

HISTORY

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Harwich, Massachusetts

1747 – 1997



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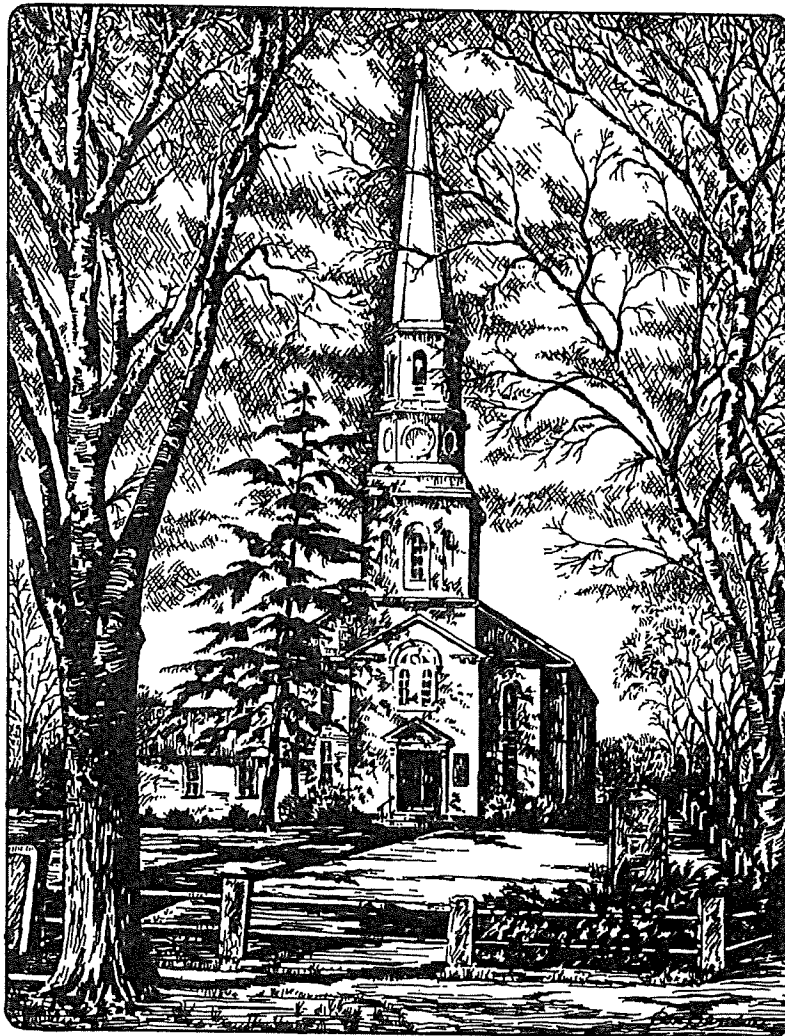
United Church of Christ

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Sketch by Donald D. Benson — 1972



HISTORY

IN prologue to an understanding of the origin of our church, we must go back to a group of Englishmen who, granted a charter in 1641, began to lay out a plantation or a settlement in 1653 in a general area of Cape Cod centered near Cape Cod Bay that was to be known first as Harwich and later as Brewster (and variously also as Old Harwich and the North Precinct.) At first they had to travel to Eastham to a meetinghouse where they could both worship God and conduct all affairs of mutual concern. There was but one church for a community, and all adults belonged to it, for one could not even establish a home in a given place unless he passed examination as fit for church society, which he was then obliged to attend. For in the beginning, early New England was a theocracy, not a democracy, so that the same people covenanted together in all sacred and secular endeavors.

The population of old comers prospered and grew with newcomers arriving from both the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay Colonies, as well as others from old England, people settling also in the area nearer the Cape's south shore as well. This latter area of course we know today as the Town of Harwich. Then in 1694, it was determined by the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony (Plymouth Colony having joined together with it two years before) that there were now enough persons to support a minister, a prime requirement for a new town. And so a charter was granted to form a new town, Harwich, independent of Eastham. The town was now responsible for the erection and maintenance of a meetinghouse through self-taxation. This church-town relationship was to continue until the disestablishment of the church in Massachusetts in 1834.

These early churches of New England had no name by which to distinguish themselves other than by the name of the town, viz., the Church, or Church of Christ, in Harwich. They were all of "the Congregational Way" in thought and practice. The use of the word, Congregational, in a title was not to come until much later, and well after churches of other denominations had come into being.

Harwich's growth continued and, as happens with the influx of new people anywhere, a variety of points of view began inevitably to come as well. The rigidity of the orthodox thinking of the early settlers imposed on the first churches began to be challenged and modified. Another development was beginning within more than one Cape town, and that was a split into two geographical parishes. Usually the reason given was that it was a long, tiring journey for outlying members to travel, as they were required to, to attend worship on the Sabbath in the meetinghouse. Oftentimes this reason was at least a partial covering for a dislike of the preaching and teaching of the "settled" minister. For whatever reason, restlessness was rising in the southern part of Harwich, divided from the earliest part of the town by a number of large ponds and divided also, apparently, on questions of taxation and other matters.

In 1744, the people of the south side asked the town meeting that a separate precinct be set off for them. Two men had already offered a tract of land for a meetinghouse here. However, the majority of the meeting voted against the proposal. Several succeeding attempts were made and failed, but enthusiasm amongst the south-siders increased, many having been stimulated for fresh religious duties by an eloquent Newlight preacher from Connecticut traveling about this area. Meetings on the matter were held in various homes. Finally, a large group of men of this area directly petitioned the General Court, and despite the continuing opposition of the people of the North, the Council and the House concurred, and with the approval of Governor Shirley, the south side became a "distinct and separate precinct", on January 16, 1747.

The first officers were: Joseph Doane, Samuel Burge, Jr., Gershom Hall, Edward Hall, Benjamin Nickerson and Edward Nickerson. April 8 the precinct meeting voted "to carry on and finish the meetinghouse" which had been begun by Capt. Jonathan Smalley even before the incorporation of the precinct. The deed to the land read as follows:

"Samuel Nickerson and Benjamin Smalley, both of Harwich, in the County of Barnstable and in the province of Massachusetts Bay in New England...in consideration of the great need there is in this south part of Harwich of a piece of land to lay for publick uses, viz to set a meetinghouse on and also any other publick use that may be thought convenient for that neighbourhood or precinct in general...and the good will we have for said precinct and the mind to promote the publick good therein, have given, granted, enfeoffed and confirmed and

To all people to whom these presents may come
 Greeting. We knowe that we, Samuel Nichols
 and Benjamin Smully both of Haverhill in
 the County of Barnstable and in the Province
 of Massachusetts Bay in New England
 for many former in consideration of the great
 need there is in this South part of Haverhill
 of a piece of land to lay for Publick use viz tope
 a meeting house and also any other publick
 use that may be thought convenient for that
 neighbourhood, or precinct in general
 and the good will we have for said precinct and
 the mind to promote the publick good therein
 have given, granted, conveyed, and confirmed, and by
 these presents do for our heirs executors and administrators
 give, grant, bargain, convey, confirm, and deliver unto
 the people of said precinct, a certain parcel of land
 situated in the said precinct, or South part of Haverhill
 containing three acres bounded as followeth, Viz- Beginning
 at several stakes laying in the dividing line between these
 lands, next Samuel Elliot's house lot, this said land, laying
 on the east side of said Elliot's house, and running north
 twentyfour poles in the said dividing line, to a stake and
 stone in the ground, thence south easterly twenty poles
 to a stake and stone, thence twentyfour poles southe-
 erly to a stake and stone standing on the north side
 of the Road from what was to Capt. B. B. to

A page from the original deed to the land

by these presents do for our heirs, executors and administrators give, grant, bargain, enfeoff, confirm and deliver unto the people of said precinct a certain parcel of land situated in the said precinct or the south part of Harwich containing three acres...to have and hold, the said granted and bargained premises with the appurtenances, free and clear to them, the said people of the said precinct or neighbourhood and to their heirs and successors in this precinct forever and for their use and improvement for a publick manner as above said forever....In witness whereof, we the said Samuel Nickerson and Benjamin Smalley, have hereunto set our hands and seals this eighth day of March, Anno Domini 1743 and the seventeenth year of his Majesty's Reign."

A committee brought Mr. Edward Pell, a native Bostonian who had graduated from Harvard, to preach on April 26 and he was found to be so satisfactory that on July 6 he was called to "ye pastoral office." His reply read as follows:

My Christian Friends: GREETING

I have received a copy under the hands of your clerk wherein you have elected me to the gospel ministry among you; and after supplication to God of all grace, for his direction and blessing in important affairs, serious consideration and advice, I do accept ye invitation you have given me, humbly trusting it is a call of God. I do accept what you have given me for my support and encouragement, and if ye same should not be sufficient for my support, I trust that you will afford such farther supplies from year to year, as that I may be enabled to perform the Ministerial office in some measure free from worldly incumbrances; and now my Christian friends and brethern I commit you and your families to the blessing of God, and asking your prayers for me, I subscribe.

Your affectionate friend and servant in Gospel of Christ.

Edward Pell

Dated at Harwich 2 precinct August 17, 1747.

Actually the precinct finally voted "to settle and ordain" him "to the pastoral office over the Church of Christ in the second precinct of Harwich" (the original name of our church) November 12, 1747. It is this date we observe as our founding date, for it was then that Mr. Pell and

the founding lay fathers, Ephraim Covell, Andrew Clarke, Nathaniel Smith, Nathaniel Doane and Samuel Burge, Jr. subscribed their names to the confession of faith and covenant, a counterpart of the original subscribed to by the founders of the first church, October 16, 1700.

Mr. Pell now fully entered upon his ministerial duties. His yearly salary was sixteen bushels of rye, ten of wheat, one hundred of corn, sixteen cord of oak and twenty of pine, cut and delivered. He was also promised a "convenient hovel" and land for "ye parsonage." During his pastorate the amount of supplies frequently had to be increased. Eventually those who neglected to provide their share of wood were allowed to pay their ministerial tax in cash. It became increasingly difficult to collect all that was due the minister from all the people because of trouble with some of the Newlights who had organized their own separate church. We know little of the Pell gifts or ministerial accomplishments, save that he was at times quite jocular and facetious. After six years in this church, at the age of forty-one, Edward Pell died in 1752. On his death bed he made his famous request that he be buried in the North Precinct because if buried among the pines of the South Precinct, he feared the Almighty might overlook a righteous man in such an ungodly place. Apparently he feared this burial ground and the rude little meetinghouse would ultimately be abandoned and overgrown.

The second minister, Benjamin Crocker, native of Barnstable, came with a promise of forty pounds lawful money annual salary. He stayed two years to be succeeded by the Rev. John Dennis, whose pastorate of five years was marked by disagreements over supplies of wood and hay due him as part of his salary. Like many early Cape ministers, he was also a physician. During his five years here there was only one admission to the church's membership. In 1761 the church recalled Mr. Crocker to serve for four more years. Apparently this man's real love was teaching, and he was never ordained.

A flowery letter to "ye second church and precinct of Harwich" from the next minister, the Rev. Jonathan Mills, a transient preacher, marked his acceptance of the call. A postscript notes his expectation of the first ministerial fringe benefit, leave to be absent three or four Sabbaths a year to visit friends and relatives. Once transient he may have been, but dying here in 1773 he was willing to stay and chance resurrection from a grave near our present Parish House. His reputation was that of a strong Calvinist who persuaded his hearers "by the terrors of the Lord." Despite his successes there were dissensions continuing from the past which were to continue to plague the church.

Apparently the majority of the members tended toward Newlights and Free Will Baptist persuasion, though the Congregational minority had the law on its side. Harwich in the middle of the eighteenth century was the known center of religious unrest on the Cape. One traveling evangelist had reported, "The pine woods of Harwich ring with Hallelujahs and hosannas, even from babes!" The old guard of Congregational ministers on the Cape banded together to counteract the "sad consequences" of itinerant preachers, but their serious appeals to reason didn't have a chance against the revivalist's appeals to emotions. This town apparently has always been a place warm in spirit, especially in the South Precinct. The days of the old ecclesiastical monopoly were ending: Quakers had become exempt from supporting the church. The Baptists and Methodists were soon to follow. In addition to all the theological controversy, political revolt with the mother country was breaking out. Town meetings were moving on to other secular concerns than the support of the standing order of churches. It was a discouraging time for the underpaid ministers.

The period of 1773 to 1792 was mainly marked by short ministries, shared pulpits with the West Harwich Baptist Church, and various contentions and controversies. During this time one minister had domestic difficulties on top of everything else and became enamored of a local widow. Needless to say, he was forced to take leave of the church. Another pathetic episode was the pastorate of Mr. Jonathan Jeffers, an Indian, from 1787 to 1789. He was invited to come preach in the meetinghouse by a few who held with him. But his efforts here were not fruitful and finally with his family in financial straits, he embarked in a ship at Bass River, never to return.

An upturn in the South Precinct's fortunes was indicated by the building of a new (the second) meetinghouse, and a call was issued to Mr. Nathan Underwood of Waltham over the objections of a number of local Baptists in town, who did not want to "settle" a minister of the standing (Congregational) order. But come he did and with his bride. They were met at Barnstable by a group of men from the parish, with their wives, riding on horses, and escorted to their new home, a custom of the time.

This man towers over our history like no other, for his was the longest ministry in this church, some thirty-six years, although he did not receive a salary his last few years. He had missed the Lexington and Concord engagements because of a badly cut foot, but he was in the thick of the battle at Bunker Hill and was one of the last to be routed

by the British. Subsequently he fought in many of the famous engagements of the Revolution under General Washington and made the legendary crossing of the Delaware and experienced first hand the near starvation and bitter cold with the patriot forces in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. This brave soldier was offered a commission after the war, but instead went to Harvard and solely through his own efforts prepared himself for the ministry. It was an experienced, dedicated, capable man of thirty-nine who here accepted his ordination on the anniversary day, November 12, 1792, and entered this church's new pulpit.

Mr. Underwood's greatest successes came in the earliest years of his ministry. During his career here he added forty-two members to the church, baptized one hundred and thirty-five persons and solemnized four hundred and forty-four marriages! He held firmly to orthodox Congregational religious principles and herein lay his difficulties in a place where orthodoxy was only one of several religious viewpoints.

He also took a firm stand for the South Precinct in town affairs when the acrimony came to a head between the Harwich precincts, resulting in the complete breakaway of the North Precinct, and its subsequent formation into the separate town of Brewster in 1803, just as Harwich itself had earlier split off from Eastham. One local historian has likened this upheaval to a diminutive civil war. From this point on there seems to be no question that our South Precinct church was ever considered to be the second of anything. And when the Old North Church, now in Brewster, shortly thereafter chose to go over to Unitarianism, in that theological split from Congregationalism, the church here in Harwich could truly be considered to be the inheritor and conservator of the historic traditions of the past.

Perhaps Mr. Underwood's influence was greater in secular rather than ecclesiastical affairs. He was one of the most successful and scientific practical farmers in the community, teaching others how to produce hay the English way. The Underwood Memorial Window in stained glass of The Sower, dedicated in 1902, was an appropriate choice of subject. In later life he was Harwich's respected representative to the General Court in Boston. However, he decided to retire from active service as a pastor in 1819, for want of support, there being only one male member, Gershom Hall, left. Yet he performed ministerial duties for seven and a half more years, after his legal claim on the parish ended, and an ecclesiastical council did not formally dissolve his relationship with the Congregational Society until 1828. His seven sons all became success-

ful, some here, some traveling to the middle and far west, and there were Underwood descendants active in the church and community until just a few years ago. (And in September of this anniversary year a young Underwood travelled back from Philadelphia to claim his bride in the Harwich church!) The Underwood family story belongs not only to this place, but is a chronical of Americana.

The church was at ebb tide for quite a while after Mr. Underwood's retirement. There was a series of winter pastorates, but little money was available to support a permanent parson, apparently. The Rev. Isaac W. Wheelwright managed to organize the first Temperance Society in town, though here only three months in 1827. In 1832 the Rev. Caleb Kimball was called here but shortly thereafter his eyesight failed him. He was later known as the blind preacher. More than seventy years after his pastorate ended, Capt. Edward B. Allen wrote this anecdote for the *Harwich Independent*: "I never use profane language for this reason, when I was a little barefoot boy, a blind minister said to me 'whenever you are tempted to swear, ask yourself these two questions. Is it right? And will it do you any good?' That monitor has always been with me and has kept me from using profane language." This was eloquent testimony to the lasting influence of the good ministry of Mr. Kimball.

In 1835 the church was again able to employ a minister without aid from the Home Missionary Society, and during the pastorate of the Rev. Charles S. Adams, a man in the prime of life, forty-one persons joined the church. Mr. Adams was a founder of the Seaman's Friend Society and keenly devoted to temperance and anti-tobacco causes, writing a widely circulated poem for the latter. In the eyes of his contemporaries he was "elegant in dress, with his blue glasses and cane, so friendly with children, making himself felt in the Lyceum." He was gifted with words for the saving of souls, a born leader, who, after his three year pastorate, left a different church and town.

Later there were more short term ministers, but the Rev. Mr. William H. Adams arrived in 1841 and in about three years added sixty-two more members to the church. His successor was the Rev. Cyrus Stone, a rather austere man, who had been a missionary to India for fourteen years. When the Stones left Harwich in 1848, they left a pathetic reminder of their stay here, the small gravestone of a two year old son in our cemetery. It is said that the next minister, the Rev. Theophilus F. Sawin, was more popular but was "addicted to long sermons."

During the pastorate of the Rev. Moses Hale Wilder from 1851 to 1858 the church went through a period of administrative shaking up: he reorganized and systematized the church benevolences, raised standards and generally toned things up. He was described as strong, erect, substantial, sometimes severe. It was also during his ministry that those of the church who had wanted a church in Harwich Port called a meeting in the "vestry of the Meeting House on March 5, 1854" on the matter. Later that month twenty people from this congregation subscribed their names and thus became the charter members of Pilgrim Church in Harwich Port. In the preamble to their proposed constitution they indicated not only an increased population in that area but also a "feeling of the importance of maintaining and supporting the Gospel in its purity" and that their new meetinghouse "be occupied by an Evangelical Minister of the Gospel." It does not seem that these words should be used as criticism of Mr. Wilder because in John Paine's 200th Anniversary lecture the latter quoted from a later pastor, the Rev. George Y. Washburn, "From Kimball to Wilder there was not one among them of whom you would say he needed to be converted, that he did not believe the gospel he preached. They were able to give a reason for the faith that was in them. They were educated - trained in college and seminary. They lived for the glory of God and the salvation of man."

From 1858 to 1868 the pulpit was supplied by the Rev. Joseph Rice Munsell, a man noted for his ease and affability, whose children later settled here. His son, Dr. Charles Munsell was for many years the village physician. After his retirement Mr. Munsell came back to live in Harwich and is buried near the present church building. Alas, after his departure, there was again a series of short ministries, but faithful Deacon Sidney Underwood also helped with the preaching. Among the brief sojourners were traveling evangelists, licentiates and the one too liberal minister who caused many to attend worship elsewhere. In 1880 the Rev. Rufus B. Tobey began a four year pastorate; but he was later to give up the ministry to engage in organized charity work in Boston and was the originator of the Boston Floating Hospital.

Over the years members of a number of our ministerial families took root in Harwich to the enrichment of the whole town. Today the citizen who best exemplifies this is Ralph U. Brett, long a First Selectman, a grandson of the Rev. Henry F. Cutting, minister of the church in 1885, as well as a great-great-grandson of the illustrious Nathan Underwood!

Two brief pastorates of the 1890s are worth mentioning: that of the Rev. J. Walter Sylvester, later a minister in a large Albany, New York church and that of the Rev. J. H. Whittaker, Jr., later a convert to Catholicism. The shortness of Mr. Sylvester's stay was occasioned by illness, but he had become so attached to this place that he commended a twenty-five year old friend, Artemas J. Haynes, to the church.

Mr. Haynes was called and ordained here in 1894. The Haynes boyhood in Maine had been one of hard manual labor, fishing and shipwreck. He was known as a man full of promise with an eloquent tongue. The prophecy was to be fulfilled, for he later served in two famous and influential Congregational pulpits: Plymouth Church, Chicago, and United Church on the Green, New Haven, the latter long having close associations with Yale. Thanks to the *Outlook*, the denominational magazine of that time, his doctrinal statement for his ordination in Harwich became famous throughout the churches and marked a tolerant stride ahead, for Mr. Haynes did not believe in everlasting punishment, yet was accepted for ordination. His eloquent tongue also won him a Harwich bride, Bertha Snow, in whose ancestral home here they were to live. In the years after his Harwich ministry, he also used a camp on Long Pond, where he could read and write his sermons in the peace and quiet of summer vacations. The sad ending to his story is his 1908 death by drowning in that pond. This man, one of the most distinguished of our preachers, lies buried in Island Pond Cemetery, the fourth of our ministers to lie "among the pines" of Harwich.

The incorporation of this church as a legal body under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts finally came at the urging of the Rev. George Y. Washburn, who became the minister in 1896. Apparently the first part of the name we presently bear, First Congregational Church of Harwich, was not adopted until this incorporation, after about one hundred and fifty years of our existence. Mr. Washburn, unlike Mr. Haynes, held to old Congregationalism's most fearful theories. He went about the sandy roads, then unsullied by oil or macadam, with his white horse and buggy, intent on harvesting souls.

The minister who helped First Church enter the twentieth century was the learned and eloquent Rev. Charles H. Rowley. His ministry was like calm after the storm. At this time the last surviving member of the Brooks family, which long had provided lay pillars of strength to this church, was Miss Sarah G. Brooks. Mr. Rowley became aware of this strong personality one day when he called at the Brooks home. When Miss Sarah opened the door, the minister asked to see her lord and

master. She responded with acerbity, "I HAVE no master, but my Lord is in Heaven." This little exchange did not prevent the Rowley family from being the first occupants of the Broadbrooks parsonage built in 1902, across Main Street from the church property, as a gift from Miss Brooks. In 1903 the pleasing custom was begun of buying Easter lilies and distributing them to the sick and shut-in after the service. Mrs. Handy and Mrs. Rowley had this honor.

After Mr. Rowley left in 1904 more than two decades went by when the church's congregation decreased. A succession of pulpit supply preachers tried to pierce religious apathy in the town with little effect. In 1928 a cry finally arose for a resident minister and Mr. Howard R. May was engaged. He quickly was hard at work, interest revived, and he was soon drawing large congregations. But seized by illness, he was summoned to his Maker on Christmas Day, 1929, the first minister to die in office since the eighteenth century. It was a solemn and impressive moment when, amidst the tolling of the bell, the pastor's body was borne from the church sanctuary for interment in Shutesbury on the hills of Franklin County in Massachusetts.

Affairs in the church were plagued with a period of penury and indifference until 1933, when a young theological student, George Hunt, appeared on the scene. From his often discouraging yet patient labors under trying circumstances was eventually to come the flowering of our church which we have experienced in recent years. His initial salary was \$25.00 a week. The deacons strongly advised him not to marry, for this remuneration would not support a wife, and the church was not about to provide any increase. But love can find a way - one Sunday the congregation was invited to remain after the service for a wedding. A minister friend from Brewster was present and joined George and Ruth Call, a lovely fellow student at Gordon College, in holy matrimony, to the delight of all, with the possible exception of a dour deacon. It is most probable that Ruth was the first woman to preach from our pulpit, when, at the last minute, she had to fill in for her husband, ill with the grippe. She was actually delighted with the opportunity to present her views in public, having had a recent theological disagreement with her husband. This hastened his recovery, and it is reported he made a rebuttal the following Sunday. Both of the Hunts were later to go on to highly successful careers in education near Boston rather than in church work. They presently make their retirement home in East Harwich.

Our next minister was Dr. Henry G. Newell, who came to us in 1934, from the presidency of Piedmont College in Georgia. Following Dr. Newell in 1943 was the Rev. George Loring Thurlow who was most successful in bringing new members into the church and obtaining generous gifts for refurbishing its building. He was an esteemed and dedicated pastor. Not adverse to making parish calls at mealtime (the hour meant little to him), he and Mrs. Thurlow often reciprocated by entertaining at the parsonage.

The congregation enthusiastically entered into the 200th Anniversary celebration in 1947 when an elaborate pageant of the town's history with costume and music was written and performed. This was also the occasion of the memorable historical address by John Paine, which has already been mentioned. (There had been a 175th Anniversary celebration with seven ministerial addresses or sermons, which would seem a bit ponderous by today's standards.)

The Cape has been known as a delightful spot during the warm weather months from the days when the Indians from the Rhode Island tribes journeyed here to swim each year before the days of the white settlers. Nineteenth and twentieth century prosperity created modern tourism. Harwich in the post war period had become an especially popular resort area, and Mr. Thurlow held summer Sunday services with visitors in mind: a brochure of the time promised special music and a service of not more than one hour. It was apparent then and has been since that many visitors from the city find real joy in worshipping in this serene, old meetinghouse and with a congregation of friendly faces. The Social Union of the church was started in 1949 and is still an integral part of church life.

In 1953 the Rev. Harry L. Meyer, a man hearty of voice and manner, came from Fall River to be our minister and became an especially beloved and devoted pastor. He and his capable wife, Alma, were both very active in the church and Sunday School and generously opened their parsonage home for church use. Sixty-five new members joined the church at just one of his services. A famous Biblical professor, Dr. Morton S. Enslin, summer attendant of this church, found the Meyer sermons to be filled with warmth, humor, amazing pertinence and called his preaching great in an article published in a home-letical journal. The introduction in 1956 of the first church secretary, Edith Benchley, was a modern advance for the church and pastor. On his retirement in 1959 Mr. Meyer was honored by being named the first minister emeritus in the church's history. So he remains with us today.

He and his successor, the Rev. J. Edward Elliot, said that their happiest years in the ministry were those spent in the Harwich church.

Mr. Elliot began life as a Maine lighthouse keeper's son and was to be briefly one himself. He brought the philosophy of this background to the maintenance and advancement of our church beginning in 1960. Coming from a Portland, Maine, church, Mr. Elliot proved to be a greatly esteemed pastor to his flock, showing his warm, tender concern in human relationships. He was also fortunate in having a gracious wife at his side whose talents were to enrich the worship of the church with her lovely voice and whose skills aided the Brooks Library of the town. In a day and age of change when many churches began to experience unexpected upheavals, First Church was a "happy ship." Its steady growth continued and the congregation provided generous support of modern mission enterprises beyond the community as well. The church voted to become a part of the United Church of Christ May 17, 1961. A tradition of men's auctions in late summer was begun, a day for fun and profit, and enabled all mortgages to be paid off in full. The custom of observing Maundy Thursday in Lent with a service of Tenebrae led by the deacons was begun during the Elliot ministry. Barbara Griffin was added to the church staff as secretary and then Ellsworth Philip as custodian. Both of these continue to fulfill the duties of their positions with a spirit of real ministry to all those they meet, and the church is indeed fortunate to have their services. Barbara's husband, Donn Griffin, is presently Harwich's first selectman. Christmas 1970 was a time for both tears and joy in the church when the Elliots retired to a home on Cape Elizabeth in Maine.

The arrival of Cape Cod's usual late spring in May, 1971, also brought the arrival of a new minister, the Rev. Albert C. Ronander, all the way from the San Francisco Bay area. However, like our earliest ministers, he is a native of Massachusetts, polished off his theological education at Harvard, and like them usually wears the Genevan bands and gown on Sundays. Before coming to us he served churches in New England and the west and held positions in the national offices of our denomination. Both Parson Al and his wife, Harriett, have been accepted with enthusiasm by young and old alike, and we look forward to a future of joyful service in the Lord's name together.

After serving the church for nine years, and feeling the need to "slacken the pace", Parson Al Ronander submitted his resignation as minister, effective September 30, 1980. He and his wife, Harriett, are still living in Yarmouthport where they remain very active. Janice Shepherd had

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joined the church staff as a Seminary student during Parson Al's term of service and spent six years at the church involved with youth and family ministry. First Church was honored to be a part of her Ordination and our good wishes followed her to her new ministry in Lancaster, N.H.

The Reverend Mr. Louis Toppan was called to serve as interim minister of the church. Toppo and his wife, Adra, held the congregation together with great sermons, warm pastoral work, and experience and wisdom while the Search Committee was hard at work. The Reverend Mr. James B. Williams was installed as our minister on May 16, 1982. Mr. Williams had served the church in Virginia, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and served First Church through 1984.

The Reverend Mr. Roy Colby was then called as Interim and served until the Congregation called the Reverend Mr. Charles T. Newberry to serve as our minister beginning September 21, 1985. Mr. Newberry had served churches in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York and Massachusetts. He was called from his position as Chaplain to Cape Cod Hospital where he had established a Department of Pastoral Care as part of a "tent-making" ministry of the Cape Cod Council of Churches. During the first five years of his pastorate, the church began to grow, Pine Oaks Village expanded (1989), and the church built and dedicated the Memorial Garden west of the Church Cemetery (1989). The Reverend Mr. Toppan had moved to Cape Cod and became a member of the Church in 1984 and was called by the church to return to service as the Minister of Visitation in 1986.

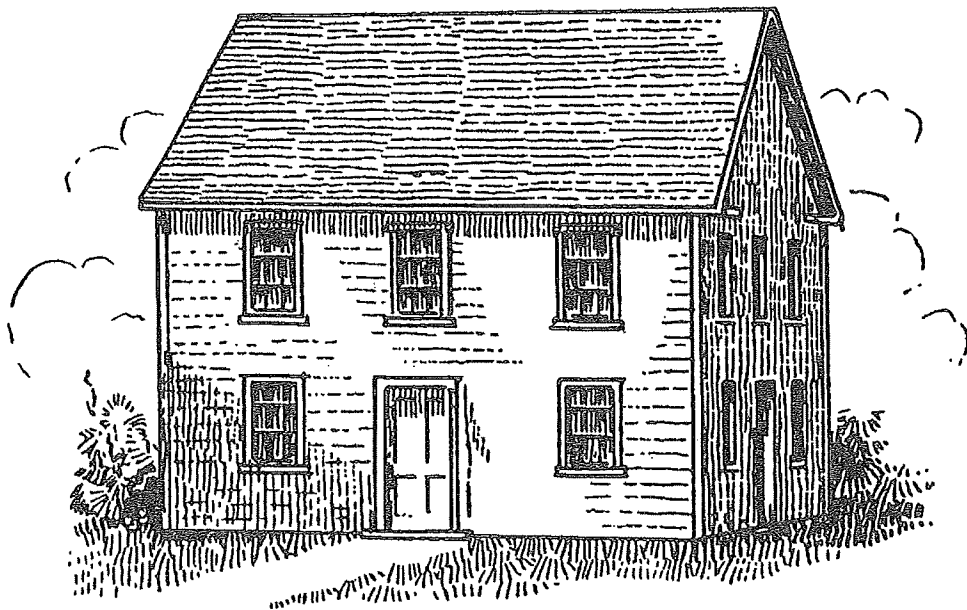
By 1989, Mr. Toppan was anxious to retire from service and Peg Carver Schad was retiring from her service as Director of Christian Education to devote more of her time to an expanding music program. The church began a study of its needs and after three congregational meetings with full and unanimous votes at each called the Reverend Mr. John Nelson Erickson, III, as its first full time Associate Minister. Mr. Erickson is a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, a graduate of Bowdoin College and has served in the United States Army. Since 1990 the church has grown in number and activity. For our two hundred and fiftieth anniversary, we have voted to conduct a capital campaign to expand the facilities of our church properties to accommodate anticipated growth and continuing strength.



BUILDINGS AND PROPERTY

THE first meetinghouse of this church was finished in 1748 on the site just west of our present Parish House. It was a rude structure with no plastering to keep out the cold. Neither comfort nor aesthetic appeals to the senses was considered proper at this time. Facing south it had one door on the south side, the long side, and separate stairways for men and women, but no porch or spire. Inside there were only twelve pews and the pulpit on the long north wall, the minister's wife's pew being just east of it, the other pews bought by men in order of their standing in the town "rates." There were also long seats in the body of the house and galleries for less important members of the congregation, evidence of class distinctions.

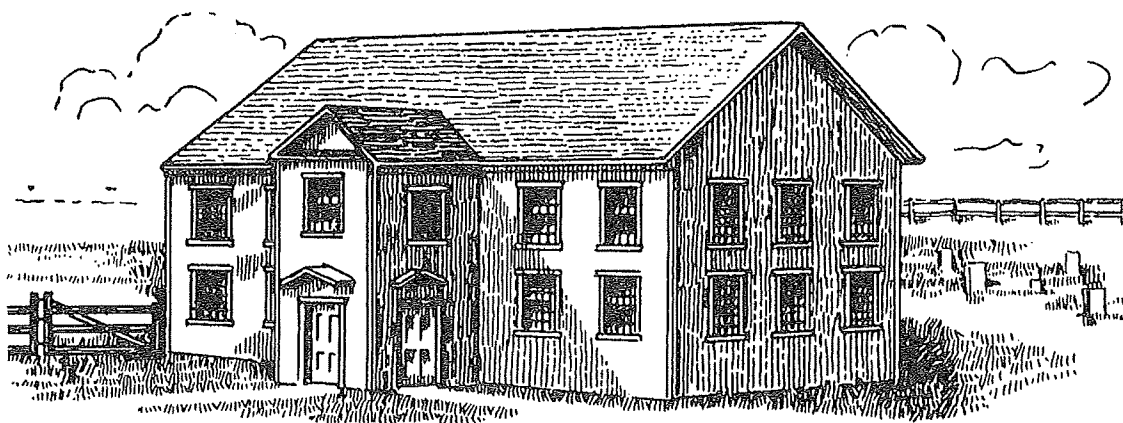
The tract of land which had been first given in 1744 especially "to set a meetinghouse on", is substantially with later additions that which we know today as the church property, the first parsonage being near the ground of the present church structure. There was also some meadow land for use by the minister in the early days. Although the



First meetinghouse, 1747

first minister, Mr. Pell, had been promised a house by the precinct, it was only slowly completed sometime after 1751, and when his widow returned to Maine in 1753, this parsonage was held as the "Ministerial House" for occupancy by later clergymen until 1782 (when it had to be sold with its barn to defray precinct expenses!) The Rev. Jonathan Mills refused to come to Harwich in 1766 until this house was "lathed and plastered for him."

In 1791 the original meetinghouse facilities were deemed inadequate; it was taken down and work began on the second building, which came to be known as Mr. Underwood's Meetinghouse. Put up just east of the old one, the large barnlike structure, with two stories and seats for five hundred, was entered through a vestibule on the south. It was almost square and had no steeple. Part of its oak frame came from trees in town. The men of the church provided the labor and chose the colors: red and yellow "oker", the trim white and doors chocolate. The white-washed interior was set off with rich sea green woodwork. This meetinghouse had a wainscoted interior, square pews, galleries, a high pulpit across from the entrance in front of a "magnificently large window" of clear glass, and a communion table (or shelf) hanging below the pulpit. On the pulpit was the only cushion in the building, of green velvet, on which rested the Bible. High over the minister's head, arching down from the ceiling was the sounding-board, dark green above, white below. As in the original house there was nothing of symbolic decoration to remind these descendants of the Pilgrims of the hated Anglican and popish customs.



Second meetinghouse, 1792

Many years later Deacon Sidney Brooks was to recall the view through the windows during summer Sunday afternoon services with "changing clouds on the deep blue heavens, green earth and modest flowers and clover heads, and small gravestones 'standing thickly over the sleeping congregation on God's acre.' " This building also housed weekday revivals. One eloquent, eccentric and bearded preacher (in a day when all others were shaved) drew such crowds that timbers had to be braced against the walls to prevent structural collapse.

In place of a parsonage Mr. Underwood built his own large and convenient home on a twelve acre tract west of the meetinghouse, north of the main street and south of Island Pond. For a long time, with its substantial outbuildings, it was quite the grandest domestic establishment in the village. Shortly before his death Mr. Underwood sold it to the town for an almshouse.

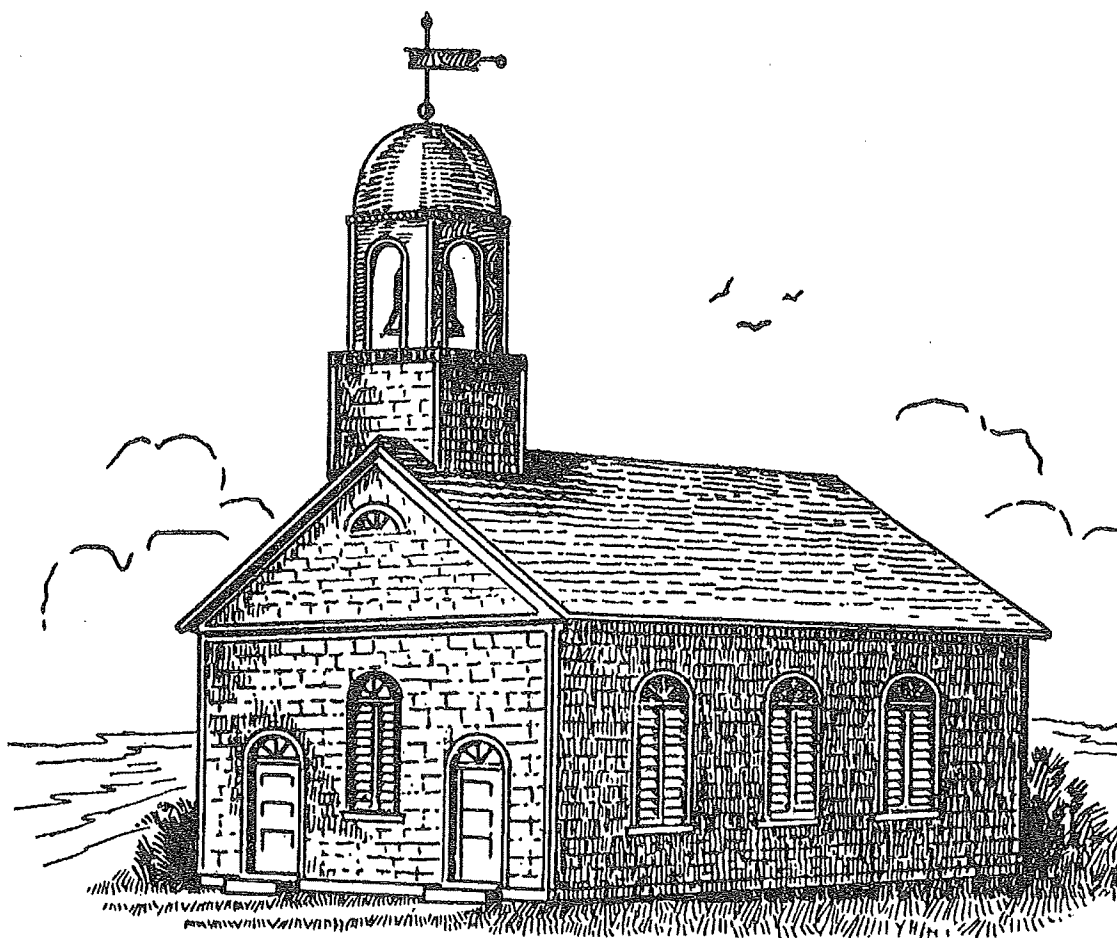
The second meetinghouse was to become so dilapidated and unfit for worship after only forty years, that it was voted to sell it in six lots by public auction in 1832. Proceeds from the sale were \$163.50, part of which was used for fencing in the parish graveyard. Late that fall the third meetinghouse was completed at a cost of \$2,437.47. Moses B. Lakeman was the master builder for its construction. This building, later remodeled and modernized several times, is where we presently worship. It was 40' by 54' with semi-circular topped windows and galleries on three sides. Even before it was fully completed, the minister, Mr. Kimball, began holding services in it, the parishioners seated on rough benches and timbers. In the belfry hung the bell donated by Capt. Thomas Snow.

A new parsonage was built about 1840 across the road on land given by Obed Brooks, Esq. This was to house most of our ministers from the Rev. William H. Adams on until 1899, when it was removed up Pleasant Lake Avenue beyond the Old Colony right of way, where it still stands, a modest, modified red Cape Cod structure, having no relationship to the church.

In 1854 the parish decided to enlarge and renovate its house of worship under the direction of a Boston architect, J. D. Towle. To this gentleman we owe the exterior and part of the interior as it stands today, a lovely example of simple, early Victoriana. The cost was \$6,000. The Towle work is still called beautiful; and despite later changes, the spirit of his style remains. The steeple, more than one hundred and thirteen feet high from the ground is now known as the most photographed on the Cape and contains the old bell. An entrance area, the narthex,

was constructed below the new steeple. Inside, the galleries and partitions were removed to enlarge the auditorium. Windows and curved cushioned pews of a then more up-to-date style replaced the old ones. A frescoed recess for the pulpit was "splendid." We do not know just what this or its predecessor pulpit may have looked like, but from other similar structures of that day, it is likely that it was still in the center somewhat elevated and perhaps approached by curving stairs, matching the graceful pair of stairways, leading to the rear gallery for the organ and choir. The remodeled church structure was impressively dedicated on May 16, 1855, the Rev. Edward Beecher of Boston, brother to both a famous sister and fellow preacher, giving a sermon based on "And there was great joy in Samaria."

On the memorable night of January 19, 1876, this building that had heard hellfire preaching was to be tried by fire from without. The old Exchange Building, Brett's Store and Mrs. Turpie's house east across



*Third meetinghouse, 1832
(later remodeled to present form, 1854-55)*

the street went up in flames and smoke. A fortunate change of wind saved the church, which escaped with only a scorched and blistered exterior. This incident and one where the steeple was hit by lightning in the 1940s fortunately have been the building's only experience with fire.

In 1881 the ladies of the Sewing Circle decided to build a chapel of their own for religious and social purposes. At a cost of \$2,000. this building with a mansard style roof was erected on the land by the road and cemetery southwest of the large church. (This was to become the genesis of our present Parish House.) Our three buildings (church, chapel and parsonage) were now standing in the heart of the busy town, near stores and several hotels.

Through the generosity of Miss Sarah G. Brooks, the large Broadbrooks parsonage was built in 1899. The name on the building was that of the English ancestors of the many generations of Brooks who lived in Harwich. It was styled in the latest mode of turn of the century architecture with only its shingles resembling anything of the Cape Cod cottages of the village. During the Depression years this house was rented to the manager of the A & P store next door, to help provide income for the church, such ministers as came and went having to arrange for their own housing.

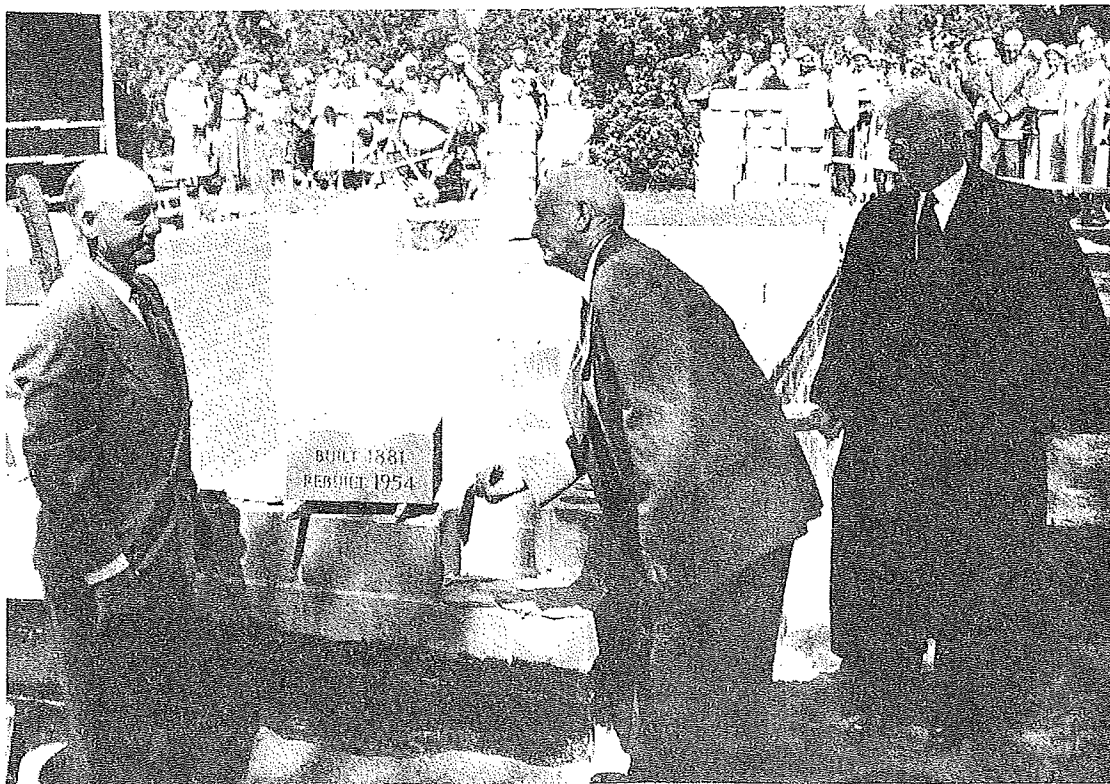
Mr. Towle's church had undergone minor changes but when the Carnegie pipe organ was placed in front of the congregation in 1909, its location necessitated places for the choir members near it, and a brass rod supporting a green velour curtain to screen their feet. A long platform bore potted palms and a central reading desk type of pulpit from which the sermons were given by a frock-coated minister. The general effect in a contemporary photograph seems rather dark and ponderous to us today.

For the 200th anniversary of the church in 1947 the building was completely renovated and repainted. The interior color choices of off white and gold seemed most refreshing. Two handsome chandeliers were hung over the center aisle. New gas furnaces with floor registers were installed in both the church and parsonage. A modern kitchen with hotel range and hot water was installed in the ladies chapel. The greatest change of all was to remove a few front rows of pews and to create a chancel in the church as a focal point of worship. This Anglo-Catholic ecclesiastical styling of an altar and pulpit and lectern to the sides with choir stalls had become very popular in the thirties throughout American churches of all denominations despite differing beliefs. Deacon Frank Underwood rightly pointed out that such styling here would be a dis-

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tinct break with the practices of historic and traditional Congregational worship. However the Rev. Mr. Thurlow was anxious to carry out the new plan, and it was accomplished. Certainly the light and airy results of the total renovation, which we still have with us, are preferable to what it replaced. And the improvements to all the three church properties cost only \$12,000!

By 1954 the church's facilities for religious education were so inadequate that a major building project costing \$40,000 took place. Through the imaginative skill of Lloyd N. F. Spicer, a Boston and Harwich architect, the original ladies chapel was reconstructed and enlarged to create a colonial style building with the parlor and kitchen area separated by sliding doors from a large hall. The second floor was divided into three rooms for children's classes. The cornerstone was the gift of Henry T. Crosby, one of our deacons for many years. Much work was done by men of the church. During the remodeling the Ladies Benevolent Society met in the town Recreation Building. One day Harry Meyer excitedly burst into the room and said, "Ladies, if you want to save your parlor, you'd better get right over there!" Everyone hurried to the construction site before the parlor was lost, and thus it is as of now.



*Laying of Parish House cornerstone, 1954
l. to r., Ernest J. Butlin, J. Burleigh Atkins, the Rev. Harry Meyer*

To meet the steady growth of the church and further upgrade its physical facilities, a major capital improvement drive was begun during the Elliot pastorate. Over a three year period \$73,558 was pledged, received and expended. A choir room wing was constructed off the narthex which also contained a flower room and the first lavatories ever to be built in the main building of the church itself. The Broadbrooks parsonage was now at the corner of a busy traffic intersection and in need of modernization. There was also need for an adequate church office for the minister and secretary, who had been sharing a small, closet-like room off the parish hall. Fortunately the church was able to buy for a parsonage an attractive, almost new "half Cape" house with four bedrooms about one mile east of the center in the Woodlands development. Its floor plan is ideally suited for parsonage use today. The Broadbrooks building was converted into office and church school facilities. A new wing of attractive panelled rooms for education was attached, behind it an adjacent lot purchased and black-topped for parking.

In relatively modern times there have been more and more resources available for maintenance and upkeep of the church's buildings. For instance in the 1960s the interior was redecorated and the walls were tinted a soft rose color, which is presently complemented by rich red carpeting and velvet hangings, providing a warm and fitting setting for worship. The church has received some major bequests, including an attractive lot on the Herring River in West Harwich from the Flagler Foote estate. At the February meeting of the church which called the new minister in 1971 an additional interesting warrant was also unanimously approved, the purchase of acreage north of the meetinghouse and cemetery along Pleasant Lake Avenue. No doubt the coming years will see specific plans made to use these lands for the benefit of the church.

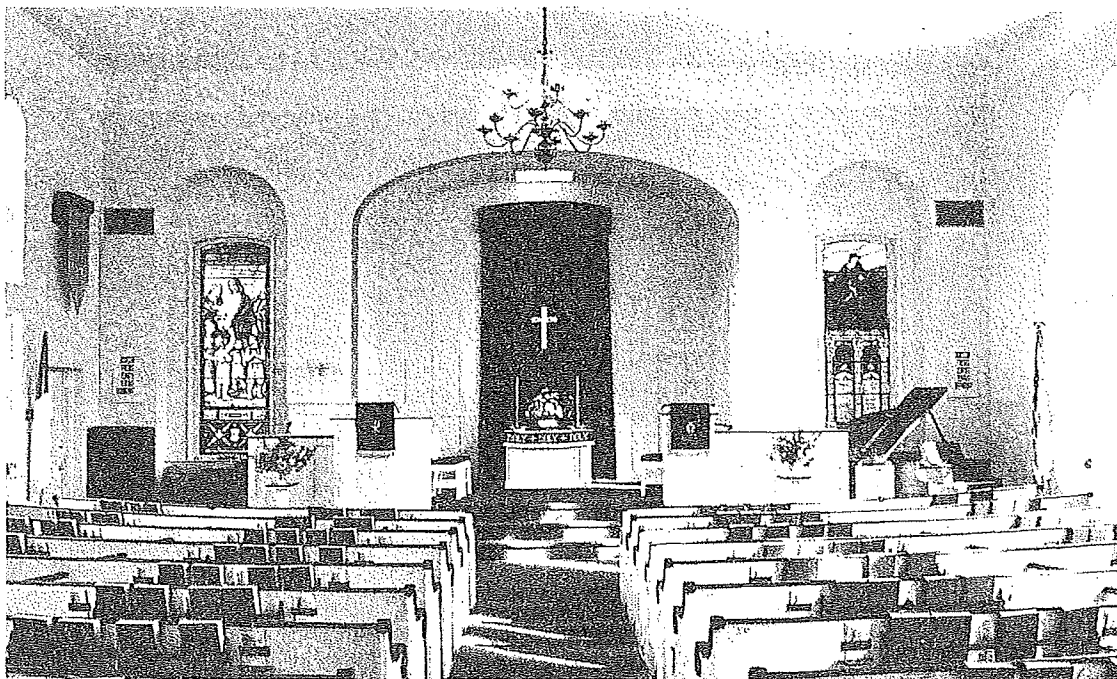
During the leaner years now gone the church turned over the responsibility for care of its old cemetery to the town. The nostalgic charm of this old area of Harwich Center today is summed up on the gravestone for Enos and Polly Nickerson, who left this life in 1820 and 1854:

*Dear is the spot where Christians sleep,
And sweet the strain which angels pour.
Oh why should we in anguish weep?
They are not lost but gone before.*

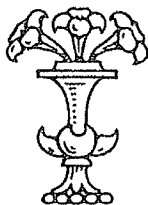
Just as Deacon Brooks long ago so beautifully recorded his impressions of our second meetinghouse, we close this chapter with

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these words by a couple recently retired from the Boston area and now new members of old First Church: "We sense the friendly atmosphere immediately on entering the door, notice the vase of flowers and overhead the beautiful star lighting fixture. After a welcome by the greeters at the inner doors to the sanctuary and being seated with a smile by the ushers, we always find it a pleasure just to sit and admire the flowers in front and baskets of flowers on each window sill. While listening to the prelude, we feel the peace and friendliness passed from person to person, which inevitably recalls with gratitude the words of the Psalmist, 'I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.' "



Interior of present meetinghouse, 1972





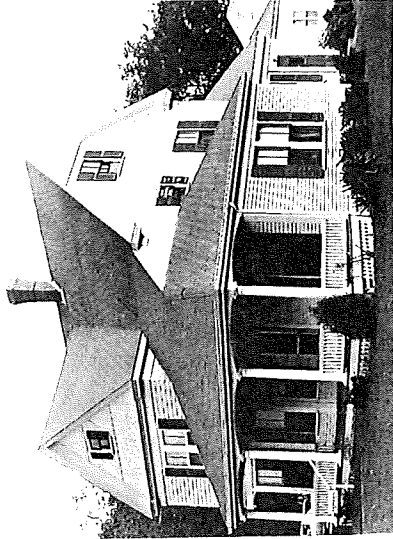
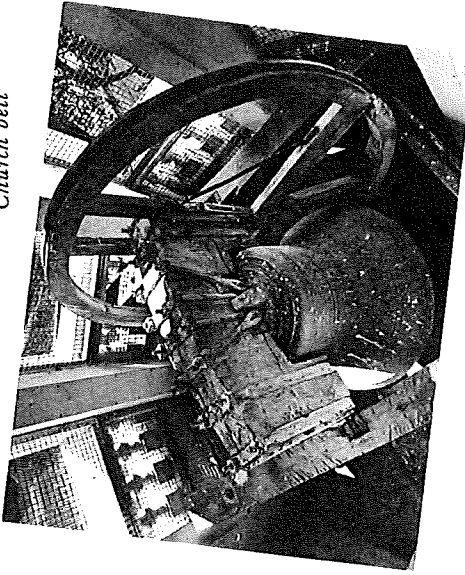
MUSIC

NO doubt, the first music heard in our church was a psalm from the Bay Psalm Book or similar psalter sung by the congregation. This was the only form of music considered suitable by our church fathers in New England. The Bay Psalm Book had been the first book to be printed in English in North America and went through many editions. In the early churches the tune was selected and lined out by a precentor, who was often one of the deacons chosen for his importance in the congregation rather than his musical ability. ("Lining out" is the singing of a psalm, phrase by phrase, by a leader with the congregation repeating it back. One can imagine the often dismal "squeaking above and grumbling below" that resulted from this attempt to make a joyful noise unto the Lord!)

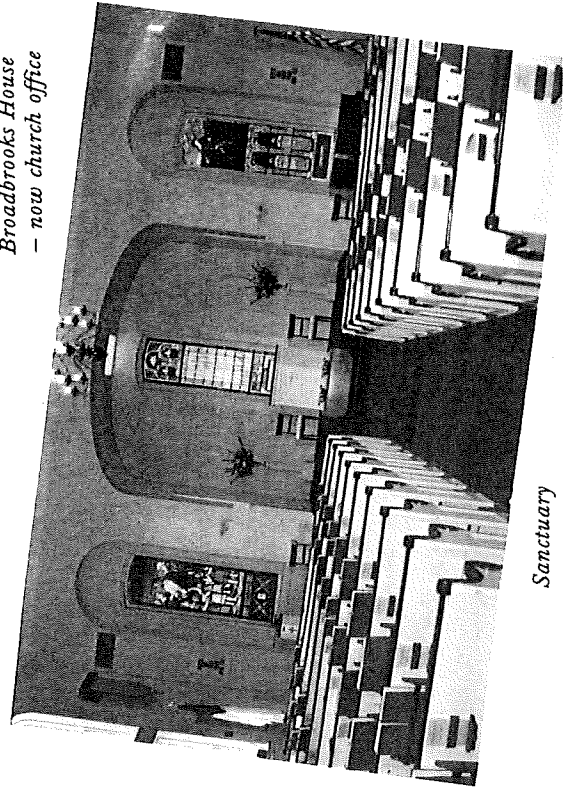
After the Revolutionary War a happier form of revolution began in New England village churches. Newer versions of psalms with more melodious tunes began to appear. These were based on a style originated by a Massachusetts tanner, William Billings, called "fuguing." Because of this livelier "fuguing" style which appealed to the young people and the dropping of the lining out custom, we can only imagine the controversies that must have gone on. Then, too, books of spiritual songs and melodies began to appear. Pitch pipes of applewood were also being smuggled into galleries in the interest of more harmonious and "amusing" singing. The older members gloomily foresaw such pipes to be the opening wedge that would lead to the introduction into the meetinghouse of musical instruments - and eventually to that "tooting tub", as Puritan opponents of the hated organ called it.

The first attempts to upgrade our church's musical praise probably came when those who enjoyed singing gathered as a rudimentary choir in the gallery opposite the pulpit and over the front door of the second meetinghouse - men and women using separate stairways and sitting separately in the pews in the gallery. The earliest recollection in print about music of our church comes from Deacon Sidney Brooks, recalling from his boyhood early in the nineteenth century the choir in the second meetinghouse as being "large - the leader, Mr. Nathan

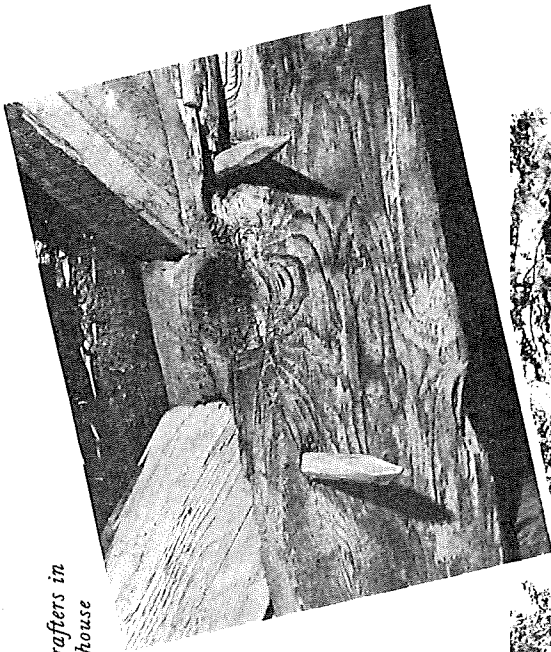
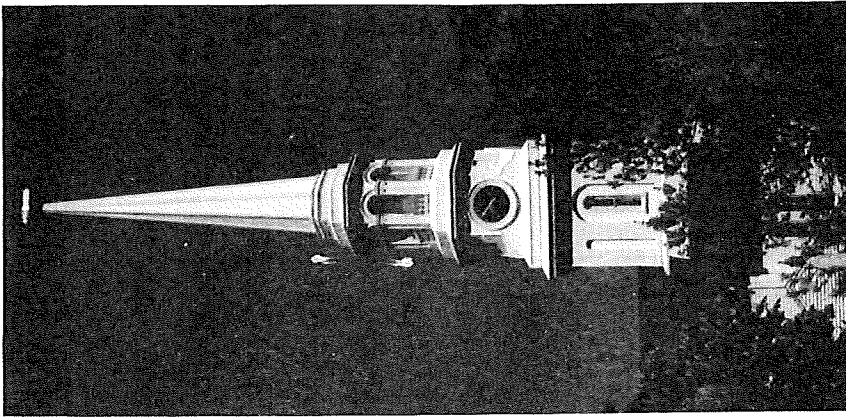
Church bell



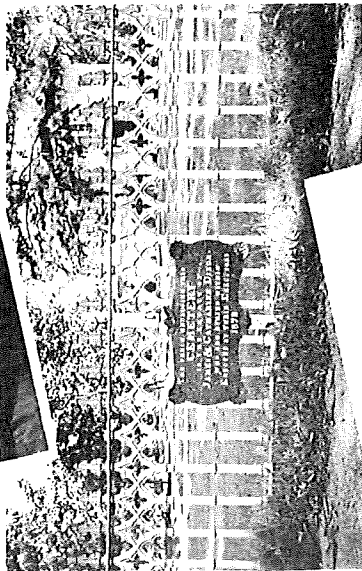
*Broadbrooks House
— now church office*



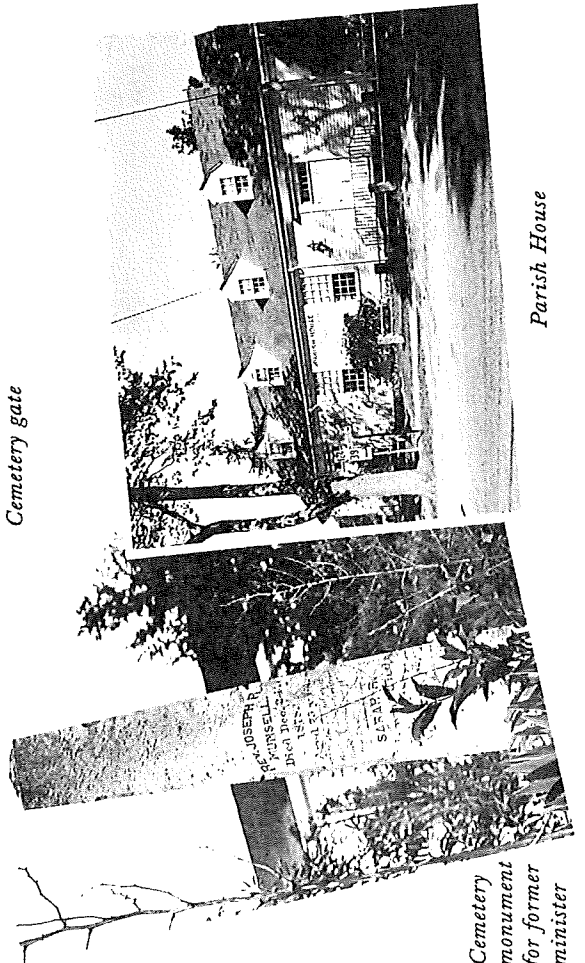
Sanctuary



*Pegged rafters in
meetinghouse*



Cemetery gate



Parish House

*Cemetery
monument
for former
minister*

Robbins, playing the bass viol and our fathers and mothers carrying the different parts, as they were called, of bass, treble, tenor and counter." Such a group was a result of the popular singing schools of the day, an innocent outlet for the natural spirits of people who had few opportunities for amusement and sociability. Any resemblance to our present vested choir which processes and sings from a chancel behind the pulpit accompanied by an organ would be quite strained since this formal style would have seemed reminiscent of the abhorred churches of old England to our forebears.

Psalm singing was still the acme of sacred music as evidenced at the re-dedication in 1855 of the remodeled third (and present) meeting-house, when the choir sang the twenty-sixth Psalm. The program also included an "original" hymn adapted for the occasion. A description of that renovation of this building tells us that the choir gallery with its semi-circular facade was in the rear fronting the pulpit. There were ample and cushioned seats for a large choir. Two curved areas of the back wall still act as sounding boards for the superb acoustics we continue to enjoy from the old choir loft.

Until 1851 stringed instruments provided the only instrumental church music - probably bass viols or cellos. The first organ was purchased from the Simmons Company for \$450 by the church Sewing Circle. The case of that first organ still remains in the gallery to this day, and under layers of paint can be seen initials carved by boys who pumped air for it before the days of the mechanical blowers. One of the early organists was Suzanne Cutting, the minister's daughter, who in the 1880s was dismissed from the position because she incorporated a popular song of the day in the prelude to the Sunday service.

In 1909 thanks mainly to a gift from Andrew Carnegie who helped many such churches attain more adequate instruments, a new and larger two-manual Estey pipe organ was installed in the front recess and the choir departed the gallery for the front of the church. We can only imagine the mutterings that must have gone around at such "new-fangled presumption" in relocating the choir. Subsequent photographs show an impressive display of pipes behind seats for the choir and a pulpit or reading desk.

During the first 150 years of our history there were many periods when there was no choir or even a quartet, although mention is made of a male quartet in 1909 during Mr. Ryder's pastorate. The choir as we presently know it is the result of an upsurge of interest in the church in 1933. Marion Munsey became the director and Thursday eve-

ning choir rehearsals and parties were enjoyable social occasions for the younger crowd.

In 1931 Mrs. Earle Sims, then Miss Charlotte Patch, began her musical association with our church, having studied at the New England Conservatory of Music. In 1942, she became director of the choir and in this church anniversary year Mrs. Sims observes her thirtieth anniversary as director. Many rehearsals were held in the Sims home, especially during those times when there was no adequate heat in the church. Rehearsals were also held in the front parlor of the Broadbrooks parsonage until the new parsonage in the Woodlands was purchased. Of this original choir group John Handren is still an active member today.

For many years the choir wore traditional black robes until several years ago when a choir member, Mrs. Marian Doty, finally rebelled at their condition and ordered a set of rich maroon gowns with white satin stoles from New York as her gift to the church. The gowns, which were to arrive for a Thanksgiving service, went astray in the shipping. Undaunted, the donor tracked down the offending truck in Rhode Island, had the driver off load her order and proceeded triumphantly back to Harwich with all the new robes in her car!

Many talented soloists have sung during our services through the years but none were more appreciated than Ruth Elliot, our former minister's wife, whose lovely trained soprano voice was also a mainstay of the choir throughout her husband's pastorate. Today we consider ourselves fortunate in having such a faithful choir which rehearses and sings throughout the entire year without vacation.

During the 1930s Henry K. Bearse, a self-taught musician of spiritualist persuasion, was organist for several years. Madeline Crowell and her daughter Lorraine succeeded Mr. Bearse, with Lorraine also providing cello solos during the summer services of the 1940s, reminiscent of the original instrumental music in the church. Iris McKenney became our organist in 1948. She received her formal musical training at Tufts University, where she not only studied pipe organ but was chapel organist. She is former supervisor of music for the Chatham-Harwich School District and presently supervisor of music in the Harwich elementary schools.

The present Hammond electronic organ was installed during the major redecorating project for the 200th anniversary, a gift of friends of Mr. Thurlow, the minister. The story is told that during the time of the pageant held in the Exchange Building, this instrument was moved across the street supervised by experts from Boston to insure no damage

MUSIC

and a church member "waked" it through the night. The old pipe organ, in need of repairs to its electric action, was sold to the Methodist Church in Orleans where it was restored and still remains in service.

Our present minister was the executive secretary of the committee which prepared our *Pilgrim Hymnal* published by the Pilgrim Press in 1958. This hymnal, a lineal descendant of the Bay Psalm Book, has been used by this church since shortly after its publication. Mr. Ronander also co-authored the *Guide to the Pilgrim Hymnal*, a scholarly yet entertaining handbook of information on all the hymnal's texts and tunes. He has introduced at our early informal worship services much of the new religious folk music of our day and has encouraged our young people to play guitars, cellos, violins, flutes, pianos and other instruments at both our innovative and formal worship services, so that we can enjoy the best of the past and present traditions of New England church music.

When it seemed that the electric organ that had been used for 25 years was on its last legs, Mr. Ronander wrote in his report of the 225th anniversary, "I cannot think of anything that would contribute more to the enrichment of our worship, the vital center of our church's life, nor be a more fitting, glorious and lasting legacy to hand to the future generations than a fine organ." A very thorough organ committee persuaded the congregation to vote on November 28th, 1973, to purchase and have rebuilt a tracker type pipe organ built by the George S. Hutchens Co. in 1892 from the Philip A. Beaudry Co.

On Sunday, November 3, 1974, a formal dedication service was held with Olive Cahoon playing an original composition of her own. That evening, Daniel Pinkham, organist, composer and teacher, arranged a program with other well known artists.

On her 35th anniversary year in service to the church, director of music, Charlotte Sims, wrote her letter of resignation on October 4, 1977. Charlotte achieved many accolades for her dedication to inspired music and musical programs through 3-1/2 decades. Charlotte is still at church every Sunday and one of the most avid supporters of our continuing music program.

For a few years several people helped carry on the task while the Music Committee searched for a new director. In 1980 Peg Carver-Schad (then Peg Carver) was contracted as choir director, alto soloist and continued her position as music coordinator for early service families. From her later position, Peg had developed the choristers (children) and the mini choir and combined them with the adult choir for many interesting

worship services. Gradually the music program became larger with an adult choir and a youth bell choir. Today we have adult choir, cranberry ringers (adult) and a church orchestra co-founded by Peg and director, Cindy Erickson.

The music program continues to flourish with minor changes in volunteers who are dedicated to our church. Today at this writing Peg is music director of our church. Iris McKenney, our long term organist, will celebrate her 50th year of service to the church in 1998 and is as good as ever. She is always alert to the needs of the choir and soloists. Iris plays in the bell choir as well as in our orchestra. She has held the longest staff position in the history of our church.

Candlelight concerts began with the music committee, when Parson Al was pastor, and are celebrating 23 years of success. These concerts "pay for themselves" as well as pay performers and make a gift to the church.





MEMORIALS

MANY beautiful and generous gifts and bequests have come to our church down through the years. Space does not allow us to list all of the contributions and memorials, but they can be found in the church's permanent records and many are listed in a beautiful repository cabinet, a gift of one of our families, in the narthex of the church building.

The first memorial was the stained glass window "Jesus and the Children" given in 1887 in memory of the Brooks family, especially Sidney, and in 1902 the stained glass window "The Sower" was given in memory of the Rev. Nathan Underwood.

For the 200th anniversary in 1947 almost everyone in the parish made a gift. At that time the altar Bible, candlesticks, communion set, cross, offering plates, spotlight to illumine the steeple, vases, ground glass window over chancel, chandeliers and Steinway piano were all presented to the church.

During the period from 1953 to 1967 the flags, outside steps and railings of the church, *Interpreters' Bible*, superfrontal (altar cover), antependia (lectern and pulpit hangings), dossal, baptismal font, seven branch candelabra were given, as well as other church furnishings.

In 1953 an early communion set probably made by James Dixon about 1820 to 1840 was restored to the church by a descendant of the Brooks family and has now been placed in a cabinet for the 225th anniversary. The organ chimes given in 1957 memorialize Mrs. Mary A. Hirschman, mother of Mrs. Harry Meyer.

A present member of the church, a skilled metalcraftsman, Captain Malcolm Bunker, created the star embellishment of the hanging light in the narthex, as well as the gold cross on the dossal cloth.

Other memorial funds have been started and it is hoped may be completed, perhaps with the impetus of this anniversary year and a growing congregation. One of special interest is a fund to honor the late Deacon J. Burleigh Atkins, who always hoped that one day the church steeple would house a clock.

And, alas, at the 11a.m. service on July 7, 1974, the four-sided clock was dedicated. Mr. Atkins had been a deacon of this church for 70 years.

In 1976, Mrs. Alva (Bea) Walker gave a set of 27 Dutch handbells to the church in memory of her husband. With the addition of more bells in the next few years, we know we are in for a treat when we see the "Cranberry Players" in the front pews.

A new welcome addition to First Church is the carillon given by the Partridge family in memory of parents Edwin and Helen Partridge. Its bells represent another form of ministry in the community. The first hymn played on Tuesday, November 9, 1982, was "The Lord's My Shepherd".

As an expression of a caring Christian fellowship, and to meet a specific need, the church established its Memorial Garden in 1989. Located west of the meeting house in an area of the historic cemetery, the garden is designed as a resting place of beauty and peace for the interment of the cremated remains of deceased members of the church and their immediate families. It is also a place where many enjoy sitting quietly with their thoughts.

The history of Harwich's First Congregational Church rose to new heights with the discovery of a weathervane that had graced the third meeting house until its renovation in 1854. The decision not to replace it on the new meeting house led to its being sold at auction, where it spent the next 128 years on Oak Street. First on the barn of Obed Brooks, Jr., and then atop Howard Doane's barn. When Mr. Harold Moyer purchased the Doane property and heard of the origin of the weathervane, he gladly donated the ornament to the church. The original vane is now encased in a cabinet in the Parish House, while a replica, which was hand crafted, is affixed to the steeple today. The cost of the replica was to be expended from the Memorial Fund as a dedication to the members who caused the current structure to be erected. Again we are unable to list the many contributions and memorials, but we are always aware of them, be it in the form of a tree, plaque or a sundial on the church grounds or a flag, a new bell or a work of art seen in one of the three church buildings.



THE CHURCH AND THE COMMUNITY



EGINNING with the construction of the first meeting-house in Harwich, this church has served through the years as the vital center of its members' moral and civic interests.

It has been said that the force behind the War of Independence came directly out of the pulpit and pews of the New England meetinghouse. Harwich was one of the towns which observed, for example, March 20, 1775 as a day of public fasting and prayer as recommended by the second Provincial Congress. The Rev. Isaiah Dunster of the North Precinct preached a sermon for the occasion and throughout the war "rendered good service in the pulpit to the cause of the patriots, during the conflict." Many Harwich sons marched off to fight the British or sailed with the privateers. Many of our ministers as well as our sons and daughters have experienced first hand armed struggles for freedom from the days of the French and Indian Wars to the present. The religious beliefs of those of the Congregational Way have never been confined to other-worldly, personal piety but have always resulted in social concerns and action in both local and wider areas of daily life. One of the eighteenth century Harwich pastors publicly urged the members of his church "to unite together for ye choice of such selectmen (if such could be had) as would take care to have such persons to keep public houses, as would be conscientiously careful to keep good order for ye suppression of ye ruining sin of excessive drinking."

The architecture of early houses of worship reflected the practical use to which they were put, for, until the separation of church and state they were, in truth, the place where the townspeople met to discuss and settle all their affairs, secular as well as religious. Attendance at the town meeting and public worship in the same building were duties of equal responsibility. It appears that town meetings departed the meetinghouse in 1820 as far as Harwich is concerned.

The importance of education has always been a characteristic emphasis in Congregationalism, and our early and later history shows that both our clergy and lay people have been closely involved with

good education throughout the years. For example in 1844 Deacon Sidney Brooks started what was to be known later as the Brooks Academy, one of the first navigational schools of the country.

Of necessity after the disestablishment of the church in Massachusetts (withdrawal of support by public taxation) the focus of each church's endeavors was the organization within and around the church, but as issues were resolved, guide lines drawn, the church began in earnest to give evidence of its continued influence on the contemporary society.

The church has locked horns squarely with issues and conditions it could not tolerate, and in the matter of slavery was so outspoken as to be quoted nationwide. It wanted no question as to where it stood on that odious condition. This, in spite of the fact that some influential people in the town owned slaves.

On December 3, 1846, Pastor Cyrus Stone and the congregation unanimously passed the following resolution: "Resolved that we can have no church fellowship with those who hold and treat their fellow men as chattels or who advocate and approve of the system of human slavery. Resolved that as we regard the system of Domestic Slavery under every modification as utterly opposed to the principles and spirit of the Gospel, we feel it to be our duty to offer prayer, to observe the use of all Gospel methods for the speedy and entire removal of this system."

Situated so close to the ocean, the parish members knew only too well the agonies of families left desolate when husbands and fathers were lost at sea. With Pastor Charles S. Adams as President of the Seaman's Friend Society this church was fully identified with the men of the town. Many of the men were at sea for months, prompting the raising of money to establish a library for circulation among the sailors. Bibles were desired and given.

The church's history of concern for people and conditions began many years ago and continues to this day. In 1952 the following resolution was sent to Senators Henry Cabot Lodge and Leverett Saltonstall and Representative Donald W. Nickerson: "The First Congregational Church of Harwich, Massachusetts, at its Annual Meeting, January 14, 1952, unanimously expressed its disapproval of the proposed appointment of a United States Ambassador to The Vatican. The Clerk of the Corporation was instructed to inform you of its action, and to urge you to counteract such appointment." However, First Church did allow the burned out Roman Catholic congregation in Harwich to use the Ladies Chapel for its worship until a new building could be provided.

Today through the Christian Social Action Committee, the Ladies Benevolent Society, deacons, deaconesses and the minister, the church members are made aware of current issues and problems. No suffering is too small to be ignored and no issue too great to shun. Our current concerns relate to problems of adequate housing and care for the elderly, the alienated youth of our day, mental retardation and drug abuse.

Let us hope that the nobility of purpose in our church will draw the finest minds in many fields of endeavor and as it grows even stronger in its Christian labors, it will continue to produce young people upon whose shoulders rests the future of our community, and who are already giving us great hope.

The past twenty-five years of our church have been marked by great strides in service within the church and the community. In 1974 the church sponsored a housing project to serve Harwich's older population. After nearly seven years of negotiation and contracting, Pine Oaks Village became a reality. This beautiful community of homes for low income elderly was expanded in 1989 and is currently engaged in expanding again. Phases 1, 2 and 3 will provide 150 units of housing. The dedicated people of our church who have served on the Board of the Mid-Cape Church Homes are to be commended for their patience and persistence which made this project possible.

In 1988, in response to a Sunday sermon, a small group became concerned with the plight of latch key children, those children who went home from school to empty homes. By working with the schools of Harwich, the town's after school care program began. When a call for volunteers went out to the community, fourteen of seventeen people who volunteered to help in the program were members of First Church.

In November of 1990, the Harwich Clergy Association established the Harwich Ecumenical Council for the Homeless.(HECH). Homeless families were moved from welfare motels to homes and assigned a mentor. The National Council of Churches presented HECH with its Ecumenical Service award in our Sanctuary in January of 1993. Since then, HECH has developed a homeless prevention program and is currently buying and renovating duplex homes to assure the availability of low cost housing in years to come.

The Children's Community Center is a daycare program that provides care for 3 and 4 year olds on a sliding scale fee. The work is subsidized by donations and fund raisers and provides care for the children of

working parents or parents who are in school to acquire job skills. The center was first housed in our church and staffed by volunteers from the church until it finally received full accreditation from the state and was moved to Saint Peter's Lutheran Church to conform with current regulations for handicapped children.

For six months, the church ran a "coffee house" ministry for teens. The coffee house served as a once a week drop-in center for teens. Growing out of this ministry and out of the concern of the Harwich Police, HECH and the Harwich Clergy Association are in the process of creating a position for a youth chaplain. The Harwich Youth Chaplain will be supported by the churches of our town and will minister to troubled youth. A Search Committee is currently interviewing candidates for the position. The Mission Board of our church has pledged substantial support to this ministry, and the Trustees have agreed to have our church buildings used in any appropriate way to support this ministry as well.

First Church has been at the forefront of all these projects, participating through volunteering, giving, and serving on the Board of Directors of HECH. Mr. Newberry served as the founding Chair of HECH, and Mr. Erickson was the first Chaplain to the homeless.

The church has set a pattern of giving and service that has inspired two other UCC churches on the Cape to call Associate Ministers. First Church has become known throughout the Cape for its many ministries, and the ministers of the church have been called upon to serve as resource people for conferences on service, pastoral care, and church organization by other churches, the Mass. Conference, and various service agencies on Cape Cod. We look forward to continuing our service to others in God's name as we move into our 250th year.



DEACONS

TO tell our church's story we should most properly recount the deeds and achievements of our laymen and particularly those who have held the high office of deacon. A church's history is not just an account of its ministers and buildings, but a recounting of the continuing zeal and fire that burned in the hearts of its devoted members. Our very origin came not as an ecclesiastical decree from some higher church body but was a result of a hard, often discouraging, struggle by a group of ordinary men who wanted a church of their own. It is regrettable that our historical records have not adequately set down the contributions by scores of deacons. But these facts we do know:

The first deacon was Nathaniel Doane, a descendant of John Doane of Eastham and first white settler on the Cape. Nathaniel was a carpenter by trade and was involved in the building of our first meeting-house. Serving with him as deacon was Edward Hall, descendant of Gershom Hall, Harwich's first settler. Both deacons were active in 1745 in promulgating the establishment of a second precinct of the church.

One of the deacons' primary responsibilities has always been to assist in the proper administration of the sacraments. We note one meeting of the church in 1794, when Edward Hall, 3rd, was chosen deacon, a vote was passed to make "addition to the church vessels, etc. for the better administration of the ordinances, viz: one flagon, one cup, one christening bowl, two pewter dishes and one tablecloth, etc." In this year of our anniversary we have put on permanent display, thanks to a gift from Harry L. Meyer, our minister emeritus, and with the encouragement of our present deacons, some of the old communion vessels, a flagon and six goblets.

In 1806 Ebenezer Broadbrooks changed his name to Brooks by legislative decree. Famous as a deacon in his own right, he was an ancestor of Deacon Sidney Brooks (1813-1893), who became one of the town's more distinguished citizens. Tenancy of pews in those days was by subscription. Sidney sat in pew No. 26. The most important men had first choice and therefore the most desirable pews!



The old Communion vessels

A shining example of a deacon in this or any church was Sidney Underwood, the fifth of the Rev. Nathan Underwood's seven sons. Joining his father's church at the age of nineteen, he became a deacon in 1830 and served this church faithfully till his death in 1893. He was not only a cranberry grower, but served a term as Harwich's representative to the General Court. He had broad political interests and advocated temperance and anti-slavery. A newspaper of the day described him as a man of "purity, decision, moral and Christian character." His appearance was dignified, manly and he possessed "open, truthful kindly ways." His wife, Lucy, must have been a great help for she lived "a life pressed full of good deeds and love."

Throughout the church history, the names of Underwood, Brooks, Snow, Moody and especially "an abundance of Hall" were replete.

More recently it is worthy of special note that Deacon J. Burleigh Atkins was made honorary deacon and served on the board with his

1860.

Seating Plan
 Methodist Episcopal Church
 of the South
 Charleston, S.C.

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1 Lewis Long Mary Rogers
 2 Isaac Long Mary Rogers
 3 Henry Baker James Rogers
 4 James Baker James Rogers
 5 Polly Snow James Rogers
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grandson, Calvin Eldredge, as the oldest and youngest of one family to serve in this capacity and at the same time.

In 1942 the deacons' wives were appointed as a visiting committee and later to carry out the organization of an auxiliary. It wasn't until 1950 that it was voted to elect six deaconesses to assist the pastor in calling on the sick, shut-ins and newcomers. This number was increased to eight in 1952 and finally to twelve in 1953.

Although we have some indications that in past years there were times when strong-minded deacons "ran the church" in periods when ordained leadership was unavailable, low paid, or of brief duration, we can be grateful to laymen and women that the church held together and survived. Today our deacons and minister hold each other in equal high esteem and regard. Although our minister presently is vice-president of the Commission on Worship of our denomination and is a widely known lecturer and writer on historic and contemporary forms of worship, he requests the counsel and advice of the diaconate on all matters regarding the content and forms of worship in our church.

The combining of the Board of Deacons and the Board of Deaconesses started in the 70's with one or two joint meetings a year along with the exchanging of minutes of their separate meetings.

In the proposed By-Law-Changes at the Annual Meeting, February 14, 1982, Article IX Offices and Boards, read Section I, Delete Board of Deacons and Board of Deaconesses and change to "Diaconate", and add Personnel Board.

The Diaconate, composed of eighteen members, have the responsibility for representing the church to the ministerial staff on worship and spiritual care of the membership.

It was said, "The year of 1982, which saw the transition from Deacons and Deaconesses into the Diaconate, was a learning as well as a beneficial experience."



WOMEN OF THE CHURCH



HERE are many evidences throughout the history of our church of the importance of women in its continued existence. That they made significant contributions is all the more remarkable in the light of the hard life of women here on the Cape in the earlier days. One has only to stroll among the old headstones in the adjacent cemetery and read between the descriptive lines and the short span covered by the dates to realize most of these mothers of ours, all with Biblical names, had only a few years to establish a home, raise a family and be a force for good in the church and town.

In the early days our women had to be indirect in their influence, for a woman was not allowed to speak in meeting, even though boys were permitted and on occasion, encouraged to do so. One of the most notable of our parish's first ladies was Susanah Lawrence Underwood, who came as the bride of the minister, Nathan. They were to have seven sons and their (parsonage) homestead of 1793 was to become the finest and largest in the community, surrounded by gardens, barns and an orchard. No doubt its reputation was in large degree a result of her skills and enthusiasm. Mrs. Underwood was young, vigorous, healthy and fair, a "model of a pastor's as well as farm wife", apparently very adept at the churn, the spit, the preserving kettle, the loom and the broom.

The coming of a new minister's wife from off-Cape was usually cause for quite a stir in the community. Few women were able to travel about until a hundred years or so ago and a new minister's wife from a place like Boston usually brought word of new fashions, recipes, health and child care, advice, just like the arrival of the latest edition of a women's magazine today. We realize now that the women began to group themselves in the nineteenth century into aid and mission societies because domestic life had finally become less of a physical struggle and they needed to be with each other and exchange ideas and news, even though the stated purposes of these early societies were always eleemosynary. These were the days before widespread newspapers and magazines, not to say vacation travel or visiting women lecturers. During

the Stone pastorate in the 1840's, his wife gathered the women into "missionary and maternal meetings." We know that prior to 1857 two societies had been formed here and were related to the church: the Harwich Sewing Circle (interestingly, for both women and men) and the Auxiliary to the Women's Board of Foreign Missions. The former was noted for the bountiful collations that were served (hence its appeal to to men?). The Sewing Circle also provided work for all its members, but those who did their own work were fined five cents.

The Rev. and Mrs. Rowley were instrumental in bringing the two groups together and the name of the united group was Ladies Aid Society. It was changed to the present name of the Ladies Benevolent Society in 1899. During the unfortunate times in the past when the church was unable to pay all its bills, it was the women's groups, who through their energetic labors at the stove or with the needle, raised the necessary funds to employ a minister, keep the doors of the meetinghouse open and send gifts to mission enterprises. At least one minister's wife was enabled to have a pretty new outfit, thanks to a discreet envelope from our church women. And the first screens and storm doors on the parsonage were made possible by the Ladies Benevolent Society. Generous gifts to the church and ministerial families are a hallmark of the L. B. S. to this day.

The story of good works by women associated with our church would be incomplete without mention of Miss Susan Lawrence Underwood, a great granddaughter and namesake of Mrs. Nathan (Susanah) Underwood, who for many years, including those of the Depression, had a boarding house on Parallel Street. Many young unmarried teachers who came to town and student preachers supplying our church (including our present choir director, organist and a former minister, Mr. George Hunt) were warmed, fed and generally mothered by Miss Susie. She inherited her famous ancestor's homemaking talents and hospitable spirit in full abundance. A small plaque in the present brick entrance steps to the church helps us remember this gracious lady who died in 1954.

One of the most notable presidents of the L. B. S. was Mrs. Amos Sharpe from 1964 to 1967. To Mary Sharpe we owe a unified, productive, high minded group that is such a present force for good in the church and community. When she and her husband returned to their home country of England a year ago, the church experienced a great loss in its fellowship.

Today, under the skilled leadership of Miss Elizabeth Gill, former Dean of the School of Nursing, Columbia University, and Director of Nursing, Presbyterian Hospital, the L. B. S. continues as an active, energetic, growing group with an annual disbursement budget for benevolences, memorials, gifts and various local expenditures. The group is famous in this area for its Christmas and spring teas, setting a handsome table of beautiful silver, fine china and truly delicious food. These large teas are attended by friends and representatives from all the neighboring churches, including the Catholic groups. Our women support a variety of fund raising projects which are always congenial social events. From fall to spring there are a series of programs, regular sewing, knitting and craft meetings for the Summer Fair and for mission projects, a weekly Bible Study Group, and a monthly Books and Coffee Group. The Christian Service Women's Group holds monthly evening meetings and is one of the largest contributors of bandages to Ryder Memorial Hospital in Puerto Rico. The Ladies Benevolent Society is also responsible for a growing and well used library in the Parish House. Through memorial gifts it maintains an interesting collection of circulating and reference books, both new and old.

Long ago, happily, are the days when women were officially silent in church. Today they share in the leadership in Sunday worship services on special occasions and help bring "Moments of Concern" about Our Christian World Mission to the attention of the congregation. They also have made real First Church's ecumenical stance in the modern day by recently being one of the strongest supporters of Church Women United on the Cape, as well as the Barnstable District meetings of the women of our own denomination. There have been several notable women trustees of the church in recent years, as well as hard working board and committee members in every area of our corporate life. Perhaps the day of our first woman moderator, the highest lay office, is only a few years ahead!

This year, as we celebrate our church's 250th anniversary, finds the women of First Church working as diligently as ever. As the church and community have grown, these dedicated women, especially the L.B.S., have been true keepers of their brothers and sisters in Harwich. It is impossible to enumerate all the work done in the community by women, so we will cover just a few.

In 1972 L.B.S. voted to co-sponsor a corporation to plan for housing for the elderly. Thus, Pine Oaks Village became a reality. Again in 1990, they lent their support to a Congregate living, life care retirement

community. Harwich House was built north of First Church.

Another project enthusiastically supported is the Harwich Ecumenical Council for the Homeless. Two women represented the lay leaders of First Church at the organizational meeting of HECH, as it is commonly called. Several women are still faithful workers in many capacities, and L.B.S. has created an ad hoc position on its Executive Board. The women use funds from L.B.S. and interested friends to help in clothing children of HECH families.

Women have long supported education in public and private schools such as D.A.R.E., Latham, Elon and at Nauset Workshop. In the fall of 1988, Rev. Newberry suggested a program for latchkey children in Harwich. First Church women helped organize the Harwich After School Program, which is now called Harwich Extended Day Program. Women still volunteer there and L.B.S. supports it financially through the Board of Missions. In 1973 the Spring and Fall Rummage Sale was given up and the Summer Thrift Shop was started. It was changed to an all church project in 1975. Now it is open all year and turns over approximately \$10,000 yearly to the church.

The ladies of Friendly Service have always been a vital commitment with both old and new clothes and gifts for children sent to many missions and schools.

A stole created by women of First Church for Rev. Newberry's 25th Anniversary of Ordination demonstrated the ability of our women with a needle. Another example is the Bicentennial Sampler in the Narthex, designed by Mattie Pettijean and the color scheme planned by Eleanor Knaus. We quote from the Sunday Bulletin on November 7, 1976: "This morning we are dedicating the Bicentennial Sampler, a presentation to the church from Ladies Benevolent Society ... this gift is to be a symbol and a lasting remembrance of the love and devotion of our women to First Church. It has been said that Jesus has to rely on women to see that his presence is continued in the world. Women of First Church have followed this tenet for years.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



IN 1825 the Massachusetts Home Missionary Society granted enough aid to the parish that the services of the Rev. Nathaniel Cobb were obtained. Although he worked zealously, his pastorate was of only a few months' duration, but while here, he did organize the first Sabbath School that Harwich had known. Little is known of it save that it was "large" and that a few of its members were still alive and held a reunion fifty years later.

In the early nineteenth century when the Sunday School movement from England became a real evangelical force in this country as an attempt to renew the faith, it was usually regarded by established churches in New England and their clergy as a threat to the established way of doing things and often created a divisive element in the community. Luckily this did not seem to be the case in Harwich. In fact the times when the church here has had a reawakened interest as to its responsibilities for its children and youth have appeared to be the times when the church experienced a revitalization of its spirit and numbers.

The first Sunday school superintendent and teacher of record here was Sidney Underwood in the 1800s. What would this church and community have been without this able and energetic old deacon, son of one of its early clergymen? For many years the children were gathered in groups in corners of the church and the rear gallery for instruction. One of our present members recalls both the minister and various mothers instructing classes after Sunday morning worship in these areas before the turn of this century. Perhaps the chapel (ancestor of the present parish house) was also used.

Although it was seldom acknowledged in the early days of the church in New England, one of its powerful attractions was that a church provided a place for good fellowship. This is still true, of course, and applies to all ages. Wholesome Sunday evening activities of a social nature for young people proved a help to many a struggling late nineteenth century church. Harwich was fortunate in calling the Rev. Charles H. Rowley from Vermont shortly after the turn of the century. Mr.

and Mrs. Rowley had an attractive teen age son and daughter. The then new Broadbrooks parsonage became a naturally popular mecca for the young crowd. The Rowleys, for instance, introduced such customs as sugaring-off parties, more normally associated with New England's uplands. The maple sugar north country still appeals, and with the ease of modern expressways, recent years have seen annual snow and ski outings by our church youth groups.

Summertime always used to mean an exciting visit to Harwich of a traveling circus, which came by rail. The old station was not far from the church property, to the west and north, and there were nearby sidings for the circus cars. Some of our men today recall their boyhood enterprise in getting free tickets by filling water buckets for the elephants and other animals at the old pump which used to stand at the church corner on Main Street and Pleasant Lake Avenue. Nowadays the Youth Fellowship use buckets and earn money by washing our cars!

But to return to the Sunday School, when our church was experiencing financial hard times in the twenties and early thirties and the aforementioned chapel was being used by Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church, after the destruction by fire of their Pleasant Lake Avenue building, classroom space for our children had to be scrounged from any possible source. Mildred Paine, concerned for the children of the church, for example, boldly approached the manager of the A & P store, then housed in what is now Don Hall's antique shop on Main Street, and obtained the use of the second floor of that building, which was kept warm all winter.

About this time, professional education in religion was being opened to women and many ministers' wives (though unpaid) brought to their churches training as well as enthusiasm for the Christian nurture of the young. One of these in 1933 was Ruth Hunt, the bride of our then student minister. The Hunts attracted a number of young couples to work with them in activities for children and youth.

During the pastorate of our now emeritus minister, Harry Meyer, it became evident that the old chapel was inadequate for the burgeoning Sunday School attendance in the days of the post-war baby boom. Harry Albro conducted his boys' class in the coat closet, while Mr. Meyer's high school class met in the balcony. There was no adult Bible class then, so many members availed themselves of a double service by going to church an hour early and sitting under the balcony to listen to the Meyer group. Other classes also met in the old high school

or recreation building down Sisson Road. This situation provided the impetus for the rebuilding of the old chapel into our present parish house. Perhaps no one was happier for our children in this project than the minister's wife, Alma, whose great contribution to First Church was to see that the children of this church received the best religious education possible. There is a delightful color photograph of her on the Sunday of the dedication of the new building, busy arranging little chairs for the occasion.

During Jack Elliot's ministry and guidance the church was able to obtain the part-time services of a series of students from Andover Newton seminary and the Boston area who helped with the children's and youth work of the church. Notable among these was the Rev. David Grogan, who has gone on to a creative ministerial career and presently is the executive director of the Cape Cod Council of Churches. Also about this time, one of the distinguished new residents of Harwich was the Rev. Dr. Joseph Novotny, a European political hero and distinguished religious scholar from Czechoslovakia, who came here to retire. Fluent in seven languages, Dr. Novotny not only preached in the pulpit on occasion, but also led memorable Bible study sessions for a group of all ages. Under his charm and skill the hours spent together flew like minutes. Though he died some few years ago, people still remember this great and unique man, who carried a Bible under his arm everywhere and wore a gay red vest!

The Ronanders have been active in introducing a new style of religious education here for all ages which stresses family worship and uses contemporary folk singing, dialogue, drama, dance and different types of visual arts, all of which is designed to meet the changing needs of children, youth and adults today. These new styles of learning experiences grew out of a successful early morning worship series, informal and innovative, which began in the summer of 1971. The old nineteenth century concept of a separate Sunday school is beginning to evolve into a true church school for all, where, it is hoped, children may learn and catch the joy of Christian living and mature into full members of the adult church itself and where young and old alike may continue a lifelong growth in faith and understanding. The long term success of this project will depend on the continued sharing of our lay members' leadership and talents.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

In June of 1990, First Congregational Church's first Associate Minister, John Erickson, began his ministry. Among his duties was the

directorship of Christian Education, a position vacated by Margaret Carver-Schad, who remained in place as the Director of Music. At that time, the chief vehicle for Christian Education was a family service called the "Intergenerational Service." Begun in the 1970's under the direction of Janice Shepherd, the service was a response to the feeling that a traditional Sunday School model wasn't meeting the educational needs of young families. People of all generations worshiped informally in the parish house at 9:30 a.m. Mrs. Carver-Schad, with planners from the congregation, built worship experiences around crafts, music, drama, and discussion.

Mrs. Carver-Schad, and later, Mr. Erickson, continued leading the Intergenerational Service until the re-introduction of a church school in 1992. Since then, the church school has grown from a few students to about 35 attending children and youth. Classes are conducted in the parish house and in the Broadbrooks office building. They are broadly-graded and taught by a small but dedicated group of teachers, aides, and substitutes.

The church school has engaged in various projects and activities. Students have collected money for the Heifer Project and the Harwich Ecumenical Council for the Homeless (HECH). The church school performed a modernized adaptation of the Christmas story in 1995. One of the highlights of the 9:15 early service is the students' lively, sometimes humorous, but always earnest exchanges with the ministers over a Biblical lesson during the "Children's Moment." An additional kids' activity at the church is a Youth Choir, organized and led by Margaret Carver-Schad, Director of Music.

Christian Education board members and teachers, George Whitehead and Kay Proctor, gave the classroom space in the upstairs of the parish house a badly-needed "facelift", organizing the closets, painting, hanging curtains, putting up posters, and resurfacing a counter. With its new look, classrooms welcomed students into a clean and bright environment suited just for children.

YOUTH GROUPS

Throughout these years, the church has supported one or two youth groups. Originally, Mr. Newberry and Mrs. Carver-Schad led the youth groups. Mr. Erickson took over in the fall of 1990, in accordance with his duties as Associate Minister. Two parents, Janice Speakman and Robin Hindle, have assisted Mr. Erickson in youth ministry.

The purpose of the youth ministry is threefold: to build a sense of community, promote service, and educate. The youth groups are open to young people who do not attend the church, as well as to those who do.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The youth have participated in such diverse activities as walks for the homeless, buying Christmas gifts for children in need, preparing Thanksgiving care packages, visiting a nursing home, cleaning up a beach after Hurricane Bob, and serving meals to hungry people in Boston.

The youth look forward to a big field trip each spring. They've gone to New York City, Washington, D.C., a camp in the Berkshires, and an enormous amusement park in New Jersey. And more adventures loom ahead...

ADULT EDUCATION

While plenty of room for growth still exists in adult education, the Board of Christian Education has sponsored many high-quality educational opportunities. Mr. Newberry has taught seminary-level Bible studies. The Rev. Mr. Robert Sisson and Mr. Erickson have led book studies on matters of faith.

Periodically, the Board of Christian Education has produced special events to inform the church and community about current issues. State Representative Robert Lawless spoke about the Clinton Administration's failed health reform initiative. In a similar vein, the church and the Massachusetts Conference joined forces to bring to Harwich specialists to lead a discussion about our country's health care problems and possible solutions. During Lent, the Men's Breakfast Group meets, enjoying fellowship and listening to speakers talk about issues that concern the Church and society.

THURSDAY NIGHT SERVICE

It's not unusual for good ideas to re-emerge after an absence. This is the case with the intergenerational worship concept. About four years after the Intergenerational Worship Service ended, the "Thursday Night Service" began (in April, 1996). Like its predecessor, the Thursday Night Service meets in the parish house, encourages participation by the congregation, and sets an informal tone. It's distinctive in its aim to gather like a family around supper. The folk music sung in the Intergenerational Service is back; so, too, are the crafts, drama, and discussion.

MINISTERS

Edward Pell	1746-1752	S. W. Powell	1880
Benjamin Crocker	1754-1756	Rufus B. Tobey	1880-1883
John Dennis	1756-1761	Cassius M. Westlake	1884-1885
Benjamin Crocker	1761-1765	Henry P. Cutting	1885-1888
Jonathan Mills	1766-1773	F. J. Ward	1890
No regular minister	1774-1776	John C. Staples	1891-1892
Joseph Litchfield	1777-1778	J. Walter Sylvester	1893
Samuel Nickerson	1778-1787	J. H. Whittaker, Jr.	1893-1894
Jonathan Jeffers	1787-1789	Artemas J. Haynes	1894-1896
Asa Hunt	1790-1791	George Y. Washburn	1896-1899
Nathan Underwood	1792-1828	Charles H. Rowley	1899-1904
Isaac W. Wheelwright	1826-1827	Henry A. Ryder	1905-1910
William M. Cornell	1828-1829	Frederick T. Knight	1910-1912
Lucius Field	1830	George W. Clark	1913-1918
Mr. Powers	1831	Jack Hyde	1919-1920
Caleb Kimball	1832-1834	F. B. Noyes	1920-1922
William Withington	1835	F. W. Hoisington	1923-1924
Charles S. Adams	1835-1838	B. D. F. Lindsay	1924-1928
John H. Avery	1838-1839	Howard R. May	1928-1929
William Marchant	1840-1841	Walter M. Stone	1930-1931
James D. Farnsworth	1841	Leon S. Kelley	1931-1932
William H. Adams	1841-1844	George A. Hunt	1933-1936
Cyrus Stone	1844-1848	Henry C. Newell	1936-1943
Theophilus F. Sawin	1848-1851	George Loring Thurlow	1943-1953
Moses Hale Wilder	1851-1858	Harry L. Meyer	1953-1959
Joseph Rice Munsell	1858-1868	J. Edward Elliot	1960-1971
William H. Beard	1869-1870	Albert C. Ronander	1971-1980
Charles S. Whitney	1871-1872	Louis C. Toppan	1980-1982
Bradish G. Ward	1872-1876	James B. Williams	1982-1984
Joseph Hammond	1876-1877	Roy Colby	1984-1985
Smith Norton	1878-1879	Charles T. Newberry, III	1985-
		John N. Erickson, III	1990-