregational, and Baptist churches on Sunday, announcing that there would be a service on Thursday April 20 at 7:45. Despite a rainy evening, sixty people came. The Methodist pastor in Woburn preached and a prayer meeting followed.

Lucinda writes of Thursday evening prayer meetings, class meetings, and camp meetings, the latter being a revival style gathering. “When we commenced our meetings, we did not know of only five Methodists in town. You cannot understand how much we enjoyed these meetings for it had been several years since some of us had attended a real earnest Methodist prayer meeting.” She adds, they sang from *The Revivalist* singing book, “no one book since has ever given so us much satisfaction.” Songs in the book were gospel and rousing hymns sung in revival camp meetings to incite worshippers to come forward to be baptized.

Throughout the spring and into July, ministers came from other churches to preach on the Sabbath, one being “Camp Meeting John” Allen. Due to warm weather in late summer, they decided not to hold meetings. So the next gathering was not held until December 19, 1871 when they had a Praying Band from East Boston. Other Praying Bands came from Woburn and East Cambridge. These bands were made up of people who went to house churches to help communities organize and grow a church.

The next journal entry is January 12, 1872, when she noted eleven were present and formed a class. The next month, members met to nominate a Board of Stewards with much discussion on who should make up the board. She writes, “This is the only time the women have had any voice in the Board.” After the all-male board was selected, the presiding elder advised, “go slow and sure.”

The first regular Sabbath service was held March 3, 1872 at Union Hall above Edmund Sanderson’s store, led by a theological student from Boston University. Sundays were a day devoted to the Lord and after a meal at home, one returned to church. Lucinda wrote that in the afternoon, a Sunday School class met with forty-five present. The next month, April 28th the first baptism and sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was administered and “We had our first SS concert. It was a success.”

Generous gifts of twenty bibles and thirty testaments came from the Massachusetts Bible Society, a Reading church gave singing books, and a Lowell church gave a bookcase to hold these.

Lucinda ends her journal by noting the rise in class numbers – eleven in 1872 and one hundred and five in 1887. “We labored under many disadvantages. It was very hard times in the business world. [There was an economic depression from 1873-1877.] Our people were very changeable coming and going where they could find employment. Many of the people were not used to our Methodist ways people coming from different parts of the country with different ideas of how things should be done – not always willing that what was for the greater good of the whole should be the way.” She gives credit to the workers who rally to see what needs to be done, the singing in social meetings and the sociables [sic], as she calls them.

She then becomes pensive: “This church is very dear to me; it has been first in all my thoughts and plans. When I hear any disparaging remarks about it, it hurts me as much and even more than if spoken against myself. This little church has looked bare and comfortless to those who have more recently come among us – and it has been with real Christian heroism and true loyalty to Methodism that they have passed the more wealthy and better-appointed church edifices and come to this.”