

CEC History

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Miss Hart added sections on the "Boys' Choir", "Evangelism and Mission", "Ecumenism" and "Decade of Change". Earle Potter was the source of clippings about the Boys' Choir.

Materials in the archives of Christ Church furnished information for other topics. These sources included Directories of Christ Church for 1902, 1903, 1926, vestry minutes, clippings from the Norwich Bulletin and the New London Day, The Search Committee Report 1979, The Norwich Area Study 1962-1963, The Norwich Area Episcopal Council, Norwich, CT., Tune 1964 - A Descriptive Pamphlet, and the text of The Covenant.

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Mr. Robert R. Buckley was responsible for all the steps required for publication of this history.

Mrs. Dorothy Rhodes helped with the typing.

The Rev'd Donald R. Lillpopp contributed the section "The Changing Face of Christ Church."

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A HISTORY OF CHRIST CHURCH

As the earliest settlers in Norwich were, for the most part, religious refugees- especially from the Church of England-it is not surprising that Episcopalians were considered "Johnnies come lately" when compared to the members of the Congregational Society who built their first meeting house in 1660. Town records of 1720 report the presence of two Church of England members in Norwich, both living in the vicinity of the Meeting House Green. They were served by the missionary in New London, the Rev. Samuel Seabury, S.P.G. (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts).

By 1734, their number had increased to about a dozen. That year, a missionary, the Rev. Ebenezer Punderson, S.P.G., was sent to serve North Groton (Poquetanuck) and Norwich. The services of the latter were held in private homes, usually that of a Mr. Gookin on Bean Hill or Thomas Grist, near the Green.

On January 7, 1747, a meeting, moderated by Mr. Punderson, was called. Here it was voted to "Build a Church for the Worship of Almighty God, according to the Liturgie of the Church of England." Captain Benijah Bushnell promptly offered a piece of land at the foot of Weewaucus Hill, the site of the present church and now known as lower Washington Street. The following year, for "the consideration of five shillings", Captain Bushnell conveyed the land to the Parish. Money was raised by subscription in the town and by collections in the Narragansett Plantation (Rhode Island) by the Rev. Mr. Punderson and in Boston Captain Bushnell.

On April 1, 1748, Abner Armstrong, carpenter, was commissioned "to frame said church, to hew sleepers, to board and shingle the roof, to make scaffolds, to clapboard, to board the walls, and to lay the under floor." Upon completion, he received one hundred and twenty pounds about six hundred dollars.

In 1749, the small, clapboarded building, measuring thirty-six by forty-two feet, and containing thirty-one box pews, was completed. It was almost Spartan in its simplicity, boasting neither porch nor spire. The interior walls were unplastered and the windows were narrow, of clear glass, and Gothic in design.

The Rev. Ebenezer Punderson served as minister-in-charge from 1749-1751. Here, in 1749, he first outspread the Book of Common Prayer and, from the rude Altar table, gave the Sacrament to his people.



1749

In 1751, Mr. Punderson returned to his native New Haven for the education of his family and the extension of the Church in that area.

For eleven years, the church was without a spiritual leader, but the members remained faithful. They held the necessary parish and vestry meetings and conducted their services with lay readers.

The name "Christ's Church in Chelsea (Norwich)" first appeared in 1758.

In 1763, the Rev. John Beardslee, S.P.G. came to Norwich to serve as minister-in-charge for five years. In 1758, he removed to Poughkeepsie.

In 1766, it was voted to build a glebe house, or rectory, for the missionary. The necessary funds were pledged. Zerviah Bushnell offered land at the top of the hill, now known as Church Street. The glebe was built in 1767.



THE GLEBE HOUSE

1767

In 1768, the Rev. John Tyler became the first rector. He served fifty-four years!

Young John Tyler of Wallingford was the valedictorian of the Class of 1765 at Yale. Then he went to St. John's College in New York where he earned his M.A. degree. Although a Congregationalist, he had become very interested in the Church of England and wished to become a priest. This was difficult because

there was no bishop in the Colonies and a candidate had to go to England to receive Holy Orders.

After theological training with Dr. Samuel Johnson in Stratford and an apprenticeship in Guilford, sufficient funds were raised to send Tyler to England in May, 1768. There, in June of that year, he was ordained by the Lord Bishop of London. He then spent several weeks in London where he met not only royalty, but political, literary and clerical personages, including the Archbishop of Canterbury. That fall, he returned to America and assumed the rectorship of the Norwich church on November 1, 1768.

In 1774, it was voted to remove the church building from the original site and move it. A piece of land on Main Street, near the glebe, was given by Phineas Holden who, by the way, left the church its first bequest by will. Before the plans could be realized, however, the Revolution broke out.

As Episcopalians swore allegiance to the King, the Defender of the Faith, they didn't exactly ride the crest of the popularity wave. The church was closed for three years. Services were held in the glebe. Nor did the glebe escape; its windows were stoned and it's well poisoned. Legend tells us that a tar-and-feather party of zealous patriots came after the Rev. John Tyler. He, however, prudently hid under the steps until the tar cooled off and the patriots departed. It is an interesting sequel that when memorial services were held throughout the country, following the death of George Washington, the orator at the Norwich observance was none other than the Rev. John Tyler.

In 1789, the remodeling plans for the church were revived. The building was moved to the Main Street lot. The interior walls were plastered and a spire and a porch with columns were added. The refurbished church was dedicated by Bishop Seabury on May 19, 1791.

The land on Washington Street became the parish burying ground.

Up to this time, parish expenses were met by the annual renting of the pews. When this sum proved insufficient, pew auctions were held with the bidding starting from a fixed amount. In 1800, the pews were first rented in dollars instead of pounds.

John Tyler was a fine man, devout and caring. He even added the study of medicine to his other activities the better to serve his people. As he grew older, he required more released time and finally was given assistants. Ever the intellectual, it is said that he was examined by the bishop for his active interest in the new Universalist Movement. He died January 21, 1823 at the age of eighty-one.

That April, his assistant, the Rev. Seth B. Paddock, became rector. Seth Paddock served for twenty-one years. John Tyler's widow had been given temporary use of the glebe, so the parish paid for "board, lodging, firewood and washing" for the Paddocks.

In 1823, it was voted to build a new church of brick or stone. By coincidence, the Methodists were looking for a church building. The two parishes got together and agreed to petition the General Assembly to permit a lottery for \$8,000. The sum of \$2,000 and the old church would go to the Methodists and \$6,000 would serve as a building fund for Christ Church. As the vestry notes contain no further reference to the lottery, it can be surmised that the General Assembly refused to permit the venture.

The old building was sold in 1829 to the Episcopal Society of Salem (Connecticut) for \$800. It was knocked down, removed to Salem, and reassembled on the town green. The Society disbanded after a few years and the church was purchased by the town and the spire and pews removed. It served as the town hall until just a few years ago. The building is now the headquarters of the Salem Historical Society.

Meanwhile, the plans for the new church were completed. A plot of land on the steep slope between Church and Main Streets was purchased. The new church was consecrated by Bishop Thomas Church Brownell on July 29, 1829. It was built of gray stone and was two stories high. The upper level, entered from Church Street, was the church proper. It measured sixty-five feet in length, fifty-four feet in width and twenty-five feet in height. The lower level, entered from Main Street, was elegantly named the "Lecture Room" and was used for meetings and for the Church School. The cost of the building was \$8,800. In 1835, a gallery was added at a cost of \$762.

In 1829, William Tyler of the John Tyler Family was granted a 999 years' lease on the glebe. The Paddocks built a house and the glebe rent was added to the rector's salary.

In 1844, the Rev. Seth Paddock resigned to become vice-president of the Episcopal Academy at Cheshire.

In this year, the Rev. William F. Morgan of New Haven was called. He served thirteen years. He was a handsome and dynamic man - a real "go-getter." It is his portrait that hangs in the Pine Room.

The year after his arrival, he proposed building a new church. Richard Upjohn, the foremost architect of the English Gothic, was engaged to draw the plans. After much discussion, the parish decided to go back to the Washington Street lot, once the burying ground was removed. The graves were removed and the remains interred in a common grave. The remains of the Rev. John Tyler and his wife, Hannah, were placed in a crypt under the chancel. The headstones and footstones were, and still are, stored in the cellar.

Bishop Brownell being ill, Bishop Lee of Delaware, a former Christ Church boy, laid the cornerstone on August 31, 1846.

In 1848, as the building neared completion, a dark cloud appeared on the horizon. A group in the church flatly refused to move to the new building. The Rev. Mr. Morgan employed all his persuasive powers to no avail. The objectors were adamant. Matters reached a climax at the parish meeting in 1849. Mr. Morgan gave a stirring speech, pleading for concession, but the dissenters remained firm. Finally, in desperation, he gave them two alternatives. They might buy the Church Street building for \$5,000, with Christ Church retaining title to the land and having the refusal to buy it back for \$5,000. Or, given an assistant and added salary, Mr. Morgan would serve both parishes. In any event, the name Christ Church would go with the new building. The dissenters elected the first option, purchased the building for \$5,000 and established Trinity Parish.

After costing \$33,000, the English Gothic, brown Portland sandstone church with black walnut interior was consecrated on April 18, 1849 by Bishop Brownell. Fifteen members of the clergy, including the President of Trinity College were in attendance.

In February, 1857, the Rev. Mr. Morgan received a call to New York City at a salary of \$2,000. The parish promptly voted to raise his Norwich salary to this amount and he declined the call. On March 7, he resigned. New York must have raised its offer above Christ Church's ability to pay. Mr. Morgan was a "building

rector." Shortly after going to New York, he built St. Thomas' Church on Fifth Avenue, with Richard Upjohn once again the architect.

Expansion for Christ Church, directed by the Upjohn plan, included a bell tower, the addition of a chapel wing, and the purchase of adjacent lands. There wasn't money in 1849, so the plans had to be postponed.

The tenures of the first three rectors have been covered in some detail as they included the establishment of the parish and the erection of the various buildings. At this point, it seems advisable to take up various phases in the life of the new church, abandoning chronological order.

THE BELL TOWER

"The great bell tower controversy" raged for more than thirty years.

Upjohn's plans called for a freestanding bell tower beyond the south portal. It was to consist of three floors, housing a kitchen, offices, and rooms for the Church School and to be topped by a belfry.

By July, 1851, \$6,700 had been raised, but this was insufficient and the plans were shelved. In 1863, General Tyler offered to pledge \$1,000, provided the parish raised the amount necessary for the tower in two years. This was not done, and, once again, the building was put off. In 1886, Maria Johnson, who also endowed the Johnson Home, left \$10,000 to build the tower. This amount still wasn't enough. As the money was earmarked by will, it could not be spent and was put in the savings bank. In 1926, the Superior Court granted the parish the use of the interest after forty years, quite a handsome sum.

There is still no bell tower.

ADDITIONS TO THE BUILDING

Over the years, two additions have been made. A two-story wing was added at the back in the 1850's. The upper floor was a chapel leading from the nave, and the lower floor was a large, high-ceilinged room that served as a meeting room and was used for the Church School.

In the 1950's another two-story wing was added on the north side. Although designed for the Church School, it proved too small. The lower level contains an extension of the Pine Room on the west and a storage room and rest rooms on the

east. The upper level contains a library and a hospitality room on the west and the church office and rector's study on the east.

Adjacent lands to the north and south were purchased. One of the two houses on the south, used as an annex of the church school, was destroyed by fire. The house to the north, a rectory prior to 1900, had been sold in 1902. In the 1960's, the three houses were razed. The land was leveled and paved to serve as parking lots.

CHANGES WITHIN THE BUILDING

The first decade of this century brought marked changes.

The chapel was converted into a choir room. It was separated from the nave by carved wooden screens.

The chancel was extended forward, with the pulpit and lectern at the front. Against the east wall was the reredos which consisted of six narrow sections of black walnut between large, black walnut posts. The panels were separated by small black walnut columns and each was topped by a three-dimensional black walnut triangle with a trefoil cutout on the face and a black walnut fleur-de-lis finial at the apex. The four outside panels were covered in black sand and carried the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments inscribed in gold lettering. The two center panels were plain.

The Altar was against the reredos. It was fronted by the Communion rail. Choir stalls, at right angles to the rail, flanked the aisle. Marble steps led from the nave to the chancel.

During this period, many memorial gifts were presented to the church. They included the marble steps from the nave to the chancel and from the nave to the choir room; carved wooden screens, separating the choir room from the nave; a baptismal font by the north portal; an organ console in the **chancel**; tungsten lights to replace the carbon lamps; Communion silver; brasses; stained glass windows; and a marble, mosaic floor in the nave and chancel.

The 1933 hurricane wrought extensive and expensive damage especially to the stained glass windows. They were restored and repaired.

In 1947, the church observed its two hundredth anniversary. On January 7, the guest preacher at the eleven o'clock Communion Service was the Rev. Charles Johnson, rector of All Saints' Church in Locust, N.J. He was the great grandson of the Rev. Seth Paddock. On January 9, Bishop Walter H. Gray dedicated the new reredos and Altar. The reredos was given in memory of Leroy Saunders, Jr., a flight officer killed in World War 11, and of Anna May, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Russell. The Altar was given in memory of William Tyler Olcott, a generous benefactor of the church.

In 1963, the worst disaster in the church's history occurred. The VanTassel chemical warehouse across the river exploded and left the church a shambles. The walls and the roof were badly damaged; nearly every piece of glass was blown in. All but the two large stained glass memorial windows in the rear of the nave were destroyed, as were the large lancets of the Altar window and the 5 small lancets in the chancel.

The parish voted to make the necessary repairs and, at the same time, remodel the building. The cost was \$200,000 in a building that had cost \$33,000 to build in 1849! About half the amount was covered by insurance. The note for the debt was burned by the rector and the senior warden at the parish meeting ten years later.

While the structural repairs were being made, the choir room was, once again, made into a chapel. The Altar is against the west wall with the Communion Rail before it. The pews, at right angles to the Rail, are on either side of the aisle. The screens have been replaced by a partition with a door leading into the nave.

The large, high-ceilinged first floor room below was divided into two stories, with five rooms on each level. These are used for the church school and the crib nursery.

The chancel was again recessed, the choir stalls and organ console removed, and the choir returned to the organ loft.

The reredos were left against the east wall and the Altar was made freestanding in the center of the chancel.

A raised pulpit and a raised lectern were put in the nave at the front of the pews.

An Altar Rail was built in the nave, at the foot of the chancel steps.

The vestibule of the north portal became the sacristy.

The most difficult decision concerned the replacement of the windows. Seldom did an old church have the opportunity to put in windows with continuity in theme. As the two large memorials at the rear of the nave had survived the blast and both depicted events in the life of Christ, the Annunciation and the Resurrection, it was decided to continue this theme in the new windows, which picture the Nativity, the Baptism, the Transfiguration, the Crucifixion, the Ascension, Pentecost, and the Great Commission. Although modern in feeling, the windows are in the Byzantine-Romanesque style.

The three large lancet windows in back of the Altar and the five side lancet windows in the chancel depict the Descent of the Heavenly Jerusalem, taken from the Book of the Revelation.

RECTORIES

The glebe was built in 1767 and was used as the rectory until 1829 when William Tyler was granted a 999 years lease. In 1936, the glebe once again reverted to the parish under the will of William Tyler Olcott. In addition to the house, Mr. Olcott left to the church a substantial sum of money and Tyler heirlooms. The most notable of these was John Tyler's secretary-desk. It was brought by ox-cart from Wallingford in 1769, set up in the glebe, and there it remained until 1951. In 1954, the glebe was finally sold to the Otis Library for use as a Children's Library

Over the years, several houses were inherited, rented, bought and sold by the parish. Form 1924 to 1949, the Gardiner Greene house at the corner of Sturtevant Avenue and Washington Street served as the rectory. From 1949 until 2000 it has been the former Slossberg house at 180 Washington Street. Following the retirement of the Rev. Donald Lillpopp it was used by the interim rector and then sold following the merger with The Church of the Resurrection. A condition of the merger, with The Church of the Resurrection, required accepting their current rector and consequently the rectory at 226 Hunters Road.

SPIN-OFFS

In the jargon of television, there have been two spin-offs from the Christ Church parish.

The first, of course, occurred when the group who refused to move to the new church in 1849 bought the old building and established Trinity parish.

Throughout the years, attempts were made to reunite the two churches, but they all failed. In 1956, a goodly number from Trinity came over to Christ Church. In 1962, Trinity united with St. Andrews to form the Church of the Resurrection. As Christ Church held title to the land of both churches, Christ Church had to release it to the new parish.

Since then, the Trinity building has served as the Thorne, a coffee house-recreation center and its last occupant was a black congregation. In 1978, the building was completely destroyed by fire.

The second spin-off began in 1865, when Greenville residents petitioned for a mission in their section of the city. The building fund slowly grew until, in 1881, it was voted to build St. Andrew's chapel. The cost was \$8,000 and Christ Church again held title to the land. It was consecrated in 1882. The following year, the St. Andrew's members petitioned the bishop to become an independent parish. This was granted, and so it remained until the merger with Trinity in 1962. The building on Central Avenue is now the home of the VFW Post.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Throughout the years of John Tyler's tenure, no woman is mentioned in the vestry notes. Apparently, the church, its rector, its wardens, its vestrymen, its finances and its decisions were the concern of men.

During the Rev. Seth Paddock's rectorship, the Ladies' Parish Aid Society came into being. In 1835, Mrs. Elizabeth Lee and Mrs. Mary Lanman gave money to liquidate the debt on the gallery. Mrs. Lee also presented a silver paten, two octagonal silver chalices and an octagonal silver tankard.

In 1844, the following appears in the Norwich Courier of August 7: "A card - Mrs. S. B. Paddock returns her most sincere thanks to the "Ladies of Christ Church" for the beautiful silver tea set presented yesterday. It is her ardent prayer that they who so freely contributed of their temporal things may be abundantly recompensed in spiritual things."

From 1879 - 1888, the Parish Aid Society paid off a \$7,500 mortgage on the rectory.

The 1902 Directory of Christ Church lists the women's groups as follows:

- The Parish Aid Society
- The Missionary Society
- The Junior Missionary Society
- Saint Agnes Guild
- The Visiting Guild
- The Hospital Committee
- The Altar Committee
- The Collecting Committee

Each group had its purpose. On St. Michael and All Angels' Day, all women of the parish met to organize for the year. Collectors were appointed for districts to call on members willing to contribute to any of the above committees.

The purpose of the Parish Aid Society was to work for the improvement and care of the church property. Money was raised by fairs; weekly teas were held to prepare articles for sale. In 1903, this group restored the woodwork in the church and gave the marble and mosaic for the chancel, transepts and broad aisle.

The Missionary Society in union with the Woman's Auxiliary to the Board of Missions was in charge of sending clothing and vestments to needy missionaries.

The Junior Missionary Society, for girls aged 8 to 14, sent clothing to missions and provided gifts at Christmas and Easter for the Children at Rock Nook Home. In the 1920's, this group became the Mary and Martha Junior Auxiliary and helped with the Easter choir breakfast.

St. Agnes Guild assisted in the care of the altar and vestments. Members were expected to be models of Christian living and were appointed.

The Visiting Guild visited the sick, helped the needy, welcomed strangers and called on parish members to interest them in the work of the church. Books, flowers, fruit and clothing were provided where they were needed. The 1902 Directory notes the men in the Alms House were particularly desirous of books.

The Hospital Committee visited the sick at Backus Hospital and provided luxuries for patients for one month a year.

In 1926, the Directory reports the Woman's Auxiliary and the Parish Aid Society strengthened the church through their ability to raise money and to promote a "social spirit". In the nineteen forties and fifties, these two groups held afternoon meetings in homes or at the church. Business meetings were followed by lectures, readings or practical work such as rolling bandages for the hospital, and, of course, refreshments and a social time. Both groups continued to raise money by suppers and fairs.

St. Agnes Guild, in the nineteen forties and fifties, held monthly supper meetings followed by business and a program. Over the years, this guild financed altar and vestment purchases, the double stained glass windows over the North Porch and other needs of the parish.

In 1962, all women's groups united under the program of the Episcopal Church Women of the diocese in order to conduct a full missionary and community program. Today, the ECW continues to raise money for church projects. A portion of the money raised is reserved for needy parishioners and community charities. Members are strong supporters of the White Envelope program and the United Thank Offering.

In 1961, Muriel Hart and Anna Johnson became the first women to be elected to the vestry. By 1966, girls had become acolytes and women were ushers and lectors. In 1976, Wilma Langley Brown was elected to be the first woman to serve as junior Warden. In the eighties, women became chalice bearers and intercessors.

BOYS' CHOIR

(From reminiscences of choir days given the Norwich Bulletin by William A. Buckingham)

William Prothero initiated the idea of a boys' choir which sang for the first time at the Easter service in 1888. Ernest Felix Potter from New Jersey became the first choir master for eighteen boy sopranos, four boy altos and ten men (six tenors, four basses). This early choir was multi-racial including a descendant of the Mohegan Tribe. The boys received twenty-five cents a week, the men one dollar.

Under choirmaster William Hahekotte, the boys presented a "Choir Festival Night" and the operetta, "Pinafore", to raise money. When St. Paul's Church in Danielson was dedicated, the boys rode by special train to sing at the ceremony.

Of these boys, Christopher Thurhen became an Episcopal bishop, Robert Thorpe an Episcopal priest, David Henderson a Metropolitan star and Harold Witter Brynner a poet and writer.

Mr. Johanssen, writing about the choir in the 1930's, recalls choir mothers who adjusted black bow ties and white cottas over black cassocks and boys with good attendance who were rewarded with a week of summer camp. At Christmas, the boys sang for patients at Uncas-on-Thames and shut-ins at the Sheltering Arms.

World War 11 brought the end of the Boys' choir.

Choir masters in order were: Ernest Felix Potter, Walter Vinol, Ernest Ibbison, William Frederick Hahekotte, Arthur G. Hall, Stanley Pierce, Arthur G. Hall, Hanison Walker, Richard W Hyde, Earle M. Potter, Mary Beth Lee, Kathy Cooper and currently, Jesse Glaude.

EVANGELISM AND MISSION AT THE END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The spring of 1977 found ten members and the rector of Christ Church participating in "Here's Life New London County" aimed at reaching the unchurched. Three days of training were followed by telephone evangelism and door-to-door visits to evangelize and to distribute literature.

During the eighties and nineties, the Gideons received support for their distributions of Bibles and a few members participated in Full Gospel meetings.

The Hamanack Fund established in the 1980's by the will of Edna Hamanack directed that the interest from the fund be used for outreach in the community. Yearly distributions have aided parishioners and others in need as well as charitable organizations.

Today the parish covers the total cost of the Milk Fund for the Soup Kitchen. More than one church group provides support for two children overseas. Parishioners donate to the Presiding Bishop's Fund, The Bishop's Fund for

Children, Community Meal, Church World Service Blanket Fund, Food Pantry and Aids Ministry.

ECUMENISM

During the last half of the twentieth century, some parishioners became involved in ecumenical activities. Women attended World Day of Prayer and other celebrations of Church Women United. Some assumed leadership positions at the state and local level. For years, the Episcopal Church Women gave a party for patients at the Norwich State Hospital under the sponsorship of Church Women United.

In the 1950's, men joined with their Protestant brothers in Washington Birthday ecumenical communion breakfasts, and, over many years, parishioners participated in ecumenical Thanksgiving services.

On October 18, 1964, Christ church dedicated new windows. Clergy who participated in the service represented A.M.E. Zion, St. Mark's Lutheran, Park Congregational, First Baptist, Lee Methodist, Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox and St. Patrick's Cathedral.

On June 29, 1980, at St. James Episcopal Church in New London, The Right Reverend Morgan Porteus, Episcopal Bishop of Connecticut and The Most Reverend Daniel P. Reilly, Roman-Catholic Bishop of Norwich signed a Covenant to express their desire to follow Christ's will that "all may be one." It was agreed that all churches would include a Covenant Cycle of Prayer in their liturgies, share facilities, worship, educational resources and the professional expertise of both clergy and laity, dialogue, work together for social justice and, lastly, worship together at the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, at the Feast of Pentecost and at an annual celebration of the renewal of the Covenant.

On June 14, 1992, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, New England Synod, joined the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Norwich in signing a covenant similar to the 1980 one. The areas for working together were listed as public education, social welfare, world peace, social justice, employment, stewardship of creation, housing, environmental preservation and multi-cultural acceptance. It was recommended that documents produced through dialogues at the national and international levels be studied. A yearly review of the achievements of this Covenant was to be conducted.

Results at Christ Church have included the appointment of an ecumenical representative, prayers for Covenant Cycle Churches, shared worship at the annual renewal of the Covenant and at the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, a Summer School of Religion for children and the Community Meal held on two Sundays a month at St. Mark's Lutheran Church.

DECADE OF CHANGE

Christ Church witnessed more change in the 1960's than in any single decade in its history.

Changes proposed for the Book of Common Prayer were introduced. Lay participation in the service increased. The altar and communion rail were moved closer to the congregation in keeping with the theological emphasis on participation in the Eucharist as a celebration of community and unity in the body and blood of Christ.

As noted elsewhere, women assumed liturgical and administrative positions. The physical plant was redesigned to meet modern needs.

The parish reached out to other denominations. Lenten Sunday afternoon programs welcomed people from other churches to do dramatic readings of the events leading to the crucifixion. Members of other churches helped our people to put on Menotti's Amahl and the Night Visitors.

In 1962, the Diocesan Unit of Research and Field Study in cooperation with the General Division of Research and other division of the National Church conducted parish studies of all Episcopal Churches in Connecticut. The Norwich Area Study was a result. Christ Church was assigned responsibility for the downtown ministry which was to have elements of evangelism, pastoral concern and Christian social relations.

All churches (Christ, St. Andrews, Trinity, Grace and Poquetanuck) were found wanting in evangelism. Consequently, the Norwich Area Episcopal Council was formed in 1963 to promote evangelism in the area and to foster team ministries for its member parishes. One result was the establishment of a mission in Montville which was recognized as St. Mary's Church by Bishop Walter H. Gray on November 1965. Other shared projects included a teacher training session, a Lenten School of Religion, a clerical and lay ministry to the Norwich State Hospital, a Vacation Bible School and a publication, Norwich Area Review.

Statistics for Christ Church in 1962, taken from The Norwich Area shed light on the congregation of the sixties. Seven hundred and seventy six people received spiritual ministrations. Roughly 75% of the parishioners lived in Norwich. Communicants numbered four hundred and seventy four. The average attendance at two services was three hundred and fifty five. In 1961, the total income was \$51,000 with \$22,000 from pledges and \$29,000 from endowment. Twenty-seven young people were in the Y.P.F. The Episcopal Church Women averaged twenty-seven at a meeting. Two hundred students were enrolled in the Sunday school with an average attendance of one hundred. Students were taught by thirty-eight teachers, observers and substitutes. Seventy parishioners were involved in the adult education program.

THE CHANGING FACE OF CHRIST CHURCH

The 1960's mark the beginning of change in various areas of the church's life. Some of the change that took place reflected what was happening in the Episcopal Church.

The building itself had taken on a new look. In 1955 a two-story addition was built to house church offices and meeting rooms. But it was the interior of the church that was to have a marked change. In the early 60s there was movement in the Episcopal Church called the Liturgical Movement, which most likely had its influence on the Rev'd David O. Cowles. Father Cowles was ahead of his times introducing new liturgies to the parish, much to the chagrin of many parishioners! The changes in the church reflected the changes in the liturgy.

In addition to the new windows in 1963 the change in the chancel reflected the change in liturgy. The chancel had been divided into two parts, the choir and sanctuary. The sanctuary was separated from the choir by the altar rail. In the sanctuary was the altar and tabernacle. When the change took place, the altar rail was moved just outside the chancel. The choir was moved back to the loft, which had originally been designed for the choir. That move didn't happen without resistance! The altar was moved away from the east wall to the center of the chancel. The priest now celebrated facing the people and the Eucharist was a celebration of the people of God.

Along with all the turbulence in our nation in the 60s the Episcopal Church decided it was time to revise the prayer book. And Christ church, like other parishes, had to be exposed to liturgies from Green books, Blue books and Zebra

books out of which would evolve our worship in the new Book of Common Prayer. It was not an easy time for parishioners.

People were moving out into the suburbs and not all were faithful to our parish. That marked the beginning of a trend which resulted in the loss of our communicant strength. The trend continued into the 70s and was magnified by people who left the Episcopal Church over the new Prayer Book and the Ordination of Women. It was during the rectorship of the Rev'd Dwight Blakeslee that the 1979 Book of Common Prayer became the official Prayer Book of the Church. People once again could have a sense of roots and change was not always knocking at the door.

In the 1980s there would be more changes. The early 80s were a time with inflation running rampant. Our parish was hard pressed to keep up with rapidly increasing budgets. It was during this time that the parish received a large bequest from Charles Gilbert, which helped a great deal. With fewer communicants it had become increasingly difficult to have a balanced parish budget.

During this decade the national church produced the 1982 hymnal. While it did not create the problems which Prayer Book revision did, it did introduce a number of new hymns and service music. It was during this same time that the parish fulfilled the intention of the 1979 Prayer Book by making the Eucharist the principal service of Sunday worship. This too was not done without difficulty. The Rev'd Donald R. Lillpopp, rector, began a teaching program to educate parishioners about the change. In November 1981, Father Lillpopp announced the change to the parish in an address to parishioners. The change took place in Lent in 1982.

Other changes have taken place during this same period. In the chapel the Rev'd David Cowles had intended to have stained glass windows depicting the seven sacraments. Father Lillpopp wanted to see that wish become a reality. Over a period of several years various individuals and groups made donations so that the new windows could be completed. One window is interesting because it depicts a woman priest. At the writing of this history there is no known stained glass window in the Episcopal Church which portrays a woman priest.

In the early 80s the parish honored Earle M. Potter, organist, for serving 50 years in music. Ten years later the parish did the same to honor 60 years of service. In our 250th year we look to honor him for 65 years of service. He played at the church's 200th anniversary celebration!

In the 90s renovation has taken place. A completely new heating system has been installed in the church. In this same time span the parish received a large bequest from Ruth Bolz, making possible repair of our north parking lot and the extension of the south one. During the early 1990's it was decided to replace the existing parking lots and construct additional walkways with handicap access. This project was completed in 1995 in connection with a town built heritage trail and greenway which now adjoins church property on the north and west sides. An engraved plaque giving a brief history of the church is located approximately 100 yards south of the north entrance to the heritage trail. A new use for the south parking lot and porch was found in the summer of 1996 when parishioners used this area to view the fourth of July fireworks display.

Along with her bequest and a capital funds drive the parish was able to repaint the church. The Episcopal Church Women are renovating the "Upper Room" in memory of Ruth, Bolz. In addition work is being done in the church's vestibule. And Father and Mrs. Lillpopp have given a gift to make possible the renovation of the priest's vesting room. Work is taking place in other parts of the church as Christ Church gets ready to celebrate its 250th year.

250TH YEAR

January 7th, 1997 marked the 250th anniversary of Christ Church Parish. This revision of our history was written in conjunction with our celebration of this event, the parish planned a number of special events to celebrate its 250th.

We began the year with a special annual meeting in which we presented parishioners with copies of a special Pictorial Directory. The Anglican Singers joined us early in the year for a special Evensong. We had a special service for renewal of marriage vows, inviting people married at Christ Church to return for this occasion. After Easter the parish presented the play "Godspell," using the church as was done in medieval times. We had a visit by the Rev'd David Sharp from Norwich, England. Our bishop, the Rt. Rev. Clarence N. Coleridge made a Visitation in the fall. It was a great homecoming and we invited all who had been a part of Christ Church at some time in their life. We plan to conclude the year with a special Thanksgiving service with people dressed in Colonial garb. We hope that in later years someone will write about what took place.

It was in January 7, 1747, that a meeting was held at the town-house, Norwich, to arrange for the erection of an edifice "for the service of Almighty God,

according to the Liturgie of the Church of England, as by law established, somewhere between the town of Norwich, and the landing-place in said Norwich, at the north east end of Wauwecus hill, upon a piece of land to be given by Captain Benajah Bushnell." 250 years later we celebrated our past and brought to mind so many of the events that have taken place during this time. But we not only celebrated the past. Our 250th year was a time to turn our heads to the future and we do so with a new vision in which we can better serve our Risen Lord and make him known to the world in which we live.

RECTORS

In all, nineteen men have been called to the parish. Their tenures ranged from zero to fifty-four years. To explain the zero: In 1886, the Rev. Orlando Witherspoon was called and accepted as of April first. On that day, he failed to appear because he was ill. He died on April fourteenth. Although he was called and accepted, he never served.

Nine of the rectors remained for ten or more years.

The Rev. Richard Nelson became a bishop.

The Rev. Thomas Richie was granted leave of absence to serve as an army chaplain in World War 11. During that period, the Rev. Robert Beattie of Trinity supplied at Christ Church.

Two of the rectors were forced to resign, prior to their divorces.

As in all human relationships, some of the rectors were more beloved than others, but, by and large, the church has been fortunate in its choice of leaders.

The leaders of Christ Church:

Ministers-in-charge:

The Rev. Ebenezer Punderson, S.P.C. 1749 -1751

The Rev. John Beardslee, S.P.G. 1763 -1768

Rectors:

The Rev. John Tyler 1768 -1823

The Rev. Seth B. Paddock 1823 -1844

The Rev. William E Morgan 1844 -1857

The Rev. J. Treadwell Walden 1857 -1863

The Rev. David E Banks 1863 -1870

The Rev. John Binney 1870 -1874

The Rev. Samuel H. Giesy	1874 -1885
The Rev. Orlando Witherspoon	1886-
Called and accepted, but died before assuming his rectorate	
The Rev. Richard H. Nelson	1887 -1897
The Rev. William Stanley Emery	1897 -1900
The Rev. Thomas F. Davies, Jr.	1901 -1902
The Rev. Neilson Poe Carey	1903 -1911
The Rev. Richard R. Graham	1911 -1924
The Rev. C. Montgomery Budlong	1925 -1929
The Rev. Thomas Richey	1929 -1943
The Rev. Douglas H. Loweth	1943 -1960
The Rev. David O. Cowles	1960 -1968
The Rev. H. Dwight Blakeslee	1968 -1979
The Rev. Donald R. Lillpopp	1980 -1999
The Rev. S. Scott Hankins	2000 -2009

DID YOU KNOW!

1. In the 1930's choirboys were paid 10 cents for two-hour rehearsals on Tuesday nights and 15 cents on Fridays.
2. Bishop Lee a former parishioner laid the cornerstone for the present church.
3. The sacristy was once the north entrance to the church.
4. We once had two hundred candles on the altar for the Festival of Lights.
5. Father Blakeslee took the acolytes to Yale-Harvard football games.
6. The Sunday school rooms were once one large room.
7. In the 1990's a little girl's grave stone was unearthed when the south parking lot was excavated.
8. Father Richey took a leave of absence to serve in the Armed Services during World War II.
9. In years past uptown people used the north entry and all others used the south entry.
10. In the 1960's the church held a Christmas party every year for the neighborhood children.
11. In the early 1960's the first women were elected to the vestry.
12. The Sunday school used to hold a birthday parade for Jesus with each child carrying a cake with lighted candles.
13. Father Cowles made some of his house visits on a motorcycle.
14. We have a very nice library open to all parishioners.
15. Gov. William Buckingham was a member of the Boys Choir which gave its first performance on Easter Day 1888.
16. The first Choir Master's name was Ernest F. Potter.
17. Parishioners once paid for their own pews.
18. At least two of our former parishioners became Bishops.
19. After the Revolutionary War church membership was only twenty souls.
20. The original church building is now home to the Salem Historical Society.
21. We once used fresh flowers for the Flowering of The Cross.
22. We have altar hangings made by the Mother of justice Akrofi, our Seminarian from Ghana. Justice is currently serving as Bishop of Accra.
23. At one time Chief Taft kept the coal furnace going all night so the Church would be warm Christmas morning.
24. Christ Church Parish and Church of the Resurrection merged to become known as Christ Episcopal Church in 1999?
25. The Ruth Mae Bolz room across from the office was remodeled into a very comfortable library, a meeting area or just a place to read?
26. Bishop Gene Robinson of New Hampshire ordained Susan Langley as a

- Priest in 2008 at C.E.C.?
27. E.C.W. sells parking space for the 4th of July Fireworks and the money earned is used for local mission work?
 28. There is a Spiritual Open-Mic (thanks to Will Schramm) once a month where all guitarists and vocalist are welcome to share their gifts of both classic and contemporary music.
 29. Journey to Adulthood started with Journey as Story in 2004 for adults and the Rite -13 class started in 2005 with 8 youth.
 30. We have Bible study on Thursday morning at C.E.C. and Thursday evening at the Rectory?
 31. Bishop Thomas Veil of Kansas was a former member of C.E.C. Our present Rector, S. Scott Hankins also comes from Kansas. Interesting?
 32. The newly installed organ in 2008 is a Rodgers T968 and this particular instrument was heard at the American Guild of Organist National Convention in the Twin Cities?
 33. In the year 2002, Fr. Andrew Tyler, Priest of St. Mary Magdalene Church, Norwich England visited Peg Wilson, a member of C.E.C. As a result of the visit, In July 2003, a group of parishioners traveled to England to witness a celebratory service commemorating the 150th year of the church's founding.
 34. In 2003, Marilynn Davis Gilbert of Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan was the first woman priest called to serve as assistant to Fr. S. Scott Hankins, Rector of C.E.C. Marilynn served for a period of three years.
 35. Every November, the C.E.C. Choir, along with approximately 12 Norwich area church choirs participates in the Annual Norwich Choir Festival. It is held at United Congregational Church. Individual anthems are sung, and between 160 and 200 voices combine for a final anthem.
 36. Journey to adulthood is actually 3 programs in one – Rite 13 (ages 11-13), J2A (ages 14-16) and YAC (ages 17-18).
 37. The Geddes Organ, located in the Chapel was moved from the Church of the Resurrection in the fall of 2002. It is played on Tuesday morning Prayer Service and at various services during the year.
 38. Jesse N. Glaude, Organist-Choir-Master, introduced the Christ Episcopal Church Chamber Music series in 2006. This successful series features very gifted musicians from the surrounding area.
 39. 2008 was the first time C.E.C. has had two female wardens at the same time and they are Terri Nash, Pastoral Warden and Cindy Adams, Property Warden.