

### The Changing of the Guard: Dr. Barney and Allan Lorimer

In 1927, First Church took on new life and came into the 20th century. The old and the new are vividly described in Carolyn Colegrove's childhood memories of the Church, which are excerpted below.

We left the house at nine-fifteen as usual on Sunday morning to drive the mile through the village, under the railroad bridge, past the cemetery to the neo-Gothic stone church which stood on a rise north of the Village across from a large swampy salt marsh. We passed groups of children walking to Sunday School, the girls in navy blue or brown coats over frilly pastel dresses and wearing round felt hats with turned-up brims held on by elastics under the chin. The boys were mostly in knickers and belted jackets, although a few were in long trousers. At the church, parents were dropping off their children at the end of the walk, then driving away. A couple of boys were chasing each other across the front lawn around the flagpole and large stone commemorating World War soldiers.

The primary and intermediate classes were held in the basement of the church. A narrow stone-walled stairway at the side led to a dark cloakroom lined with hooks where we left our coats and hats before entering the large, low-ceilinged room. Lollycolumn posts stood at intervals throughout the room, and a small table at one end served as an altar. Classes met in small circles about the room, a teacher to about every ten students. With a Sunday School enrollment of almost two hundred, this made for a very crowded and noisy room, although a couple of classes of the older boys and girls met upstairs behind the sliding doors in the sanctuary. Dad taught one of these classes, but Mother was downstairs with a class of 8-year old girls.

When the offering was taken, a couple of children were chosen to hold the baskets and we marched up by classes as everyone sang, "Hear the Pennies Dropping." Mr. Isaac Ferris, a tall, bald-headed, powerfully built man with a walrus mustache, treasurer of the Sunday School, arrived to take the collection baskets into the kitchen behind our classroom.

This morning we learned the pieces we would say in Church on Children's Day, when we would sit in the front pews and certificates of perfect attendance would be handed out. Each of us in turn would climb the three steps and face the congregation to say our lines. This year I was to say, "Enter into

the House of the Lord with thanksgiving," and I followed Liz Starr. I knew her piece too, "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands."

After Sunday School the other children all spilled out of the basement and ran across the lawn to where their parents waited in cars on Sound Beach Avenue to take them home. Flora and I sat on the side steps of the Church and looked at the leaflet handed out by our teachers. The front page today was a brightly colored picture of Rebecca at the Well, and the story was printed inside. When the sexton began tolling the bell about five of eleven, we went in the side door and joined Mother and Dad in our pew.

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Dr. Barney stood in the pulpit, his right arm raised, fist clenched, his voice reaching a crescendo as he called on God's angels to snatch us from the gates of Hell and set us on the path of righteousness. He was a very short man with white hair falling in curls to the shoulders of his black suit and stiff clerical collar. His round rimless glasses sat above two pink cheekbones, while the rest of his face and forehead were chalky white. Now he was quivering with the intensity of his admonition to the twelve people in the congregation. I knew there were twelve because I had counted them when the service started, and that included my sister and myself. He had been preaching for a half hour and I was tired and fidgety from sitting so long. I squirmed around in the pew and Mother put her hand on my knee to quiet me.

The morning sunlight shone on the brown and amber stained glass window behind the chancel arch. In the center of the window an oval glass head of Christ looked sadly and compassionately down on us. I amused myself by staring at that oval while I counted slowly to ten, then closing my eyes. There was Jesus right behind my eyelids! I tried it again, this time looking at the pinkish tan rough plaster side wall instead of closing my eyes. Sure enough, I could move Jesus around the Church wherever I wanted.

The sermon finally drew to a close and Mrs. Stanton, who was substituting for Miss Worrell this Sunday, began playing "Jesus Saviour Pilot Me" on the wheezy old pipe organ. I could just see her at the right of the chancel behind the choir rail, corset-straight back and steel grey hair piled on top of her head in a bun, the black ribbons from her pince-nez glasses draped to her shoulder. Mr. Stanton sat in the second row of the middle section, one man

surrounded by empty pews. We always occupied the last row of the side section. Mother had chosen that spot when they first came to church when I was two and Flora was seven, so our wiggling wouldn't disturb anyone.

After the Benediction we slid out of the polished golden oak pew. "Something has to be done," Mother exclaimed as soon as we were in the car. "Do you realize, Ed, that we have been the only young couple in church for weeks!"

Dad choked the car and stepped on the starter a couple of times before the motor caught.

"Go through the tunnel, Daddy, go through the tunnel, please." Dad grinned over his shoulder at me and headed the car around the swamp onto Arch Street. When we reached the railroad tunnel, a half round of stone just large enough for one car, he put the heel of his hand on the horn and proceeded through with the honking bouncing off the walls and vibrating through the car until we had to cover our ears.

As we turned onto West End Avenue, he quietly said to Mother, "Some of us were talking about the church on the train on Friday. The commuters want a minister who will bring some life back into our services. Here it is 1927 and Dr. Barney has never left the 19th Century. I think we will be having a meeting soon to see what can be done."

Dr. Barney retired not too long after that and a new minister and his wife came into our lives. They were full of surprises.