

# From the Archives

## Presbyterian? Congregational?

Through the teachings of the Rev. Dr. Tim Ahrens, many of us at First Church know that our 42 founding members were originally parishioners of Second Presbyterian Church. With support from that church, they formed a new congregation which became Third Presbyterian Church. By 1857, our founding members found themselves continually at odds with the non-abolitionist position taken by the denominational Presbyterian Church. Consequently, they decided to affiliate as First Congregational Church instead, enabling them to adopt a more resolute position against slavery.

However, a fascinating historical nuance reveals that the original 42 founding members initially aspired to establish a Congregational church from the start. Despite this intent, they were persuaded by leaders at Second Presbyterian to remain “within the fold.” What adds another layer of interest is that those who formed Second Presbyterian out of First Presbyterian Church in 1839 *also* harbored aspirations to create a Congregational church. Yet, they, too, were persuaded to remain Presbyterian.

Perhaps the supportive environment provided by Second Presbyterian to our founding members stemmed from an admiration of the courageous commitment of the 42 to their convictions. These individuals chose to leave the Presbyterian Church and take a stand, something their fellow members at Second Church had also contemplated but ultimately opted to remain on a different path.



*Second (later Central) Presbyterian Church, Columbus, Ohio, circa 1860*