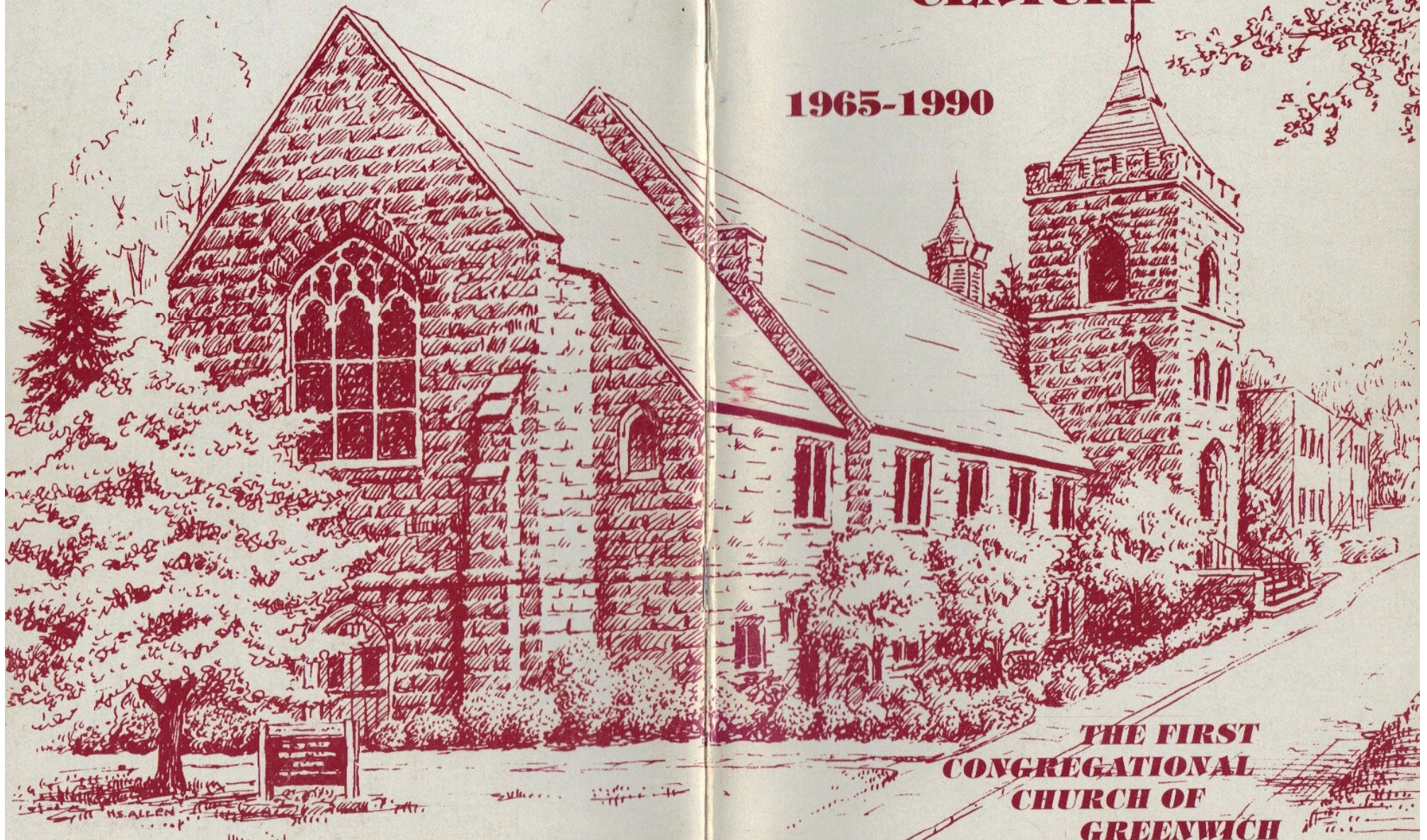


THE LAST QUARTER CENTURY

1965-1990



THE FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH OF
GREENWICH



THE LAST QUARTER CENTURY

***The First Congregational Church
of Greenwich
Old Greenwich, Connecticut***

1965 - 1990

*Older than the State of Connecticut
or the United States of America,
First Church is a living witness to the glory of God
and the faithfulness of all people.*

Written, edited and illustrated
by
Helen Siekels Allen

Two Bytes Publishing Company
1990

*This book is dedicated
to the memory of my husband,*

Karl Rutherford Allen

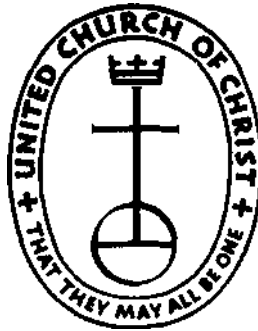
*who served First Church as Senior Deacon,
Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and
sang for many years with the Chancel Choir*

PRINTED IN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
in Darien, Connecticut
September, 1990

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

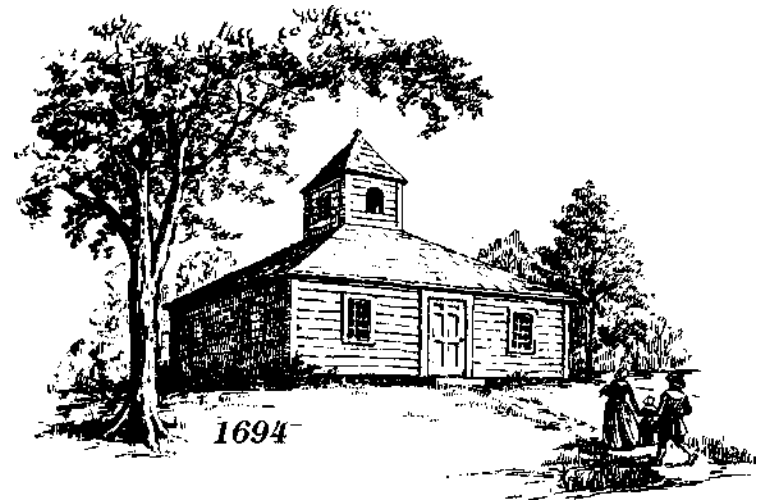


I would like to thank Lenore Hill for her encouragement and invaluable help every step of the way; Jane Jansen and Geraldine Porter for their thoughtful advice and assistance; Peggy Whitlock for typing it all onto the computer, as well as her esteemed advice; Carolyn Colegrove for her part on the 300th Anniversary and the Women's Fellowships; Sally Colegrove for writing about the young people; Robert Ferry for his contribution about Second Hours; Evelyn Ferris for her knowledge of the history of First Church; Susan Craig, Richard Vogt, Curtis Carlson, Wendy Reynolds and Richard Hill for their help with Church School, Music, Diaconate, Outreach and Trustees, respectively; Earle Bragdon for his expert proofreading, and to Tom Stiers for his suggestions, help, and vision of the future.

Lastly, a special thanks to our publisher, Elizabeth F. Clark, for her delightful enthusiasm, creative ideas and attention to detail.

There have been many people over the years who have done so much for First Church. Rather than inadvertently leave anyone out, it was decided that except for staff, not all the names would be used in the telling of this story. Thank you, both the living and the dead. You, your families and friends know who you are! Your contributions have made First Church what it is today . . . a strong, caring community of dedicated Christians.

Helen Sickels Allen



1

INTRODUCTION

The strength of First Church has always been its people. First there were the settlers, those strong-willed "proprietors" who turned forest into farmland to feed themselves and their families, who hunted and fished, always fearful of hostile Indians.

In the eighteenth century "Greenwich Old Town" was a small community of small farms. The church was struggling, for its few people were not prosperous. They persevered; their church was important to them. With the coming of the railroad in the nineteenth century "Sound Beach," as it was renamed in 1872, became a summer resort for residents of New York City. Farms started to disappear as large summer homes and inns were built. Money brought changes as more and more people came to live in Sound Beach year-round.

The town had another name change, in 1931, to Old Greenwich. First Church grew and continues to grow, serving the needs of the community to this day.

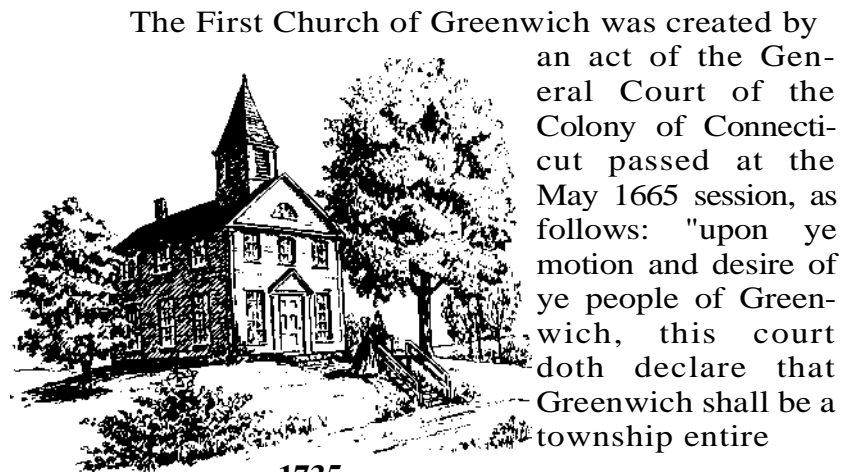


1675

BRIEF HISTORY

This is the story of that growth in the last twenty-five years, 1965-1990. It begins with a brief history of First Church from its earliest days.

The first recorded religious services in the town of Greenwich were held in 1656 in the houses of settlers. In 1667 a newly built schoolhouse became the place of worship as well as a central meeting place for the inhabitants. It is probable that religious services were conducted by the clergy of the First Society of Stamford from 1645 on in "private houses or in the open air."



1735

The First Church of Greenwich was created by an act of the General Court of the Colony of Connecticut passed at the May 1665 session, as follows: "upon ye motion and desire of ye people of Greenwich, this court doth declare that Greenwich shall be a township entire

of itself, provided they procure and maintain an orthodox minister, and in the meantime and until that be effected they are to attend ye ministry of Stamford."



1835

This action of the legislature authorized the establishment of "the First Church of Christ in Greenwich" or "First Society of Christ" or "The East Society". The name "Congregational" was not applied generally in New England until after the Revolutionary War. As late as 1840 the members of First Church were discussing the name of the church, for in that year a meeting was held "to decide if the name of this church is to be Congregational." The settlers of Greenwich, unlike some other New England towns, did not bring the church with them. As churches were supported by taxation, it was necessary to have at least twenty-seven "proprietors," or taxpayers, to finance it. The growth of Greenwich was so slow that it was not until about 1669 that the inhabitants numbered enough to support a minister of their own.

During the years since then the Church has slowly grown, meeting all the community problems of war, poverty,

sorrow, anxiety, peace and prosperity which have marked these three and a quarter centuries. In 1960 First Church became affiliated with the United Church of Christ and is known as The First Congregational Church of Greenwich, Old Greenwich, Connecticut.



The stone "Meetinghouse," dedicated in 1895, was the fourth one built to house the congregation and was an adaptation of a Norman-Gothic structure built in England in 1100.

The building was expanded in 1930 with the construction of the June Binney Memorial Parish House. The education wing was added later, and dedicated in 1952. The Meetinghouse itself was enlarged and partially reconstructed during the years 1960-1962. *The First Three Hundred Years*, published in 1965, covers the history of the Church up to that time.

The period of Dr. Vincent Daniels' pastorate between 1942 and his death in 1963 was one of stability, growth and enrichment. Following World War II there had been an unprecedented growth in the population and building in the

town, and this was reflected in the greatly enlarged congregation of First Church. It became evident that the facilities were inadequate, even with two identical services on Sunday mornings, one at 9:15 a.m. and the other at 11:00 a.m. The Sunday School, which numbered over 1,200 at one time, was using every space available for their sessions. After long discussion, study and a successful capital fund drive, the Meetinghouse was turned to face west and doubled in size. A chapel was added and the required rooms were built in the undercroft for the Church School. Fortunately, Dr. Daniels lived long enough to see his dream of an enlarged church become a reality, but his death left First Church with a sense of being adrift. There was the feeling that no one could take the place of this remarkable man.



PROFESSIONAL STAFF



Merton E. Libby

In 1964 the Reverend Francis E. Potter was called to First Church from the old First Church in Springfield, Massachusetts. A genial, informal man, whose hobby was sailing, he was known to everyone as "Duke." He served First Church until 1972 at which time Mr. Libby also left.

The Reverend Merton E. Libby had been called as Associate Pastor in 1956. He continued to run the church during the interim after Dr. Daniels' death. For a year the Reverend Harry B. Adams, who at the time was a professor of Homiletics at Yale Divinity School, came each Sunday to preach.



Francis E. Potter



Paul W. Yinger

Dr. Paul Wesley Yinger, originally from California came from New Jersey in 1973. A scholar and a charismatic preacher, he was well known throughout the country. He stayed at First Church for three years, until 1976. The Reverend Thomas Lowell Stiers, who had been pastor of the NorthHaven Congregational Church in Connecticut, was called as Associate Pastor to First Church in 1974. When Dr. Yinger left, Mr. Stiers was named Senior Pastor, the position he still occupies in 1990. In 1989 a joyous celebration commemorated the 15th anniversary of Mr. Stiers' joining the staff of First Church and the 25th anniversary of his ordination. The Reverend Alexander (Zan) Harper was Interim Pastor between the time that Mr. Potter left and Dr. Yinger arrived. It was he who brought Dr. Herman Reissig to Old Greenwich as his associate. Dr. Reissig had retired to Florida after a distinguished career as a pastor and as International Relations Secretary for the United Church of Christ. A superb preacher, he proved so popular that he was asked to stay on as Pastor Emeritus, adding new dimensions to the social consciousness and outreach of the Church.

The 1960's and 1970's were troubled times in the world and this country. There was unrest and loss of membership in all churches. With Dr. Stiers' inspired guidance there has been a gradual rebuilding, and once again the church community is enjoying a "golden era" in First Church's history.

There have been many fine associate and assistant pastors in the last twenty-five years, as well as seminary "in

care" students working at First Church as part of their training. A number of these pastors were just out of seminary, coming to Old Greenwich before their ordinations. Some had served in small churches and most stayed only a year or two at First Church. With the valuable and varied experience they gained at such a large, active and vital church, they soon moved on to churches of their own and some to positions in the state or national United Church of Christ. The Reverend R Alan Johnson, 1970 and 1971, is Secretary for Evangelism and Membership Growth for the U. C. C. Board of Homeland Ministries; Reverend David Taylor, 1980 to 1982, is Minister of Church and Society for the Connecticut Conference of the U. C. C. The Reverend Sarah-Anne Colegrove, better known as Sally, grew up in First Church. She has been an outstanding youth minister since 1978 and is known throughout the state, especially for her work at Silver Lake Conference Center. She is now Associate Pastor with responsibilities not only to the young people but to the whole congregation.



Dale M. Greene

The Reverend Dale M. Greene was an important addition to the staff in 1980. She retired in 1989 leaving a void that was hard to fill. She was a sensitive, caring person whose ministry was notable especially for counseling and her beautiful pastoral prayers. In 1982 Reverend William C. Hart who was invited to come out of retirement and serve as interim associate for six months was so well liked that he was persuaded to stay on until the beginning of 1987. Others

who left their special marks on the life of First Church were the Reverends Arthur "Bill" Comeau, James Fung, Ann Suzedell,

Meg Boxwell, Marie Reed, and Jean Simpson. Dr. David L. Fountain, Associate Pastor, and Reverend Brigitta S. Remole, Assistant Pastor, are the newest members of the pastoral staff.

The importance of the Sexton (Maintenance Supervisor) and his staff cannot be overlooked. Victor Smalley had been Sexton since 1947, and continued until he retired in 1974. Lloyd Cooke, who replaced "Vic", came in 1973 and still holds that position. The Maintenance Supervisor lives in one of the church-owned houses.

A surprising number of First Church members have entered the ministry. The Reverend W. Douglas Allen, the first in many years, was ordained in 1964. Since then there have been the Reverends' Elizabeth Frazier, Nancy Schongalla, Sally Colegrove, Sally's brother - Jonathan Colegrove, Dede Rigg, Susan DeSimone, Jean Simpson,



The Professional Staff, 1990

Left to right: Richard Vogt, Susan Craig, Reverend Sally Colegrove, Dr. Thomas Stiers, Reverend Brigitta Remole, Dr. David Fountain.

and Dr. Brenda Stiers, who is now Director of the Stamford Council of Churches and Synagogues. Of particular interest was the ordination of Reverend John Potter while his father was Senior Pastor. Currently there are several members who have been or are studying at seminaries: Barbara Livingston, Faith Carmichael, Eric Plickert, Laurie Tubbs, Nan Broeder, and Susan Craig, our present Director of Children's Ministries. The Reverends James Fung, R. Alan Johnson and Meg Boxwell were ordained while working at First Church.



3

EVENTS AND INNOVATIONS

There have been many changes, developments and special events in the last quarter century beginning with the 1965 gala celebration of the First Three Hundred Years. This anniversary was celebrated by a year-long program of special events, one of which was an historical pageant entitled "The Flame of Faith," presented in the Meetinghouse in the spring. The pageant effectively portrayed the history of First Church from its early beginnings to 1965, using costumes of the periods against a background of music and narration.

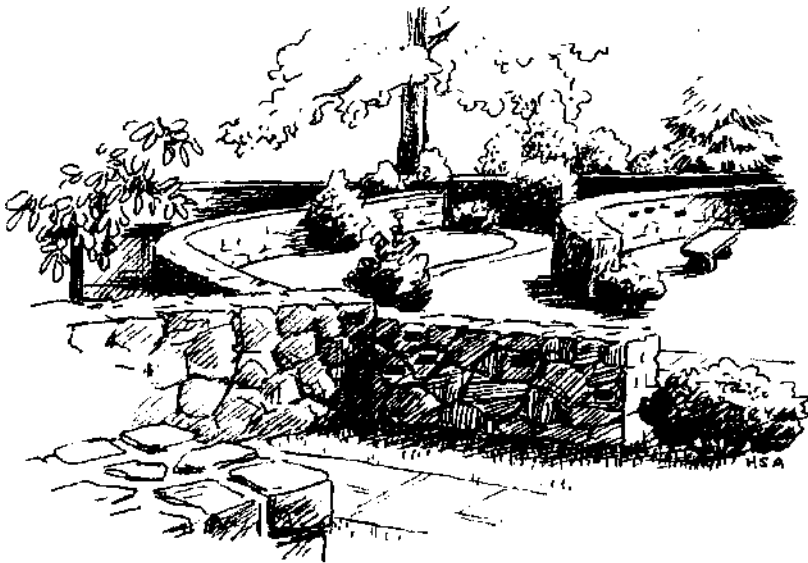
The major event of that summer was the Old Town Social which included a parade through town on the evening of Friday, August 13, featuring the Governor's Foot Guard

Band and Troop, costumes, flags and floats, antique cars and vintage fire engines. This was followed on Saturday by an all-day fair and celebration on the church grounds, in Binney Park and on Sound Beach Avenue which was closed to traffic for the occasion.

During the anniversary year the church sponsored a creative arts contest and a tour of old houses. Birthday and anniversary dinners were held at Eckman Center (now the Eastern Greenwich Civic Center). A replica of the Charter Document was obtained and hung in the narthex of the Meetinghouse. An exhibit of other historical memorabilia was staged in the Lounge. The year culminated in the publication of the book *The First Three Hundred Years*.



One of the most important additions to the church and community was the Columbarium, dedicated in 1979.



The cemetery had limited space and was filled almost capacity. At the back of the cemetery there was an area which could not be used for full burials because it lay on a rocky ledge, and on this was built the lovely circular stone Columbarium, a place of beauty and peace. This added a potential of 1,200 new spaces in the cemetery which would fulfill the needs of the community for many years to come.

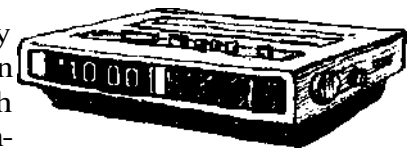
Another large capital expenditure was made for a new organ in 1978. The organ that had been installed at the time of the 1962 expansion had not lived up to expectations.



Apparently the design was faulty and there were many problems which could not be remedied. After much discussion it was decided to scrap the old organ and begin again with the purchase of a new Austin organ. One particularly noticeable difference was created by several ranks of the smaller pipes being brought out into the open and placed above the choir on either side of the chancel. The pipe room adjacent to the chancel was no longer as crowded as it had been, thereby improving the sound.

A new piano was also needed for the Meetinghouse, and in 1982 the search for a suitably fine concert grand was begun. A beautiful Steinway, for sale by Victor Borge, was acquired in 1983. During January and February the piano is moved to the auditorium where it is used by performers in the "Sunday Afternoons Live" concerts, a delightful series inaugurated in the last decade.

In 1967 the Sunday morning worship service began to be broadcast once a month live over WGCH radio in Greenwich and has been on the air



every week since 1974. This is an important community service which appeals to listeners of many faiths, and is especially appreciated by the elderly, shut-ins, and the ill.

A number of innovations have become very much apart of the life of First Church. One of the most enjoyed is Coffee Hour, which follows the Sunday morning worship service and is held outside in the Memory Garden in warm weather and during the remainder of the year in the Auditorium. This was begun in 1973 when the two services were dropped in favor of one at 10:00 in the morning. Coffee Hour is a time of good fellowship and has done much to strengthen the members' feeling of being a cohesive church family.

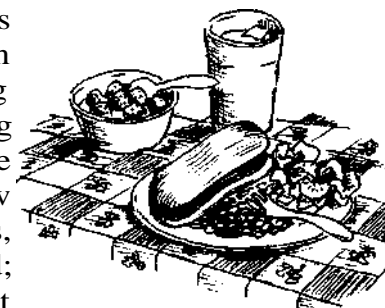


A second service was reinstated in 1979, but with a big difference! It takes place during June, July and August at 8:00 AM at Greenwich Point and has become increasingly well attended over the years. The beach service is informal, a "bring your own beach chair or blanket" affair, lasts only one-half hour, is often conducted by lay people and is usually an abbreviated version of the later service, often with communion. It is offered for those who sail, play golf or just like to start the day on the Point with God.



There are two annual picnics held on the church lawn, the first is in May on Music Sunday. This began in 1981, with the English Festival and is often a fish-and-chips feast with strawberries and cream for dessert. Maypole dancing by some of the church school children is a colorful celebration of spring. This extremely popular event is planned and organized by the Music Committee.

The second outing is usually held early in September, celebrating "Homecoming", the beginning of church school and all the other activities of the new church season. Hamburgers, hot dogs and chili are served; salads and desserts are "pot luck." There are games and other group activities. During the 1970s the Homecoming picnics were held at the Clambake Area of Greenwich Point.



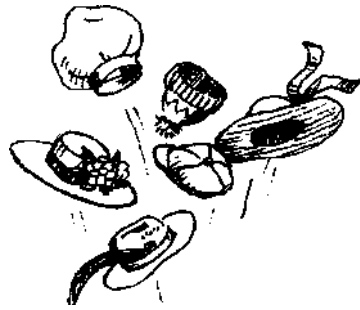
A number of Lenten programs have, taken place over the past twenty-five years, including Bible studies, movies on the life of Christ or other subjects that were symbolic or controversial, followed by discussion. Other events during Lent have been lectures, play reading, a study of Carl Jung's "Man and His Symbols," and inter-faith Seders led by local rabbis.



In recent years a series of interesting meetings have taken place with people from both St. Catherine of Siena Church in Riverside and First Church participating. Small groups have gathered in homes to discuss and discover the differences and similarities between Catholics and Protestants. These dialogues have led to a deepening understanding on both sides.



When Jean Simpson was Parish Associate, she initiated a Bereavement Support Group which has continued since her leaving First Church in 1988 to become Associate



Minister of the First Congregational Church of Darien. Dale Greene led Ash Wednesday services and started, in 1984, the very successful "Hats Off!" group for women, which now meets under the direction of Brigitta Remole on Thursday mornings. Dale Greene also formed "Springboard Singles," a group that filled a need for several years.

Every year in March the United Church of Christ conducts its "One Great Hour of Sharing" fund drive to which First Church members and friends always contribute generously. In the last few years First Church has adopted special causes and specified that their One Great Hour gifts be allocated for those needs. It began with Togo, West Africa, where the people were desperately in need of wells. Then there was mission work to be supported in Honduras and most recently in Turkey. The locations where these needs had been identified were visited by First Church staff and members for first-hand observation.



Structural renovations in the last few years include repairs to the heating system, the roof and the tower bells. A new fire alarm system was installed. A lot of external repairs have already been completed and further renovations and refurbishing of the Meetinghouse are being planned for 1991, while many other improvements are still necessary.

The Women's Fellowship provided the funds to redecorate the Lounge in 1981 with a new rug, furniture,

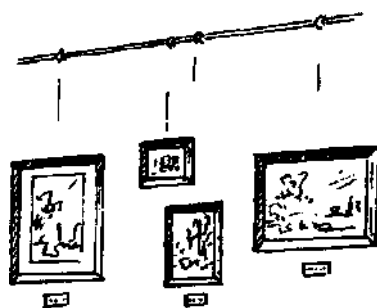
draperies, paint and pictures. The Bride's Room was refurbished also, in 1984, and a new curtain made for the stage in the Auditorium. In 1980 this active group also provided funds for church signs and for Lexan coverings for the stained glass windows to protect them from damage.

In 1988 the offices in the Parish House were redesigned and remodeled, major changes that were necessary for greater efficiency. These changes were made possible with monies raised in the Capital Improvements and Endowment Campaign, "First Church: A Commitment That Lasts Forever", during the years 1984-1988, conducted under the auspices of the Long Range Development Committee.



The grassy area between the two doorways to the education wing, just east of the main Meetinghouse entrance, was transformed into a lovely sitting area and garden with a flagstone sidewalk extending to a semi-circular area flanked by curved stone benches. This outdoor sitting area was given as a memorial by several families. Recently the outdoor area between the Meetinghouse doors was beautified and the front of the building on Sound Beach Avenue was illuminated, as memorials.

The last building change to take place in these twenty-five years was the creation of the Daniels Center named in memory of Dr. Vincent Daniels. This large space was formerly



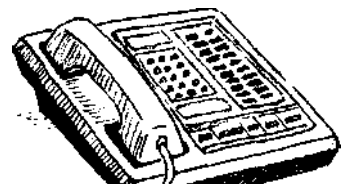
the gym. It had fallen into a serious state of disrepair and was no longer used as such. New walls and ceiling were built over the old to cover unattractive bare pipes. The walls were covered with carpeting for sound-proofing and durability, making an attractive background for art displays. The adjacent

kitchen, which dated from 1930 when the Parish House was built, has also been completely remodeled thanks to funds from the Women's Fellowship and the contributions to the 1986 three-year Capital Campaign. The new Daniels Center, dedicated at the Annual Meeting in January 1989, has become a versatile area for church school, family events and meetings.

There had been newsletters published intermittently for many years, but in 1966 the "Meetinghouse News" was begun and has since proved to be of great value in keeping the congregation and community in touch with what is going on at First Church. It is sent bimonthly during most of the year, and monthly during the summer.



A Church Administrator was added to the office staff in 1978 so that all business expenses and work assignments could be coordinated in one office. The administrator oversees the clerical and custodial staffs as well as the bookkeeping office. A large corps of office volunteers, with



a dedicated group of men and women who keep the gardens weeded and blooming, complement the staff.

A Canon photo copier, a Risograph stencil machine, and a Machintosh computer were added to the office equipment for use in publishing the "Meetinghouse News," the Sunday bulletins, the Annual Report and other church letters and notices.



First Church has been home to many groups. It began sponsoring Boy Scout Troop #3 in 1923. Now there are Cub Scouts Den #3, Sea Scout Ship #3 and Explorer Post #3. The Old Greenwich Association's annual meeting is held in the Auditorium. District 6 delegates of the Greenwich Representative Town Meeting meet in the Lounge. A Jewish study group, theater and dance groups, Alcoholics Anonymous, Junior League and Old Greenwich-Riverside Newcomers are among the many other organizations who use First Church space.

First Church has sponsored the Summer Youth Festival since Dr. Daniels' time. Each summer high school and college-age young people of the church and local communities produce a well-known musical, giving a large number of them an opportunity to display their talents as actors, dancers, designers, costume makers, technicians and business people. They use church facilities for try-outs and rehearsals and pay for that use. However, the Church backs the Youth Festival financially. There is an SYF steering committee, with liaison members from the Board of Trustees and the Diaconate. The production takes place in the Greenwich High School



auditorium; formerly the stage at Eastern Junior High School was used. The business manager, choreographer, and technical, managing and musical directors are all paid adults.

Every ten years, in 1969, 1979 and 1989, a Vision Committee, also known as Long Range Planning, has been formed to discuss such difficult questions as "Where have we been?", "What have we accomplished?", "Have we met our goals?", "Where do we want to go?", "What are our problems and how do we address them?". Looking back it would seem that a great many of First Church's visions have been brought to fulfillment, but time brings new problems and new visions for the future as the congregation searches for ways to better serve the church family, the local community, and world-wide mission.



LAY ADMINISTRATION

THE DIACONATE

The Diaconate is the mainstay of The Church Committee, the governing body of the church which must approve all policy and professional personnel changes. In addition, it is charged with serving the congregation by preparing and serving communion, with visiting the ill, elderly and shut-ins, and with providing spiritual leadership and support in situations of need.



Twenty-five years ago The Church Committee consisted of the members of the Board of Deacons and the Board of Deaconesses plus the Church Clerk and Benevolence Steward. The heads of major appointed committees might be present, but did not vote and were present for communication purposes only, to keep abreast of important decisions. The Church Committee then, as now, was chaired by the Senior Deacon, the head of the church. The separate Boards of Deacons and Deaconesses met monthly, usually with the Senior Pastor in attendance. The Senior Deacon and Deaconess presided at their respective meetings.

In 1972 a new post was created, Chair of the Board of Deacons. This new officer was to conduct meetings of the Deacons and relieve the Senior Deacon of various related responsibilities.

As a result of by-law amendments passed at annual meetings on January 25, 1979, and January 24, 1985, the president of the Women's Fellowship and the chair of the Music Committee are now voting members of the Church Committee.

Traditionally, the Deaconesses have done most of the visiting, note-writing such as cards and messages to shut-ins, and planning and serving at receptions following memorial services and at other special events. Communion was prepared by the Deaconesses and then served by the Deacons. Some calling was done by the Deacons, and a member of the Diaconate was assigned to be a liaison, non-voting member on each of the various committees and boards of First Church. The Senior Deacon has always assisted the pastors on occasion of baptism, reception of members, and confirmation.

In 1989 the separate Boards of Deacons and Deaconesses were merged into one Board of Deacons which included both men and women, all of whom are now called Deacons. Responsibilities of the former two boards are now shared by all the Deacons, including the preparation, serving of communion and clean-up. The assignment of the many responsibilities of the new Board was undertaken by the Chair. The Board of Deacons meets, together with the pastors, at about four-week intervals and, in addition, meets monthly as part of the Church Committee. The Church Committee institutes and acts upon church programs and activities while in their separate meetings the deacons emphasize the spiritual concerns of the church.

It is interesting to note that the emergence of women from traditional roles to positions of importance in business, finance and politics has been mirrored in the church. Twenty-five years ago only men ushered and served communion, while now these and other duties on all boards and committees are shared equally by men and women. In the role of Senior Deacon two women have served, in 1975 and 1981. The last decade has seen more women than men entering the ministry from First Church, and since the mid-1980's there have been more women than men on the professional staff.



MISSION STATEMENT

Written by the Diaconate in 1988

Acknowledging our dependence on God's grace our mission is to seek to know and make known God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit through

- + *Common worship*
- + *Celebration of the sacraments*
- + *Outreach*
- + *Christian education*
- + *Parish care*
- + *Stewardship of God's creation*
- + *Proclamation of the Gospel by work and deed*
- + *Fellowship in a vital community of faith*

In this mission we respect the right of private judgment and pray for God's continued revelation. We seek with love to provoke, inspire and challenge each other in our faith as it manifests itself in our daily lives.

Ever aware of our needs, we acknowledge as our Biblical mandate the call to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, receive the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick and visit the prisoner. (Matthew 25:35)

We shall celebrate the awe, mystery and wonder of life and faith, rejoicing and giving thanks.



Past Senior Deacons

First row, left to right: Harlan Reynolds, 1987; William Porter II, 1977; Ruth White, 1981; Allie Holmes, 1975; Curtis Carlson, 1989; Warren Dennison, 1956-57

Second row: Gerald Isaacson, 1988; George Fisk, 1969 & 1970; Clark Whittemore, 1976; Donald Freeman, 1979

Third row: Ferdinand Veith, 1980; Leon MacKenzie, 1973; Bruce Benedict, 1971; Arthur Delmhorst, 1985; Kenneth Olson, 1986; Robert Wilson, 1978

Missing from the picture: James Kratzer, 1965; Edward Newton, 1966; Haven Knight, 1968; Fred Pinkham, 1972; Edward Holden, 1974; Henry Van Buren, 1982; Michael Chapman, 1983; John Lehman, 1984; also, missing from the picture is James Sotzing, 1990 Senior Deacon

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

First Church is a large and vital organization whose central focus is the Sunday morning worship service. The many activities and meetings which keep things humming from early morning until late at night are spin-offs from the concept that all members are "ministers," sent forth to do the will of God and to witness to Christ. From the youngest children in church school, to the oldest shut-ins, First Church offers worship, education, fellowship, study, comfort, hope, caring and help, not only to its members and the community around it, but in outreach around the world.



The 15-member Board of Trustees is entrusted with keeping the place where all of this happens in good condition, and with providing the funds to pay the salaries of a staff—professional, clerical and custodial—large enough to be able to take care of the needs of the congregation. The lovely grounds and historic cemetery have to be maintained also. This is only made possible by the generous financial support of every member of the congregation. The Board works long and hard to manage the endowment funds and the money raised in the annual stewardship drives.

The Board meets on the third Wednesday of the month. There are several members who are responsible for particular areas of care, i.e. the cemetery, maintenance of buildings and grounds. In addition to the Chair, there is a Vice-Chair as well as a Treasurer and a Financial Secretary, the latter being responsible for counting and depositing the Sunday offering. The Treasurer and Financial Secretary are ex-officio but have a vote, according to the by-laws.

Unlike the membership and church attendance numbers, which have fluctuated, the yearly budget has gone

only one way - up, reflecting the needs and inflation of the past quarter century. These increases have largely been met through the generosity of the congregation.

In 1965 the operating budget was \$225,679 of which \$167,626 came from pledges and the balance from endowment funds, interest and special bequests. Ten years later the budget was \$236,423 and pledges amounted to \$189,895. By 1985 the budget had climbed to \$516,401 and pledge income to \$356,353. At the beginning of our 325th anniversary year, the proposed budget for 1990 was \$660,000 and anticipated pledges total \$551,000.

In addition to paying the operating costs and maintaining the buildings and grounds, there is always the chance of funds being required to overcome an unexpected crisis, such as the failure of the heating system on a wintry Sunday morning or the roofs springing a leak. Recently there have been many major improvements, long overdue, such as a new boiler, roof and wall restoration, a new fire alarm system, and emergency lighting.

These large capital expenses are financed in various ways. From time to time there is a capital fund drive, separate from the stewardship campaign. The Trustees are committed to not touching the endowment funds and to using only half the income generated by the funds, the other half being reinvested. Somehow, with wise management, the money is usually found when the need arises, in spite of the ever-tight budget!

Several properties have been purchased, or were already owned by the church, as homes for various ministers, and sometimes sold as ministers left or wished to purchase their own homes. Four houses are still owned by First Church in 1990.

THE CHURCH CLERK

According to the Church Clerk, who keeps the records of membership and attendance, in 1965 the total membership of First Church was 2,502. There were 169 new members that year and 49 transferred or had died. On Sundays the average attendance was 465 with 63 in the choir, a total of 27,488 for the year. It should be noted that, at the time, there were two worship services each Sunday morning, one at 9:15 and the other at 11:00. It is interesting to consider how membership and attendance numbers have varied over the past twenty-five years. By 1975 the recorded membership and attendance had dwindled sharply. However, in 1972 and 1973, the church rolls had been reviewed and revised, resulting in 339 names being placed on the inactive list or completely removed. Since each U. C. C. church in Connecticut pays a "head tax" to the state conference based on the number of its members, this was a job well worth doing. As of December 31, 1975, the membership numbered 1,559. New members totaled 70, and 102 members had been removed because of transfer, death, or inactivity. Average Sunday attendance was 315.

After another ten years, in 1985, the church rolls numbered 1,823, 101 new members having been added that year and 38 removed. Total attendance for the year was 17,409. At two services on Easter Sunday the number was 1,025; at the three Christmas Eve services, 1,362. On Music Sunday 675 were present.

On January 1, 1990, there were 1,757 active members of First Church.

In the preceding year 72 new members had joined and there was a loss of 65. During 1989 the Sunday worship

service total attendance was approximately 18,710, with an average Sunday attendance of 353. Easter Sunday attendance was 1,008 plus 600 early-risers at Greenwich Point for the sunrise service. Attendance on Music Sunday was 490 and at the Christmas Eve services, 1,314.

The greatest attendance has always occurred during Lent, culminating in the Easter services, and during Advent, ending with Christmas. The lightest attendance comes during the summer months.

CHRISTIAN OUTREACH



Over the years First Church has become increasingly aware of the needs of others outside the church family and has tried to affirm Christian hope and love by giving. The Christian Outreach Committee is responsible for identifying and allocating funds for missions following the dictum:

"Truly, I say to you, whenever you did this for one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did it for me." (Matthew 25:40)

The report of the Benevolence Steward, Chair of the Benevolence Committee, for 1965 showed that the total First Church benevolent enterprises came to \$23, 621. Of this, the Benevolent Fund contributed \$17,209, with the rest coming from the Women's Guild, the Evening Guild and the Religious Education Department. This amounted to \$6,413 from various fund-raising activities. That year \$776.79 was given for One Great Hour of Sharing.

The growth of the benevolence program at First Church had been modest, as large amounts had recently been spent on enlarging the meetinghouse and new programs. However, by 1967 the church was virtually free of debt and it was hoped that benevolences could be expanded. The Church Committee authorized the formation of a new sub-committee, the Benevolence Committee, to be

responsible to The Church Committee for the administration of these funds. The major part of that money went to "Our Christian World Mission," to support the work of the United Church of Christ. About 22% was used for Connecticut, 23% for Homeland Ministries, 27% for World Ministries, and the balance for other organizations such as the Pension Board and Stewardship Council.

It was felt that a stronger commitment must be made to benevolences, and in 1968 a goal was set, to be reached in three years, to give at least 25% of every pledge dollar for benevolences. Giving was expanded to include support for a seminary, a building fund for a hospital in Puerto Rico, "seed" money for a day-care center in Stamford, support for the new chaplaincy service in Greenwich, scholarships for young Africans, and aid to a family service center for Arab refugees in the Holy Land. The number of supported causes has grown each year.

The Social Action Committee, which was formed in 1969, and the Benevolence Committee merged in 1970 to act as a Board of Christian Outreach. It was hoped that this would strengthen their efforts to encourage greater financial support for their areas of concern.

The Benevolence Fund, in 1975, disbursed \$33,655, almost twice the amount of ten years earlier. The One Great Hour of Sharing offering totaled \$3,092, and the benevolences from the Congregators and Women's Fellowship were \$21,359. In addition, \$1,000 was being held in a special savings account for the Organ Fund.

Many new projects were being helped, such as Call-a-Ride East (to serve the elderly in the Old Greenwich-Riverside area), the Youth Shelter in Greenwich, relief to Guatemala following a devastating earthquake, the American Indian Fund. In 1976 First Church sponsored a resolution at the

Annual Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ. Over one thousand delegates approved the motion to support the establishment of a Housing Court by the State General Assembly.

In 1977 there was a substantial increase in the money allotted to Christian outreach and \$2,000 for each of two years was pledged to the building fund of the Miracle Temple, a new black UCC church in Norwalk. Twelve other Fairfield West UCC churches pledged as well, making a total of \$50,000 for this project.

New projects were added year by year to meet pressing human needs. The Christian World Mission continued to receive the main emphasis as it can best give help on global, national and state levels. In 1979 two medical missionaries to India, Dr. and Mrs. Edward C. Riggs, were "adopted," under the auspices of the UCC Stewardship Council. This was a "Second Mile" project, and First Church became the only Second Mile church in New England.

Closer to home, First Church helped to resettle two Vietnamese families (13 in all) who came from refugee camps in 1980. They were given temporary housing, furniture, household items, cars, clothing, as well as help in finding jobs and tutoring in the English language. Also supported were the Carver Center in Port Chester, Pilgrim Towers, Community Return, Hill House, Hotline and the Rape Crisis Center.

In 1982 the Second Mile Program selected Richard and Nancy Sales of Zambia as missionaries for First Church, and in 1984 the Reverend Allen and Judy Myrick as missionaries in Zimbabwe. As always, baskets of food for distribution to the needy were filled at the Harvest Sunday "Neighbor to Neighbor" offering, the Sunday before Thanksgiving.

1984 was the year when the One Great Hour of Sharing offering was first designated to be used for one specific purpose. The generous gifts totaling approximately \$30,000 enabled the Evangelical Church of Togo, West Africa, to buy a new drilling rig for an area in desperate need of water. This has now brought water to over thirty-two villages. First Church received special commendation for this from the UCC Board of World Mission.

In 1985 the One Great Hour of Sharing money went to a UCC church in Honduras, to help fund a project (PRODIZONAH), to train health and agricultural workers in Honduran villages. Sally Colegrove went to Honduras to learn about the work being done there and the following year Dr. Stiers led a group from the church to the area.

Outreach disbursements were down slightly in 1985, from \$107,634 in 1984, to \$100,071. The One Great Hour of Sharing, \$30,574 in 1984, was \$23,308 in 1985. Still, it was a dramatic increase over 1965 and 1975!



New needs continue to be met. The Food Bank, Interfaith Caregivers, Friendship House, Prison

Visitation, the Stamford Shelter for the Homeless, Adopt-a-House and the Soup Kitchen are projects with a difference—members of the congregation can actually take part in the work.



In 1988 and '89 the One Great Hour of Sharing focus was on the rural poor in the Van and Cubuk areas of Turkey. A group led by Sally Colegrove and Wendy Reynolds, Chair of the Outreach Committee, visited Turkey and met with missionaries and officials of the Development Foundation

of Turkey to see the villages and discuss their needs. Of particular importance was setting up training for women, first to help them understand good hygiene and nutrition and to support their families, and second, that as breadwinners their status would be greatly enhanced. At present there are 110 women who are learning rug-weaving skills and making Kilim rugs to sell in Europe and elsewhere.

In 1989 the One Great Hour of Sharing offering reached \$27,281, and the total giving from the Outreach Committee was \$110,481. The total outreach from the Women's Fellowship was \$123,500, making the First Church benevolent giving for that year \$234,481.

All of the needs that have been met are far too numerous to mention. First Church is truly reaching out to the world with its outreach.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious Education has four facets: Church School, Pre-School, Adult Education and Day Camp —activities presided over by The Religious Education Committee.



THE CHURCH SCHOOL

The Church School has always been characterized by richly imaginative programs, not only to teach the Bible but to put into actual experience the caring and concern learned from that study.

In 1965 Frances H. Milnes was the new Director of Religious Education. Two "pilot classes" were begun to try out the lesson material under the most advantageous possible teaching conditions. Only those children with the

best attendance records were asked to enroll in these classes, and at Christmas there was a trip to the Hayden Planetarium to see "Christmas and the Star," for those children. Food was collected by the children for the Social Services Department of Greenwich at Thanksgiving, mittens for the American Friends Service Committee at Christmas, and they also raised money at Easter for Missions to

In 1966 the church library was expanded and audio-visual equipment improved. There were three choirs—Cherub, Junior and Senior—and a Christmas Manger Service was presented in which 120 children participated. In 1967 it was noted that although the First Church school was the fourth largest in Connecticut, enrollment continued to decrease, as was the national trend.



Indians in North Dakota.

Church School registration has followed the pattern of church attendance since 1965. It started high with an enrollment of 777 at two sessions plus 102 teachers and assistants at the height of the baby boom, dropped to a low point in the early 1980's, but has been slowly regaining numbers since then.

Frances Milnes, who later married Donald Woodward, resigned in 1969 and was replaced by Alice Berry the following year. Marion Johnson, wife of Associate Minister R. Alan Johnson, served as interim Director for several months. There were special teacher training sessions and a junior high program was added to the curriculum. A new emphasis on involving the whole family was apparent. Family Night suppers were held, as well as a Family Retreat.

In 1973 the transition from two sessions to one was made, and the tradition of "Recognition Sunday" was begun. This Sunday celebrates and recognizes the contributions of teachers and students during the Church School year and takes place in late spring as the Church School concludes its year together. Children help plan and participate in this service, and the third graders receive Bibles.



The Church School has continued to be actively involved with outreach such as "One Great Hour of Sharing," to hold family suppers, and for several years there were Advent stained-glass cookie workshops. The early 1970's also saw activities such as the making of a "Jesse Tree"; modeling a Palestinian village in clay; gathering the fruits of "Hanishah Asar Bishvat", which is the Hebrew "New Year of the Trees"; making a Madonna and Child of papier-mache; and baking a large birthday cake for the Sunday worshippers to celebrate the Church's birthday at Pentecost.

In 1972 the classes earned money to help sponsor several Puerto Rican young people so that they could attend an August conference at Silver Lake. In 1974 Alice Berry moved away to take another position.

In 1976 the Church School celebrated the United States' Bicentennial by studying the history of Congregationalism and First Church. As a part of their program a colonial-style worship was held one Sunday. Mary Ann Chidsey became Church School Administrator that year, working closely with Ann Suzadell, Interim Associate Pastor. Since that time church history has become a regular part of the Church School curriculum.

There was a major reorganization in the Religious Education Committee in 1976 when it came under the direct supervision of Paul Fraser, new Associate Pastor, and Mary Ann Chidsey, and the "task force" concept was begun with class parents sharing the work involved with non-class programs and events. The next year enrollment stood at 257 with a teaching staff of 27, a Task Force of 25, and 16 Junior Teachers. There were visits to shut-ins, a Christmas toy collection, and bandage-making for leprosy hospitals. In addition, field trips were taken to the Cloisters, a church in Chinatown and the Graymoor Monastery in Garrison, New York.

The decade of the 1980's began with an emphasis on ecology/theology — "Caring about the World." The fall Homecoming Dinner for parents and children celebrated the 200th anniversary of the Sunday School Movement in the United States. In 1982 Mary Ann Chidsey resigned, and Meg Boxwell took her place in August of that year. A workshop on children leading worship was lead by the Reverend Shannon Clarkson of West Haven for parents, children and teachers. Children's participation in leading worship has continued as a result. The following year the "Sand Dollars"— child care during summer worship, was started. The children's choir was active under the leadership of Meg Boxwell and Kathy Anderson, and the Women's Fellowship enabled them to purchase several Orff instruments.

In 1985 Meg Boxwell who was ordained at First Church in 1983 resigned, and Kathy Verdier came as her interim replacement. The Church School had only 169 children registered at that time. In 1988 Susan M. Craig, who had served First Church for a year as Parish Associate while attending Yale Divinity School, took over as Director of Children's Ministries. The students now have regular time of worship. They write their own prayers and litanies,



read scriptures and participate in dramas. The children's choir is led by Claudine Jackson. At Christmas an older youth choir has been developed. The nursery has expanded into separate infant and toddler groups. As of January 1, 1990, the Church School membership stands at 252, with 27 teachers, 10 junior teachers, a task force of 14, and numerous other dedicated volunteers for special events.

As the children grow up in the Church School they concentrate on the following curriculum areas: Biblical storytelling, the Bible for daily life, church history, the United Church of Christ, worship and prayer, seasons of the church year, conflict reconciliation and affirmation, and mission and outreach. Teaching is usually done in teams using traditional and creative techniques. The children come to see themselves as part of the church school family as they gather for children's worship, and as part of the larger church as they participate in the events and activities during the church year.



Underlying First Church's ministry to children is the philosophy that:

"We at First Church would have our children know that they are precious in the sight of God; that they are never forgotten, never deserted, always forgiven, and always loved by their Creator."

FIRST CHURCH PRESCHOOL

The First Church Nursery School was started in 1955 by Peg Roberts, with fifteen preschool children. Under her dedicated and expert guidance it soon acquired a reputation for excellence and in 1965 had an enrollment of sixty, its maximum capacity, and a waiting list. That year a Nursery School Committee was formed as a sub-committee of the Religious Education Committee. A profit of over \$2000 was turned over to the church, as have profits of succeeding years.

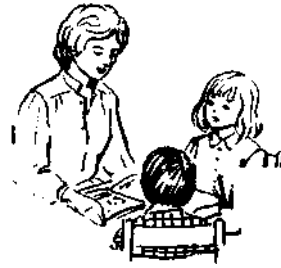


In 1968 double sessions were begun, with a pilot afternoon program of 20 four-year-olds augmenting the morning schedule of 60 three- and four-year-old children. To carry on this increased program new staff was added.

Peg Roberts continued as Director of the Nursery School until her death in 1978. Parental involvement was always welcomed, and the school held coffees for mothers and special evening programs included fathers. The Benevolence Committee provided money for scholarships and there were short field trips.

In 1979 Wendy Silverman was chosen as Director, and remained in that capacity until 1984. During that time the name of the school was changed to First Church Preschool, and it was decided to offer a new program for three-year-olds, three days a week. Also added were the "Lunchkins" for three- and four-year-olds, which met from 11:45 to 1:00p.m. three days a week. The "Lunch Bunch," an added section of four-year-olds, was another successful innovation.

In 1985 and 1986 Sandy Plickert was Director, and Jacquelyn Denning in 1987. Then came Michael Homer in 1988 and in 1989, Jacqueline Kahl. During this period of change, the preschool has continued to flourish. A check was presented to First Church for use in the Daniels Center renovations. Because of successful fund-raisers by parents, some new playground equipment was purchased. As was the case in 1965, there has been a long waiting list each year, a testament to the high regard and enthusiasm which is felt for the First Church Preschool by the community.





Dr. Herman Reissig

ADULT EDUCATION

The Adult Education subcommittee of the Religious Education Committee was formed in 1968 as a result of the Vision Committee report, a First Church long range planning effort. The subcommittee work produced two Sunday morning adult seminars in 1969, one on comparative religions and a

second titled "What Do We

Believe?". These were followed, in 1970, by Sunday morning discussions for adults and two new Sunday morning seminars in 1972 for adults and youth. The 1972 seminars were titled "Drama of the Whole Bible" and "Further Reaches of Christian Love."

In 1973 the Adult Education subcommittee presented a Lenten series followed by Sunday morning seminars on the right to die and aid to Cuba. Each of the morning sessions resulted in a resolution that was presented at General Synod. At this point the Religious Education Committee felt, to quote from the Annual Report, there was "an urgent need to promote discussion of the deeper convictions of our faith, which mold our daily lives. It is through sharing our beliefs and our concerns that we can become more significant in our own lives and in the lives of others."

The 1974 and 1975 programs, developed as something more than study groups or seminars, covered such topics as aging, China, law, death, and spirit in the arts.

In later years, topics ranged from the Vatican, presented by Reverend Vincent O'Connor, beloved Pastor at

Riverside's Saint Catherine of Siena Church, to the United Church of Christ's leadership in Asia. Other subject matter extended from business ethics to human rights, medical ethics to AIDS, Greenwich-Stamford social service needs to international social problems, peace to criminal justice, the Holy Spirit to Islam, the Greenwich Youth Shelter to creative retirement, holistic medicine to the Christian funeral. In addition to informing the congregation, the Second Hour, the name by which these after-church sessions had come to be called, has been used to gather reactions and ideas from the congregation, to permit the congregation to respond to sermon subjects, and to encourage and train the congregation for lay preaching and the writing of spiritual journals.

Second Hour programs have been sponsored by the Congregators, by the Christian Outreach, Stewardship, Worship, Family Life, Music and Church in Society committees, and by the various youth task forces, as well as by Adult Education.

"The material read or discussed in Second Hour programs becomes a vehicle for concerned sharing—a kind of probing, reading, helping mutual exploration of the perplexing problems we all share as humans in search of a deeper faith and a fuller life." (The Reverend Sam Newcomer, 1974)

BIBLE STUDY

Adult Bible classes have been offered by the pastors of First Church for many years, but with the advent of the



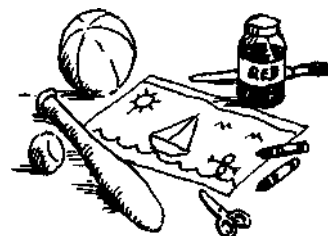
Bethel Series course of study, the number attending has increased greatly. The course takes two years to complete, the first year covering the Old Testament and the second, the New Testament. The Bible is read from beginning to end, and the participants are encouraged to

"think Hebrew," as the Jews taught by means of stories or parables not meant to be taken literally. The story of Adam and Eve, for instance, is one of these. Those of European descent, however, have been brought up to "think Greek," or literally, so that many of the wonderfully wise lessons in the Bible are hard to understand.

Bethel Bible presents the Bible in a different way. Training of those who teach the course, whether pastors or lay people, takes two years of intensive study under the tutelage of the Senior Pastor.

FIRST CHURCH DAY CAMP

The First Church Day Camp, having been started several



years prior to 1965, was under the direction of William Zboray, a teacher at Eastern Junior High School. There were 122 children enrolled in the 7-12-year-old group, and 93 "Periwinkles," aged 4,5 and 6 years. Camp was in session for six weeks, with three

enrollment periods of two weeks each. It offered a varied program of athletics, arts and crafts, nature study, swimming instruction overseen by a Red Cross certified swimming director, cook-outs, field trips to nearby places of interest, and three full days at Island Beach, one during each two-week session. Mornings were spent at the church and in Binney Park; lunch was in a picnic area at Greenwich Point, followed by swimming after a quiet time. The Periwinkles met in the morning only, went to the beach for swimming lessons for a shorter time, and left camp before lunch.

At the close of the 1965 season, a Day Camp Committee was formed as a subcommittee of the Religious Education Committee to oversee the affairs of the camp. That year the camp made a donation of \$1,000 to the church. Scholarships have always been offered to children in the church and community.

In 1969 First Church Day Camp was accredited by the American Camping Association, the only camp in Greenwich at that time to have achieved that distinction. In 1972 something new was added—an overnight camp-out.

In 1982 an "extended day" program for children aged 4-6 was introduced and well attended. Following

this enrollment trend, the Day Camp Committee made changes in the structure of the camp

Mr. Zboray left following the 1982 season, and in 1983 Rita Caruso became Camp Director, serving for four years. An "early day" program was offered for children aged 3-5, and a "full day" for 6-8 year olds. By now the enrollment stood at 300. In 1987 and 1988 Lynne Lehman was Director as was Kerry Stratton in 1989 when the camp again secured the State of Connecticut camp license.

The Day Camp continues its outreach to the community by offering scholarships and contributing its profit to First Church. It has filled a need for both children and families which has been much appreciated for many years.



7

MUSIC

In 1966, Gerald Mack, who was Choral Director at Greenwich High School and Choir Director at First Church for ten years, resigned and moved to Hartford to teach at the Hartt College of Music. Richard Vogt, who lived in New York City, replaced Mr. Mack and began his work at First Church in October 1966. This ushered in an era of unparalleled richness in music, and few churches have been exposed to such variety and excellence as has First Church in the last twenty-four years.

Many outstanding singers came to First Church as soloists with the choir and at special events through Richard Vogt's contacts in New York, where he worked as both conductor and singer. These included Seth McCoy, Jan DeGaetani, Ara Berberian, Cynthia Clarey, Elaine Bonazzi, Jake Gardner, Clamma Dale, John Aler, Lorna Haywood, Thomas Pyle, Elizabeth Humes, Ben Holt, Brenda Harris, and Thomas Woodman, who had grown up in the church. All of these singers have performed with opera companies and major symphony orchestras all over the world. And there was also Sir Peter Pears, the great English tenor who founded the Aldeburgh Festival in England with composer Benjamin Britten. Sir Peter sang and took part in services and concerts at First Church whenever he was in this country.

George Matthews was Organist at the church when Richard Vogt became Choir Director. Mr. Matthews

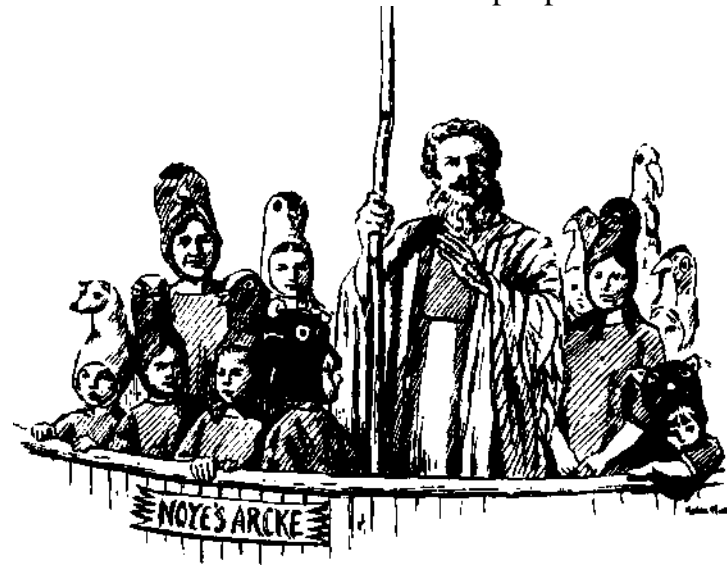
resigned in 1968, and Porter Remington, a livery, talented southern lady, became organist until 1972. Other organists during the succeeding years included David Johnson, Thomas Strickland, Jon Hunt, Jayson Engquist and Scott Youngs. All of these musicians contributed their talent and energy to the busy music program of the church. John Stansell was appointed to the position in 1988. He also serves as organist-in-residence at Moravian College, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and maintains an active recital schedule, especially in West Germany.

The major choral work performed by The Chancel Choir in 1965 was Mozart's "Litany in B-flat," directed by Gerald Mack and accompanied by a string ensemble and organ. The Junior and Senior Choirs, numbering 112, sang on Family Sundays and sometimes at Church School worship services in the auditorium. During the summer, music was provided by small ensembles from The Chancel Choir or a youth choir from the Summer Youth Festival, and by soloists.

Handel's "Messiah" (Part *T*) was first presented in December 1966, drawing people of different faiths in the community into a chorus of more than 100, together with guest soloists, chamber orchestra, harpsichord and organ. Now more than 200 choristers take part in this annual event on the Sunday before Christmas, and spaces are saved each year for college choristers who return home in time for the dress rehearsal and performance. Many of these choristers, and others from the Greenwich Choral Society, which Mr. Vogt has conducted since 1973, take part in other major music events at the church and sing as The First Church Chorus. The Chancel Choir, however, is the faithful backbone of the music program and sings year-round at Sunday worship services.



The Recorder Group for both children and adults and The Palmer Handbells (55 bells, Whitechapel Bell Foundry, London) were organized in Mr. Vogt's early years at the church. May 1968 marked the first production of Benjamin Britten's "Noye's Fludde," a spectacular event that involved more than 300 children and adults. Most of the costumes and scenery were designed and made by men and women at the church, all within the space of three months. Noah and his Ark sailed into the Meetinghouse and captured hearts and imaginations with the great Biblical story. Ara Berberian, bass of the Metropolitan Opera, was Noah, and he has performed in every repeat production of First Church's "Fludde." For the congregation, Ara IS Noah, and he comes to Old Greenwich every four years as a reminder of God's rainbow covenant with His people.



"The Boar's Head and Yule Log Festival" (1969) became a Christmastide "Noah's Fludde", involving hundreds of children and adults in the old English celebration. A peal of bells and a flourish of trumpets herald the approach of the Boar's Head, which is borne in state on a trencher

bedecked with bays and rosemary. Since ancient times the fierce wild boar has been a symbol of evil. The presentation of the slain Boar's Head signifies the victory of the Christ Child over evil and wickedness. The Boar's Head Festival includes a company of monks and musicians. There is singing, dancing and feasting, plus the traditional mummers' Christmas play, "Saint George and the Dragon," which also portrays the triumph of good with the noisy demise of the Dragon. The festival ends with a tableau of Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus. These parts are often portrayed by a father and mother who are members of the congregation, and their newborn baby.



May 1981 will long be remembered as the month of the British Festival. It began on May 1 with the British actress/singer/comedienne Hermione Gingold, and the ever-present strawberries and cream — a memorable evening in a refurbished auditorium. The festival included a series of British films; the play, "The Hollow Crown," was presented by Cameo Theatre; the Greenwich Morris Men from New York City danced in front of the firehouse on Sound Beach Avenue; Angle's Colonial Inn was renamed "Trafalgar Tavern" for a day's life as an English pub, complete with darts, scotch eggs, bangers, beers and ales. There were travelogues on Scotland and Wales; a demonstration of English cooking; and a twilight organ recital by John Scott, organist at St. Paul's Cathedral in London. An English Country Dance was held for church members, and the Daughters of the British Empire presented a formal tea. Afternoon "high" teas were given every Saturday and Sunday. A round-robin tennis tournament (Wimbledon West) took

place in Binney Park; the Yale Concert Choir performed a concert of British music; fish 'n' chips and strawberries and cream were served on the church lawn, with Maypole Dances as entertainment "A night at the Proms" was another major music event, with soloists Cynthia Clarey, Jake Gardner, John Aler, the Greenwich High School Jazz Ensemble, and the Christ Church Boys Choir. Britten's "Noye's Fludde" on May 30 and 31 ended a fantastic celebration, and Aletha Carlton's festival banner hangs in the auditorium as a beautiful reminder.

Other events through the years have included two productions of Dave Brubeck's "La Fiesta de la Posada," an Epiphany pageant which portrays the coming of the Wise Men to the manger in a contemporary Mexican manner. Dave Brubeck took part in these performances, together with The First Church Chorus and guest soloists. He returned for Music Sunday 1984, and again for Music Sunday 1990.

"Christ Crucified" is a drama that has been presented several times on Good Friday night. It was written by Richard Vogt and pictures the final days of Jesus' life and his crucifixion. Many members of the congregation have taken part in the drama.



Several years ago The Chancel Choir journeyed to New York for performances of Brahms' "Requiem" and the Verdi "Requiem" with the Riverside Church Choir. Richard Vogt conducted and Frederick Swann was organist. The choir also performed Bach's "St. John Passion" with the Knickerbocker Chorale of northern New Jersey, both at First Church and in New Jersey.

Other events have included "60 Minutes" and "An Election Day Special," celebrations of America in music and words. Poulenc's "Gloria" and Bernstein's "Chichester Psalms" were sung on Music Sundays. In 1969 Alice Parker, American composer and educator, conducted "Alice's Workshop," a two-day focus on music for children and adults. There have also been community hymn-sings by the water in Binney Park and carol caravans through the town at Christmas. An important addition to the hymnal was published in 1983, the booklet "Hymns+Carols." It was compiled by Richard Vogt and a committee and contains some old favorites not found in the Pilgrim Hymnal, together with many contemporary hymns.



A new organ designed by Austin Organs of Hartford was installed in 1978. Frederick Swann played the dedication recital, and The Chancel Choir and The Palmer Handbells also took part. The new organ was also the reason for another celebration, "Festival '78," which included two major concerts with chorus, orchestra and guest soloists, including Sir Peter Pears.

Music Sundays were scheduled on a Sunday in late May each year, and these were often followed by Maypole Dances on the lawn and an outdoor brunch, usually fish 'n' chips, strawberries and cream. In 1990 it was an early American brunch, with turkey and all the trimmings in celebration of First Church's 325th anniversary.

"Sunday Afternoons Live" has become a post-Christmas series of concerts in the auditorium since 1983. These one-hour candlelight programs are presented at four o'clock during January and February. They are remarkable for the diversity of talent, from jazz to Schubert song cycles. Artists on this series have included Benita Valente, soprano, and

John Aler, tenor; Eduardus Halim, pianist; Jerome Carrington, cellist, and Elaine Bonazzi, mezzo-soprano; Leonard Raver, Scott Youngs, and John Stansell, organists; Brigitte

Fassbaender, mezzo-soprano; Dave Brubeck; E. Thomas and Carol Woodman, baritone and soprano; The Leonardo Trio; The



EOS String Quartet; The New York Philharmonic Quartet; Stephen Burns, trumpeter; and many others. Those who attend are offered Twinings Tea, hot chocolate and other refreshments. Twinings is served because it tastes

so good, and also because Twinings gave Richard Vogt 5,000 tea bags (long gone!) for the British Festival in '81. No tickets are required for these concerts, or any other music event at First Church. Donations are accepted to help defray costs. These programs are a delightful way to spend cold mid-winter afternoons.

Through the years Richard Vogt has made the congregation and the Greenwich community aware of church events through his design of programs, Advent calendars, brochures and flyers. He has been the catalyst for the Harvest Sunday service, the outdoor crèche with live animals, the Advent wreath, and the laurel leaves circling the columns in the Meetinghouse at Christmas.

For projects, for countless music and dramatic events, Richard Vogt has had the tremendous help of staff, choirs, music committees and other volunteers. His creative talents have made First Church a special place for music and the arts, and he has also reached out to the larger Greenwich community and brought that community into the life of the church. His concern for peace in the world, his celebration of America and his joy in children and animals — all these have been part of the fabric of music at First Church.

ORGANIZATIONS

THE WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

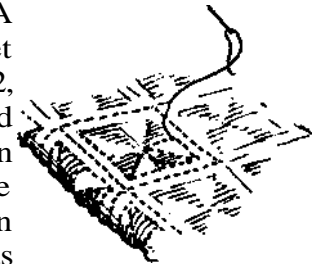
During the past 25 years the women of First Church have continued to be an active force, both spiritually and financially. The Women's Guild, the daytime group which was the outgrowth of the Ladies Aid Society, and the Evening Guild, which served the younger women, were each attracting over 150 of our church members in 1965. By 1968 it became apparent that the members of the Women's Guild would benefit from the vitality and youth of the Evening Guild, and a merger of the two groups took place, with monthly noontime meetings in the Parish House and circle interest groups meeting mornings and evenings in members' homes. The combined groups became known as the Women's Fellowship. As more and more women were becoming employed over the next decade, the circles were replaced in 1977 by the Evening Fellowship, a multi-generational group of women who were unable to attend the regular monthly daytime meetings of the Fellowship.

Foresightedly, four members of the Women's Guild, Ruth Wright, Barbara Miller, Ruth Cadley and Martha Fingerle,



had seen the possibility of expanding the immensely popular once-a-year rummage sale into a year-round store in the village. The Rummage Room was opened in the fall of 1964 at 191 Sound Beach Avenue under the management of Ruth Wright and Barbara Miller. Through the dedication over the ensuing years of several hundred volunteers, the store passed the million dollar mark in 1989 of monies turned over to Fellowship benevolences. In recent years The Rummage Room has been operating under the able management of Betty Edgar. Benevolences have been far-reaching, with roughly one-third of the funds each year addressing worldwide concerns, one third going to local and state needs, and one third supporting First Church.

An annual Antiques Show was begun in 1970 and continues to be a successful enterprise with over 100 women actively involved each year. A Mother-Daughter Banquet became an annual event in 1972, and a weekly quilting group, called the "Kettle Quitters," was begun the following year. A daytime bridge tournament was started in 1974, and a discussion group "Hats Off!" began meeting in 1984.



The monthly meetings have featured outstanding spiritual speakers as well as panel discussions, lectures on Christian outreach, field trips, Rummage Room fashion shows, and luncheons for residents of area housing projects for the elderly.

Service projects have included the sewing of layettes for distribution through the state Fellowship, collecting clothes

for depressed areas in Maine and Appalachia, making outfits for Honduran children and cooking meals for the Fellowship's Helping Hands. The women in the Fellowship have constantly been called upon and responded to the needs of First Church for anniversary, ordination and memorial receptions, refurbishing the kitchens and meeting rooms, and other special projects.

In 1965 the net income of the Women's Guild was \$13,400, of which \$12,000 was earned by the Rummage Room. Of that, \$4,500 was contributed toward the reduction of the building fund debt and \$5,500 was given to benevolences. The Evening Guild gave \$1,410 to various missions.

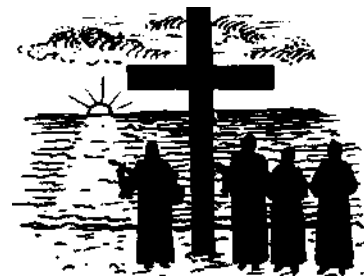
Ten years later the Women's Fellowship gave \$21,400 to benevolences and in 1985 the total giving by the Fellowship had increased to \$103,362. In 1989 the amount allocated for benevolences was \$123,500.

THE YOUTH PROGRAM

In this century young people have been a priority for First Church. From Alden Mosshammer's fireside fellowship groups in the 1930's to the present, the youth program has been a strong component of the educational ministry. Formal church school classes have culminated in eighth grade. Ninth graders historically have been The Pastor's Class, meeting after church or on a weekday evening.



Beginning with the expansion of First Church membership in the 1950's and under the guidance of



Vincent Daniels, the fellowship program for young people was given new direction and focus. The Young People's Fellowship met on Sunday evenings and was a discussion and social group for those in high school. Dances, movies, day trips and service projects formed the core of the group's activities. The tradition was begun of holding an Easter Sunrise Service on the beach at Tod's Point, now Greenwich Point. The Summer Youth Festival was started in 1952 to provide dramatic training and fellowship for the young people in town on summer evenings.

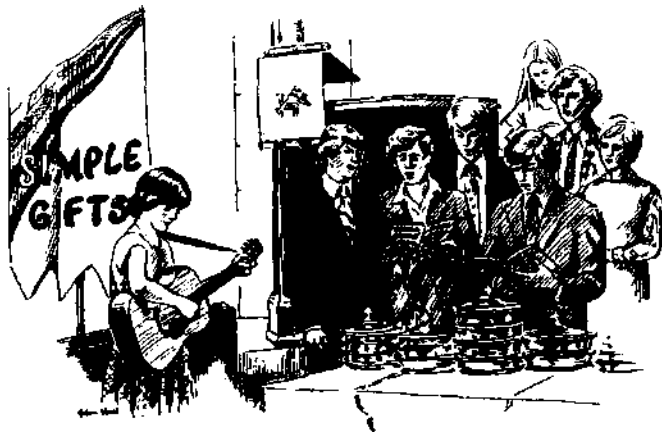
Beginning in the mid-1960's, the youth program was modified to adapt to the changing needs of the teenagers. Gary Schrag, a seminarian from Union Theological Seminary in New York, was the youth director in 1967 and

convinced the church that a full-time Minister to Youth was needed to deal with the program and counseling needs of the young people.

Arthur Mahlon Comeau, known as Bill, a graduate of Bangor (Maine) Theological Seminary, was called in 1968 to begin a youth program which would attract the young people who felt alienated by the church in the turbulent 1960s. He was a folk singer and artist, producing a children's record, dedicated to the young people of First Church, called "Busy Day." Under his leadership, a coffee-house ministry was begun on Friday evenings. The first work trip, to Elon Home for Children, took place in 1969.

During the 1970's the emphasis on mission continued. R. Alan Johnson became Minister to Youth in 1970 and led work trips to Decoy, Kentucky, and work projects in inner-city Stamford.

James Fung, who took over the ministry in 1973, began a junior high program for seventh and eighth graders. One special focus of the high school program was an after-school baby-sitting project in the Undercroft which enabled mothers to have an afternoon off.



By 1975 the youth program had declined, and no professional leadership was available. The Pastor's Class had become the Confirmation Class, which was taught by Associate Pastor Thomas Stiers. The Sunday evening program had all but stopped. When Dr. Stiers became Senior Pastor in 1977, he encouraged Nancy Ziac, a member of the congregation, to reorganize the group. Robin Telesco was hired for a year as a youth coordinator. The newly formed group was advised by Associate Pastor Paul Fraser.

Sally Colegrove was hired in 1978 as Director of Youth Ministries, and once again the youth program changed. Since 1978 the youth ministry has developed and grown. The current program is a four-focus ministry with equal emphasis placed on worship, fellowship, education and outreach. The name of the high school group was changed to the Senior Pilgrim Fellowship. The junior highs became the Junior Pilgrim Fellowship, led since 1987 by Annie Scharfenstein. A retreat program was begun for all the youth groups. The young people and adults became active in the Summer Conference Program of the United Church of Christ at Silver Lake Conference Center. In 1981 the College Pilgrim Fellowship began meeting, reuniting First Church's young people when they are home on vacation.



Mission trips expanded. The SPF worked at the Appalachia South Folklife Center in Pipestem, West Virginia, in 1980 and 1984-. They painted and did light construction at the Community of St. Luke in Stamford in 1982 and 1986. Since 1987, the group has worked each spring vacation at H.O.M.E. Co-op in Orland, Maine, building houses for the rural poor. The young people have learned hands-on Christian giving. The mission trips have been funded by musical reviews staged by the young people, beginning in 1980 with "The Rainbow Connection."

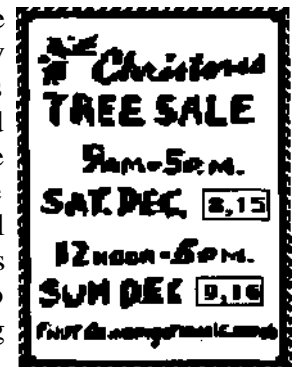
Now the youth program Involves approximately 150 young people from middle school to post-college age in three fellowship groups and the Confirmation Class. The post-college folk have remained active and chaperone work trips and retreats and advise the Senior and Junior Pilgrim Fellowships.



THE CONGKEGATORS

The Couples Club was in its fifth year in 1965. This large and very popular group filled the need for a social group dedicated to the ideals of friendship, fellowship and service to the church and community. They met about once a month for a potluck supper or dessert and coffee, with either a speaker or an evening of games and fun, and an occasional dance. The club took over organizing the Progressive Dinner in December, already an established event, with dinner courses at various homes, followed by dessert and the singing of Christmas carols in the Parish House auditorium. The fall program always got under way with a coffee held in the Lounge between services, there being no regular Sunday coffee hour at that time.

The annual Christmas Tree Sale on the church lawn helped raise money for benevolences and various needs within the Church. They contributed wreaths, holly and trees for use in the Meetinghouse, Binney Park, the cemetery, and the Nathaniel Witherell home in Greenwich. Additional groups formed for duplicate bridge (later to become abridge tournament), bowling and theater-going.



In 1969 the Couples Club decided to become a sponsoring group for bringing to the community an exchange student from Europe, through the International Christian Youth Exchange Program. The Women's Fellowship made it a combined effort, and two young people, from Finland and Germany, lived with host families for a year.

In 1973, with the change from two Sunday morning worship services at 9:15 and 11:00 to one at 10:00, the

Couples Club initiated and hosted the coffee hour following the service. This soon became an important fellowship occasion and continues to this day. It finally grew to such proportions, however, that it became too great a weekly expense, and is now underwritten by the operating budget.

The club made a policy decision that a person need not be part of a "couple" to join, and welcomed all adults. In 1974 the Couples Club was renamed "The Congregators" to reflect this change. Trips to baseball and football games were great fun.

The events which had made the Congregators so enjoyable gradually dwindled in number as several other groups formed during the 1980's. Under Dale Greene's direction the "Springboard Singles" filled a particular need and lasted for several years. Also, the Saturday Group for those in their 30's and 40's met monthly in homes for supper and the Family Life group began in 1982.

The Christmas Progressive Dinner remained as popular as ever, and the Christmas Tree Sale was always a success. There were still dinner/theater outings and an occasional dance, but in 1988 the Congregators as a group was terminated. The Dinner and Tree Sale are continuing under the aegis of the staff and Board of Trustees.



COMMITTEES

There have always been committees to address the various needs and activities of First Church, but their number has proliferated over the past quarter century. Some, like the Arts and Memorials Committee, have been functioning for a long time but are now known by different names, e.g. Memorial Gifts Committee. Long-range Planning comes back from time to time under different names, as the Vision Committee or, most recently, as a group studying "Twelve Keys to an Effective Church." Some were ad hoc committees created for specific purposes, such as the By-laws Revision, Three-in-One Campaign, Energy, British Festival, Facilities Use, Communications and Sexuality Education committees.

The WORSHIP COMMITTEE was appointed by the Church Committee to act in an advisory capacity, and functioned from 1980 to 1987, when its concerns were returned to the Diaconate. The purpose of the Worship Committee was to evaluate the format and content of worship services and to make worship meaningful. Many ideas were tried, some were discarded and others were considered to be improvements. As it stands now, the order of worship is not static. It changes often, always keeping those four basic elements set forth as a guide in Isaiah 6:1-8—praise, confession, forgiveness and rededication—the well-known verse, "Here I am! Send me."

The Worship Committee also conducted surveys of the radio-listening congregation and provided leadership for vespers during Lent and Advent and several summer evening vespers in the Memory Garden.



A booklet on the meaning of baptism was prepared by the committee, to be given to parents at the time of baptism, as was a booklet on communion for the general congregation.

Many other committees do not change; the charge remains constant. The USHERING COMMITTEE is one of these. The Chair appoints a head usher for each month who, in turn, recruits the ushers for the four or five Sundays for which they are responsible, records the count of people present at each service, and collects the offering.



The CHANCEL COMMITTEE makes arrangements each week for the placing of memorial flowers in the Meetinghouse, and for their distribution following the service to church members in the hospital. The committee also decorates the chancel and chapel for Palm Sunday, Easter and Christmas. Memorial flowers are paid for by the donor or by a fund that has been established for that purpose.



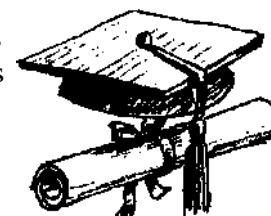
Special

donations are made at Christmas and Easter to cover the cost of the many plants used on those occasions. Traditionally, the members of this committee are former Deaconesses.

The MEMORIAL GIFTS COMMITTEE reviews all gifts or memorials which maybe offered from time to time, and passes on their suitability. They also suggest to families what use might best be made of funds given in memory of a loved one, and work closely with them to carry out their decision. These have included such diverse things as gardens, stone benches, stained glass windows, clocks, sponsorship of radio broadcasts, outdoor signs, Bibles, hymnals, and silver crosses and goblets. The First Church Book of Remembrances records memorial gifts and is permanently on display in the narthex.

The MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE, another of long standing, welcomes visitors and prospective new members to the fellowship of First Church. Since Easter 1990 committee members have been calling on first-time visitors to First Church with a message of welcome, a loaf of homemade bread and a current copy of the Meetinghouse News.

The COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY LOAN FUND was established by The Church Committee in 1955 for the purpose of providing interest-free loans to students who could not otherwise finish college. Each student who receives a loan is required to sign a note which indicates that the loan is to be repaid after graduation. The source of income for this fund is the return of loans, the generosity of the Women's Fellowship, the offering from the Christmas Eve 11:00 PM service, and memorial gifts. This is a part of First Church's home mission.



The FAMILY LIFE COMMITTEE was formed in 1982 for the purpose of bringing together all ages for fellowship and spiritual growth, and to stimulate the concept that everyone is part of "First Family." It grew out of the popularity of the inter-generational all-church retreats held at Silver Lake Conference Center in northwest Connecticut.

Some of the many events sponsored by the Family Life Committee have been an annual Family Life Sunday worship service; Second Hours on alcohol and drug abuse; parent-effectiveness classes; dinners, dances, retreats, and canoeing and camping trips; craft workshops; and the 4:00 PM Family Worship Service on Christmas Eve. The committee's mission was to address serious family issues

while, at the same time, bringing about a time of fun and fellowship for all ages:

The Family Life Committee of First Congregational Church is charged by The Church Committee to create programs which will bring together all of the generations of family within our Church community. Whether a daughter, a son, a mother or a father, in all generations there are those for whom family relationships are important. The committee is the advocate for family values and activities and as such, keeps family issues before the Church community. Within our Church tradition, we respect and believe in each individual's right of private judgment in the area of family life. To these ends we will provide and support programs in education, family worship and fellowship."

The Family Life Committee was disbanded at the end of 1989.

One of the most interesting new and active groups at First Church is THE COMMITTEE FOR CHURCH EV SOCIETY, created in 1978 as the Church and Society Committee by Dr. Herman F. Reissig "to provide leadership in education and action on issues of public policy that concern us as Christian citizens." During the 1950's Dr. Reissig was Secretary for International Relations of the Congregational Churches' Council for Christian Social Action.

A prodigious reader, a scholar, and incomparable preacher, Dr. Reissig pricked the consciences of the people at First Church, prodding them to see beyond their lovely, affluent, comfortable suburban society to the masses of poor, hungry, disadvantaged people of the world ... some even practically on their own doorstep, in the slums of

Stamford. He taught that ecclesiastical isolationism and provincialism must give way to concern for political and economic issues, and he summoned the congregation to "keep coming back to that which alone justifies the existence of a church: *growing toward the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*" (Ephesians 4:13) He was also deeply concerned about the arms race. Dr. Reissig died in 1985.

It was in the 1950's that Dr. Reissig first met William T. R. Fox who was Professor of International Relations at Columbia University for 38 years, and also was Director of its Institute of War and Peace Studies, and one who helped write the 1945 Charter of the United Nations.

Professor Fox was a member of First Church and was enthusiastically active on the Church and Society committee, bringing his years of experience and wisdom to the group with friendliness and humor. He was Chair at the time of his death in 1989.

In 1985 the name was changed to The Committee for Church in Society. The members have encouraged the discussion of social justice, ethics and public policy issues, and have sponsored many Second Hours on controversial subjects. They have also actively participated in and supported projects such as the Food Bank of Lower Fairfield County which was founded seven years ago by Dr. Brenda Stiers and a colleague, the Shelter for the Homeless and the Soup Kitchen in Stamford, the CROP Walk to Combat World Hunger, and Adopt-a-House. They have presented resolutions to the Connecticut Conference annual meetings and to the biennial meetings of the UCC General Synod. Their voices have been heard!

During 1989 the committee undertook the publishing of a newsletter which brought about, within the congregation, a greater awareness of the committee's concerns.

To quote Professor Fox: "The committee would, of course, be going beyond its charter if it undertook to speak for First Church. On the other hand, if we cannot touch potentially controversial issues, we might as well shut up shop. Almost everyone would agree that 'passing by on the other side' is not a practice which is compatible with the Christian social ethic."



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1990 THE 325TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

The Anniversary Committee began monthly meetings in January 1989 to plan and schedule events for the celebration of the special year.

April

- 8 - Palm Sunday
U.S. Representative Christopher Shays
- 20, 21, 22, 27, 28 - Performances of "Our Town",
Directed by George Fisk
- 23 - House of Worship Tour
Sponsored by Council of Churches &
Synagogues and Church Women United

May

- 20 - Music Sunday
Special Guest, Dave Brubeck
- 21 - Vintage Dress Fashion Show
Women's Fellowship/Rummage Room
- 27 - Heritage Sunday, 50-Year Member Recognition
Nancy Mosshammer Newman, Preacher

June

- 17 - "The Church and Its Mission"
Shelby Rooks, Exec. Vice President of United
Church Board for Homeland Ministries, UCC

July

- 4 - Town of Greenwich Parade
First Church Float, Created by SPF
- 8 - Founders' Day
Harry Adams of Yale, Preaching
- 15 - Town-wide Inter-faith Service, Baldwin Park
Retired Bishop Brad Hastings, Preacher 18
- Town of Greenwich Founders' Day Concert
- 21 - Town of Greenwich Harbor Fireworks
Tall Ships in the Harbor

September

- 9 - Dr. Paul Sherry, President of UCC, Preacher
- 16 - Homecoming Picnic
- 22 - "Our Town" Art Show
Old Greenwich Art Society

October

- 21 - Festival Worship Services / Stewardship
Dr. Paul Yinger, Preaching
- 28 - Festival Worship Services/ Stewardship

November

- 18 - Harvest Sunday
- 21 - Inter-faith Worship Service, Thanksgiving Eve
at First Church
- 25 - Festival Worship Service
Led by Revs. R. Alan Johnson and Marti Swan

December

- 31 - Ringing Out Greenwich 350th Year

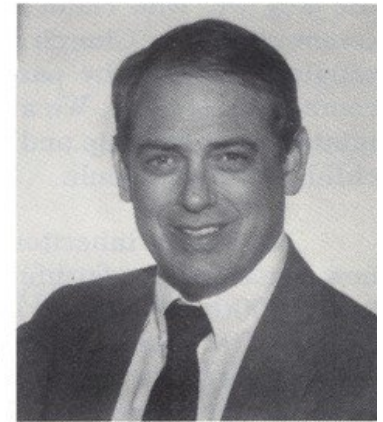
A Tentative Date in the Fall

Dr. Harry Stout of Yale, Preacher
Rev. Merton E. Libby

10

IN CONCLUSION

I am honored to write the postscript to this booklet concerning the past 25 years of The First Congregational its publication is a significant historical event. Helen Allen and others have labored long and hard in its writing.



Dr. Thomas Lowell Stiers

We are, by God's grace, moving out of an age of "me first" into an age of compassion and hope. Already we can recognize many features of this trend: you have read in this booklet the story of our concern for mission to others as well as ministry to ourselves. Mission is the responsibility of the whole Christian community. Having heard the message of the gospel, we are called to share that message in word and in deed. Touched by God's grace, we are able in compassion to reach out to others. It has been said many times, that as fire exists by burning, so too the church exists by its mission.

It is this compassion that gives us hope for the future. Human beings are incorrigibly religious. That is, we require an understanding of life, an awareness of our place in it, and value guides by which we intend to live. The First Congregational Church of Greenwich has been and continues to be a place where, with God's help, we gain a new understanding of our lives and how we are to care for the earth. A person's faith, world view, beliefs, attitudes and values cannot be understood without reference to the Church. The Church is the source of our hope.

Faith, life styles, and values are given meaning by the way we, who claim that faith, live and act in the community of the Church and in the world. We deepen our religious identity by participating in the actions of a community of faith. We are faithful to the gospel in our ministries of worship and music, Christian education for child, youth and adult.

We are the inheritors of 325 years of history. Can we now continue to be faithful to the gospel? In his remarks in the 300th anniversary book, the late Francis E. Potter wrote: "The church is a people, gathered with a mission. The storms of life may blow icy blasts against the flame of faith but that flame will not go out. As it has burned in the past, it shall burn for centuries to come."

Thomas Lowell Stiers

June 1990

Old Greenwich, Connecticut

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Many thanks from all of us at First Church to

Helen Sickels Allen

whose illustrations, hours of research, writing, editing and layout have made this book come to life. Helen Allen's artistic talents shine throughout The First Congregational Church of Greenwich where for many years and in so many ways she has shared with us her beautiful expressions of faith, joy and love.

The Congregation of First Church