

## DETAILED HISTORY

### A statement made during our 250th anniversary in 1978

We, the members of the staff are grateful for the opportunity of serving this Church of Christ in the 250th year of its existence in Hanover. We offer our time and our talents, first of all, to the Lord, and secondly, to his people. In all our efforts, we are very much aware that the service of many dedicated people are necessary for the well-being of the church. Therefore, we thank you for all your support in the past and invite you to continue working with us for the realization of Christian goals. It is most appropriate that a pictorial directory should be published. Included is a very special feature, namely, a written history of the church from 1728 to the present. The first portion, covering the years 1728 to 1953, is essentially a reprint of a booklet prepared by Mrs. Clifton F. Bradley and published at the time of the church's 225th anniversary. Mrs. Stuart Barker (Barbara) and Mrs. Horace Fishwick (Barbara) worked with Mrs. Bradley in preparing a history of the church from 1953-1978. We are certainly indebted to those persons for the preparation of this document.

THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH of Hanover, Massachusetts

On December 5, 1728, following a day of fasting, The Church, consisting of ten members and the pastor-elect, the Rev. Benjamin Bass, was formally organized and the Church Covenant subscribed to.

### THE ORIGINAL CHURCH COVENANT - FIRST CHURCH IN HANOVER:

"We do give up ourselves and our offspring to that God whose name alone is Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as the one only true and living God, and unto our blessed Lord, Jesus Christ, as our only Saviour, Prophet, Priest, and King over our souls and only mediator of the Covenant of Grace; promising (by the help and assistance of His spirit and grace) to cleave unto God and our Lord Jesus Christ by faith in a way of Gospel obedience, as becometh the Covenant People forever, and we do also give up ourselves one unto another in the Lord, according to the will of God, freely covenanting and promising (the Lord Helping us) to walk together in holy union and communion as members of the same mystical body and as an instituted church of Christ rightly constituted and established in the true faith and order of the Gospel; and further do we oblige ourselves (by the help of Christ) in brotherly love to watch over one another and over all the children of the covenant growing up with us, and faithfully, according to our ability, to transmit the holy word and worship of God to our posterity; to cleave unto and to uphold the true Gospel ministry as it is established by Christ in his Church, to have it in due honor and esteem, to subject ourselves fully and sincerely unto the government of Christ in his Church, and duly attend to the seals, censures, and whatever ordinances Christ hath commanded to be observed by his People, according to the order of the Gospel; and, withal, do we further engage ourselves to walk orderly in a way of fellowship and communion with all our neighboring Churches, according to the rules of the Gospel, that name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be one throughout all the Churches to the glory of God, the father. Amen"

Joseph Stockbridge, Isaac Buck, Elijah Cushing, Joseph Stockbridge Jr., James Hatch, Thomas Josselyn, John Tailor, Amasa Turner, Samuel Staples, Samuel Skiff

**THE NEW CHURCH COVENANT – FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF HANOVER:  
ADOPTED JANUARY 12, 1953**

We covenant with the Lord and with one another, and do bind ourselves in the presence of God to walk together in His holy ways. We will strive to be doers of the Word and not hearers only, to be firm in faith, quicker in hope, and constant in charity. And we will consecrate our time, talent, substance, and influence as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

AMEN

**Psalm 122:1 Psalm 26:8 Matthew 20:27-28**

*“I was glad when they said unto me. Let us go unto the house of the Lord Jehovah, I love the habitation of thy house, and the place where thy glory dwelleth. And whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant; even as the Son of man come not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”*

**1727-1755**

On June 14, 1727, the lieutenant governor, council, and representatives in General Court passed An Act for erecting a new town within the County of Plymouth by the name of Hanover, “ Provided that the inhabitants of the said town of Hanover do, within the space of two years from the publication of this act, erect and finish a suitable house for the public worship, and, as soon as may be, procure and settle a learned Orthodox minister of good conversation and make provision for his comfortable and honorable support.” The petition for this setting-off gave as the principal reason for the calling into being of a new municipality, the fact that the burden of supporting distant churches - Abington and Scituate -was too great to be borne.

The new town, accordingly, as part of its earliest municipal action, voted July 17, 1727 that Mr. David Dwight be chosen to dispense the word of God for three months. It is stated that Mr. Dwight (not Rev.) had preached to this people prior to 1727. Hence, when the act of incorporation called for the procurement "as soon as may be" of a minister, the early fathers proceeded with all dispatch to call upon someone whose standing and ability they knew. The early services conducted by Mr. Dwight were, of necessity, held in homes of the parish. The home of Mr. Samuel Stetson, opposite the present parsonage, was frequently used and was particularly appropriate by reason of its size and central position.

The location of the first church edifice was a matter of greatest importance. On Nov. 13, 1727, it was agreed to erect a meeting house at "the most convenient place by the road called the Drinkwater road." Three Pembroke men, perhaps, because they were disinterested and could not be accused of partiality, were chosen by the town to select the site. No record of their action can be found, but it is presumed that they did act and selected the site where the meeting house now stands, for it is here that the first house of the Society was located, and, since 1728, the congregation has here worshipped.

For many years there has been a question as to who was the original owner of the land. Dwelley inclines to the position that the land, one acre, was purchased for 3 pounds from Thomas Buck, although that transaction did not take place until June 15, 1730. Whoever gave or sold the site, the parish acquired it and took means to cause the erection of the edifice. On Dec. 13, 1727, it was voted that the church

should be 48' long, 38' wide, and 19' high "between the joints". It was to be completed by Oct. 1, 1728, and was to be built "in a workmanlike manner, but as cheap as possible" - a mingling of religious duty with Yankee thrift and shrewdness. The cost of the completed structure, according to Barry, was about 300 pounds.

Old records show that there were gallery stairs on the west end, and that the exterior was covered with clapboards. It faced the south, had no steeple nor chimney, and had a double row of windows with diamond shaped panes, probably set in lead. The interior had neither plaster nor paint nor heat. The pulpit was high perched and was surmounted by the customary sounding-board. One old record tells us that timber was hewn, every nail hammered out by hand. "The fine beading and moulding of the pulpit and the sounding board were made from Hanover lumber by skilled Hanover craftsmen." An old print shows this first meeting house to have had a hip roof. (Briggs, Church and Cemetery Records, p. 86)

One record says that the church had 31 pews, given a value of 10 pounds each. Another old record says "-usual and commendable that there should be dignities. Therefore we vote that the highest pew in dignity shall be valued at 15 pounds, and the next 14 pounds, and soon proportionally lower, until we come to those pews which are of no difference in dignity; and then proportionable to each man's rates, either by general vote or lots, to take in the more people in each pew so valued or prized, as shall amount to the money." A committee of three was chosen to the delicate task of apportioning the 'dignities', and, human nature being what it is, in church as well as out, it is not surprising that the report of the committee was not satisfactory. In June, 1730, a new committee of seven was chosen "to make all persons easy and to take in those that were left out." The work of this committee was approved on Aug. 31, 1730.

Following a day of fasting and prayer, the Church, consisting of ten members, was formally organized, and the Church Covenant was subscribed to by the said ten members and the minister-elect, the Rev. Benjamin Bass, on December 5, 1728. Of these ten members, Joseph Stockbridge and Elijah Cushing were the first deacons.

On January 10, 1729, it was voted at a meeting of the church to raise money by contribution to "provide utensils for the Lord's table". This was quickly done, for by the 30th of the month the utensils had been purchased, and were first used on March 2, 1729. These utensils were "three Pewter Tankards, marked CT. of lbs price, each; five Pewter Beakers, costing 30s, 6 pence each, and marked C.B.; two Pewter Platters, Marked C.P.; a Pewter Basin for baptism; and a cloth for the Communion Table". Perhaps the C meant church; the T obviously meant tankard; the B, beaker; and the P, platter.

On October 30, 1768, after the pewter service had been in use for 39 years, Deacon Joseph Stockbridge presented the church with four silver cups for the Communion table at an expense of 25 pounds, old tenor (about \$11.11 each cup) each bearing the inscription: "The Gift of Deacon Joseph Stockbridge to the Church of Christ in Hanover, 1768". On January 8, 1786, a legacy from Deacon Thomas Josselyn provided two more silver cups. "When we turn to recall the men who ministered to this, the first church in town, we find a class of men who were all liberally educated, all devoting themselves to the work of promoting the spiritual good of the people". This tribute to the early ministers of the church may likewise be well applied to all who succeeded them.

The first ordained minister to serve the new church was the Rev. Benjamin Bass, who graduated from Harvard in 1715 and was ordained in Hanover on December 11, 1718. He served the church for 27 years, 5 months, and 15 days, during which time 83 persons joined the church, and 588 were baptized. During

the ministry of Mr. Bass, on March 7, 1742, the church voted to adopt the "new way" of singing. Prior to this time, singing in most of the New England churches had been strictly congregational, the lines of the hymn being read off by the Deacon, who also pitched the tune; the congregation "chanting to the quaint, old-fashioned tunes of the day, Sternhold and Hopkins' hymns, deaconed off to them line by line". By this vote, Sternhold and Hopkins' version of the Psalms was rejected, and Tate and Brady's was accepted.

Under the leadership of the Rev. Bass, the first attempt at a Public Library was made, and it is best described in the words of Mr. Bass himself: "I, Benjamin Bass, received at Deacon Rose's as he and Deacon Barstow reckoned it, good and bad together, Fourteen pounds, fifteen shillings and nine pence, old tenor, it being a collection made by ye flock under my care to buy good books with to lend to such of the society as stand in need of em & would be glad to read them. With the above mentioned money I bought in less than a week after the collection, a parcel of books, whose titles, authors, and price in old tenor may be met with in a book which is an exposition of ye Epistle to the Colossians by Mr. Nicholas Byfield, viz: on a leaf I found vacant immediately before the title page of said book: anyone that borrows these books must use em well and return em in two months. That these books may be known, I have put in the title page the letters: C.B.C.S.H. which stands for 'Charity Book of the Congregational Society in Hanover'." True, this was confined to the Society (church), but it was a collection of books for public use, even though that public was limited.

### **1756 – 1805**

In 1756, the Rev. Samuel Baldwin became the pastor of the church. At the present moment, the following excerpt from Dwelley's History of Hanover may be especially appreciated. "Mr. Baldwin was not lacking in worldly business ability. He refused the first offer made to him to come to Hanover, which was at a salary of 73 pounds 6s 8d per annum. The offer was raised to 80 pounds per annum, and, as a settlement gift, a house to be built within 18 months". It stood on Hanover Street, nearly opposite what is now Spring Street. Full specifications as to size and finish were made: "Oct. 11, 1756 it was voted to give him (the Rev. Baldwin) 80 pounds and to build within 18 months a dwelling house 40' long, 30' wide, and 17' between joints, with two stacks of chimneys, a plain roof, with a suitable number of windows with crown glass, and to be painted inside and outside such a color or colors as may be agreeable to his mind and to build and finish under the house a cellar 30' long and 14' wide, pointed and everything both inside and outside, both woodwork, ironwork, and joiners work, with two cupboards and as many closets in said house as may be convenient, all to be done to the turning of a key, and tube underpinned in a suitable manner, to the acceptance of Mr. Baldwin, and this is to be a free gift as a settlement". February 7th the dimensions were changed to 38' x 32'. It was voted to give Joseph Curtis 160 pounds for building and completing the house. Mr. Baldwin accepted and acknowledged receipt of the house on March 5, 1759. (A photograph of this house may be seen in Brigg's Church and Cemetery Records, Vol.1, opposite page 8.)

Until 1764, the first structure had been continued to be used both as a place of worship and as a town hall. By 1764 it was found that the success of Mr. Baldwin as a pastor and the continued growth of the town made necessary additional church space. The plan was first conceived of building a piece 13 or 14 feet long into the middle of the church. (Difficulties were experienced even then!) This was actually voted, but better counsel prevailed, and in Oct. 1764, a new house was decided upon which should be 62' long, 43' wide, and 23' between joints.

The first church edifice was, therefore, torn down and on its site the second church edifice was erected,

as specified, in 1765. At the east end was the women's porch extending from the ground to the eaves, and projecting from the building a few feet. In the entry was the stairway leading to the gallery, and overhead was the powder room, in which the town's stock of powder was kept during the Revolutionary War. The men's porch was at the west end, also projecting from the building and rising above the eaves, with long, tapering spire surmounted with a vane. This church had a plastered interior, gallery, and square pews. It was stipulated that each person was to enjoy his pew as heretofore except as space was needed for new pews. In 1789, this church was painted, the walls being a stone yellow; the roof, Spanish brown, a color popular in the colonies; the corner boards and window frames white. A print of the second church edifice may be seen in Brigg's Church and Cemetery Records, page 116.

The spire of the second church was removed about 1784 when a bell was presented to the Society by Mr. Josselyn (n), and a new steeple with a suitable belfry was erected. As far as the records show, this was the first church bell to ring within the limits of the town of Hanover. It was recast in 1788 and was used until it was destroyed in the fire which ruined the third church edifice in 1863. In 1784, the Rev. John Mellen began what was to be a twenty-one year term as pastor of the church. In 1797, the church voted that his salary should be \$300 per year. Mr. Mellen is the first minister listed as having resided in the house on Hanover Street now occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Stanley A. Briggs. This was continued as the residence of the minister until 1855 when the present parsonage was built. A photograph of this residence may be seen in Briggs' Church and Cemetery Record.

### **1806 – 1832**

In 1806, the Rev. Calvin Chaddock began a twelve year ministry to the people, and more seems to be recorded concerning these years than those immediately preceding. The "entertainment" expense for Mr. Chaddock's installation is set forth at \$125. Presumably this amount was for food and lodging, perhaps even traveling, for visiting dignitaries who came to participate in the event. Mr. Chaddock's salary for the first year is given as \$300, and \$500 for the second year. The following instances are culled from the records of this period and are given as "human interest" items:

- March 28, 1808: "\$5.28 to Elisha Bass for stringing Bass-vial from Nov. 1805 to this date.
- April 5, 1808: "\$10.20 to Barze Sturtevant for ringing bell and taking care meeting house. Voted to assess the precinct for above and other sums." (Northern Precinct of Hanover.)
- April 24, 1809: "Voted to sweep the meeting house 7 times the year vandued to Samuel Dwelley at 8 dollars and 45 cents."
- April 2, 1811: "Voted \$15 to repair meeting house. Voted \$2 to Treasurer for his service for past year."

At the suggestion of Mr. Chaddock, the Town voted to establish the Hanover Academy, the first building of which was erected in 1808, a little to the west of the meeting house. Mr. Chaddock was the first teacher and taught during the remainder of his pastorate.

On February 4, 1819, the Church voted to call the Rev. Seth Chapin, and to pay him \$500 per annum. The day of installation for Mr. Chapin was scheduled for April 21, 1819, and the church requested the selectmen not to grant licenses for the selling of spirituous liquors on that day. We find recorded: Voted, "the following resolves, wherein it is expressly unlawful for any person without special license to sell spirituous liquors or wines from tents, stands, or carts or any other way in the streets, highways, or fields on public days, and whereas such a practice is unbecoming the solemnity of ordination and

installation resolved that we deem it unnecessary that spirituous liquors should be retailed at such times and places, the selectmen be respectfully requested not to grant any such licenses for the installation day."

It was further voted "to vandue the entertainment for the counsel (meeting for the installation of Mr. Chapin) to the lowest bidder" and "it was struck off to Capt. Jesse Reed at 66 dollars". In the year 1821, it is recorded that the "people belonging to Scituate", but regularly attending this church, paid \$50 yearly toward Mr. Chapin's salary. In the same year, it is further recorded that Seth Rose was paid \$9 for the year 1820 for ringing the bell. During his pastorate, Mr. Chapin proposed to the Parish "if they will pay him his salary half yearly will engage to refund once in four years so long as all the payments are punctually made or within twenty days after due, the sum of \$30 to be appropriated towards defraying the expense of a Singing School in the Parish." The Parish agreed to this proposal.

During the term of the Rev. Seth Chapin, 1819-1824, much time, energy, and attention were given to the subject of church discipline, and many meetings and days of fasting were held seeking to solve the problem of how best to deal with those who disregarded both communion and church attendance. For example, "At a church meeting, held in the meeting house April 19, 1820, the importance of attending to church discipline was considered, and a committee of three was chosen to converse with those members who had for a long time neglected the communion and public worship or who had otherwise publicly offended." Nor indeed, was this a new problem for the church.

On May 24, 1811, we find that 7 men and 5 women were excommunicated "for persevering neglect of divine ordinances". Instances of unchurchly behavior are noted in the early years of the church, and more than once, members of this church were fined by the church for gossiping, and they paid the fines. On April 8, 1748, we find, "Mr. John Bailey, Jr. gave the church satisfaction which they to a man voted the tance of for an offense he had given for sinning although this man "had had the character of a man that was in no way given to evil speaking, and it was well known that he was extremely provoked when he, in his passion, uttered the words which gave the offense he made satisfaction for". One may consider that his words may have been of a nature other than gossiping.

On Feb. 19, 1824, Mr. Chapin resigned and asked for an ecclesiastical council to meet on April 21 for the purpose of dissolving the pastoral relation. The members of the church granted this request, and in their records express their "deep contrition and humiliation before Almighty God under his providential frowns upon them" and make mention -- of "afflictive circumstances". Further reading of the records shows that the afflictive circumstances were want of pecuniary support. It is interesting to note that the first three years of his pastorate, he was paid \$500 per annum as agreed; the fourth year his salary was raised by taxation, with difficulty; and the fifth year, by subscription, an insufficient amount having been subscribed.

In October, 1824, the Female Helping Society was organized, its principal purpose being to raise funds for the pastor's salary. This is the first recorded instance in which women took an active part in the affairs of the church. At about this time, it was felt that the second church building had outlived its usefulness, and that a new building was needed. In March, 1825, it was voted that the "Parish give up their right in the Old Meeting House-provided a sufficient number come forward to build a new one". Following many reports of appraising the meeting house and the pews, on March 23, 1826, we find the following, "Voted that the committee of 15 to take down the meeting house," and, "Voted that the Precinct will not build a new meeting house by a Precinct". Indeed, "these were spirited times, on account of different views entertained, and earnest discussions resulting therefrom."

Late in 1826 or early in 1827, the third church edifice was erected. Unlike its predecessors, it faced east instead of south, also unlike its predecessors, it was not used for Town meeting. In the same year, a Town Hall was built in the rear of the church, only 6 feet from the church, facing south. Not much material descriptive of this church building is found, although we do find this: "During the ministry of Mr. Smith (Rev. Ethan Smith, 1827-1832) the second meeting house was torn down, and the third-erected; which stands in the center of town, facing the East, and is a modest structure, surmounted by a steeple, and in the belfry hangs the old bell given by Mr. Josselyn, in 1785, and recast in 1788." An old printing the history of the church written by Mr. L. Vernon Briggs (Church and Cemetery Records, page 166) shows the church to have had a rounded steeple, with bell and vane, and two front entrances.

Of the council meeting for the dedication services for the third church edifice, the following is recorded, May 16, 1827: "They (the council) also highly approved of the sentiments expressed by the people in not providing ardent spirits for the council, and in all the measures taken by them to prevent intemperance and disorder in the vicinity of the house of God on this occasion March 19, 1827, the church held a meeting in the new meeting house to extend a call to the Rev. Ethan Smith to become the settled pastor, the church having been without a "settled" pastor since 1824. The seriousness with which office in the church was esteemed may be estimated by the following record, January 31, 1828: Br. Isaac Cook, having been elected a deacon, "was set apart to the office of Deacon by prayer and the imposition of hands by the pastor" who also "set forth the origin, ordination, character, and importance of this office in the church".

### **1833 –1853**

In 1833, the Rev. Abel Duncan assumed the pastorate of the church, a position he held for 21 years. During many of these years, he also served as chairman of the School Committee. That church discipline was still a matter of concern is evidenced by a report in 1833 that Joshua Dwelley was "cut off from the watch and fellowship of the church" for having "embraced the heresy of Universalism", and by a further report in January, 1834, that Jane Merriam was "cutoff from the church" for "going to the Baptists without consulting with the church and neglecting to give the church satisfaction".

Also in 1833, we find that at a regular church meeting held April 4, 1833, a committee of three was chosen, consisting of Deacon Isaac Cook, Deacon Elijah Barstow, and Elisha Bass, to visit those members whom they judge to walk disorderly, and to make a report to the church at some future day by those most closely concerned. In 1835, it was voted "to observe Thursday ensuing as a day of Fasting and Prayer with reference to the present favorable indications of good in Zion." "The church met accordingly. There was apparently a good degree of right feeling. It was a good day." In 1836, the church caused to be printed a small pamphlet containing 29 Doctrinal articles of their Creed and Their Covenant. Each article was followed by a list of passages from the Bible as proof texts.

In 1840, the Rev. Duncan wrote in the church records as follows: "The meeting house was painted white. Stoves removed into the entry, and the aisles were carpeted. But the state of religion has been very low." That the aisles were carpeted is interesting in that previous records had mentioned "sanding" the church. We find recorded for the first time in the year 1847, the amount of benevolent contributions by the church. These amounted to \$85 for that year, \$65 of which were apportioned as follows: \$20 to the ABCFM (American Board of Commissioners to Foreign Missions), \$20 to AMA (American Missionary Association home missions), and \$25 to AHM Soc. (American Home Missionary Society).

## **1854 –1867**

On March 10, 1854, a division occurred in the church, and 32 members were dismissed to be organized into a Trinitarian Congregational Church at the Four Corners, for the better accommodation of themselves and their families and others living in the vicinity. We are assured, however, that this was a friendly division, and considered a necessary one.

On Oct. 14th of the same year, a meeting of the church was called by the pastor to decide if the church would join the Pilgrim Conference. The request was presented to the conference, and the church was accepted. Thus, the church has had membership for almost 100 years in what is now known as Pilgrim Association, and throughout the years frequent reference to attendance at meeting of the Conference or Association is found in our church records.

Mr. Duncan was a man of more than ordinary talent and perseverance, and was known as a man of rare scholarship and a wise councillor in denominational polity. However in 1854, feeling that at the end of his long pastorate he was unappreciated, he tendered his resignation. The church accepted this, and also voted: "that as the Rev. Duncan's expenses have for some years past exceeded his salary, those who have enjoyed his ministerial instruction be recommended to raise at least \$200 as a mark of their continued affection and regard and their desire to do justice to one who has labored long and faithfully in the gospel ministry."

On January 13, 1855, the church extended a call to the Rev. Joseph Freeman to be its "pastor and teacher", and on April 18, 1855 the installation services took place. His salary was \$600 per annum. Shortly after the arrival of Mr. Freeman and his family in Hanover, a new parsonage, or 'parish house', was built for them, not by the parish, but by individual members, and into this they moved on September 18, 1855. This parsonage has been used by successive ministers and is now, in 1953, undergoing extensive repairs and improvements. (See Briggs, opposite page 48 for old photograph of parsonage.)

However rejoiced Mr. Freeman may have been with a new home, he was, nevertheless, somewhat depressed at the spiritual state of the church, for we find recorded January 4, 1856, "Church met in conference at the house of Widow Stetson. Only 4 individuals present. Prospects appeared rather gloomy", and in the records of March 9, 1856, we find in Mr. Freeman's handwriting, "Religion is low and wickedness abounds, but it reveals no reason why God will not to hear the prayer of faith and reveal his precious power unto salvation."

That the spirit of hope shown in the preceding comment was not without fruit may be evidenced by Mr. Freeman's entry in the church record on May 2, 1857, when he wrote, "The Lord is reviving his work." On Sept. 13, 1857, the meeting house was reopened after undergoing extensive repairs, and we read: "-a new pulpit has been furnished, pews have been remodeled and grained-a new sofa is put in the pulpit-a rich, marble top communion table has been presented to the church-settees provided for the singers-". Lest the church be thought too boastful, the record concludes with, "It was a work prompted neither by pride nor by emulation. It was a work that needed to be done."

It is believed by many in the church that the marble topped table now at the right side of the entry of the church may well be the same table as that described above. It may also be mentioned here that, according to Mr. Robert Stetson, the first communion table was a large, drop leaf table.



The church and its improvements were enjoyed for a little over five years when disaster struck. On January 18, 1863, the meeting house, and the Town Hall with it, burned, the fire having been discovered less than an hour after the congregation left. It is supposed that the fire started from one of the stoves. Fortunately, the most valuable part of the furniture was saved. Until the fourth church was built, the congregation worshipped at the home of Mrs. Stetson, widow of Samuel Stetson, in the same house where the people met for worship in 1726.

After the fire, the society began to plan for rebuilding and the following is noted in the church records: "Voted that the parish authorize the persons who have subscribed money towards a new house to erect a meeting house on or near the site of the old house and authorize said subscribers to hold and sell the pews therein until they are reimbursed for their expenditures."

On November 22, 1863, the congregation worshipped for the first time in the vestry of the new church, the fourth church edifice, built on the site of its predecessors, and, like the first and second church buildings, facing south. On April 27th 1864, the church was dedicated. Of the dedication, the pastor wrote, "The weather on the whole was favorable and the house filled. Our gratitude to God for His great goodness, and for a new sanctuary in which we may worship Him, and enjoy as a people the communion and fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Very little can be found concerning the actual construction of the building. Perhaps we do not need to read about that which we can see for ourselves! An old photograph (frontispiece, Briggs', Church and Cemetery Records) shows the church to have been painted white, to have a double row of windows, a single, mended front door, and a moderately high spire on a base. Within, the vestry was, as at present, on the first floor, and the sanctuary on the second floor approached by two stairways, one at the east end and one at the west end of the narthex or vestibule. It is said that the gallery at the back of the sanctuary has been used at various times for seating the choir and, as at present, for seating part of the congregation. It is also said that the organ was formerly placed there.

### **1868 –1901**

At the church meeting held on April 11, 1868, during the pastorate of Mr. Freeman, it was voted "that the ladies of the Church and Society be invited to attend future Parish meetings." Thus we realize that all previous church meetings had been attended only by the men. It was further voted "to put the care of the Meeting House and ringing the bell at auction to the lowest bidder".

Mr. Freeman resigned on July 11, 1869, and on May 1, 1871, the Rev. Cyrus William Allen was permanently engaged as the pastor, in which position he continued until 1879. Sometime before the latter date, we read that the usual custom of two services, one at 10:30 a.m. and one at 1 p.m. was changed to one in the morning and one in the evening. Of Mr. Allen, it is written, "The best sermon he ever preached was his own everyday life." What better accolade could be given any man!

It is unfortunate that the church records are missing from 1869 to 1885. The ensuing records seem to indicate comparatively smooth years, being the year after record of the annual meetings.

## **1902 – 1953**

On Nov. 2, 1902, there occurred a rededication of the church following extensive repairs upon the inside of the building.

In 1908, the Rev. Edwin H. Gibson entered upon what was to be the longest pastorate-14 years-since that of the Rev. Joseph Freeman. At his death, April 15, 1953, he was still one of the most mentioned and most loved pastors whom the church has been blessed to have. At the testimonial service held for him on Sept. 15, 1950, at the First Parish Church, Brockton, when he terminated his pastorate there, it was said of Mr. Gibson that he himself was a benediction. While he was in Hanover, he was also active in state, community, fraternal, and school affairs.

In 1911, Mrs. Margaret Olivia Sage (Mrs. Russell Sage) of New York, "wishing the old communion tankards as relics" (see church records) presented to the church in exchange for these, a sterling silver communion set, costing \$500, and consisting of two plates, seventy-two individual cups, two trays with covers to hold the cups, and one pitcher. This exquisite service we are privileged to use on each Communion Sunday. On September 11, 1911, it was voted to present one of the four old Stockbridge silver communion cups to the Museum Of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass., to be left there as a permanent possession.

It is interesting to note here that the present beautiful communion table now in use was presented to the church in June, 1917, by Mr. Eugene Ashton Perry, founder of the famous Perry Pictures. (See church record.) Since history requires a certain amount of perspective, it will probably be most satisfactory to record events from this point on mainly by dates, taken directly from the church records:

Jan. 6, 1918: "Voted that a committee be appointed to make investigation concerning a union of Church and Parish."

May 5, 1918: "The matter of free seats was suggested by the pastor (the Rev. Edwin H. Gibson) in place of the old fashioned family pew and was favorably received by members present."

May 24, 1919: "Voted that hereafter the congregation stand during each hymn."

May 29, 1920: Officers were elected and the Constitution and By-Laws were adopted pursuant to incorporation.

June 8, 1920: The First Congregational Church of Hanover, Massachusetts was incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

In 1922, Mr. Gibson resigned to assume the pastorate of the First Parish Church of Brockton, Mass. Following him were eight student pastors, all of whom gave the church devoted ministry. On May 27, 1925, after 18 months of deliberation, it was voted to build an addition on the rear of the church and to remodel the church proper. The committee recommended that this be financed by borrowing \$10,000 on notes endorsed by several property owners, after securing pledges to that amount. In 1928, we find that the church borrowed \$7,000 giving as collateral a note for \$4500 secured by pledges, and a note for \$2500 endorsed by Mr. Ashton Perry.

Nov. 13, 1925, the church voted to include transportation for Sunday School scholars in the budget as an expense attributable to the church. Previous to this, transportation had been paid for missionary funds of the church.

## FCC Hanover - The First 250 Years

In September 1926, during the pastorate of the Rev. Myron R. Bunnell, ground was broken for the addition, which, together with improvements to the church building, cost \$24,891.36. Dedication exercises were held on February 12 and 13, 1927. This addition now houses the Sunday School rooms, kitchen, and Scout room.

In 1927, we note this in the records: "The change from a parish controlled church to a self-supporting corporation is a slow and hazardous process, but after a large amount of work and the exercise of caution, we have accomplished the change without disaster."

April 16, 1928, the Rev. Dow Strang Clute was called to the pastorate of the church, but he did not care to accept unless some repairs were made to the parsonage and a bathroom and running water were installed. This instance is included at this time only because it is felt that it may be especially appreciated in light of the remodeling now taking place in the parsonage. Apparently, these changes were made, for Mr. Clute ministered to the church until 1930.

On Oct 19, 20, and 21, 1928, the 200th Anniversary of the Church was observed. This included an excellent and comprehensive pageant, "The Lighted Torch" written by Marion Mitchell Stetson (Mrs. Bernard Stetson), a banquet, a roll call service, and an exhibit of historical interest and significance. Included in this exhibit was one of the old Stockbridge silver communion cups, loaned for the occasion by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass. The description of the cup as given by the museum is as follows: Stockbridge Silver Beaker (obviously, what the church called a cup, the museum called a beaker.) four and one quarter inches high with a slightly flaring lip and a wide moulding at the base. Around the center is inscribed, "The Gift of Deacon Joseph Stockbridge to the Church of Christ in Hanover, 1768", Made by Joseph Edwards, 1707-1777, son of John Edwards, the Boston silversmith, and has his mark "1 Edwards" in a rectangle in the bottom.

On March 13, 1932, the trustees of the Bethany Chapel, located on Circuit Street near School Street gave the building and land to the First Congregational Church.

In 1933, the church realized \$90 from the sale of the chapel building, and \$25 from the sale of the land. On Nov. 26, 1933 the vestry of the church was dedicated as Gibson Chapel, marking 25 years of service of the Rev. Edwin H. Gibson in this area, that is, Hanover and Brockton.

In the records of Nov. 1934, the Chase Fund is mentioned, being the interest from money received from the sale of property in Pembroke left to the church by Richard Chase of Pembroke and Quincy.

From 1935-1940, the Rev. Vernon A. Loescher served the church and endeared himself to the congregation so that we frequently hear him mentioned now. That he was a brilliant young man is attested to by the fact that he was first in a class of 1,200 (see church records) and, as the recipient of a fellowship, studied abroad for one year.

In 1942, one of the active groups in the church, The Middlers, was organized by the pastor, the Rev. Elton W. Brown. Following his resignation here in 1944 and a pastorate in the church at Chelmsford, Mass., Mr. and Mrs. Brown spent five years as missionaries in the Philippine Islands.

On September, 15, 1944, the Rev. William George Sewell became pastor and for nine years has ministered to the members of the congregation and has been beloved both in the church and in the community. Under his guidance, and that of a committee appointed for the purpose, the church was

completely redecorated at a cost of more than \$16,000. The sanctuary was painted a soft taupe, and draperies at the curve-topped windows and the choir rail curtain were made of material of the same color. Tall-backed pulpit chairs were removed and the old sofa, upholstered in sage green, replaced them at the back of the pulpit platform, the latter being newly carpeted in the same sage green. Overhead candle-lights in one large and four smaller handmade, burnished brass cart-wheel fixtures replaced the former lights. An electric organ was installed, as was also a new oil heating system. The Bible now on the beautiful sage green topped white pulpit was purchased by the church; the bronze reading lamp was the gift of the Middlers; and the brass cross and candlesticks were the gift of Mrs. George Haupt in memory of her husband. The labor of refinishing the chairs by the communion table was donated by Mrs. James Waterman of Hanover, a descendent of Deacon Isaac Cook (1828). For many months, church members and organizations, notable the Ladies Aid, worked faithfully to make beautiful our place of worship.

On November 5, 1951, the church voted that "the Moderator appoint a committee of 7 to work with the trustees on repairing the present parsonage or the advisability of building a new one".

On April 28, 1952, "Gibson Chapel" became "Gibson Hall", wherein dances are permitted, but card parties are not.

Aug. 3, 1952, the church voted that a committee be named to raise funds for the complete renovating and decorating of the parsonage, inside and out.

On Jan. 12, 1953, the newly edited By-Laws, completed after months of careful and painstaking work by a committee headed by the Moderator, Mr. James Vose, were accepted. From these By-Laws came the formation of the new Church Cabinet.

As this brief history goes to print, the renovation and redecorating of the parsonage are about to be completed at a cost of \$7,155. Since Mr. Sewell's resignation became effective on Easter Sunday, April 5, 1953, and since that time he has graciously acted as interim pastor, the church now awaits a new pastor and his family to enjoy both the church and the newly conditioned parsonage.

As the First Congregational Church of Hanover celebrates its 225th Anniversary, it is well to note that at the annual meeting held on Nov. 9, 1953, the membership of the church is 295, of which 165 are listed as active members (54 men, 111 women). 225 children are enrolled in the Sunday School, and there is a recently formed Mothers' Group sponsored by the Sunday School. Active organizations are the Ladies Aid, the Pilgrim Youth Fellowship, the Middlers, and the Young Couples Club founded, Jan. 1951, by the Rev. and Mrs. William Sewell. There is a large young people's choir.

Since Feb. 10, 1912, the church has sponsored the Boy Scouts, Troop 1, Hanover. The troop was originally sponsored by the Men's Brotherhood during the pastorate of the Rev. Edwin H. Gibson, Mr. Gibson being the first Scoutmaster. The Rev. Harry E. Titus was Scoutmaster during his two year pastorate. In 1925, Mr. Robert Stetson became Scoutmaster and from then until Oct 23, 1948, almost twenty-five years, he gave untiringly of his time and devotion to the Scouts of First Church and Hanover.

Truly, our church has been blessed through the years by devoted spiritual leadership and by an equally devoted and ardent membership. Each life which has been lived and each act which has been done in the service of the Lord and His Church has been gathered into the whole effort of the church. If there is

not so much detail of these later years, may it not be that time lays in rich patina of color on those events which happened long ago, and that time may, years hence, lay its overtones on today's happenings?

### **1954 – 1978:**

The 225th Anniversary had been celebrated. The final report of the 225th Anniversary Committee was accepted with grateful thanks at the annual Church Meeting on January 10, 1954. The Church History, written by Mrs. Clifton E. Bradley, remains as "visible proof" of the living church in the community.

First Church looked forward to the pastorate of the Rev. John Gilbert Gaskill, formerly of Andover, who was to continue as pastor through the turbulent times of rapid growth, mobile population, and war. The Rev. Gaskill began his ministry January 8, 1954. He was "read into membership" by Senior Deacon Clifton E. Bradley." The Pilgrim Association of Congregational Church and Ministers was invited by the church to serve as the Ecclesiastical Council to "examine and install the Rev. John G. Gaskill." The installation was in keeping with Congregational history as a community focus: clergy, town officials, and public health nurse were invited as well as town folk.

Meanwhile, the membership grew, the church school grew, and the greater needs of the church were met through the generosity of members and memorials: silver communion compotes, a set of communion cups, cup racks for the pews, a phone installed in the church, new hymnals, a framed cradle roll for the front hall. The new members were presented with copies of the bylaws and the Church History. They were introduced into the activity and life of the church through the "Colony System," a series of visitations organized by the deaconesses.

Mr. Robert Ballentine, newly appointed high school principal, and newly appointed church school superintendent, stressed the need for more space for our burgeoning church school population. He urged, too, that the church school budget be placed within the regular church budget, starting in October, 1954. Insurance premiums to the extent of \$2,500, an updating of the membership list, and the need for mimeographed yearly reports suggest the pressures of growth. The annual meeting of November 8, 1954, after supper, songs, and prayer, accepted the revised bylaws, paid off the parsonage debt, and scheduled a series of Sunday hymn sings. The offering, which was given to SOS (Share Our Surplus), represented the concern of the members for others, both near and far. Mrs. Clyde Bowker was recognized at the meeting for her 10 years of faithful service as church clerk.

At a meeting held January 9, 1955, treasurer Morton Lord was able to say that the finances were "very good." Concern with the wider community led to the formation of a Social Action Committee to work closely with Dr. Myron Fowell of the Massachusetts State Conference. One again, church communication would develop through a publication similar to the wartime Spire, this time under the direction of Mr. Gaskill. The elderly and the shut-in were graciously appreciative of the Christmas caroling by the Youth Group and said so in letters which were read by the Church Committee.

First Church took active part in plans of the Rockland Area Council of Churches, sponsoring a series of evangelistic meetings. At home, Moderator James Vose was "concerned that strangers be greeted after services by church members." The Reverend Fowell met in February, 1955, with the Church Committee and the new Social Action Committee to plan for the "great potential in the South Eastern Massachusetts area to promote a Program of Outreach."

Rev. Fowell recommended the following actions:

1. A survey of the community to be followed by visitations and round table discussion.
2. Development of an Operational Booklet stating the goals to be accomplished: an increase in membership, improvement of the property, spiritual goals, churchmanship, an inclusion of peripheral families in the active life of the church.

At this time, the dorsal, lovely velvet draping behind the pulpit, was hung. When the Church Committee met on March 29, 1955, Mrs. Bradley was appointed as pastoral secretary. Both Mr. and Mrs. Gaskill were complimented as members of the faculty at the Junior High Conference at Framingham Center. Mr. Gaskill urged the church to join the Rockland Council of Churches, the better to continue the chaplain services at the South Shore Hospital and to participate in the training sessions for teacher and laymen alike. The Church grew, as witnessed by the need for an enlarged communion cloth. A real need for a student assistant pastor was primary proof, however. The State Conference would pay the salary of \$15.00 per week for the first year, would pay half the salary for the second year, and then cease assistance. But no decision was made at the time.

Mr. Robert Stetson, reporting for the trustees at the Cabinet meeting in September, 1955, announced that the front doors had been "turned out" to conform to fire laws, and painting, roofing, tile laying, painting the steeple had all been accomplished. Mr. Stetson proposed a "color harmony" committee be organized. We can imagine the difficulties inherent in color choices, for the committee has continued to function. An every member canvas was held on Reformation Sunday. Canvas plans were carefully made, even to arranging that "a woman outside the church be asked to wash the dishes" following the pot-luck dinner which completed the program.

Mr. Gaskill was partially supported in his request for Rockland Council Association: the church voted \$100 in support of the Chaplain service at the hospital. The church also heard Mr. James Jeffries, assistant minister, report that youth "were a challenge as well as an inspiration." The challenge was well-met, for one of his youth group became "committed to Christ" by November, 1956, the membership of the church was 370.

Great attention was given to the every-member canvas. Possibly the reluctance of members to commit themselves to pledges, preferring to give cash donations, was a reflection of the unstable times. However, the budget of \$14,000 was capably met.

During the term of the second student assistant, Mr. David Pasamonte, Mr. Gaskill had set a directive which Mr. Pasamonte sincerely endeavored to fulfill: that the youth would be the forge to link the community and the wider area and thus encourage the growth of the church. The Rev. Gaskill looked ahead 25 years to 1982 and saw the need for the church life to be "strengthened and deepened." He said, "Together, then, let us be workmen that needeth not be ashamed, rightly doing the word of truth."

Benevolence reported in October 1957, included assistance to the Little Wanderer's Home, the Christian World Mission, the Veterans of the Cross, and, in recognition of worldwide troubles, provided aid for Sunday Schools in Ceylon, Cycles for Ceylon, and aid to the Hungarian Relief Program. Church growth demanded six rather than four deacons and deaconesses. Deaconess Emma Stetson was recognized for her many faithful years of service. Mrs. Marion Stetson was named first Deaconess for Life. A change in the bylaws assured that committees would function soon after the annual meeting in

November. "The first-named person on a committee shall be the conveyor. If the organizational meeting has not been called prior to January 1, the moderator is empowered to do so." An excellent rule.

During 1957, the church school grew so that police were required for Sunday traffic and parking, the general superintendent of the Church School was assisted by six department superintendents and 25 teachers, and, after a long history of church school busing, that service was discontinued. After four years of faithful service to First Church, The Rev. Gaskill was called to the First Congregational Church of Lee, Massachusetts. Both Mr. and Mrs. Gaskill had devoted themselves to the spiritual growth as well as the physical growth of the church. Mrs. Gaskill had initiated the Women's Fellowship, and her efforts with the children of the parish were unstinting.

The Rev. Silas W. Anthony, retired from the ministry of the Congregational Church in Allston, was elected to serve as interim minister. The Church meeting held January 1, 1960, marked, according to Moderator Herbert Jefferson, the "beginning of the end of the lean years." Surely the 419 church members, the many calls made by the deacons and deaconesses upon the parishioners, the awareness of the diversified backgrounds of the newcomers and their particular needs had demanded and received a positive program of action during the year. The year 1959-1960 had seen a farewell on April 5, for Mr. and Mrs. Anthony for their devoted interim service to the First Church.

On April 19, 1959, the congregation welcomed the Rev and Mrs. William B. Parsons as the new minister and wife. Mr. Parsons brought new life to the Benevolence Committee, developing a self-examination, self-education program which would further the service of the committee. The resulting Africa Mission and the International Weekend with foreign students as guests were highlights.

The whole of the church experienced a spirit of "togetherness" which reflected well-planned activity. Chancel renovations were underway, the burgeoning church school spread into the Town Hall, in-service training for the teachers, morning and evening reading groups, the concern of the Ladies Aid, not only with the housekeeping of the church, but also with missions abroad, the efforts of the Women's fellowship for Lebanon, the need for contracts for choir director and organist, the ballroom dancing lessons provided by the Couple's Club from the Currie School of Boston, participation in the Rockland Area Council of Churches, World Day of Prayer, the Communion Breakfasts, and the four part series, "The University of Life" involved members and friends.

Mr. Parsons in his report at the church meeting January 1, 1960, quoted the old hymn by Charles Wesley, "And Are We Yet Alive?" He gave his answer for First Church, looking back at all that had been accomplished, and looking forward with faith to the new year, a vigorous, "Yes, We Are Alive." Under the guidance of Mrs. Marge Williams, the Assistant in Christian Education, the church school hummed with activity: new programs, new beginnings for older programs, Christian concern with education in Africa which initiated an exchange in cultural understanding. Thus, Christian education became a part of all of our lives. The Ladies Aid performed yeoman tasks at the home church and sent gifts and money to the world-wide missions efforts. The Women's Fellowship, with guest speakers, book reviews, and spiritual services, continued for the fourth year to enrich the spiritual lives of the women of the parish.

The big venture, which first was expressed in 1953, was underway. The church meeting approved a fund-raising program through Church Fund-Raising, Inc., of Framingham at a fee of \$2,700 for four weeks, and approved the architectural concern, Lange and Lambert, Inc., of Boston, to develop a "Church Education building on the 7,000 square feet on the church owned 3 1/4 acre site on Silver

Street." First Church was "alive and doing well," and "putting our Master and His work in first place." During 1961, the Permanent Church Building Committee devoted much of its time to selecting the plan for the new Religious Education Building. The final plan would cost more than the \$90,000.00 pledged; the remainder would be raised through a mortgage. The problem of space for the Church School was about to be solved after many years of temporary housing.

The Deacons deeply missed the guidance and inspiration of Deacon Emeritus James W. Vose who had for so long been a devoted counsellor to the Board. The Trustees were concerned with maintaining the church property during the period of building transition with possible changes in the near future. They had to consider the need for a new organ, the future of the parsonage, and the need for greater kitchen facilities in the church. Despite the problems, First Church continued its activities in the community and world-wide. The Social Action program aided the Heifer Project which provided livestock for underdeveloped countries. The Church School developed a curriculum to further the spiritual education of the youth. The program of music with Mrs. Anne Doble, Choir Director, lent inspiration to the services. On Good Friday, the choir presented "The Seven Last Words," by Dubois. The performance was recorded by Station WJDA, Quincy, for later use.

On March 4, 1961, an important decision was made by the church body. At a specially called meeting, the church voted its approval of the Constitution of the United Church of Christ and thereby became a member of the new Body. The United Church brought together into one new denomination congregations of the Evangelical and Reformed Church and of the Congregational Christian Churches.

In 1962, the Religious Education Committee established a Day School Kindergarten, called the Hanover Center Kindergarten, which was held in Gibson Hall. Space for Sunday School was a problem, and some classes met in the Town Hall. A student assistant minister was hired to work with the youth group. The Cradle Roll was established. In 1963, the choir was revitalized, the parsonage painted, and a single Sunday service was held instead of two. The moderator reported, "1963 was not a bad year. There were some difficulties and failures, but the accomplishments outweighed the failures."

In 1964, after five years, the Rev. William Parsons resigned, and the Rev. Ralph Rogers served in the interim. In October, the Pastoral Supply Committee recommended the Rev. W. Roscoe Riley, and it was voted unanimously to extend a call to him. On December 1, 1964, the Rev. Riley led us in worship for the first time, and was officially installed June 27, 1965. On May 23, an Open House was held at the Parsonage to admire the redecoration by the Rileys and the Parsonage Committee. In October of 1965, the deacons reported, "Our relationship with the Rev. Riley has been harmonious, and we feel fortunate to have him as our pastor. Under his leadership we feel that our church can expect a strong and steady growth."

A Memorial Book was established in 1964, and a Memorial Fund Committee was appointed as a permanent Committee of the Church. In 1965, a group of young married couples called the Merriweds was voted as a new church group. The Junior and Senior High Fellowships were reorganized and reactivated. One of the most significant actions of the church during the 1960's was the completion of the Christian Education Building on Silver Street, later voted to be called the Parish House. A study committee had been formed in 1955, and later a Building Committee was formed. In 1962, the plans went out to bid. Many individuals and organizations of the church pledged and gave money towards this ambitious project. The Lutheran church gave \$25 towards our building fund.



## FCC Hanover - The First 250 Years

In 1964, it was voted that, "the church authorize the Trustees to borrow \$60,000 for construction mortgage" and "that the church authorize the Christian Education Building to proceed". Many individuals donated time and labor to see this to completion, and on October 17, 1965, the new Christian Education Building was dedicated. The keys were given by Arthur Sewell, Chairman of the Building Committee & accepted by Arthur Cram, Chairman of the Board of Trustees. The Rev. W. Roscoe Riley gave the Litany of Dedication and Rev. Pierre Vuilleumier, the prayer of dedication. The minister's study and the Christian Education office were located in the new building, and in 1966, the church voted "to accept as a gift, the furnishings of the Pastor's study from Mrs. James Vose, in memory of her husband."

On June 27, 1966, it was voted to permit St Mary's R. C. Church to use the Christian Education Building on Saturday mornings for their church school classes. Music in the sanctuary was greatly improved in 1966 by the addition of an Allen Organ at a cost of \$7,400.

In 1967, it was agreed that all major boards of the church would meet on the same night. A gift of \$25 was sent to the newly formed Norwell Congregational Church.

In 1968, it was voted to build a one room addition to the parsonage. Throughout the 1960's, the regular organizations of the church continued their activities and services to the church and community.

The leadership of the church during the decade of the seventies has been that of the Rev. W. Roscoe Riley, who celebrated his tenth anniversary with this church in December of 1974. The Sunday worship service has continued to be the most important focus from which the other activities of the church emanate. The laity have been taking a more active role in assisting the minister with the service, and women, as well as men serve as lay assistants each Sunday. Communion is served the first Sunday of every other month, beginning in February, prepared by the deaconesses and served by the deacons. Various forms of communion have been introduced as a balance to the familiar rituals. One such new form has been the gathering of small groups around the communion table and partaking of cranberry bread and cranberry juice.

Two Christmas Eve Candlelight Services and a special Maundy Thursday Service have been established. The choir has been led by Thomas Boyer through the period of the seventies, and has added depth and beauty to our services. In 1974, the Roland Smith Carillon Bells were given in memory by his family. They are played before and after church as well as at appointed times during the week.

The practice of having the children of the church school worship with their families during the first part of the church services before going to their regular classes was instituted in 1970 and has proved successful. The Rev. Riley gives a children's sermon as part of the Sunday service, which involves the youngsters actively and makes the service more meaningful to them.

Christian Education has continued to be of prime importance during this decade. The Christian Education Committee and the teaching staff have devoted many hours of time to this task. A teacher Appreciation Dinner has been held each year since 1973 to recognize the service of these volunteers. Anne Olson was given special recognition in 1977 having served as Director of Christian Education of this church for 14 years. At this time, the position of Director of Christian Education was discontinued, and in the fall of 1977 a seminarian, William Donohue, was acquired to work with the fifth and sixth grades, and with the Senior High Fellowship as well. Since 1976, the Church School has met on a voluntary basis in June for special programs. A lending library was renewed under this committee in 1972, and

discussion groups have met from time to time to aid in the Christian Education of the adults of the parish.

The church has continued its outreach and service to those in need in the community and beyond. In 1976, three Vietnamese refugee families were resettled in the area through an Ecumenical Committee on which the pastor and several lay persons served with enthusiasm. The child sponsorship program has continued whereby individuals through the Outreach and Service Committee (formerly the Benevolence Committee) contributed aid and sent letters to children abroad and in the United States. Each year through the Neighbors in Need and One Great Hour of Sharing programs, our monies are used to help others. A special collection is taken on Communion Sundays and is used as the Deacon's Fund to aid special needs in the parish and community. In 1976 a "17/76 Fund" was subscribed to by some to help improve the educational offerings of the U.C.C., black colleges. The diaconate began a program of parish visitation on Wednesdays in 1977 and call on new families, shut-ins, elderly etc., in an effort to reach out in neighborliness and service.

The church has recognized the faithful service of the Diaconate by awarding Life Memberships to Mr. Raymond Dixon, Mrs. Herbert Jefferson, Mrs. Clifton Bradley, Mrs. Roy Gorrill, Mrs. Marion Stetson, Mrs. Wallace Kemp, Mrs. Marina Robinson, and Mr. Roy Gorrill. The Parish House continues to be well-used by the church and community. In 1970, public kindergarten was held here until space was available in the public schools the following year. A private nursery school and day care center have used the facilities since 1973. In the ecumenical spirit, our Catholic brethren have used the building on Saturday mornings to hold their CCD classes. The church has continued to provide sponsorship for the Boy Scout Troop and the Girl Scouts, and beginning in 1973 a Cub Scout Pack. 1978 marks the final year of the mortgage on the Parish House. The upkeep of the church buildings is under the direction of the trustees.

In the seventies, during the "energy crunch" efforts were made to conserve, and storm windows were purchased for the church. Gibson Hall was given a face life in 1976. Church members papered and painted the hall and refinished the old deacon's benches. In 1975, a Restoration Committee was formed and has been studying the needs of the church building. The first project was the extensive repair of the church steeple which was completed in 1977. A special emphasis of the seventies has been our national, local, and church history.

In 1976, a Bicentennial Fourth of July service was held in the church, recreating the worship style of 200 years earlier. The parishioners arrived in costume, several by horse and buggy, and the militia was in attendance. A fine talk was delivered by Larry Bright, a former English citizen, entitled, "What's Revolutionary about America?" It ended with the provoking statement, "God bless England, she is my past; God bless America, she is my future." In 1977, under the direction of Barbara Fishwick, the church took part in an Ecumenical Pageant that was part of the town's 250th celebration.

Now in 1978, this church is 250 years old. In the founding year, our chartered membership was 10 men. Twenty-five years ago, the active membership was 165. Today our membership numbers 337 active and 99 inactive. Twenty-five years ago (1953), the proposed budget was \$8,500. Our budget for 1978 is \$52,314. Through the years, many members have served faithfully on the boards and committees which help the church to function smoothly. Active boards and committees in 1978 are: Deacons, Deaconesses, Christian Education Committee, Trustees, Finance Board, Outreach and Service Committee, Spire Committee, Memorial Fund Committee, Ushering Committee, Greeting Committee, Flower Committee, and Fair Committee.

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Many church-sponsored organizations use the facilities and contribute to the support of the church, such as the Women's Fellowship, which incorporates the Ladies Aid which disbanded on April 10, 1975, the Couples' Club, the Middlers, the Merriweds, and various youth organizations. In the past 25 years and back through the past nearly 300 years, the church has been influential in the history of the town. We have had periods of reluctance, awakening and reawakening, and as our present church family examines its past, it looks forward to do God's work here in Hanover and beyond.