

The United Church of Byron

The United Church of Byron has a long and rich history in the community. Because of our New England heritage, the early settlers tended to be strongly Congregationalist or Methodist. Both groups organized early in 1837 meeting first in the homes of the members.

In 1837 early Byron residents met in the home of Lucius Read on May 24 and organized the First Congregational Church of Bloomingvale (later Byron). There were nine charter members. A year later they were offered an unfinished school building if they would finish it and permit its use as a day school. Deacon Isaac Knowlton completed the structure and the school served as the Congregational Church for nine years. The Rev. Ebenezer Brown was called as the first resident pastor in 1838.

The "Old Brick Church" was built in 1846 at South Franklin and Main Street (Blackhawk) on land donated by Brown and served as the house of worship for 56 years. Built of locally made brick and trimmed in white, the building was dedicated in August, 1847. A larger brick building was built in 1904 at Third and Washington streets.

The Byron Methodist Episcopal Church was also formed in the spring of 1837 with 16 charter members. On October 4, 1931, the First Congregational Church and the Byron Methodist Episcopal Church merged to form the United Church of Byron. The members of the new United Church worshiped in the Congregational sanctuary and used the Methodist church building for Sunday School. Congregationalist and Methodist ministers served the church alternately and generally served three year terms.

In 1957 the United Church of Byron voted to affirm its Congregational ties and to discontinue its affiliation with the Methodist Church. That same year the General Conference of the Congregational Churches voted to merge with the Evangelical and Reform Church, forming the United Church of Christ. The United Church of Byron voted to affirm this merger and to become a member congregation of the new denomination.

The current building was built on the corner of Second and Colfax streets in 1970.

In the tradition of many early frontier settlements, the United Church of Byron is a community church. Throughout its rich history, the church has welcomed members from a variety of denominational traditions. The diverse backgrounds of the members has been a strength to the spirit of congregationalism: the importance of each individual Christian and his/her responsibility and privilege in a free church. This community of believers continues to be committed to the concept of Christian unity and to serving the Lord by serving others.

The United Church of Byron is a part of the [United Church of Christ](#), which has about 1.4 million members worldwide. The United Church of Christ was formed in 1957 as the union of several different Christian traditions, including the Congregational Churches, the Reformed Church in the United States, the Christian Churches, and the Evangelical Synod

of North America. It has a proud tradition of spiritual and social activism, including a number of [historic firsts](#): the first African American ordained by a Protestant denomination (1785), the first woman since New Testament times ordained as a Christian minister (1853), and the first openly gay person ordained as a Christian minister (1972).

The Church today remains diverse. Historic statements of Christian faith, such as the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed, are honored in the United Church of Christ. However, the Church respects freedom and diversity of individual conscience, and we do not use a creed or catechism as a test of faith for our members.

The United Church of Byron is part of the [Prairie Association](#), which is part of the [Illinois Conference](#) of the UCC.