

AND IT CAME TO PASS - DECEMBER 24, 1971



And it came to pass that on Christmas Eve 1971 the congregation was able to worship in its new home for the first time. What an inspiring evening that must have been as the beautiful new Sanctuary greeted worshippers on that very Holy day.

On May 12, 1972, the official Service of Consecration was held with Bishop James K. Mathews presiding and former pastors, Robert W. Huston and Alan H. Moore, joining their successor, Robert M. Houston, in the high moment of dedication. The structure, with its striking red and white Sanctuary and spacious Narthex, complete with a lighted display case for historical exhibits, was richly praised by church officials. In addition to the aforementioned, the new

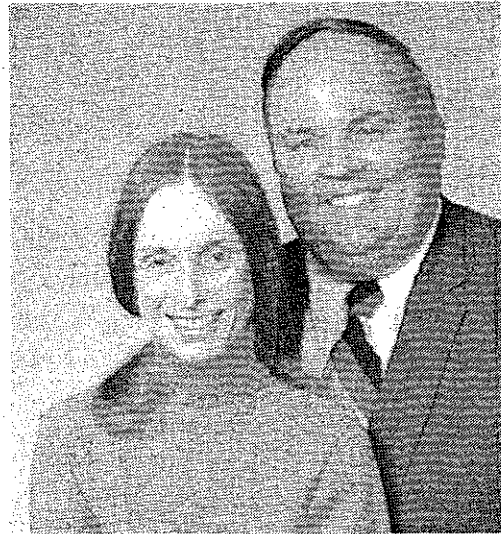
building contained a large and beautifully decorated Parlor, a spacious Church Office and handsome Study for the Pastor, as well as five large classrooms. It was agreed that this, added to the Parish Hall with its classrooms and other facilities, would provide for our space needs for many years to come.

A TIME OF ADJUSTMENT

The early 1970's were difficult times for churches everywhere, and many of these difficulties were experienced by our congregation. There were many strong feelings to be dealt with in the church--unhappiness with radicals on the national scene, and with the National Denominational response to

a number of national crises. On the local level there were those who were disappointed over the decision not to relocate the church building and others who were unhappy over the decision to replace the 1900 structure, and still others who did not appreciate the contemporary architecture of the new building. We were fortunate to have a minister with Reverend Houston's particular gifts to lead the congregation during these years.

In 1972, even with the Building Fund payments continuing, the current expense budget increased by \$5,000. A purchase and sales agreement on the Boston Post Road property was signed in March of 1973, but that agreement was not honored, and this problem remained. The financial campaign produced 107 pledges toward a \$67,000 budget, but it was necessary to cut the budget by \$10,000 in order to stay within the available income. United Methodist Women's activities were expanding, but the Couples Club had only two programs during 1973. A new Pictorial Directory was published, replacing the previous Directory which had been produced in the mid 60's. Thirty members were removed from the rolls in 1973 and another thirty-two in 1974, yet the giving increased with fewer people giving more and more. By 1975, when nineteen more members were removed, the envelope offerings exceeded \$50,000, even though the budget remained unbalanced. In July of 1975 the Weston Forest and Trail Association purchased the Boston Post Road property, ending a long period of financial drain on the funds of the Trustees.



Ned and Elizabeth Watts

A PERIOD OF TRANSITION

In June, Reverend Houston ended a ministry of outstanding accomplishment in Weston, and was appointed to one of the strongest churches in the Boston area, St. John's in Watertown, which had been served for twenty-three years by the Reverend Edson G. Waterhouse, whose father, Joseph, was our minister for twelve years.

Our new minister, the Reverend Ned C. Watts, Jr., and his wife, Elizabeth, arrived in July to begin his work in Weston. The Watts were among a growing number of ministerial families who owned their own home instead of living in a church-owned parsonage. The Trustees voted to permit the Watts to continue as homeowners, providing them with a housing allowance and renting the Parsonage. Reverend Watts was warmly received and his primary task was defined by the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee as continuing

three major objectives: to increase worship attendance and membership, and to address the chronic problem of deficit budgets. All members and friends of the church were invited to meet the new Minister and to enable him to get to know more people quickly.

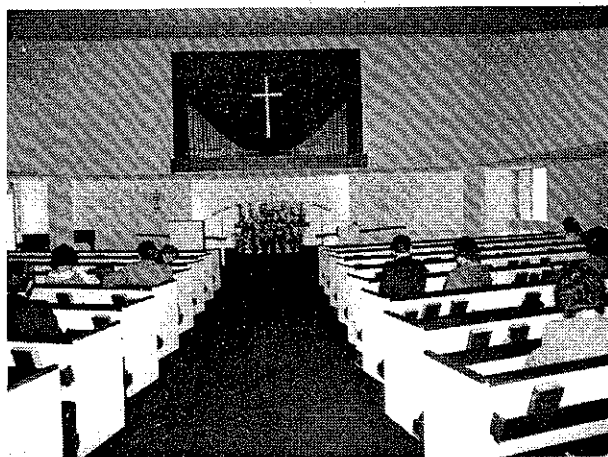
1977 saw the church turn the corner on a period of diminishing membership, deficit budgeting and an inability to pay 100% of our apportionments. Membership stood at 293, down from a high of 450 during the 1960's, with only 16 new adult members added between the years of 1973 and 1976, and Sunday mornings saw an average of fewer than 95 worshippers. Reverend Ned Watts saw reason for rejoicing in his annual report though.

"During the year, we received 28 new members, 18 of whom were adults, surpassing the total number of adults received during the previous four years. There was also a sharp increase in church attendance, with the attendance up 35% from the previous year."

The bi-annual church fair, under the direction of Jean Jackson and Betty Van Cott, was very successful with a gross income of nearly \$9,000. The fair not only provided needed income, but was a unifying force as more than 100 people worked hard to make the event remarkably successful. The budget of was met and income exceeded expectations. The Couples Club, renamed the Tuesday Night Club reflecting its changing role and the increased number of single individuals participating, also experienced a resurgence with

between 50 and 70 people present at the monthly get-togethers.

In 1979, the church celebrated the 190th Anniversary of the founding of the Weston United Methodist Church, with Bishop Edward J. Carroll helping to serve communion, using the historic Francis Asbury Communion Service. Past ministers, Robert Huston, Alan Moore and Robert Houston, also returned for the celebration service.



new organ

A NEW RODGERS ORGAN

In 1965, friends of Vincent M. Hoagland, Sr. established an organ fund in his memory. Gifts to the fund in 1976 and 1977 brought the fund balance to more than \$7,700 and encouraged church leaders to launch an appeal to raise additional monies and purchase a new organ. \$21,800 was raised and a new Rodgers Organ was installed into the choir loft, debt free, with the accompanying pipes in the Sanctuary. Enough monies remained to purchase new robes for the choir. Mr. and Mrs. Alton Jones (Al and Ellen) spear-

headed the effort, providing extraordinary leadership, dedication and generosity. Their efforts were aided by the other members of the Organ Committee, Bob Birkenstock, Flo Harrington (Mrs. Raymond Harrington), Evelyn Moriarty, Ned Watts, Donna Burg, Bill Yonan, Dick Hersum and Ed and Helen Parker. They spent months listening and studying in their search for the right instrument and then worked to raise the funds necessary to realize this dream.

Music at the church was well supported through the playing and choir direction of Douglas Marshall, one of the most gifted church musicians in New England. Doug's organ playing led to a long-lived congregational custom of remaining seated during the postlude to better hear his mastery of the music and the instrument.

During the early months of 1980, Reverend Watts was reassigned to the Wesley Methodist Church in Worcester and the search was on for a new minister. Having overseen a period of rapid change and new



Reverend Charles R. McCracken

growth, many knew they would miss his outstanding preaching and jovial nature. Reverend Charles R. McCracken became our new minister in 1980 and, unlike his predecessor, needed a parsonage to move to.

After renting the parsonage for more than three years, often to students, it was in a sorry state. The Trustees had been considering selling it as it did not meet the minimum guidelines established by the Conference for ministerial housing. The Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, under the able leadership of Edward Parker, along with the Trustees, headed by Gerald Sinclair, evaluated a series of options, and decided to enlarge and renovate the parsonage. Glenn Young, a talented general contractor in the congregation, agreed to take on the project and the Waltham Savings Bank (now the Sterling Bank) agreed to add the needed monies to our existing mortgage, with no change in the interest rate or the administrative fee.

In the fall, members of the church drove to Portsmouth, Rhode Island, to help Reverend McCracken, his wife, Sue, and their three children, Reed, Curtis and Jeanine, move into the renovated and enlarged parsonage.

1980 also saw a change in the music program as Douglas Marshall moved to Grace Chapel and Mort Hyams became the new Organist and Choir Director.

The early 1980's welcomed a number of new, younger families into the church, and with them a need to reestablish the nursery to meet the needs of their growing families. In 1983, the Administrative Board and its various committees was consolidated and revamped into the Council of Ministries, first chaired by Nancy DeLong. The Council, as a whole, maintained responsibility of discussion and resolution of broad philosophical issues and the ratification of business matters. Three smaller "task forces" were formed to carry out the details: Christian Nurture, Congregational Life and Community Life. To quote the first chairperson's report of 1983-1984 - *"Our emphasis has been on strengthening the church family, spiritually and communally."* The Trustees also started an "endowment development program" (the current Capital Improvements Fund) set aside monies for major capital expenditures. Flower beds with tulips, daffodils, irises, day lilies and varying annuals were also established in front of the sanctuary and alongside the Parish Hall. The annual budget for the church was set at \$108,964, the first budget over \$100,000.

1985 saw significant outreach activity by the church.

Support for Heifer Project International began as a Lenten Project for the church school under the direction of Sally Hicks. The church helped to send Charles (Chip) Bell, a member of the church and one of the leaders of the Youth Group, to Dominica for a

week of mission outreach, helping other Methodists build a school.

Members of the church, under the leadership of Susan Coppock, agreed to serve the dinner meal once a month at the Bristol Lodge Soup Kitchen in Waltham and a Vacation Bible School was organized for one week during the summer under the leadership of Michael Coppock and many other committee members of the church.

It was also the year that the church received its first (and present) computer, the generous gift of Harold Merry, a long-time member of the church.

The celebration of Communion on the first Sunday of the month was established and our first Homecoming Brunch was held in early September to welcome back members of the church who had been away for the summer.

The history of the church, as embodied the "Carrie Brooks" quilt was put on display in the Parish Hall. Each square of the pink and white quilt included the name of a loved one or contributor to the making of the quilt. The making of the quilt was undertaken by the women of the church as a fund-raising effort in the 1940's, selling each square for 25 cents.

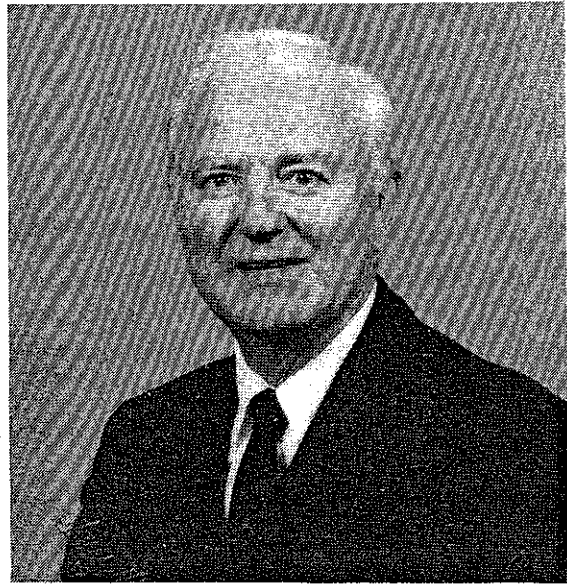
Further improvements to the Parish Hall included installation of wall-to-wall carpeting, new window curtains, new stage curtains, refinishing the hardwood floor of the stage, and a complete repainting of the interior walls. 1986 saw the planting of a dogwood at the western end of the

North Avenue side of the building in memory of Tom and Beatrice Batey, beloved members of the church, and the beginning of participation by the church in the Walk for Hunger, an annual fund-raising event for soup kitchens and food pantries throughout the Boston area, began through the efforts of Barbara Lauback and Sally Hicks.

Volunteer church members completed painting the exterior of the parsonage and it only took them two years. The Capital Improvements Fund received nearly \$25,000 in contributions during the year, putting the Trustees and the care of the church on much firmer footing. A new sound system, given by an anonymous donor, was designed and installed by Austin Harrison in the Sanctuary.

The church had its first "retreat" in recent memory in September 1988 with many members traveling to Camp Aldersgate for a weekend of discussion, prayer and fun. Carillons, given in the memory of Alton Jones, were installed in the belfry of the Sanctuary and were programmed to play every noon and before the start of services on Sunday mornings.

1989 also brought a new minister to Weston United Methodist Church. After watching his children grow and two of them graduate from Weston High School, Reverend McCracken was reassigned to a church in Groton, Connecticut, and Reverend Shephard S. Johnson became our new pastor. He and his wife, Nancy, moved into the parsonage and the church entered the final decade of the twentieth century.



Reverend Dr. Shephard S. Johnson

Throughout the years, the church has been blessed by the continuing commitment of its many members. Heritage Sunday, held on October 28, 1990, recognized the contributions and steadfastness of many of our community of faith, celebrating the long-term members of the church at a formal lunch after Sunday morning services. Florence Harrington and her sister-in-law, Helen Harrington Warner had been members of the church the longest, with Helen having been a member for over 70 years. Flo was at the lunch to share some of her memories.

Sandy Thalheimer became the Music Director, and Leslie Bell (nee Burt), a long-time member of the church became the organist.

Fourteen baptisms were recorded in 1990. A task force met to address the needs of a growing church school. "A Time For Children" was added to the early portion of the worship service,

with all of the children of the church joining their families in the Sanctuary for the start of the service. Dr. Eliza Menninger soon agreed to lead this special portion of the service and the number of younger children joining her at the foot of the altar rail quickly swelled and attendance at church school tripled.

A new pictorial directory was made in 1992. Although blessed with strong stewardship by the 90 plus pledging units within the church, our ability to continue to grow in programs and outreach, and to pay all our bills was once again called into question.

1993 was celebrated with a Holly Day Fair, ably led by Norma Keller, Yola Colby and the United Methodist Women. Many people volunteered their time and talents to make this a very successful fair, the first since the early 1980's. The monies raised helped the church to meet all of its financial obligations for the year.

Kevin Murphy became the new Music Director, after interim leadership by both Anne Gross and Leslie Bell. His enthusiasm and compositional prowess added new breadth to the music programs. Several members of the church, including Reverend Johnson and his wife, Nancy, visited the Holy Land, and shared their experiences with the congregation at a special potluck supper during the Fall. Their visit prompted the Missions Team to financially support the United Methodist Liaison Pastor in Jerusalem. Heifer Project, the Walk for Hunger, Aid to Battered Women, and Bristol Lodge continue to be the

focus of the church's local outreach. Each month Andrea Humphrey and Nancy Hammerton have published the "Beams", the church newsletter. Andrea's artwork and the combined publishing skills of both women make it a key means of communication between the church and all of its members and friends. The Christmas Pageant, produced by Lucy Leland and Andrea Humphrey, and the following potluck supper, organized by the Nurture Team, continued a holiday tradition with nearly 100 people attending.

The Sanctuary received a significant gift of a new Cross and Dossal Cloth, given by the Keenan family in memory of Frances Boyd, a long-time member of the church. The change in color from red to white, with the addition of natural wood trim, greatly enhanced the room.

And, on a final note, preparations started for the celebration of the 200th Anniversary of the church in 1994. These included visits by members of the church from all eras of the church's past, commissioning of special music by Kevin Murphy in honor of the event, the addition of "history" lessons about the church's past during the worship service, and the updating and republishing of this church history. Two special Bicentennial Services were celebrated on May 15 and May 22 with members of the church coming in period costume, and visits by all of the living past ministers as well as many former members who have moved away from the area.