

A Brief History of the First Congregational Church of Georgetown

By Christine Comiskey

The settlers of the western part of Rowley agreed it was time to take action. Making the long trip to Rowley or Byfield for worship services was a hardship and there were now enough residents in West Rowley to justify forming a new parish. They petitioned the General Court and in 1731 this area became a separate precinct called Rowley West Parish. Our church, then known as the Second Church of Christ in Rowley, was organized on October 4, 1732. Services were held in a rustic Meeting House constructed in 1731 on the corner of what is now Pillsbury Lane and East Main Street. Men and boys sat on one side of the aisle, women and girls on the other.

In 1768, with the old building in need of major repairs, the parish decided it was time to build a new Meeting House. The new building (later known as Old South Church, pictured right) was built on the corner of East Main and Elm Streets in 1769. When the West Parish of Rowley became the town of Georgetown in 1838, our church became the First Congregational Church of Georgetown.

The Old South Church served as a meeting place and house of worship for our community and congregation for over one hundred years. But it too came to be in need of costly repairs and the congregation once again decided that a new church building was needed.

The First Congregational Church on Andover Street in Georgetown, where we now worship, was dedicated on December 18, 1874. The beautiful tracker organ, still in use today, was heard for the first time on that day. The Paul Revere and Sons bell, which first rang out from the Old South Church in 1815, was moved to the new church and continues to ring out on Sunday mornings to call us to worship together.

Our congregation has gone through many changes throughout the years, from our early Calvinist roots as the Second Church of Christ in Rowley to our membership since 1961 in the United Church of Christ. We have survived conflicts and controversies and seen great joys and celebrations. Through it all, our faith in God has guided us and will continue to guide us for generations to come.

