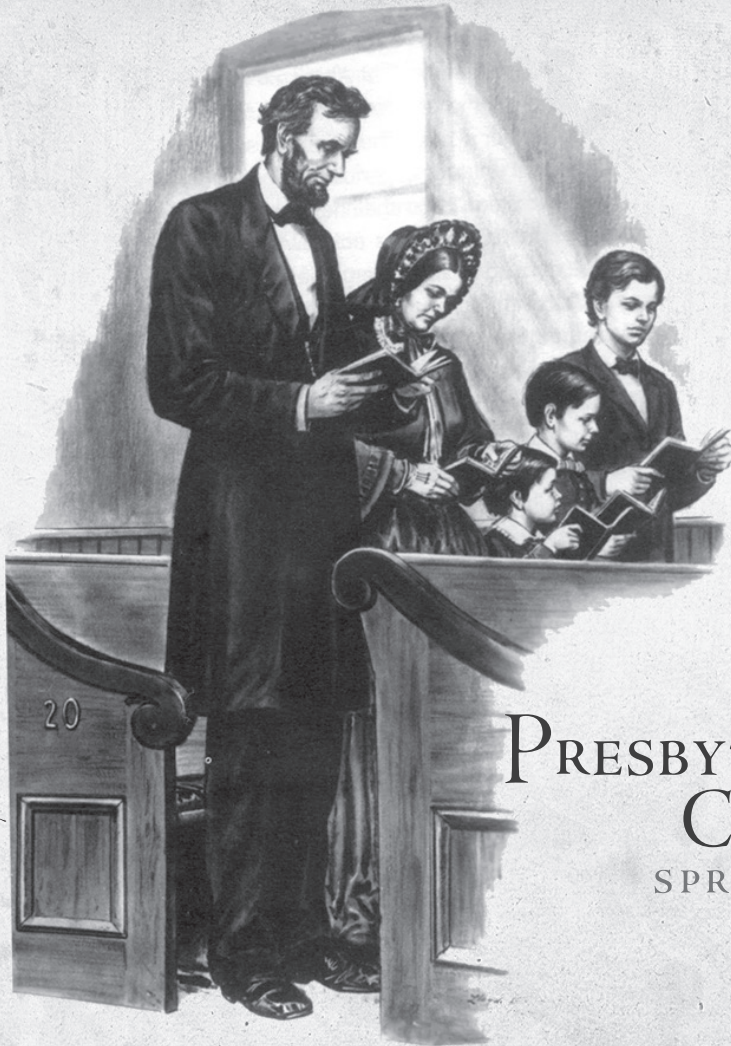


The Lincoln Family Church



Lincoln Artwork: Lloyd Ostendorf

FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
SPRINGFIELD



The Lincoln Family at First Presbyterian Church of Springfield

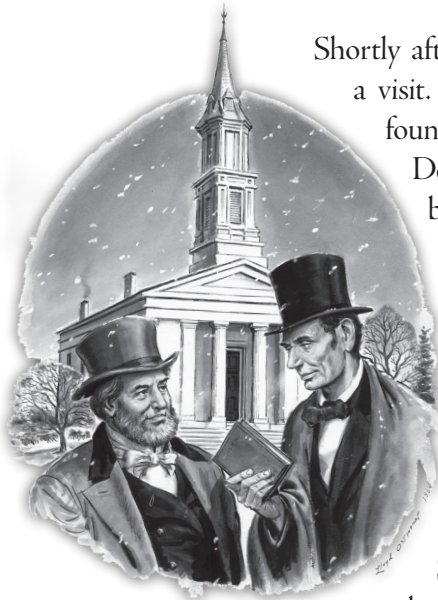
Abraham Lincoln's connection to First Presbyterian Church of Springfield began with his friendship with Dr. James Smith, its pastor from 1849 to 1856.

Lincoln first encountered Smith when Lincoln was 16 years old. He was attending a revival in Rockford, Indiana, and Smith was the preacher. The next time they would meet personally was 25 years later under tragic circumstances – the passing of the Lincoln's son, Eddie.



Dr. James Smith

Eddie was not quite 4 when he died on February 1, 1850. The Episcopal pastor of the church Mary Lincoln had been attending with her sister was out of town and unable to officiate the funeral. Smith, who was then the pastor of First Presbyterian Church, provided the grieving parents pastoral care and officiated Eddie's funeral service the next day in the Lincoln home.



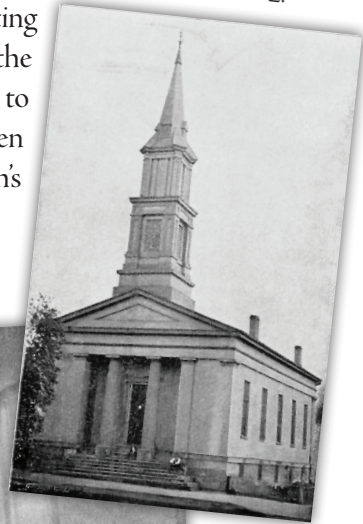
Lincoln Artwork: Lloyd Ostendorf

Shortly after the funeral the Lincolns returned to Kentucky for a visit. It was at the home of Mary's uncle that Abraham found a book written by Smith entitled "The Christian's Defense." He began reading and was greatly intrigued by Smith's thoughts. Unable to finish the entire book before returning to Springfield, Lincoln asked his friend, Thomas Lewis, for a copy of the book and a more formal introduction to Smith.

Smith visited Lincoln at his law office and the two became friends. He was a frequent guest in the Lincoln home and close to the entire family. The two were known to have had many long conversations about Smith's writing. Smith invited the Lincolns to visit the church he pastored and they accepted. Soon they started attending regularly and the church became a part of their lives.

Mary Lincoln joined the church on April 13, 1852. Tad Lincoln was baptized on his second birthday, April 4, 1855. The Lincoln family rented a pew, No. 20, fifth row from the front, for \$50 a year during their time in Springfield. From the White House Mary, anticipating the family's return to Springfield, wrote a note to the wife of the church treasurer asking that he hold on to "our particular pew to which I was very much attached and which we occupied some ten years." Both the pew and Mary's note are on display in the church's narthex.

*First Presbyterian Church,
Springfield 1830-1872.*



The friendship between Lincoln and Smith continued after Smith left the pastorate of First Presbyterian Church. As President, Mr. Lincoln appointed Smith's son, Hugh, to be the U.S. Consul to Dundee, Scotland. Less than a year later Hugh fell ill and Smith replaced him as consul.



Sadly, the Lincolns' return to Springfield would not be the happy reunion Mary was hoping for. After the President's death, his body was brought home to Springfield on May 3, 1865. His arrival was marked by the somber sound of church bells tolling, including the bell of First Presbyterian Church. That same bell still rings today.

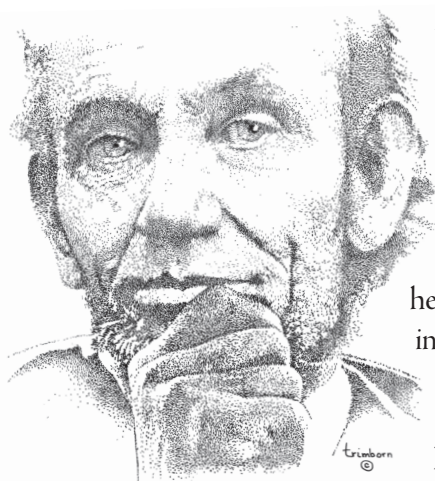
Pew with the cloth is the Lincoln Family Pew.



The Lincoln pew as it sits today.

Mary continued her friendship with Smith. She and Tad visited him in Scotland during the summer of 1869. She died on July 16, 1882 at age 63. Her funeral was held in the sanctuary of the current church at the corner of Seventh and Capitol.

A Church Worth Joining



Although actively involved in the life of two churches, First Presbyterian Church of Springfield and New York Avenue Presbyterian Church of Washington, DC, Abraham Lincoln famously never officially joined a church. He was not one to focus on creeds and doctrines. But he knew what he was looking for in a church. He said, “When any church will inscribe over its altar, as its sole qualification for membership, the Savior’s condensed statement of the substance of both law and Gospel, ‘Thou shalt love the lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and thy neighbor as thyself’ that church will I join with all my heart and all my soul.”

Lincoln was right. A church worth joining must live out the God-inspired love that is written into its DNA. A church worth joining seeks to love, respect and honor God in all that it says and does. A church worth joining demonstrates God’s love to all people and welcomes them without hesitation. A church worth joining demonstrates kindness and generosity to those in need. A church worth joining seeks peace, justice and equality for all.



For 190 years people from all walks of life have joined together as the congregation now known as First Presbyterian Church. While we cherish the history and the legacy built by those who were here before us, we recognize that the mission of the church continues. The people beyond these walls need us to continue to live out God’s love. We desire to be a church that Mr. Lincoln and anyone else who is searching for God would deem worth joining.

If you are seeking a church home we invite you to join us Sunday mornings for worship or contact us by phone, email or Facebook. Our doors are open to all.