

# **“The Town Clock Church”**



**History of the  
First Reformed Church  
New Brunswick, NJ**

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by

the Rev. Dr. J David Muyskens

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## FOREWORD

The last time someone compiled a history of First Reformed Church was when Dr. Richard H. Steele presented his Historical Discourse Delivered at the Celebration of the One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the First Reformed Dutch Church, New Brunswick, N.J. That was on October 1, 1867. The discourse was published by the Consistory. There are still a few copies in existence of that volume. But it seems time for an update.

My work on writing the history of First Church began with a series of Wednesday evening lectures during lent some years ago. My research continued since then as I read consistory minutes, old newsletters, and talked to some of the older members of the congregation compiling the story that follows on these pages. It is a story in which the hand of God is evident. It is the story of dedicated people who gave much in the service of Christ.

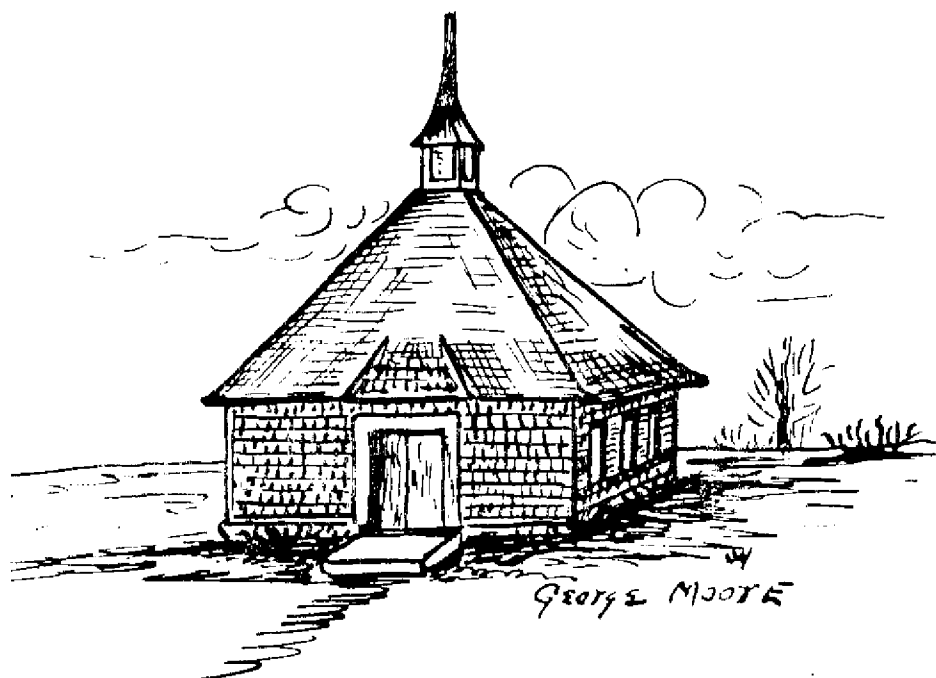
It is the story of a church which has played a central role in the life of its community. For a time it was known as "the Town Clock Church" as its tower has housed the town clock of the city of New Brunswick for one hundred and sixty years. Its earliest names reflected the fact that it was a church organized to serve its community. The names expressed the geographic location of its congregation. Its earliest minutes still in existence, from April 19, 1717, identify the people in the area of Lawrence Brook and the Raritan River as belonging to the congregation which came to be called the Three Mile Run Church, the Three Mile Run being another brook that identified the parish. After New Brunswick was chartered the church became known as "the congregation of New Brunswick" and was also called "The Dutch Church." Later it was called the Dutch Reformed Church distinguishing it from the Presbyterian, Episcopal and Baptist churches that were organized. When the need for more Reformed Churches became apparent it became known as the "First Reformed Church" and "First Church" for short.

It is my hope that telling the story of First Church will make us better informed and equipped for the future. While the names of the church reflect a central role that it had in the community, it no longer enjoys such a role. Once next to the market and city hall, one of a few churches serving the greater New Brunswick area, today there are many other churches and the secular attitudes of the times place the church on the periphery. It could become no more than an antique. This history is written with the hope that we may follow the new directions of the Spirit for our time in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Being reminded of the dedication and faith which is our heritage we may be inspired to be engaged in the mission of the church of Jesus Christ.

And seeing the weaknesses of our spiritual forbearers, their paternalism, prejudices and mistakes, can teach us lessons from history and help us find the wisdom we need for our ministry. May the Holy Spirit guide us in the task of drawing people's attention to God, bringing hope and joy to the people of our community, not to put the church in a place of prominence or to bring back the past, but so that people may find the renewal of spirit that is so much needed.

There are many people who helped in the preparation of this book. Rev. Robert Dickson and Rev. Glenn Van Oort made helpful suggestions for the chapters dealing with the time they were ministers of the church. Betty Gram and Dorothy Van Nostrand read portions of the manuscript and offered their suggestions. Bruce Baier compiled the list of officers since the time of Steel's work. Our church Secretary, Merrijane Gottshall, contributed her expertise to the final editing. My wife, Donna, did proof-reading and offered valuable suggestions. Many thanks to them and to all who answered questions and contributed with their knowledge and interest.

J.D.M.



## Three Mile Run Church

Sketch by George Moore,  
Pastor of The Six Mile Run Reformed Church,  
1940-1952



## THE FOUNDERS

The congregation now known as the First Reformed Church in New Brunswick, New Jersey, was originally called the Three Mile Run Church. It was organized by settlers of the area surrounding the point where the main road from New York to Virginia crossed the Three Mile Run. The road followed a trail which had been used for years by Native Americans. The path ran from the place where Elizabeth is now located southwest to the falls on the Delaware at Trenton. It crossed the rivers and streams at their most shallow points. The Raritan River was crossed at Inians Ferry where New Brunswick is now located. Going southwest from the Raritan there were crossings at the Mile Run, Three Mile Run, Six Mile Run and Ten Mile Run each so many miles from the Raritan.

Much of the land was covered with native forest. But to the north along the Raritan there were meadows which the Indians used to raise corn, beans, and pumpkins. In 1650 Cornelius Van Tienhoven, Secretary of New Netherlands, described the area: "The district inhabited by a nation called Raritangs is situated on a fresh water river, that flows through the centre of a lowland which the Indians cultivated. This vacant territory lies between two high mountains far distant from the other. This is the handsomest and pleasantest country that man can behold. It furnished the Indians with abundance of maize, beans, pumpkins, and other fruits. This district was abandoned by the natives for two reasons: The first and principal is that, finding themselves unable to resist the southern Indians, they migrated further inland. The second, because this country was flooded every spring...frequently spoiling and destroying their supply of maize, stored in holes under ground. Through this valley pass large numbers of all sorts of tribes on their way north or east. This land is, therefore, not only adapted for raising grain and rearing all descriptions of cattle, but also very convenient for trade with the Indians."<sup>1</sup>

With such encouraging words Van Tienhoven was trying to entice people to come and settle in the area. By the 1680s people came from New York and Long Island. On November 10, 1681, John Inians, a New York merchant, purchased a tract of land where the city of New Brunswick was later built. At the crossing of the Raritan River he established a ferry. Some of the people who came to create farms in the vicinity of Three Mile Run were Roelef Sebring, Hendrik Bries, Roelef Lucas Van Voorhees, Aart Artsen, Isaac Van Dyke, Johannes Folkersen, Jan Aten, Laurens Williams, Jacob

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<sup>1</sup> Abraham Messler, D.D., Eight Memorial Sermons, with Notes for a History of the Reformed Dutch Churches in Somerset County, N.J. (New York: A. Lloyd, No. 729 Broadway, 1873) p. 159.



Ouke, Roelef Nevius, Charles Fonteyn, Hans Stoothoff, and Thomas Bowman.<sup>2</sup>

From Long Island there came a Dutch colony which settled in the area. They were attracted to the greater freedom to be enjoyed under the proprietors of East Jersey, Wm. Penn, President. They were unhappy with the arbitrary conduct of the English governors of New York and Long Island. Among the purchasers were Peter Cortelyou, Stoffel Probasco, Theodore Polhemus, Hendrik Lott, Hendrik Hendriks, Jacques Cortelyou, Dennis Tunis, and Cornelius Wyckoff. They acquired ten thousand acres of land lying in the central part of Franklin Township.<sup>3</sup>

These people were of the Reformed faith. They were Dutch Reformed and French Huguenots. Sometime before 1717 Abraham Bennet built a church building in which they could gather for worship. Tradition says it was a stone structure with a pyramid shaped roof, similar to many country churches in Europe. Its location is uncertain. It has been thought that it was located on or near the site where the Three Mile Run Cemetery was later located. Writing in 1873, Abraham Messler said the church was located on what later became the cemetery lot. In 1867, Richard Steele said, in his history of First Reformed Church, that the church was not on the cemetery lot but next to it. (Near the intersection of How Lane and Route 27.)

In 1710 the Rev. Paulus Van Vlecq organized the Six Mile Run Church. He had been ordained irregularly by Rev. Bernardus Freeman of Long Island in 1709. In 1710 he organized several churches in Pennsylvania and November 15, 1710, he organized twenty-three members with two elders, Adriaen Bennet and Charles Fonteyn, and two deacons, Baerent de Wit and Abraham Bennet, in a congregation at Six Mile Run. Van Vlecq baptized Abraham and Jannetje Bennet's daughter Sarah on October 23, 1711. They had ten children altogether. In 1717 the family joined those who formed the congregation in the vicinity of the river and Lawrence Brook. The baptisms of their last four sons, Johannes, Volkert, Petrus and Benjamin, born in 1718, 1720, 1724, and 1728, were registered at the church which later became known as the congregation in New Brunswick.

The Reformed believers in the area were given spiritual guidance by the Rev. Guiliam Bertholf. Rev. Bertholf and his family came to America from Holland around the year 1683. They settled at Hackensack and he became a Voorlezer and Comforter of the Sick in the churches at Hackensack and Acquackanonk. The voorlezer was a lay leader who led the singing and some of the liturgy in worship services. The churches were impressed with Bertholf's gifts and sent him to the Netherlands to be ordained. In 1693 he

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>3</sup> Eugene H. Keator, Historical Discourse (Published by the Six Mile Run Reformed Church, Franklin Park, N.J., 1910) p. 18.

was ordained by the Classis of Walcheren. He returned in 1694 to become the Pastor of the Hackensack and Acquackanonk Churches. As the only ordained minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in New Jersey he assumed the supervision of all the churches in the province. He assisted in the organization of the churches in the Raritan valley as well as a number of other locations. His visits to the Three Mile Run Church may have been as infrequent as twice a year. At the time of these visits the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper would be administered. There were also occasional visits by Dominies Bernardus Freeman and Vincentius Antonides of Long Island.<sup>4</sup>

The people of the Raritan Valley were not to have a resident minister for some years. They had to depend on lay leadership. Prominent among their leaders were Frederick Van Liew and Hendrik Vroom. An early subscription list indicates that they were the collectors of the sum of 10 lbs. 16s. and 16d. to pay the expenses of procuring a minister.<sup>5</sup>

It was in Abraham Bennet's home that people of the Three Mile Run, Six and Ten Mile Run vicinities got together to discuss the future of their church. The meeting was held on April 19, 1717. A previous meeting held on the 12th had left many people dissatisfied. So to "establish peace and unity" they agreed that the church built by Abraham Bennet would belong to the people who lived in the area of Lawrence Brook and the Raritan River and that the people who lived in the area of the Six and Ten Mile Runs would build a church for themselves. Each of the two congregations would have its own Consistory of three Elders and three Deacons. The churches would nevertheless continue to be one spiritual body and the two consistories were to meet together to deal with matters of discipline and other matters pertaining to the welfare of the church.<sup>6</sup>

After this meeting of agreement concerning the two congregations there was immediately a meeting called to elect officers. Roelef Sebring was elected an Elder and Hendrik Bries and Roelof Lucas were elected Deacons of the congregation at Lawrence Brook and the River. Later the Consistory was filled to its full compliment of three Elders and three Deacons with the election of Aart Aarzen and Izaak van Dijck as Elders and Johannes Folkers elected a

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<sup>4</sup> Wm. H. S. Demarest, Historical Address, delivered at the 240th Anniversary of First Reformed Church, New Brunswick, N.J., Oct. 10, 1943, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Richard H. Steele, D.D., Historical Discourse, delivered at the Celebration of the One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the First Reformed Dutch Church, New Brunswick, N.J. (Published by the Consistory, New Brunswick, N.J., 1867) p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> Minutes of the meeting of April 19, 1717, which are in the Special Collections at the Alexander Library of Rutgers University.

Deacon. The membership list of the church in 1717 contained seventy-three names.

Although at the initial meetings the words "Lawrence Brook and the River" and "Six and Ten Mile Run" were used to distinguish between the two areas to be served, those did not become the names of the congregations. The two congregations became known as the Three Mile Run Church and the Six Mile Run Church. In 1723, at a convention of churches of the Raritan valley (defending their minister against charges brought by a group opposing him) those were the names used for the two congregations.<sup>7</sup> Still later a communication to the Classis of Amsterdam from "the four congregations of Raritan" the same names were used. So it seems that "Three Mile Run" was a name attached to the church in what was later to be known as the New Brunswick area. After New Brunswick was chartered in 1730 the church began to be called "the congregation of New Brunswick," and, later, the "Dutch Church of New Brunswick." The two congregations were closely affiliated with two other churches in the Raritan Valley, Raritan and North Branch. The four together asked the Classis of Amsterdam to send them a minister. Their petition was sent in 1717 or 1718. When the first minister came in 1720 it was said that the process had taken two years.

Sometime before 1735, probably before 1729, a place of worship was built at the intersection of Burnet and Schureman Streets, then called Dutch Church Street. It was a wood structure, with shingled sides and steep roof, facing the river, fifty feet in width and forty feet in depth. There were seven pews on each side of the pulpit and eight along the middle aisle. It seated three hundred.<sup>8</sup>

Dominie Bernardus Freeman of Long Island took an interest in the churches of the Raritan Valley. Some of the members had come from his parish. Rev. Freeman had been an effective missionary among the Mohawk Indians in New York for five years. In 1705 he began his ministry on Long Island, a ministry which was to continue until 1741. He was interested in finding a minister for the churches in the Raritan valley. He wanted to find someone of pietist persuasion. The movement in Europe, known as "Piestism" emphasized the importance of personal devotion. Freeman enlisted the help of a friend in the Netherlands, Dominie Sicco Tjadde. One evening an elder of Dominie Tjadde's church entertained a young minister of Loegumer Voorwerk who was also corrector of the Latin School at Enkhuysen. The elder was so impressed with the young man's conversation and prayers at the dinner table that he told his Pastor, "I have found a man to

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<sup>7</sup> Joseph Anthony Loux, Jr., ed. Boel's Complaint Against Frelinghuysen, (Hamilton Printing Company, Rensselaer, New York, 1979), p. 57.

<sup>8</sup> Steele, pp. 25-26.

go to America." The young man was Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, who was born in Wolfenbuettel, Ostfriesland, Germany, in 1691, and had been ordained by the Classis of Emden in 1717. Theodorus accepted the call to go to the Raritan churches. He was sent by the Classis of Amsterdam and arrived in New York in January, 1720.

## THE GREAT AWAKENING

Immediately upon his arrival Frelinghuysen incurred the displeasure of a minister of the Middle Collegiate Church in New York, Henricus Boel. Frelinghuysen was asked to preach in Boel's pulpit January 17, 1720, and in his conduct of the service he left out the Lord's Prayer. It was Frelinghuysen's opinion that repetition of the Lord's Prayer could become an empty routine if not accompanied with some explanation and careful thought about what was being said. His omission made Boel quite unhappy. Boel was a staunch defender of church order. It was just the first instance of conflict between the two men.

Frelinghuysen brought his own voorlezer with him, Jacobus Schureman, who was also a school-master and a poet. Schureman assisted Frelinghuysen in his ministry and began teaching children. Schureman soon became embroiled in controversy with parents complaining that he did not teach their children the Lord's Prayer. At first the two of them lived with the family of Hendrik Reyniersz in the neighborhood of Three Mile Run.

Dominie Freeman was not only instrumental in bringing Frelinghuysen to America. He also found brides for both Frelinghuysen and Schureman. The children of a large family in Flatbush had been orphaned and the younger ones came under Freeman's care. Eva Terhune, then about twelve, was the youngest and Annetje, fourteen, was next youngest. Frelinghuysen married Eva in a service at Flatbush conducted by Dominie Freeman. Shortly thereafter Schureman married Annetje. Their marriage was performed by Dominie Frelinghuysen in the Three Mile Run Church.<sup>1</sup> Frelinghuysen had been promised five acres of land as Pastor of the church. But that was increased to fifty. He was provided with a parsonage at Three Mile Run. After he was married Frelinghuysen purchased two hundred acres from Frederick Van Liew. The Schuremans purchased a farm near New Brunswick in the vicinity of the present Roman Catholic cemetery on Route 27.

Frelinghuysen, according to his pietist beliefs, expected church members to demonstrate a vital faith and to live disciplined Christian lives. He was of the school of pietists who believed the minister must guard the sacraments and advise people who are unfit not to receive communion.

As was being done among the European pietists, Frelinghuysen held "conventicles," private prayer meetings in homes for spiritual edification.<sup>2</sup> Frelinghuysen's father was a pastor in Germany of the pietist persuasion. Pietism had been a part of the Reformed faith since the early years of the Reformation. Its first advocate was Jean Taffin, chaplain of William the

<sup>1</sup> James R. Tanis, *Dutch Calvinistic Pietism in the Middle Colonies*, (Martinus Nijhoff, 'S-Gravenhage, 1967), p. 158.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

Silent, who in 1529 tried to bring reformation to the life of the believer. The Reformation had brought reform in doctrine and church polity. Pietists sought to apply the faith of the Reformation to daily life. Their stress was upon an experiential faith, the importance of a personal and meaningful relationship with God. John Calvin had a strong doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The Reformed pietists emphasized this. They were against formalism and intellectualism calling for faith that is a matter of the will as well as the mind. Some pietists stressed inner faith. Others stressed disciplined living. William Teellink was a Dutch pastor who combined both. In addition he was concerned about the life of his community, province and nation, he had a missionary interest in reaching out to those who suffer in other lands. The Friesian pietist Jacobus Koelman, who had been Bertholf's pastor in the Netherlands, had a great influence upon Frelinghuysen. Koelman believed the pastor ought to examine members to determine their fitness to receive the sacraments.<sup>3</sup>

In 1721 Frelinghuysen published three sermons in which he attacked the general laxity of the church people. By 1723 Simon Wyckoff, a deacon at Six Mile Run, Peter Dumont, an elder at Raritan, Hendrik Vroom, a former elder at Three Mile Run, and Daniel Sebering, got together to oppose Frelinghuysen and consulted with Boel and Boel's lawyer brother in New York. Frelinghuysen excommunicated the four. The church order prescribed in the Canons of Dort required that Classis be consulted in excommunications. But Frelinghuysen considered it his duty and right as a minister to judge who should receive communion. The Friesian Catechism stated that members must "accept those leaders who seek the welfare of their souls as sent from Christ; be subjective (submissive), follow their good order, submit to their admonitions and punishment, and pray for them frequently."<sup>4</sup>

A petition circulated by Hendrik Vroom and Frederick Van Liew among the people of Three Mile Run in 1729 seems to have been an effort to find another minister to preach at the Three Mile Run Church. The subscription was dated November 20, 1729: "We the inhabitants of the Three-Mile-Run community -- as by a list signed for the Salary of a Low-Dutch Reformed Preacher under the Synodical Orders of Dort, which is to be expected by (means of) a call -- have for ourselves in love and peace thought good that whenever the said Domine shall have come that he shall preach in the same church which now stands on Three-Mile-Run for four or five years or so long as the foresaid church is comfortable for to have the service in: And then when the same church no more is comfortable to have the service in -- we are

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Anthony Loux, Jr., ed. *Boel's Complaint Against Frelinghuysen*. (Hamilton Printing Company, Rensselaer, New York, 1979), p. 10, footnote 52.

agreed to build a new church on the land of Johannes Pitinger or thereabouts." There were twenty-four signers.

The controversy became very bitter. Frelinghuysen and Schureman were outspoken and frequently without tact. Rumors spread about Frelinghuysen and Schureman sleeping in the same bed when they were still single. It was claimed that they showed affection in public. Accusations were made about Schureman's sexual orientation. Frelinghuysen was criticized for ordaining Hendrik Visscher a deacon when it was claimed that Visscher had been seen out at night with a married woman. These kind of accusations were never substantiated or upheld. In 1725 Dominie Boel published a document on the issue called a Complaint against Frelinghuysen. Sixty-three persons signed the Complaint. The Classis of Amsterdam was too far away to be effective in dealing with the situation. Negotiations broke down for a little while when Frelinghuysen was ill, possibly due to the strain of the controversy. He admitted to having taken some action without proper authorization from consistory or classis. The Classis ordered Frelinghuysen to reinstate the four initiators of the complaint in letters sent in 1729 and 1732. After considerable discussion articles of peace were written and read in the churches. Finally in 1738 all parties signed an agreement that ended the argument.<sup>5</sup>

In his Historical Discourse delivered at the celebration of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the First Reformed Church in New Brunswick, Richard H. Steele gave this description: "At the time when Mr. Frelinghuysen commenced his ministry, the churches under his care were in a most deplorable state...church organizations existed and houses of worship had been erected, yet as the natural result of the absence of pastoral supervision, there must have been a great departure from serious and vital piety.

"The physical aspect of the country very much resembled the morals of the people. It was wild and uncultivated. Dense forests surrounded New Brunswick; the streams were unbridged; the settlements were widely scattered; the roads, with the exception of the main thoroughfare from New York to Philadelphia, were little more than paths through the wilderness; and it had all the appearance of a new country.

"This was the state of things when Dominie Frelinghuysen came here in 1720. But he was a man equal to the times, of great energy of character, of large attainments in knowledge and grace, and with a certain fearlessness of spirit that enabled him to go immediately at the hearts of the people. From the sermons which have been preserved, we gather that he was a warm, earnest preacher, dwelling principally upon the necessity of the new birth, and having a dreadful antipathy to all manner of formalism. He preached the doctrines of

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

grace with so much spirituality and directness that the people, who had never had their hopes questioned, began almost immediately to raise against him a loud opposition. He was charged by his enemies with preaching doctrines contrary to the standards of the Church, and subversive to the whole spirit of the Gospel. When he insisted on the necessity of experimental evidence as a qualification for the Lord's Supper, he was represented as introducing customs contrary to the principles of the Reformed Church."<sup>6</sup>

Frelinghuysen was significant as a transmitter of pietism to America. His pietism led him to call for rebirth. He sternly denounced faith that was not experienced within. Speaking of the "wretched state of the unconverted," he addressed his congregation as "Sinners, you who are not yet born again, who have experienced no change or renewing of the heart."<sup>7</sup>

Frelinghuysen found many staunch supporters. The congregation at New Brunswick seems to have backed him substantially. Its leading elder, Minne Voorhees, was an important supporter. Minne Voorhees had come from Long Island in 1715. He resided on the property we now know as the Cook College Farm on which there were mills. Richard Steele says of him: "Tradition reports him to have been very gifted in prayer and exhortation. His memory was so retentive that he was able to repeat nearly the entire sermon after hearing it preached. When Mr. Frelinghuysen was exhausted with his excessive labors, he would frequently call upon Minne to take the evening lecture in one of the neighborhoods, and he would conduct the services with great edification. His name was very precious in the church for several generations, and he has left behind him even to this day a savor of great piety."<sup>8</sup>

Frelinghuysen found an ally in the Pastor who came to New Brunswick in 1726 to serve the Presbyterian Church which was located on Burnet Street, the Rev. Gilbert Tennent. Rev. Tennent was also an evangelical preacher and, even though he preached in English, Frelinghuysen invited him to preach to his Dutch congregations. Frelinghuysen and Tennent were among those who invited George Whitefield to come to the area. The result of this evangelistic preaching was that a large number of people were converted. The spiritual awakening that occurred was part of a larger movement in the colonies known as the Great Awakening.

Whitefield, November 20, 1739, wrote in his journal: "Preached about noon, for near two hours, in Mr. Tennent's meeting house, to a large

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<sup>6</sup> Richard H. Steele, D.D., *Historical Discourse*, delivered at the Celebration of the One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the First Reformed Dutch Church, New Brunswick, N.J. (Published by the Consistory, New Brunswick, N.J., 1867) pp. 30-31.

<sup>7</sup> Tanis, p. 111.

<sup>8</sup> Steele, pp. 39-40.



assembly gathered from all parts." On the 26th of April, 1740, he again passed through New Brunswick, reaching the town about four in the afternoon, "and preached to about two thousand in the evening." "The next day," he wrote, "preached morning and evening to near seven or eight thousand people; and God's power was so much amongst us in the afternoon service, that, had I proceeded, the cries and groans of the people, I believe, would have drowned my voice." Whitefield preached from a wagon in front of the Reformed Church on Burnet Street with the people assembled all over the meadow which sloped down to the river.<sup>9</sup> (It was a very large gathering considering that New York was probably a town of about 7,000 at the time and New Brunswick only a village.)

The effect of the spiritual revival upon the New Brunswick church can be seen in the statistics. There were 60 new members received by the New Brunswick church in the years that Frelinghuysen was the Pastor. Twenty-one of these were brought in in one year, 1741.

Meanwhile the town of New Brunswick was growing. It received a royal charter in 1730, with half of the men named in it members of the Reformed Church. About that time a number of Dutch families came from Albany, New York, settling on lower French Street, hence called Albany Street.

Dominie Frelinghuysen was serving as the Minister of five churches: New Brunswick, Six Mile Run, Raritan, North Branch, the four that called him and another which was added, the Harlingen Church. The Consistory of the Raritan Valley congregations approved a petition to be sent to the Classis of Amsterdam, Holland, October 18, 1736, requesting an Assistant Minister. The petition was sent in 1737 and again in 1738, but none was found. In those years the Great Consistory of the Raritan Valley congregations met four times a year. In 1736 the Consistory approved a plan proposed by Frelinghuysen that "helpers" be appointed. I Corinthians 12:28, where helpers are said to be among those God appoints to do the work of the church, was the basis for this decision. Three such lay leaders were appointed for New Brunswick: Hendrik Visscher (Fisher), Roelef Nevius, and Abraham Ouke. They not only performed the duties of the former voorlezers, but shared oversight of the conventicles, gave instruction in catechetical classes, and even preached occasionally in the pastor's absence. They were "to take the place of the minister in the public services of the church, when the latter is absent, or when by reason of sickness or feebleness he can not conduct the service." They were also "to assist every member of the church by their advise, instructions, directions, consolations and intercessions, when requested to do so." The combined consistories expressed this prayer for these "helpers:" "May the Lord of the harvest bless this work to the

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 34-35.

upbuilding and edification of his people, and qualify these our Brethren by the gift of his Holy Spirit." Another resolution was passed that said that no one was allowed to catechise publicly without the approval of the consistory. But every "father may and should hold particular catechisms for his children and other members of his family."<sup>10</sup> In 1742 the Consistory granted Mr. J. M. van Harlingen, who was studying for the ministry, permission to read sermons in the New Brunswick and Six Mile Run Churches while Dominie Frelinghuysen was ill.

Two special concerns of Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen were significant although it fell to his successors and lay leaders to carry them out. Frelinghuysen believed that the church in America should have its own organization and be able to train and ordain clergy in America. Dominie Frelinghuysen and Elder Fisher were among those who assembled in New York in April, 1738, to form an organization of the Reformed churches in the colonies. This assembly of ministers and elders came to be known as the Coetus. Another group who wanted to continue to keep strong ties to the church in the Netherlands organized themselves in opposition to this trend. They were called the Conferentie.

Frelinghuysen's sons Theodore and John took up the cause of providing education for the ministry in the colonies. All five of Theodorus and Eva's sons were ordained to the ministry and both of their daughters married ministers. Two of the sons never did serve as pastors because they died of small pox returning from their studies in the Netherlands.

There is some uncertainty about the date of Frelinghuysen's death. According to Richard Steele it occurred by the beginning of 1748. By the fall of that year the Rev. Johannes Leydt became Pastor of the New Brunswick and Six Mile Run Churches. He had been born and educated in the Netherlands. He was appointed by the Coetus with permission of the Classis of Amsterdam. He was thirty years old. His residence was at Three Mile Run.

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<sup>10</sup> Tanis, p. 66. The original minutes are in the minute book of First Reformed Church in Special Collections at the Alexander Library of Rutgers University. Copies are in the archives of First Reformed Church.

## THE WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE

In 1748 a visitor described New Brunswick: "About noon we arrived in New Brunswick, a pretty little town in a valley on the west side of the river Raritan; on account of its low situation it cannot be seen coming from Pennsylvania, before coming to the top of the hill which is close up to it. The town extends north and south along the river. The town has only one street lengthwise, and at its northern extremity there is a street across; both of these are of considerable length. One of the streets is almost entirely inhabited by Dutchmen who came hither from Albany, and for that reason they call it Albany Street. On the road from Trenton to New Brunswick, I never saw any place in America, the towns excepted, so well peopled."<sup>1</sup>

In 1753 Dominie Leydt secured a royal charter from King George II for the five churches of the Raritan Valley. The trustees were Dominie Leydt and Dominie John Frelinghuysen, who had become Pastor of the churches at Raritan, North Branch, and Harlingen, and the consistories of the five churches, with Hendrik Fisher as President.<sup>2</sup>

Even though the Reformed Church building in New Brunswick had been enlarged in 1735 the congregation was becoming too large for it. In 1754 a proposal was made to build a new sanctuary. The congregation had difficulty agreeing on whether to build on the same location or another. The matter was settled when Philip French contributed the lot on Queen, now called Neilson, Street where the present sanctuary is located. On September 12, 1765, he leased the lot to the church for 2000 years at the rental of one peppercorn per year if demanded. This was the same arrangement he had made with the Episcopal Church on a nearby lot twenty some years earlier.

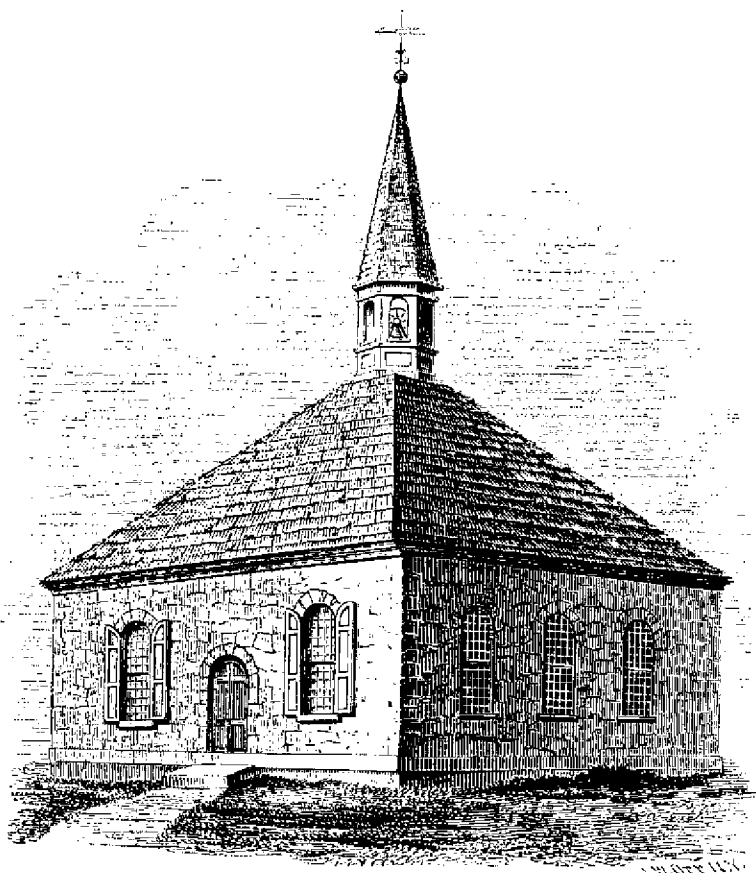
John Schureman, son of the Voorlezer and School-master, was appointed building committee chairman. The building was constructed of stone brought from Hell-Gate, New York, and up the Raritan River. It was financed by the sale of pews and was built to seat 400 people. On the south side there was a pew for the city fathers. On the north a similar pew which was popular because, it was said, "one eye could be directed toward the minister, and the other to any thing that might require attention in the other part of the house."<sup>3</sup> A circular pulpit stood high on a pedestal with a sounding board above it. The roof was shaped like a pyramid on a square base with a small steeple at the peak. Two pillars were inside supporting the roof at its peak. A bell was installed in the steeple in 1775. It was rung by a rope in the

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<sup>1</sup> Richard H. Steele, D.D., *Historical Discourse* (Published by the Consistory of the First Reformed Dutch Church, New Brunswick, N.J., 1867), pp. 48-49.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.



REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH, NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J.

ERECTED 1767, TAKEN DOWN 1811



center aisle which was wound around one of the pillars during the service. Steele wrote, "The church was never desecrated with stoves, but in the midst of winter the good Dutchmen kept up what heat they could by an occasional stamp on the floor, and tradition says the Dominic would keep warm by an extra amount of gesture."<sup>4</sup>

Steele described the town at the time: "The streets were unpaved; a swamp extended from Church to New Streets, affording a fine skating pond for the boys in winter; there were a few buildings to the right of the edifice, and only an occasional house between this and Albany Street. On the hill...stood the stone barracks, a commodious building one hundred feet in length and sixty in depth, erected in the year 1758; and the farm of Jacobus Van Nuis covered all the ground now occupied by Schureman, Liberty and New Streets."<sup>5</sup>

Steele pictured the day of the dedication of the church this way: "The day opens with a bright sunshine, and the patriarchal head of the house unclasps the huge, old-fashioned Bible, and reads a chapter for the family devotions, commenting on the verses with an ability which shows his knowledge of the Scriptures, and his strong belief in the theology of the Reformation...Earlier than usual the whole surrounding population are on their way to the house of God. All the roads leading into the city are lined with travelers, some on horseback, many on foot, and a few enjoying the luxury of a wagon-ride over the rough and winding roads...The men are attired in their best Sunday garments, low-crowned hats with very broad brims, coats of large dimensions, with plated buttons, polished brightly for the occasion, ruffled bosoms and wristbands, with silver sleeve-buttons, and the more aged in small clothes, with knee-buckles, and a linen neck-tie of perfect whiteness. The women are modestly and appropriately attired; the dress was of homespun material of fine texture, extremely short-waisted, but not entirely devoid of ornament; their bonnets were large and expansive, with crowns of sufficient size to inclose the most aspiring head-dress; a neat linen collar, with knit gloves of their own manufacture, and a stout pair of shoes completed the toilet.

"Thus attired, the people gather into the sanctuary...(Since the bell was not yet in the tower) the signal of a horn announces the hour of worship, while the services are regulated by an hour-glass. The voorlezer takes his seat in front of the pulpit, and, according to the custom of the day, commences the exercises by reading the ten commandments and selections from the Scriptures, after which the Psalm is read, and for the first time those walls resound with the praise of God. During the singing the minister enters the church, bowing to the right and left as he passes up the crowded aisle pausing

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

for a few moments with covered face in silent devotion before entering the sacred desk...the hour-glass stands at the right of the minister, by the side of the Bible. While the sermon is in progress, the sand has run out; it is then turned, and the congregation know that a half-hour of the discourse is yet to come. But the people listen with grave attention, and are full of reverence...The morning service was followed by an intermission of half an hour, and then they all returned to hear another sermon. Thus the Sabbath day passed, closing with the family recitation in the catechism, and evening worship."<sup>6</sup>

Dominie Leydt took up where his predecessor had left off in the causes of an independent church in America and of education. He became a principal spokesman for the cause of the Coetus party writing several pamphlets advocating the independence of the church from the Classis of Amsterdam. He was one of the six founders of the Rutgers Preparatory School. The first trustees of the grammar school were Dominies Leydt, Hardenbergh and Van Harlingen of the Dutch Reformed Church, Rev. Abraham Beach of Christ Church Episcopal in New Brunswick, Mayor Ouke and Dr. Cochran.<sup>7</sup> Dominie Leydt was a prime mover in the effort to begin a college in order to have an educated ministry. He was one of the signers of the petition to Governor Franklin of the Province of New Jersey for a charter. A royal charter for Queen's College was granted in 1766 and again in 1770. Dominie Leydt was one of the original Trustees and his son, Matthew, was the first graduate, receiving his degree in 1774, giving oration in Latin, Dutch and English.<sup>8</sup>

Elder Hendrik Fisher became a prominent leader in both church and society. When needed he could fill the pulpit. His sermons were said "to be rich in the doctrinal statements and pungent in their application of the truth."<sup>9</sup> He was a mechanic by trade. Elected to the Assembly of the colony before the Revolutionary War, he was President of the Provincial Congress of New Jersey which met in Trenton, May, 1775. In his opening address he "set forth in a forcible manner the grievance of the American Colonies."<sup>10</sup> He was a delegate to the Second Continental Congress which called for raising of militia in Somerset and Middlesex counties. When the barracks in New Brunswick were made ready for New Jersey troops to be stationed there Hendrik Fisher and John Schureman were put in charge.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52-54.

<sup>7</sup> Frank V. Spurduto, A History of Rutgers Preparatory School (Published by Rutgers Preparatory School, Somerset, N.J., 1967), p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Wm. H. S. Demarest, Historical Address, Oct. 10, 1943, p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> Steele, p. 66.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

Dominie Leydt was very much committed to the cause of the independence of the colonies from British rule. Steele says that Leydt "preached upon the topics of the day in such a manner as to rouse the patriotism of the people into a pitch of enthusiasm; he prayed for the success of the American cause, and counseled the young men to join the army of freedom."<sup>11</sup>

It was a difficult time for the church and the town. The church gained no new members from 1773 to 1779. For over a year no services could be held in the church. New Brunswick was in the path of the two armies crossing the state. During the winter of 1776-77 the city was in the possession of the British army. Perhaps five thousand troops occupied the town of no more than a thousand people.<sup>12</sup> Before their arrival members of the church had taken down the bell and hidden it in the ground up the hill where Old Queens now stands. Captain Adam Huyler was the last to leave the town as the British entered. He defended himself for a short time behind the Presbyterian Church which was then burned by the British. The British took over all public buildings. They took the pews out of the Reformed Church and it was converted into a hospital and then into a stable. The Three Mile Run Church is said to have been destroyed in the war. Over a hundred private homes and barns also suffered severe damage. The Reformed Church in New Brunswick suffered considerable damage which had to be repaired before services could be held again. When services could resume the building was shared with the Presbyterians, each congregation holding services on alternate Sundays.

There continued to be skirmishes which involved New Brunswick troops. On October 26, 1779, British Colonel John Simcoe and his Queens Rangers made a secret raid into New Jersey from Staten Island with the main objective of capturing New Jersey's governor William Livingston. At Raritan Simcoe burned some boats and the Dutch Reformed Church. At Millstone he burned the court house and the jail. Colonel Neilson took his troops to Raritan Landing where he hoped to intercept Simcoe. He sent Captain Guest and thirty-five men toward Millstone. Between Millstone and the bridge Captain Guest's unit attacked Simcoe's Rangers. Simcoe's horse was shot and James Schureman, grandson of the schoolmaster, took him captive. It is said that another soldier was about to put his bayonet through Simcoe when Schureman intervened. Simcoe's Rangers fled. As they were pursued Peter Voorhees, grandson of Elder Minne Voorhees, got ahead of his men and trying to jump a fence his horse tripped and fell. The British stabbed him and

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>12</sup> Richard McCormick, "New Brunswick During the Revolution," A talk given at Rutgers University art gallery's bicentennial exhibit, New Brunswick, N.J., May 1, 1976, p. 3.



he died a few hours later. So angry were the people over Voorhees' slaying that they wanted Simcoe executed in revenge. Simcoe had to be hid in a house and only an order from Governor Livingston saved his life.<sup>13</sup>

Some of the most daring exploits of the war were those conducted by Captain Adam Huyler who had several large whaling boats. He would proceed down the Raritan River to annoy trading ships and take supplies and ammunition from the British stockades at Staten Island, Long Island and Sandy Hook. He selected only the most daring men for his expeditions. It is said that they were so expert at rowing that they could travel twelve miles an hour and could be heard only at very short distance. Huyler was a special mark of the British. And so an expedition of three hundred men was sent in boats up the river to destroy his boats and retake supplies. On January 4, 1782, the river was clear of ice and the British proceeded quietly up the river. At midnight Peter Wyckoff was awakened by the barking of a watch dog. Putting his ear to the ground he heard the sound of muffled oars. Quickly he mounted his horse and rode through the city to give the alarm to Captain Guest. Word spread and soon all the able bodied men were up and armed. By this time the British had set fire to the whale boats and were in town. They beat a hasty retreat and a running battle ensued in the streets. Trying to get to their boats the British ran down Neilson Street and were intercepted at the Reformed Church with a volley of rifle fire from behind the walls of the church. Soon they reached the river and made their way back to Staten Island. Four men were killed and several wounded in the skirmish.<sup>14</sup>

James Schureman was captured at the mills on Lawrence Brook and taken prisoner during the war. He was held for a time in a temporary jail in the rear of Middle Collegiate Church in New York. He escaped from there to the American army at Morristown. After the war he was elected to the United States Congress and the Senate.<sup>15</sup>

June 2, 1783, Dominie Johannes Leydt died. He had been Pastor of the church for thirty-five years. A short, stout man with dark complexion, a man of quick movements, "in his disposition kind and affable,"<sup>16</sup> he was highly esteemed by his congregation. At the beginning of his ministry all his sermons were in Dutch but later he spoke half of the time in English. His sermons were instructive, aimed at promoting growth in the Christian faith. He was buried in the Three Mile Run Cemetery, as had been his wife, Treyntje, who died in 1763, and their two daughters, who had died at ages twelve and seven months in 1760. The stone on his grave was inscribed: "In

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<sup>13</sup> Steele, pp. 67-69.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

memory of the Revered John Leydt who departed this life June 2nd, 1783, aged 65 years.

"My flesh shall slumber in the ground  
Till the last trumpet's Joyful sound.  
Then burst the grave with sweet surprise  
And in my Saviour's Image rise."

A humorous incident occurred during the time the congregation was looking for another minister. The Rev. William Jackson, a son-in-law of Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, supplied the pulpit one winter Sunday. Richard Steele wrote, "He was a great orator, according to all accounts, but addicted to the unfortunate habit of preaching long sermons. The days were short, and in the morning service he had given them a discourse of near two hours length, and the afternoon seemed to promise quite as long. Darkness was coming on, and there were no arrangements for lighting the building; when James Schureman gave to the minister a sign that it would be agreeable to the congregation if he would bring his sermon to a close. With great vehemence of gesticulation Mr. Jackson cried out in a stentorian voice, "Sit down, James Schureman, I say sit down; Paul preached until midnight."<sup>17</sup>

After the war the church needed rebuilding. Providentially the church was blessed with the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Jacob Rutsen Hardenbergh, who came in 1786 to be both Pastor of the church in New Brunswick and the first President of Queen's College. He was well known to the congregation as the Pastor at Raritan who had been a strong advocate of the struggle for independence. He had been a member of the convention that framed the first constitution of the State of New Jersey. He had worked along with Dominic Leydt, Hendrik Fisher, and others for the establishment of Queen's College. Dr. Hardenbergh was also a leader in the denomination, he was elected President of General Synod four times. He was the grandson of Sir Johannes Hardenbergh who was Knighted by Queen Anne and given the Hardenbergh Patent comprising what is now Ulster, Delaware and Sullivan Counties of New York.

Dr. Hardenbergh was not in good health when he came to New Brunswick and died after working there only four years, on November 2, 1790, at the age of 55. His funeral sermon was preached by Dr. Peter Studdiford of Lambertville.<sup>18</sup> His short ministry saw an outpouring of the Spirit of God upon the congregation. In those four years sixty-nine new

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Studdiford, A.M., "A Funeral Sermon on the Death of Rev. Jacob R. Hardenbergh, D.D., President of Queens College and Pastor of the Dutch Church in New Brunswick. Departed this Life November 2, 1790, in the 55th Year of His Age," New Brunswick, N.J., printed by Abraham Blauvelt, 1800.

members were received into the church. It was a time of revival for the church.

The inscription on Hardenbergh's grave in the church yard, written by Dr. John Henry Livingston reads: "He was a zealous preacher of the gospel, and his life and conversation afforded, from his earliest days, to all who knew him, a bright example of real piety. He was a steady patriot, and in his public and private conduct he manifested himself to be the enemy of tyranny and oppression, the lover of freedom, and the friend of his country. He has gone to his Lord and Redeemer, in whose atonement he confidently trusted. He has gone to receive the fruits of his faithful labors, and the reward of a well-spent life. Reader, while you lament the loss to society and his friends, go walk in his virtuous footsteps; and when you have finished the work assigned to you, you shall rest with him in eternal peace."

## A TIME OF BUILDING

Dr. Hardenbergh was survived by his wife, Dina Van Bergh. Dina continued to be associated with the Reformed Church in New Brunswick and to be a spiritual leader in the congregation. She had grown up in Amsterdam, the daughter of a wealthy merchant. She came to have a strong faith at an early age. Although, at one point, she was considered hopelessly ill she prayed for healing and always felt it was by the power of God that she had recovered. She appreciated the poetry of the pietist Jacobus Lodenstein. She was part of a conventicle or circle of young women in Amsterdam which met for Bible study and prayer. For a time she kept a spiritual journal. On her twenty-second birthday she wrote: "I was led in devout meditation upon the preserving care of God over me, and the wonderful deliverance I had experienced; upon his bounty to me as to the things of this world, but especially upon the dealings of his grace when in my youth he was pleased to draw me out of the midst of the evil world. I now desire more entirely to consecrate myself unto God, to yield to him the best of my time and strength." In her diary she wrote the insights she received from sermons, communion services and personal prayer. She expressed her concern for her family, her country and international tensions of the time. James Tanis has called her diary one of the best expressions we have of the spirit of Pietism. Like the Frelinghuysens, Dina prayed, "That a formal Christianity might pass away, and the power of godliness be made again to appear."<sup>1</sup> Her faith and her prayers had made her a companion in ministry to John Frelinghuysen, then Jacob Hardenbergh and, after his death, a spiritual leader in the church in New Brunswick.

Dina Hardenbergh and Colonel Neilson, a Presbyterian who was married to Catherine Voorhees of the Reformed Church, were among those who joined the Consistory, led by Elder John Schureman, in calling Ira Condict to become the next Pastor of the church. Rev. Condict was a graduate of Princeton, ordained in the Presbyterian Church. His call stipulated that services would be in English, with two services each Sunday in the summer and one in the winter. His pastorate did not include another church but his congregation was spread out over a large geographic area: living in Bound Brook, New Market, five miles out on George's Road in North Brunswick, South River and Middlebush.

Dr. Condict was tall, muscular, and of dark complexion. He is said to have been a very serious man but friendly and warm hearted. He was known

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<sup>1</sup> Portions of Dina Van Bergh's diary are in the Gardner Sage Library of New Brunswick Theological Seminary and the Special Collections of Alexander Library of Rutgers University. See the translation by Gerard Van Dyk with biographical sketch by J. David Muyskens published as an Occasional Paper of the Historical Society of the Reformed Church in America.

to be depressed at times and there were occasions when he received encouragement from Dina Hardenbergh. He was not an especially good speaker. "His strength lay rather," wrote Richard Steele, "in his powerful conviction of the truth which he preached; in his intense earnestness of soul, driving him on as if he had a great work to do for his Master." The Conducts lived in a parsonage at 62 Church Street until 1798 when they moved to a farm of one hundred thirteen acres near Milltown.<sup>2</sup>

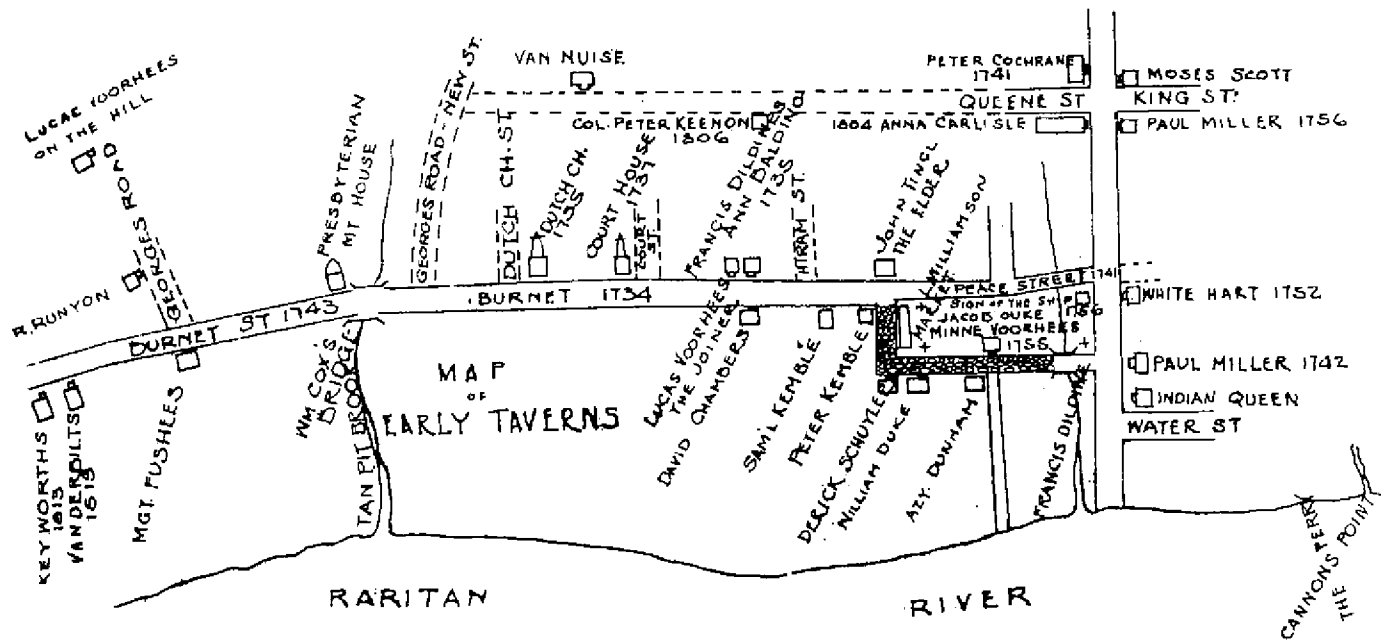
Dina Hardenbergh and Mrs. Conduct, who was an intellectually and spiritually gifted woman, were interested in the religious instruction of the youth. Informally they gathered groups of children to teach the Bible. Their efforts paved the way for the organization of the Sunday School in 1799. Sarah Van Doren was the organizer.<sup>3</sup> Assisted by a few other women such as Hannah Scott it was a lay movement as were the other Sunday Schools which came into being around that time. It was one of the earliest Sunday Schools to be organized in the United States. Earlier Sunday Schools were independent so it has the distinction of being the first to be organized in a church and the oldest Sunday School with a continuous history in America. The Sunday School movement came to America from England where Robert Raikes founded the first Sunday School in 1780 for children who worked in factories during the week teaching them reading and writing as well as the Bible.

The Consistory took seriously their responsibility for discipline. Members were admitted "upon their engaging to walk with the people of God in all the ways of his commandments and to submit themselves to the watchful care and discipline of the church." If a member of the church was reported to have conducted themselves in an unChristian manner he or she would be asked to come to a hearing of the Consistory. Some cases involved charges of adultery or dishonesty in business dealings. Witnesses would also be asked to attend. If found guilty the person would be suspended from communion until repentant. For example when a certain member was observed to have been intoxicated he was asked to appear. His plea was "not guilty" but nine witnesses examined under oath testified that he was indeed drunk. Therefore he was "suspended from the sealing ordinances of the church until such time as he shall acknowledge his fault and manifest repentance." In a later case a member was suspended for holding dances in his home and another for being in a "fight of great provocation." Those who evidenced repentance were readmitted to the Lord's Supper. In disputes among members the consistory would seek to bring about reconciliation. A

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<sup>2</sup> Richard H. Steele, D.D., Historical Discourse (Published by the Consistory of First Reformed Church, New Brunswick, N.J., 1867), p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> Philetus T. Pockman, Centennial of the First Reformed (Dutch) Sunday School at New Brunswick, New Jersey, May 21, 1899, (Presented to the Historical Club of New Brunswick, Oct. 19, 1899), p. 12.





member who built a dam causing his neighbors property to be flooded was asked to lower the height of the dam. With that they were reconciled and readmitted to communion.<sup>4</sup>

The Consistory met in the college, the parsonage and in members homes. In 1793 there were four elders: John Schureman, Jan Van Neste, William Van Dëursen and Gerrit Voorhees. And there were four deacons: Frederick Outcalt, John Thomson, Denice Van Liew and John Bice. The Consistory elected their members from the adult male members of the church.

The church was incorporated by the State of New Jersey March 30, 1790, as "The Ministers, Elders and Deacons of the Congregation of New Brunswick." In 1806 the Consistory adopted a seal. The central symbol of the seal was a lamp., shaped like a vase with a flame burning at the top. Around the circumference were the words "Dutch Church of New Brunswick."

Locating the church on Queen, now called Neilson, Street was providential. When the church was built there it was on the outskirts of town. To the south and west of it was farm land. In June 1808 the Consistory resolved "that the church wardens cause pulleys to be fixed to the gates of the church yard so as to prevent the ingress of cattle in time of public worship." But in the 19th century the town grew around the church so that it was at the heart of the city. In 1796 the county built a courthouse next to the church (where the Church House now stands) at the corner of Neilson and Bayard Streets. When the French hero of the Revolutionary War, Major General Lafayette, visited the United States in 1824 he was entertained in this building. After 1841 it became the city hall of New Brunswick.

In the 18th century the business center of town had been near the intersection of Albany and Burnet Streets. (Where Memorial Parkway now crosses Albany Street, see old tavern map.) Burnet Street branched into Peace and Little Albany Streets. This area was known as Commerce Square. In the 19th century the commercial center expanded up Church and Hiram Streets and on to Neilson Street.

161-163 Neilson Street, built in 1801, became a tavern in 1806, operated by Colonel Peter Keenon, a veteran of the War for Independence. Next door the structure at 157-159 Neilson was built in 1810. It housed the first bank in New Brunswick. The bank had been incorporated in 1807, the third bank in the state of New Jersey. Its president was Jacob Hardenbergh, son of Dominie and Dina Hardenbergh. It was commonly known as "Hardenbergh's Bank."

Private schools were held in homes. A Mr. A. Slack operated one at 141 Neilson Street. In 1801 William Hall left a bequest to be used for the education of children who could not afford the tuition of the private schools.

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<sup>4</sup> The Records of the Reformed Dutch Church of New Brunswick, 1794-1813.



Mr. Hall left a portion of his estate for "educating poor children in the city of New Brunswick." In 1807, the General Assembly of the State of New Jersey designated two trustees from each of the three churches then in the city to administer the fund as a corporation called "the Corporation for the Relief of Poor Children in the City of New Brunswick." (Later to be known as the Hall Educational Fund.) The Trustees opened the first tuition free school in the city in 1814. It was called the Lancastrian School, located on Schureman Street and grew to have 143 students enrolled. From time to time the City Council appropriated funds to operate the school. The Lancastrian School was based on a method which enabled it to serve many students on a low budget. John B. Richard described it as follows: "The system had several advantages, especially in a community without many wealthy citizens. Few teachers could do justice to more than fifty pupils each, while in the Lancastrian system one competent principal could supervise 500, he, himself teaching the highest class, and the brightest pupils in each grade being required to teach a class in the next lower grade."<sup>5</sup>

New Brunswick grew because it was a transportation center. The river was navigable up to New Brunswick. In 1785 a line of freight boats sailed between New Brunswick and New York twenty-four hours a day. And in 1795 a bridge had been built across the river replacing the ferry between New Brunswick and Highland Park. Thirty-two stages ran each way per day between New York and Philadelphia.

A memorial service was held in the church at the time of the death of George Washington. February 22, 1800, Major General Frederick Frelinghuysen gave the oration.<sup>6</sup>

The church grew. In 1803 galleries were constructed in the church to accommodate the larger congregation.

By 1810 the town had a population of 2826 free white persons, 52 free African Americans, and 164 slaves for a total of 3042. There were 375 dwellings and 469 families.

Dr. Condict was a scholar and a much loved pastor. It was his leadership that led to the building of Old Queens and the present sanctuary of First Church. Richard Steele said of him: "He was practical and earnest as a preacher, and always came into the pulpit with a well-prepared discourse...In catechizing, pastoral visitation, and labors among the poor he had not his superior. He was remarkably punctual in all his engagements...While he has left behind him a character for remarkable gravity in his deportment, and was

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<sup>5</sup> John B. Richmond, Cobwebs of Memory Gathered from Ye Dark Corners of Ye Olden Time (Newark, 1903).

<sup>6</sup> An Oration on the Death of Gen. George Washington. Delivered in the Dutch Church in New Brunswick on the 22nd of Feb., 1800, by Major-General Frederick Frelinghuysen (Published by desire, New Brunswick, N.J. Printed by Abraham Blauvelt, 1800).

subject to occasional moods of despondency, yet he was gifted with fine conversational powers, and frequently, in social intercourse with his people, he would throw off all reserve and exhibit a mind full of vivacity. As a member of church judicatories he was active, and always too a prominent part in debate. The General Synod of our church elected him their President at their meeting in Albany, in June, 1800. It is said that his assistance was greatly sought after by congregations who were vacant, and his judicious counsels often led to the amicable adjustment of difficulties which were beginning to assume formidable proportions. He gained a very just popularity for his learning, and while he was laborious as a pastor he did not neglect his study.<sup>7</sup> He was awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree by Princeton College and was elected a Trustee of Princeton College in 1804.

Dr. Condict had a deep interest in Queen's College and in theological education. As a Trustee of the college he worked hard to revive the struggling institution. Due to his efforts the college was revived in 1807. Condict was named Vice President and Professor of Moral Philosophy. Classes were held in a building on Albany Street and then in the Lancastrian School building on Schureman Street. In October, 1809, commencement ceremonies were held in the church for five graduates. Three of them were members of the church. In response to Dr. Condict's efforts Mr. James Parker gave the lot on which Old Queens now stands. Dr. Condict raised funds for the construction of the building. Legend has it that when he laid the cornerstone in 1809 his right arm was in a sling. Undaunted he held the trowel in his left hand.<sup>8</sup> When it was finished a few years later Old Queens housed both the college and the theological seminary.

In 1810 Dr. John Henry Livingston, professor of theology of the Reformed Church in America came to New Brunswick to teach theology and to be President of the college. Dina Hardenbergh and Ira Condict were among those who persuaded Livingston to come to New Brunswick. Dr. Livingston had long been reluctant to do this. He was a Pastor in New York and had been teaching students training for the ministry as he continued his pastoral duties there. For a brief time he taught in Brooklyn, probably in Erasmus Hall near the First Reformed Church there. At this point Dr. Livingston was a venerable leader of the church. As a young man he had decided to go into the Reformed Church ministry because he wanted to help heal the split between those who desired strong ties to the Netherlands and those who wanted an independent church in America. He studied at Utrecht in the Netherlands. As a young pastor in New York he was able to propose a compromise plan by which the Reformed Churches in America became independent from the

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<sup>7</sup> Steele, p. 89.

<sup>8</sup> John H. Raven, "Address: Our Church and Education," delivered at the Community Service of the 240th Anniversary, First Reformed Church, N.J., Oct. 12, 1943.

Classis of Amsterdam and yet maintained some ties with the mother church. Subsequently he had done much of the writing of the constitution for the Reformed Church in America and compiled a hymn book for the church. He has been called "The Father of the Reformed Church in America." Under his leadership the college and seminary grew, with the primary emphasis on preparing young men for ministry but college graduates went into various occupations.

Shortly before leaving New York Livingston had asked his old friend, Dominie Elias B. van Bunschooten, for financial assistance for the seminary. The Dominie was both a minister and a prosperous farmer. At the General Synod of 1814 Dominie van Bunschooten walked down the aisle and laid on the table bonds and cash totalling \$14,600 to be used "for the support and education of pious youth who hope they have a call of God to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ." The sum was increased to \$17,000 through his will, a very large amount for those days. At the urging of legal counsel van Bunschooten included in the will that the terms of the bequest must be read at every classis and synod meeting as "an humble pattern for others to copy after." Others did contribute to the fund. The General Synod had a monument erected in the First Reformed Church in New Brunswick church yard in his memory.<sup>9</sup>

The church continued to grow. For two years the congregation discussed the question of whether to add on to the existing structure or build an entirely new building. It was finally decided to build a new building using stones from the old. A building committee was appointed March 11, 1811, consisting of Matthew Egerton, Staats Van Deursen, John Clark, John D. Van Liew, and Michael Garrish.

The old stone church was used for the last time on Sunday, May 20, 1811. Demolition was scheduled for the following day. Prophetically, Dr. Condict preached on the text from Deut. 4:22,23: "But I must die in this land, I must not go over Jordan; but ye shall go over and possess that good land. Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee." He urged the congregation to remember God's covenant. With references to memories attached to the old sanctuary his sermon had most of the congregation weeping. And in God's providence that was Dr. Condict's last sermon.

On Monday work commenced, the bell was taken down, the pews removed, through the week the old building was dismantled. By Friday word was circulating that Dr. Condict was sick. On Sunday he was unable to come to the church. By the next Wednesday it was known that the beloved Pastor was very seriously ill with pneumonia.

<sup>9</sup> Arie R. Brouwer, Reformed Church Roots (Reformed Church Press, 1977), p. 79.

Thomas De Witt, a student of the seminary, was residing in Condict's home at the time and told the moving story of Condict's death recorded by Richard Steele: "Dr. Livingston visited him daily...In the early stages of the disease, he was exposed to great spiritual conflicts and distress. To the venerable professor he remarked: 'I have been much harassed and disturbed; still I hope.' When the reply was made that it was a precious exercise of faith simply to wait upon the Lord and leave the event with him, he answered: 'It is so, but Jesus must give the grace.' And that grace the Saviour did bestow. On Wednesday, (he died on Saturday after suffering great bodily pain,) he said: 'How good is the Lord to me in the midst of affliction. I can say, I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord; it is a precious salvation. On Thursday evening, as if in profound meditation, he used this language: 'I know Christ died for, I know he can keep, and will keep what I have committed to him. It is done, it is all sealed.'" Friday night, "At one o'clock he arose in his bed and spoke in these words: 'The main question with us all is, whether we are willing and ready to die. It is now ascertained to a certainty that I must die. I trust that I am sincerely willing to die. Heavenly Father! into thy hands I commit my spirit, and I pray for that grace for which I have often prayed to support me in trials and agonies which now await me.' After a few minutes of rest, he called around him his family for a farewell blessing. The scene was like that of Jacob parting with his children. To his son Harrison, a young man of great promise who soon followed his father, he said: 'My son, I must leave you. Hitherto I have been your teacher, at best an imperfect one. You shall no more have my instructions; but there is the word of God, which has an abundance of knowledge and grace. The Lord has given to you reason, and the capacity for knowing and loving him. Let that word be your instructor, and you will experience riches of grace.' 'Fear not,' he said to his wife; 'you have special promises. As for our children, you know I have often committed them to God.' To one of the elders of the church he spoke words of counsel and encouragement, and sent to his flock a message of great tenderness, pointing them to the heavenly Shepherd."

He lingered throughout the morning. Shortly before eleven o'clock he sat up in bed and requested those with him to join him in prayer. Thomas De Witt recalled that "He then made a most powerful, solemn, and connected prayer of about four minutes. What appeared surprising was that in his feeble condition he was enabled to speak so long without interruption. It appeared as if the Lord had given him special strength."

Dr Condict died at eleven o'clock, Saturday, June 1, 1811. His funeral was led by Dr. Livingston. It began at Condict's home on Water Street, to which he had moved in 1805, proceeding to the church yard. The clergy of the city were pall bearers. The Episcopal Church bell tolled. Many people of the town and surrounding area attended. He was buried beneath the walls of the old church in which he preached for seventeen years, now being

demolished. Later the congregation erected a monument in the church yard in his memory. He was 48 years old. His son Harrison died three months later.<sup>10</sup>

For nearly two years Dr. Livingston assisted the congregation with pastoral care. He visited the sick. He conducted worship services which were held in the Presbyterian Church while the new church was being constructed.

The work of building progressed under the guidance of John Clark and Staats Van Deursen. The cornerstone was laid July 6, 1811. The masons used sandstones from the old church and added to them brownstone quoins. An unusual feature is that small chips of stone are imbedded in the mortar between stones. This method is known as "galleting." Legend has it that when the masonry work was in its early stages children inserted little stones in the soft mortar. The masons liked the idea and continued it throughout. Another unusual feature is that the use of galleries is indicated by two tiers of round-arched windows. There are several Greek Revival motifs in the design of the building. One is the triangular pediment. There was no architect for this. It was designed by the building committee.

At the time the building was one of the largest in the state. It is 94 feet in length and 66 feet wide. It could seat 1100 people. At first there were "boxes," a walled enclosure type seating, under the balconies, with pews throughout the center of the sanctuary and in the balconies. A high pulpit was at the center of the west wall. On both sides of it along the west wall facing the pulpit were pews for the elders and deacons, elders to the right of the pulpit and deacons to the left. The communion table was on the floor in front of the pulpit.

The building was dedicated September 27, 1812. The dedication sermon was preached by Dr. Livingston from Ezekial 43:12: "This is the law of the house: Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house."

The cost of the building was \$16,415. The money was raised by the sale of pews on January 5, 1813. Annual fees were charged to each pew owner in subsequent years to cover the costs of the minister's salary and of repairs to the building. Pews could be purchased by people of the Reformed faith and others if granted permission by the Consistory. Ownership was registered with the Warden. The pews became personal property and could be sold by the owner or passed on by bequest to a survivor. If the annual assessment was not paid for two years the ownership of the pew would revert to the church. In 1847 a lower pulpit was constructed, the galleries were lowered and the pews on each side of the pulpit altered.

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<sup>10</sup> Steele, p. 100.



FIRST REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH, NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J.

DEDICATED SEPTEMBER 27, 1812.



The sanctuary of the church was the place where commencement exercises of the college were held. Other special events of the college, such as the inauguration of presidents were held there as well.



## THE CHURCH AND THE MARKETPLACE

The commercial and political center of New Brunswick was literally being built around the door step of First Church. This, together with a vital interest in the college, presented great opportunities to the church to present the gospel in the marketplace. It was a time of international tension. There was much concern over the War of 1812 and other conflicts that threatened the security of the world.

The church had a large new building, but it needed pastoral leadership. In their search for a minister the church worked closely with the Trustees of the college. The hope was to find a minister who would both serve as Pastor of the church and Vice President of the college. Dr. Livingston often presided at Consistory meetings in the interim. At times the Great Consistory, including all who had served as an elder or deacon, was called together. A meeting in 1811 included Philip Okey, Peter Voorhees, Peter Wyckoff, and Benjamin Taylor, elders; Henry Van Arsdalen, David Fine, and Abraham Voorhees, deacons; and William Van Deursen, Abraham Schuyler, John Van Harlingen, Denice Van Liew, Alexander Rosegrant, Gerrit Voorhees, Henry Cocks and John Van Liew. When the congregations' wishes were desired the consistory members were asked to poll those in their districts.

The first choice of the Consistory and congregation to become their Pastor was the Rev. John Schureman, D.D., great-grandson of the voorlezer and schoolmaster who had come with Frelinghuysen, and son of the Revolutionary War soldier and Senator, James Schureman. He had grown up in the church, graduated from Queen's College and studied theology with Dr. Livingston. He had been Pastor in several churches and Vice President of Queens College. Beginning in 1809 he had been Assistant Pastor with Dr. Condict but had been handicapped by poor health. He had gone to New York to be a Pastor of the Collegiate Church. Dr. Schureman declined the call and was called a second time. He then accepted but was able to serve the church for only about a year. Steele says of him, "He was truly one of the excellent of the earth...He was a most judicious and kind counselor...Few men understood human nature better than he did, and no man could have been possessed of a heart more affectionate. As a preacher, he was sound in the faith, clear in his method of arrangement, simple and concise in his style, earnest and impressive in his delivery, tender in the very tones of his voice, not frequent but appropriate in his gesticulation, and would leave upon the minds of his hearer the impression that he had in his own soul a deep conviction of the truth that he uttered...he won his way to the heart by preaching Christ in a method so distinct, and with a manner so fervid, that it is no wonder that he became one of the most useful and popular ministers of his day." For three years he was Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Pastoral

Theology at the Seminary. He died May 15, 1818. The General Synod erected a monument to his memory in the church yard of First Church.<sup>1</sup>

In 1814 the city moved the marketplace to Hiram Street right at the door of the church. Hiram Street between Dennis and Neilson was widened to make room for the market building. The market house was 25 feet wide and 150 feet long. It was the center for farmers to bring in their produce until 1864. It was torn-down in 1866. So for over fifty years the church and the marketplace were next to each other. At the one hundredth anniversary of the dedication of the sanctuary Dr. Jasper Hogan commented that this church could well have had on it the inscription placed on the walls of the first church erected in Venice: "Around this temple let the merchants' laws be just, his balances true, and his covenants faithful."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Schureman's short tenure as Pastor was followed by brief pastorates of five ministers, each being with the church no more than four years.

The Rev. Jesse Fonda was Pastor of the church from 1813 to 1817. He had been ordained by the Congregational Association in Connecticut after graduating from Union College. He served Reformed Churches at Nassau and Schodack before coming to New Brunswick. While pastor he was given a housing allowance. His tenure was marred by disagreement over the time of the second worship service held on Sundays from June through September. Those who came in from the country wanted the afternoon service at one o'clock as had long been the custom. Those who lived in town favored a three o'clock service. The Pastor also desired more than a one hour intermission between services. The dispute became so heated that some members decided they wanted to separate from the church. Meetings were held in the court house. James Schureman, Jacob R. Hardenbergh, Staats Van Deursen, James Bennet, Thomas Hance, Lewis Carman and Cornelius Bordine were appointed a committee to try to heal the breach. A compromise solution was reached giving the Pastor the option of setting the time of the afternoon service. But after he left it was held at one o'clock again for some years. The Consistory was enlarged to ensure representation from both country and town members. (Six elders and six deacons.) Unfortunately disagreement continued to affect the life of the church for some years. Despite this dissention the church grew during Rev. Fonda's ministry. He was a warm-hearted pastor and an able preacher. He was author of a book on the sacraments. He was a Trustee of Queen's College and later was elected to serve a term as President of the General Synod.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 102-105.

<sup>2</sup> Jasper S. Hogan, Sermon preached at the One Hundredth Anniversary of the First Reformed Church, Sept. 29, 1912, p. 6.

A particularly joyful occasion during Rev. Fonda's tenure was the celebration of the end of the war with Britain. On April 13, 1815, Rev. Fonda led a service of thanksgiving for which the church was filled to capacity, preaching on the subject, "Thanksgiving for Peace."<sup>3</sup>

Under the guidance of Drs. Livingston and Schureman the church next called a graduate from the seminary. John Ludlow was a graduate of Union College. He was to become one of the most popular preachers in the Reformed Church. After only two years in the pastorate he was asked by the seminary to accept an appointment as a professor. Later he was Pastor of the North Church in Albany, Provost of the University of the City of Philadelphia and then came back to New Brunswick to be Professor of Church History and Pastoral Care at the Seminary. He was very often asked to preach at installations, dedications and anniversary services. His monument is in the church yard of First Church, placed there by the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America.

The church was at times in arrears on payment of salary and bills. This was in part due to the fact that debts to the church were not being paid. The church sold some lots it owned but the purchasers had trouble making their payments and eventually some of the property came back to the church. Thirty acres were owned between Hardenberg, Somerset and Hamilton Streets. All of it was finally sold in 1832.

Sarah Van Doren reorganized the Sunday School in January, 1817. It had fifty scholars at that time. Two years later the enrollment had increased to about 100 white and 43 "colored" students with an average attendance of 70 to 80. Years later Sarah Van Doren was remembered as "an old lady of rather sour countenance, who wore glasses and had the reputation of being a good organizer."<sup>4</sup>

James Schureman was a leading elder until his death in 1824. Among the other elders serving in the 1820s were Jerome Rappleyea, John C. Wyckoff, Henry Van Arsdalen, Gerrit Van Arsdalen, Frederick and Henry Outcalt, Philip Okie, Peter Voorhees, Francis Conover, William French, Henry Hoagland, George G. Nevius, Thomas Letson and David Fine. Among the deacons were Henry H. Schenk, Rulif Van Nostrand, David Nevius, Abraham Suydam, Henry Vroom, Abraham O. and Ralph Voorhees.

In 1821 thirty-six leading men in the congregation, including Jacob R. Hardenbergh, Abraham Voorhees, Ralph Voorhees, James Conover, David Abeel and Henry Hageman, petitioned the Consistory to ask Classis permission to change the method of electing consistory members. The new

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<sup>3</sup> Steele, p. 108.

<sup>4</sup> Philetus T. Pockman, Centennial of the First Reformed (Dutch) Sunday School at New Brunswick, New Jersey, May 21, 1899. (Paper presented to the Historical Club of New Brunswick, Oct. 19, 1899), p. 20.

method proposed and which was adopted was for the Consistory to nominate a double slate to be elected by the male communicant members of the church.

Communion was held once every three months. A service of preparation was held on Saturday afternoon previous to communion Sunday.

Another student at the seminary was asked to become the next Pastor of First Reformed Church. Isaac Ferris began his ministry at the church in April, 1821. He was a graduate of Columbia. Pastors were installed in two other New Brunswick Churches in the same spring: Rev. Samuel B. How, D.D., at the Presbyterian Church and Rev. G.S. Webb, D.D., at the Baptist Church. The three men became friends developing a close relationship between these churches in the city.

It was the custom for the elders, who sat at the front of the sanctuary to shake hands with the minister after the service. The venerable Dr. John Henry Livingston sat behind the elders and it was his custom after the elders had shaken hands with the minister to extend his own. Mr. Ferris had not had much preaching experience before coming to the church. He had been a missionary in the Mohawk Valley for three months preaching in four different places. So as he became pastor of the church he was very conscious of the fact that Professor Livingston would be in the congregation. Dr. J. Preston Searle, at the 100th Anniversary of the church, told this story: Mr. Ferris "wrote his first sermon with Dr. Livingston's spirit hovering about him and sitting opposite him and criticizing every sentence. He wrote that sermon in the fear of Livingston. He preached it and came down from the pulpit. The elders extended their hands, Dr. Livingston extended his hand and said, 'Young man, that was a good sermon, but you can do better.' He went back to his study and Livingston was almost visibly present with him the next week and he wrote another sermon in the fear of Livingston. Again after the elders greeted him, Livingston extended his hand and said, 'Young man, that was a good sermon, but you can do better.' He heard that the third Sunday and then he lost patience and he took a sober second thought and he made up his mind to preach a sermon to the people who called him and whose Pastor he also was. He came down from the pulpit, the elders greeted him and then Dr. Livingston greeted him and he said, 'Young man, I told you you could do better.'"<sup>5</sup>

Fifty years later Dr. Ferris recalled, "There was everything in the case to cause hesitation in accepting the call of the Consistory, in the fact the congregation then embraced 300 families and these dispersed over an area of nearly five miles square; and, that the audiences on the Sabbath embraced the venerable Dr. John H. Livingston, whose place was always in the elder's pew, and whose upturned face was always on the speaker; and Rev. Prof.

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<sup>5</sup> Address by Dr. J. Preston Searle in the archives of First Reformed Church, New Brunswick, N.J.

John S. Mabon in the remotest square, and a gathering of some twenty-five theological students, keen observers, and sure, with all their personal good feelings, to measure with critical accuracy the performance of one who, only a year before, had been one of themselves."<sup>6</sup>

Dr. Ferris also recalled that at the time the churches of Middlesex and Somerset counties allocated districts in which certain persons were responsible for catechizing. Rev. Ferris was responsible for four districts: The Landing, Middlebush, Three Mile Run and George's Road where he taught catechism lessons once each week as well as giving a weekly lecture in the city.<sup>7</sup>

The First Reformed Church was used by the citizens of New Brunswick as the auditorium for orations each July 4th.

Among those who joined the church during Rev. Ferris' tenure were seven young men who went into the ministry. One of them was David Abeel. Making confession of faith Nov. 21, 1821, at the age of seventeen, he was later to become a pioneer missionary. His family was part of the church. His father, David, was owner and captain of ships sailing from New Brunswick to New York. His mother was a daughter of Jacob Hassart and Ann Voorhees. Richard Steele wrote about them: "His father was a man of great moral integrity and of remarkable energy of character; while his mother, Jane Hassart, was a woman of uncommon amiability of temper and of devoted piety."<sup>8</sup>

Through the concern for missions of Dr. John Henry Livingston and others, David Abeel felt called to the gospel ministry. He graduated from the Seminary in 1826. He went to Athens, New York, to be a pastor. But his health was poor and his interest was in overseas mission so he went to the West Indies after two and a half years in the pastorate. In 1829 the Seamen's Friends Society enabled him to go to the Orient. After he reached China the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions underwrote his continued travels asking him to report to them on conditions in eastern Asia. He traveled to Malacca, Siam, Java and a number of islands. In Europe and the United States Abeel devoted himself to raising concern and support for missions. Because of the low status of women which he had observed in his travels he felt the women of America especially would respond. In 1834 in London he founded "The Society for Promoting Female Education in China and the East." In America he promoted the formation of women's missionary societies. He wrote in his journal: "The work of evangelizing the world

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<sup>6</sup> Isaac Ferris, D.D., L.L.D., Memorial Discourse, Feb. 26, 1871, 50th Anniversary of Assumption of Pastoral Work at First Reformed Church (New York: Edward O. Jenkins Printer, 20 North William Street, 1871), pp. 5 & 6.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Steele, p. 113.

demands more than the labors of the ordained missionary. Their must be teachers, physicians, merchants, in places mechanics--Christian communities who can employ all the various means by which the heathen world may be influenced. The cooperation and influence of ladies are also greatly needed in evangelizing the heathen. Ladies alone have access to their own sex--Ladies ought to accompany every missionary family."<sup>9</sup>

In 1842 David Abeel founded the Amoy Mission in China, a mission of the Reformed Church in America.

The women of First Church were among those who became concerned about missions. The Women's Missionary Society of First Reformed Church had been organized in 1825.

In 1824, at the end of Dr. Ferris' tenure as Pastor of the church, New Brunswick had a population of 4500 all within the bounds of New and Somerset Streets, between George Street and the river. About half of the congregation were from out of town.

Dr. Ferris later became Chancellor of New York University. He was a Trustee of Queen's College and served a term as President of the General Synod of the Reformed Church.<sup>10</sup>

January 20, 1825, Dr. John Henry Livingston died at the age of seventy-nine. Richard Steele said of him: "The seat which he always occupied in this sanctuary was at the head of the elder's pew, with a form erect even amid the infirmities of age, and an attention that never wandered for a moment. This building reminds us of him. He laid the cornerstone with an appropriate address, and, when it was completed, he preached the dedication sermon. He presided at the ordination of pastors; during the time of vacancy was chairman of meetings of Consistory, and directed the affairs of the congregation; he offered consolation to the people on the death or removal of their ministers, and stood himself in the room of a shepherd. It was regarded as a great privilege to hear him preach, and communion Sabbaths in the church of New Brunswick always drew a large congregation; for the duty devolved upon him, by the courtesy of pastors, to take the prominent place in the services. And it is said that, while he was always excellent, on these occasions he was superior. The subject in which he most delighted was Jesus the Mediator of the Covenant, and at the Table of the Lord he would grasp the doctrine of the cross with a comprehensiveness which was peculiar to himself, and present it in a manner so adapted to his theme that all hearts would melt in the presence of Infinite Love."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> From papers on David Abeel filed in the archives of First Reformed Church, New Brunswick, N.J.

<sup>10</sup> Wm. H. S. Demarest, Historical Address, Oct. 10, 1943, at the 240th Anniversary, First Reformed Church, New Brunswick, N.J., p.23.

<sup>12</sup> Steele, p. 119-120.

Professor Rev. Dr. John De Witt preached the sermon at the memorial service. A monument was erected in church yard in Dr. Livingston's memory by the General Synod. The city honored him by naming one of its most prominent avenues after him.

In 1825 persons associated with First Reformed Church were again involved in an effort to gain greater support for the college. A committee to increase the endowment of the school was headed by Rev. Jesse Fonda, with Rev. J. Ludlow and Elder Jacob R. Hardenbergh members of the committee. At that time the name of the institution was changed from Queens College to Rutgers College, in honor of Colonel Henry Rutgers.

The Rev. Philip Milledoler, S.T.D., who was a minister of the Collegiate Church in New York was called to fill Livingston's chair as Professor of Theology and to be President of Rutgers College.

James B. Hardenbergh, a graduate of Union College and New Brunswick Seminary, came in April, 1825, to be Pastor of the church, after a one year pastorate at Helderberg, New York. He served the church until December of 1829.

Between the years 1823 and 1825 the property of the church was expanded. Two lots of forty-three feet front on Bayard and Paterson Streets, with a depth along the alley of 244 feet were purchased at the cost of \$395.50. A building called "The Consistory Room" was built in 1825. It was in the shape of a parallelogram with its long side along Church Alley. It had two doors on Bayard Street. The construction cost was \$1468. It was used for other meetings as well as Consistory meetings. Weekly prayer meetings were held in it. In 1831 permission was given for the New Brunswick Sacred Music Society to rehearse there.

The Sunday School had been meeting in the Lancastrian school on Schureman Street. When the Consistory Room was completed the Sunday School moved there and the teachers met there for a monthly prayer meeting. Two aisles ran lengthwise in the building. The girls were seated on one side and the boys on the other. At the further end there was a high platform with a desk for the Superintendent. A lower platform was in front of that for the precentor with a music rack and tuning fork. Abram V. Thompson succeeded Sarah Van Doren as Superintendent during the years 1926-27. From 1928 to 1933 Col. Richard Duryee, Jr., was Superintendent of the Sunday School with Sarah Van Doren as his assistant. Col. Duryee was a highly esteemed merchant with a hardware business on Church Street. He had an interest in military matters and organized the Governors Guards. He was a politician of "the Adams and Andrew Jackson school." "Tall, erect, graceful and dignified," he was a man of "winning urbanity and perennial kindness, a

model of purity, probity, socially a charming man...children always counted him as their sure friend."<sup>11</sup>

Students of the seminary and college were often asked to teach Sunday School. One seminarian of the class of 1831, Cornelius C. Van Arsdalen, arrived early one Sunday and found the door as yet locked. When it was opened and he went inside, he discovered that some of the boys had entered through the window. He chose for his text and lesson for the day, "Verily, verily, I say unto you. He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." (John 10:1)

In 1827 work began on the erection of a steeple. The work was under the direction of a committee: Matthew Egerton, Chairman, George G. Nevius, Peter Spader, Henry Schenk and Henry Demott. It was to be done for \$2500. Martin E. Thompson was asked to be the builder. The Consistory had difficulty deciding whether to build the steeple of brick or of wood. Minutes seem to indicate that the first attempt was to build a tower of brick and that that did not prove satisfactory. Apparently Mr. Thompson never completed all the work and in 1839 refunded the church \$500. In March, 1835, the committee reported that Mr. Thompson would stucco the tower. But in April the Consistory asked the committee to look into putting up a wooden steeple. In 1838, Mr. Van Arsdale, then Chairman of the committee, proposed a plan by which Reamer and Doty would board and paint the steeple for \$1500. Two tiers of the steeple, as it is to this day, are basically stone and brick, probably from the first tower, with wood overlaid. The third tier is entirely made of wood. The design for the wood facing may have come from a cast made by Mr. Thompson in 1835. The work was not entirely finished until 1839.

In 1828 the town appropriated \$500 to install a clock in the steeple. Since 1797 a town clock had been in the Episcopal tower. Now the city installed a new one in the Reformed Church tower. It was clearly visible to shoppers and merchants in the Hiram market area.

A new bell was installed in the tower in 1836. It was cast by McNeeley and Outhout of West Troy, New York, and weighed 1000 pounds.

Among the members who joined the church during the pastorate of Dr. Hardenbergh was Frederick B. Thompson. Through the influence of his pastor he decided to become a minister. He became a missionary in Singapore, 1838-39; Java, 1839-41; and in Borneo, 1842-46. He died in Berne, Switzerland, in 1848 at the age of thirty-nine.

Some of the congregation of First Church were African Americans. Among them were free persons as well as slaves and servants of families in the church. In 1827 the first black church in New Brunswick was organized, the Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church. Some of their charter members came from First Reformed Church, others coming from other churches in town. But there

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<sup>11</sup> Pockman, p. 25.



continued to be African Americans among the members of First Church. On Nov. 5, 1827, Consistory directed that a meeting of black members be held for the Pastor to talk with them and become better acquainted with them. In 1829 monthly meetings of the black members were established for religious instruction and by 1832 there were weekly prayer meetings of black communicants. The statistics of 1832 indicate that 29 of the 313 members of the church were black. In 1834 three black members were designated "watchmen" with the responsibility to "watch over and admonish their coloured brethren and report to consistory such cases as require their actions." The three named were Caesar Rappelyea, Anthony Smock and Anthony Voorhees.<sup>13</sup> At the time some African Americans in New Jersey were free and some were slaves. February 24, 1820, New Jersey passed a law that every child born of a slave after July 4, 1804, was declared free, but remained servant of their mother's owner until age 35 if male and 21 if female. April 18, 1846, slavery was abolished altogether in New Jersey.

A special committee appointed in 1828 was charged with the task of seeking increases in the subscription of members toward the minister's salary for which the church was in arrears. Staats Van Deursen, Matthew Egerton and James Conover were to solicit in the city and Henry V. Demott, Frederick F. Van Liew, Isaac Brower and Henry Van Liew to contact the people in the various districts of the countryside.

The Consistory was visited in 1829 by the General Agent of the Reformed Church to ask for help in denominational programs. The Consistory agreed to ask the congregation for subscriptions and payments would be made as follows: The Educational Society, January 1; the Missionary Society, April 1; and the Theological School, September 1.

Interest in missions was growing. In 1828 the neighborhood monthly "concert of prayer" meetings were asked to take up collections for the benefit of the Missionary Society of the Reformed Dutch Church.<sup>14</sup>

An Almoner's Fund was maintained for assistance of members who were in financial difficulty.

In February, 1830, some of the members of the church living in the area of Middlebush asked permission of the Consistory to form another Reformed church there. The Consistory consented to such a move and voted to give the new church, after being organized by the Classis, a three acre piece of land in Franklin Township which the church owned.

The tenth Pastor of the church, the Rev. Jacob J. Janeway, D.D. was called February 23, 1830. He was Professor of Theology at Western Theological Seminary at Allegheny, Pennsylvania, at the time. He had grown up in New York with Dr. Livingston as his pastor. He was an ordained

<sup>13</sup> Consistory Minutes of April 7, 1834.

<sup>14</sup> Consistory Minutes of 1828.

minister in the Presbyterian Church. Dr. Janeway favored the organization of a church at Middlebush. Some people who resided in that area were reluctant to leave because of their affection for Dr. Janeway. He removed that impediment by resigning in 1831. The Reformed Church in Middlebush was organized in 1834. Dr. Janeway continued to live in New Brunswick on Livingston Ave. From 1833-39 he was a professor and Vice President of Rutgers College.<sup>15</sup>

The women of the Philoclecian Society raised the money to paint the church and decorate the pulpit in 1831.<sup>16</sup>

Dr. Philip Milledoler, Seminary Professor and Rutgers President, was asked to preside at some of the Consistory meetings while the church was without a minister. The Rev. Henry Heermance supplied the pulpit for three months in 1831. Members of the Consistory were appointed to solicit subscriptions for the salary of a new minister. They also sought subscriptions from members for the purchase of the library of the late Professor John De Witt for the college and seminary.

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<sup>15</sup> Demarest, pp. 25-26.

<sup>16</sup> Consistory Minutes of 1831.

## ADVERSITY AND REVIVAL

In the Rev. Samuel B. How, D.D., the church finally found a minister who was to stay with them for a long time. He was Pastor of the church from 1832 to 1861. Born in Burlington, N.J. of English ancestry, he went to work in Philadelphia. Influenced by a Baptist preacher there, Dr. Staughton, he decided to go into the ministry. He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and Princeton Theological Seminary. He was ordained in the Presbyterian Church. He had served several Presbyterian Churches including the Presbyterian Church in New Brunswick, 1821-23, and had been President of Dickinson College, Pennsylvania, for a short time. He was appointed a Trustee of Princeton Seminary in 1823 and became a Trustee of Rutgers College, 1833-1868.

Dr. How's tenure as Pastor had a very eventful beginning. In 1832 there was a cholera epidemic. In June, 1835, a tornado caused much damage to the city. Many buildings were damaged and several lives were lost. These events no doubt had a sobering effect upon the people. They may have led to the remarkable increase in interest in religion which occurred. In 1837 there was a spiritual revival in the community. It began in the Baptist Church and soon spread to the other congregations. Dr. How observed that for several years his congregation "had steadily improved in its spiritual interests." But in the latter part of May, 1837, "the entire congregation seemed to be affected with a religious awe, and it was rare to meet with an individual who was not willing to converse with his pastor on his spiritual interests. Religious meetings were thronged, Sabbath days were seasons of refreshing, conversions were multiplied, and the entire population was moved by the Spirit of God."

In the month of September, 1837, sixty-seven persons were admitted into the membership of the church on confession of faith and four by transfer. David D. Demarest and William H. Steele, seminary students at the time, were among them.

Richard Steele said, "The result of this work of grace in this church was the addition of one hundred and thirty-seven to the communion, and about five hundred to all the churches in the city. In the graduating class of that year not one was left unvisited. Out of the number who united with our church nine entered the gospel ministry."<sup>1</sup>

People attended prayer meetings at six in the morning as well as evening prayer meetings and worship on Sundays. Dr. How wrote of these meetings, "there was no disorder, no confusion, no wild, misguided zeal. All was serious, solemn, calm, devout, and at times deeply affecting." Months

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<sup>1</sup> Richard H. Steele, D.D., *Historical Discourse* (Published by the Consistory, First Reformed Church, New Brunswick, N.J., 1867), pp. 127-128.

later he described the continuing effect upon his congregation. He said there had been "an increased spirit of harmony and love among the people of God, and never was the congregation in a state of more entire peace or of greater prosperity than it now enjoys."<sup>2</sup>

New Brunswick continued to develop as a transportation hub. In addition to the river and the road, there was added the canal. The Delaware and Raritan Canal, opening in 1832, brought barges from the Delaware River moving Pennsylvania's coal to the Raritan where it could be taken to New York. People came by steamship from New York, stayed overnight in a New Brunswick hotel and then took a stagecoach to Philadelphia. In 1836 the railroad from New Brunswick to Jersey City was completed.

A pulpit Bible was given to the church by Jane Kirkpatrick in 1837. She was the mother-in-law of Dr. How.

The Sunday School was thriving with classes at various places such as Three Mile Run, Georges Road and French Street as well as at the church. Until this time it had been an independent organization associated with the church. Officers and teachers had resisted having the school come under the supervision of the Consistory. All departments came under Consistory jurisdiction when the teachers of the Boys Sabbath School, the last to agree, signed a written agreement on October 10, 1836, to accept the supervision of and make regular reports to the Consistory. When Richard Duryee resigned as Superintendent of the Sunday School L. D. Hardenbergh served as acting Superintendent for two months until Abraham Suydam was appointed in December, 1834. He served for two years and then Jacob Aaron Van Deventer was Superintendent of the Sunday School for three years until he died of typhus fever contracted by caring for someone with the contagious disease. The next Superintendent, Johnson Letson, a man of "sterling business integrity and understanding faith," served from 1839 to 1850. Serving with him as Assistant Superintendent was an outstanding teacher, Miss Henrietta A. Vethake, who had been directing the female department since 1830. David Cole described her as "a lady of imperial form and figure of memorable dignity of bearing, of very high culture and of exceptional mental and spiritual worth." Another teacher was Katie Abeel, sister of David Abeel, who was "a lady of great excellence as a Christian and the equal of her brother in devotion to the Kingdom of Christ."

A gruesome tragedy wrenched the hearts of the people in the church and the Sunday School. December 3, 1840, a tragic event occurred in New Brunswick which shook the entire city. Abraham Suydam, who had been a deacon, elder, and Sunday School Superintendent in First Church was murdered. He was a proprietor of Suydam and Armstrong Dry Goods Store on Church Street. He had been invited to the home of Peter Robinson at New

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<sup>2</sup> Steele, p. 129.

and Schuyler Streets to receive a sum of money which Robinson owed him. His mutilated body was later found hid under the cellar floor. Robinson was convicted of murder and sentenced to be hanged. The hanging took place in the yard where the Bayard Street School now stands. The hanging was unexpectedly prolonged by the breaking of the rope by which he was hanged. While the rope was being adjusted he was heard to cry out, "God have mercy on my poor soul."<sup>3</sup>

In the midst of such heart-wrenching events the Sunday School had a message of comfort and hope. Classes were held for children of the congregation and community teaching them the gospel of salvation.

The African American students of the Sunday School, known as "The Colored School" met in the Consistory Room. Wm. R. Janeway was their Superintendent. In 1843 Lewis Applegate took his place. Classes were suspended for a time in 1845 because of a small pox epidemic. David Voorhees was Superintendent 1848-1851. Peter V. Wyckoff succeeded him. The "Colored School" counted twenty students and three teachers in 1859.

In 1843 the Sunday School had grown to such proportions that classes filled the gallery of the church. (There was no organ there then.) Once a month Dr. How would speak to the children. According to David Cole, who was a college student at the time, Dr. How came from his home on Kirkpatrick Street robed in his gown and addressed them "with much method and precision as he was accustomed to use in his most elaborately prepared sermons. Not an anecdote or modern Sunday School address feature marred the solemnity of his talk."<sup>4</sup> In the classes Bible question and answer books were used as curriculum.

The complete library of Sunday School books from the American Sunday School Union, consisting of 735 volumes, was purchased by the Sunday School in June, 1852, for \$130. The following month fifty-seven more volumes were secured for \$10 making a library of 792 books. John Clark, Jr. was the librarian.<sup>5</sup>

June 17, 1859, a report to Consistory indicated the Sabbath School had a total of 184 scholars, 151 present. There were eleven male and twenty-one female teachers.<sup>6</sup>

During Dr. How's ministry many new members were added each year. The church grew to 350 families, 549 communicants.

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<sup>3</sup> Philetus T. Pockman, Centennial of the first Reformed (Dutch) Sunday School at New Brunswick, New Jersey, May 21, 1899 (Paper presented to the Historical Club of New Brunswick, Oct. 19, 1918), p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>5</sup> Consistory minutes of June 2, 1852.

<sup>6</sup> Consistory minutes of June 17, 1859.

Because of this growth it was decided to start a Second Reformed Church in the city. Every seat in First Reformed Church was occupied. Although the parting was painful it was felt necessary for some to begin another church. So on February 14, 1843, the Second Reformed Dutch Church was organized by the Classis. Meeting in the lecture room of First Reformed Church twenty-three members presented letters of transfer from First Church. Dr. How ordained the first Consistory of that church. The Rev. David D. Demarest, D.D. became the first Pastor.

First Church was host to the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America in June, 1845.

The elders of the church continued to concern themselves with the spiritual discipline of the members. Cases brought to their attention had to do with disputes among members, intoxication, dancing, entering a horse in a trotting match, and working on the Sabbath.

Alterations were made in the sanctuary in 1847. A new pulpit was installed of less elevation, the pews on each side of the pulpit were changed, the front of the galleries were lowered by reducing the length of the pillars and the gallery pews were reconstructed. Oil lamps were replaced with gas lighting in 1853.

In 1849 the Consistory requested that each person bring their own Psalm and Hymn Book to the Wednesday evening lectures. That way everyone could read their own music rather than having a leader reading the lines to them. That Consistory regarded the "usual custom of reading the lines in the singing...as a serious interruption to the devotion."<sup>7</sup>

The Consistories of First and Second Reformed Churches met on May 20, 1851, to assist in organizing a German Reformed Church in the city. The new congregation began meeting in the Consistory Room of First Church.

Elder Henry H. Schenck died in May, 1851. The Consistory expressed their appreciation for his many years of service with a resolution saying, "He was judicious and prudent; attached to the doctrines and order that distinguish our particular denomination and desirous to preserve them in their purity while at the same time he was ever anxious to preserve the peace of the church unbroken and to promote its prosperity."<sup>8</sup>

We know who some of the leaders of the church were at the time as we read the names of male adult members appearing in the minutes of a congregational meeting of January 24, 1856. Abraham Voorhees presided and Isaac Voorhees was Secretary. Ira C. Voorhees reported that the church was \$200 in debt and recommended that the salary of the Minister should be higher. John Clark moved that a committee be appointed to assess the

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<sup>7</sup> Consistory minutes of 1849.

<sup>8</sup> Consistory minutes of May 31, 1851.

members. This was approved and John Van Nuis and Johnson Letson were asked to help solicit the subscriptions.

Benevolence contributions were made through special offerings. Every fourth Sabbath a different cause was designated: January--The American Sabbath School Union, February--Incidental expenses, March--The Board of Domestic Missions, April--The Board of Foreign Missions, May--Incidental expenses, June--The New Jersey Colonization Society, July--Church Extension, August--Incidental expenses, September--the Board of Education. October--General Synod Sabbath School Union, November--Incidental expenses, and December--the Board of Publication. A collection was received every second Sabbath for the poor.<sup>9</sup> Occasionally a special collection was taken for a new Reformed Church in the Midwest or New York State.

The bequest of John B. Edgerton gave a fund of \$1000 to be invested, the interest from which was to be used for the Sunday School. In addition \$3,063.20 was received from his estate, the interest to be used for repairs to the church edifice.<sup>10</sup>

The church owned an old burial ground on Liberty Street. African American members of the congregation were buried there until 1855 when an agreement was made with Anthony Farmer and Lewis Green to use their cemetery for colored persons.<sup>11</sup> Apparently this kind of segregation was generally accepted in the church as well as society. The minutes of the August 31, 1860, Consistory meeting indicate concern for the black constituency of the church. The Clerk recorded: "Inquiry being made concerning the prospects of the people of colour that are members of this church." Wm. G. Dehart and Jas. H. Sillcocks were appointed to confer with those who "have obtained permission from the Classis of New Brunswick to worship separately." No indication is given of separate worship services being organized. The records indicate that African Americans continued to be received as members.

In June, 1855, the General Synod of the Reformed Church met at First Church New Brunswick. At the meeting a request of the Classis of North Carolina of the German Reformed Church to be admitted to the Reformed Church was considered. Slavery was an issue in this consideration. Dr. How delivered an address entitled, "Slaveholding not Sinful." It was later published. Dr. How's argument was that slavery was a punishment of sin and its remedy was the Gospel of Christ. A pamphlet in reply to Dr. How was published by Rev. H. D. Ganse. Dr. How's view on this issue did not become the accepted position of the church.

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<sup>9</sup> Consistory minutes of May 29, 1858.

<sup>10</sup> Consistory minutes of Aug. 15, 1856 and March 6, 1861.

<sup>11</sup> Consistory minutes of November 30, 1855.

Edwin Corwin said this of Dr. How: "He was in all respects, whether in theology, politics, or in manners, an old-school man. He venerated the past, and looked upon all change as revolutionary...New-school doctrines filled his soul with abhorrence and alarm. He resisted them with all his learning and with all his might, even to the last. In sermons, conversations, and articles for the press, he warned against them.

"In manners he was the perfect gentleman. His consideration and respectful demeanor was manifest to all. Courtesy abode on his lips...always guarded in his language while contending for his convictions with strong men to whom he was opposed. While in Georgia, he preached boldly against dueling, from Ps. 19:13, although the practice was then common.

"As a learned and accomplished theologian he stood among the foremost men of his age. His familiarity with the writings of the great divines, patristic, medieval, and reformed, enabled him to quote them readily on almost any point under discussion. He discharged the duties of the ministry with singular zeal, fidelity, and success. In every sense he was a hard working man. In his study, pulpit, and parish, he was never slovenly or negligent. In both public and private he adorned the doctrine of godliness."<sup>12</sup>

Dr. How retired in June, 1861. A resolution was prepared by Johnson Letson, Jesse Hagaman and William Dehart and approved by the Consistory. It recalled Dr. How's pastoral care in times of difficulty: "In taking a retrospective view for nearly the last thirty years, we ever find Dr. How the faithful Minister of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, standing upon the watchtower, there performing his duty with boldness and at the same time in Christian love. And who is there of us but can look back to some time in this long series of years, when his faithful form entered into the sick room of our families and then heard from his lips the sweet words of consolation and comfort for the imparting of which he was so peculiarly gifted. How often has he knelt by the bedside of the sick or the dying and there poured out his soul in supplication to our Heavenly Father for his blessing.

"Twice since he has been with us has the Lord seen fit to visit us with the scourge of Cholera taking many from our midst who but a short time before were in the enjoyment of health and then it was that he proved himself the fearless and self-denying servant of Christ ever ready to visit the sick and the dying to administer to their spiritual wants and pour balm into the wounded heart. Both in the cholera and tornado seasons of peculiar calamities and distress Dr. How was ever ready and always found when sickness and sorrow were known to exist."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Edwin T. Corwin, *A Manual of the Reformed Church in America* (New York, Board of Publication of the Reformed Church in America, 1902). p. 530.

<sup>13</sup> Consistory minutes of June 18, 1861.



Miss Lydia Van Dyke died October 12, 1865, at age 78. At her funeral service Dr. How called her a "friend and advisor of friend's children to whom she readily transferred her love, interest and sympathy." She was appreciated for her conversation and "attractive companionship." Dr. How noted her "untiring devotion to relatives," her unselfishness and "unostentatious faith."<sup>14</sup>

Dr. How continued to assist the church when called upon for such duties as presiding at a consistory meeting. He died in New Brunswick at age 77. The bells of the city tolled on the day of his funeral, March 4, 1868, and places of business closed. Pastors of four city churches, a professor from the seminary and one from the college were pall bearers. Dr. William H. Campbell, President of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, preached the sermon. After the service for nearly an hour more than a thousand persons passed by the coffin in front of the pulpit. He was buried in the church yard. Later the congregation erected a marble monument in his memory.<sup>15</sup>

The pulpit was supplied by professors of the seminary and college, Dr. William H. Campbell, Dr. Samuel M. Woodbridge and Dr. John W. Proudfit. Dr. Proudfit, a college faculty member and ordained Presbyterian minister, also lectured on Thursday evenings and attended to pastoral duties. Elder Johnson Letson presided at most Consistory meetings. A meeting of the pew holders approved a salary of \$1500 to be offered with the call to a new minister. Mr. Abraham V. Schenck, Esq, presided at pew holder meetings. John Clark, Johnson Letson and Isaac Voorhees were appointed the committee to set the assessment on the seats. A range of \$85 to \$150 per year depending on the location of the pew was agreed upon.

In 1861 the squares under the balconies were removed and ordinary pews installed. Each owner of a square was given two "slips" instead. The work was done by Jonathan B. Connett. In 1862 all the pews were altered to conform with the new ones on the sides.

At the corner of Neilson and Bayard, on a lot adjoining the church lot, stood the Old Court House which had also been City Hall for a number of years. John Clark had long dreamed of the possibility of the church owning that property. So Feb. 20, 1862, he wrote to the Consistory that he had purchased the property for \$3400 and would deed it to the church subject to a mortgage of \$1600 held by Rutgers College (which John Clark later arranged to be paid) and continuation of the lease to the firm currently using it through May 1, 1863. The Consistory gratefully accepted. For the next several years the church continued to lease the building. One year a Hebrew congregation used the upper room.

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<sup>14</sup> Memorial of Miss Lydia Van Dyke and Funeral Sermon by Rev. Samuel B. How, D.D.

<sup>15</sup> Consistory minutes of March 3, 1868.

Copy of the minutes of the general officers of the  
Scott's Bluff and District Council, relative to in the proceedings  
of the Congressional meeting of May 20<sup>th</sup> 1862.

22	8/12.
21	8/12.
20	8/12.
19	8/12.
18	8/12.
17	8/12.
Hdover	
PULBIT	
Deacons	
16	8/12.
15	8/12.
14	8/12.
13	8/12.
12	8/12.
11	8/12.
10	8/12.
9	8/12.
8	8/12.
7	8/12.
6	8/12.
5	8/12.
4	8/12.
3	8/12.
2	8/12.
1	8/12.

[illegible]

Scale of 8 feet - 10 in.

$$\begin{array}{r} 777 \\ 520 \\ 624 \\ 688 \\ \hline 411 \\ 3 \\ \hline .822 \end{array}$$

Wm. Applegate  
Jas. Watson of the Firm \$16,522.75



The inauguration of Dr. William H. Campbell as President of Rutgers College was held in the church in 1863.

## YEARS OF GROWTH

In 1863 the Rev. Richard H. Steele, D.D., became Pastor of the church. A graduate of Rutgers and New Brunswick Seminary, he was ordained by the Presbyterian Church and served in that denomination five years. He was Pastor of the Reformed Church in Nassau for eleven years before coming to New Brunswick. Dr. How preached the sermon at his installation, Rev. David Cole gave the charge to the pastor and Dr. William H. Campbell the charge to the congregation. Dr. Steele's first sermon at First Church was preached on Dec. 6, 1863, on the text Acts 10:29: "Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for. I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?"<sup>1</sup>

A home at 106 George Street was purchased for \$5,010 to be the parsonage. The next year renovations and the addition of a study cost \$346.72.

The congregation was saddened by the untimely death of its warden and one of its Deacons, John Clark, Jr. The Consistory, on July 18, 1864, noted "his consistent Christian character and his fidelity in the various positions in which he had been called to serve the church."<sup>2</sup>

Benevolence contributions in the year 1864 were as follows: \$299.26 for the poor in New Brunswick, \$268.55 for the Board of Foreign Missions, \$143.66 for the Board of Domestic Missions, \$30.40 for the Board of Education, \$38.52 for the Board of Publication, \$40.00 for the Widow's Fund, \$41.15 for Disabled Ministers, \$21.05 for Church Extension, \$31.41 for the Colonization Society.

In 1865 there were 200 families in the church, 365 communicant members. The average attendance at Sabbath School was 180. The total benevolence contributions amounted to \$3385.27 and gifts for congregational expenses totaled \$4540.65. The annual report said, "We rejoice that we can receive an unusual spirit of prayer on the part of large numbers in the church, and a marked anxiety for the conversion of sinners."<sup>3</sup> In 1864 the women of the congregation received permission from the Consistory to form a Sewing Society to raise money for an organ. A committee was selected to purchase an organ: John Johnson, Johnson Letson, Dr. Steele, Dr. Joseph F. Berg (Professor of the Seminary and College), Dr. David Cole (Rutgers professor), Joseph Fisher, Cornelius Powelson (Chorister), and George Buttlr. By May of 1866 the women had raised enough money and an Odell pipe organ was placed in the gallery at a cost of \$2625.

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<sup>1</sup> Consistory Minutes of Dec. 6, 1863.

<sup>2</sup> Consistory Minutes of July 18, 1864.

<sup>3</sup> Consistory Minutes of Dec. 2, 1866.

Professor James Garland was engaged to be organist for \$200 per year. A boy was employed to pump the organ for \$1.50 per month.

In June, 1866, the General Synod again met in New Brunswick. Members of the church provided lodging for delegates. At its meeting the General Synod declared the word "Dutch" to be dropped from the name of the denomination. First Church in New Brunswick followed suit with the unanimous agreement of the Consistory.<sup>4</sup>

Isaac Voorhees was Superintendent of the Sunday School from 1853 to 1864. He was a prosperous coal dealer, a large man, earnest and pious, who maintained strict discipline. Dr. Steele said he was "noted for his strictness in order and when he asked for silence the boys knew what it meant." Dr. David Cole called him "patient, prudent and kind." He believed in developing the talents of the young men by calling on them to lead in prayer. The Assistant Superintendent was Miss Catherine Disborough, "an exceedingly lovely and intelligent woman." Isaac Voorhees' son-in-law, Gilbert Van Pelt, succeeded him.

In 1865, the Sunday School had thirty-seven teachers and 218 students with an average attendance of 175. There were twelve conversions reported that year. Benevolent contributions were \$100. The teachers met monthly for prayer. The Sunday School was conducted at 2 p.m. on Sundays. It possessed a library of 1500 volumes. The library was well used as there were few public libraries at the time. The New Brunswick Free Circulating Library was not organized until eighteen years later.<sup>5</sup>

Dr. Steele was a founder of the New Brunswick Historical Club. He had a great interest in history. For the 150th Anniversary of the church, celebrated in October 1, 1867, he prepared a "Historical Discourse," a 136 page history of the church. It was presented at the morning service by Dr. Steele. At the afternoon service addresses were presented by Dr. Thomas De Witt, Dr. S. M. Woodbridge, Dr. Charles Hageman, Dr. William H. Campbell, Dr. P. D. Van Cleef, and Dr. David D. Demarest. In the evening an address was given by former Pastor, Dr. Isaac Ferris. All the addresses were published by the Consistory. Steele reported there were 416 members at that point.

Steele concluded his Historical Discourse with these words: "Am I wrong in cherishing for this ancient church the brightest hopes? Progress is the law of Christian life. May we not, then, anticipate growth in the piety of her members, in the liberality of her benefactions, and in the efficiency of her labors for Christ? The most wonderful developments of Divine Providence are now in progress. Movements are going on in our world which are tending to advance the kingdom of our Lord. Let us watch the signs of the times and

<sup>4</sup> Consistory Minutes of Dec. 9, 1867.

<sup>5</sup> Pockman, pp. 52 & 62.

make our church life throb with the impulse of a Christian activity. And let this church always stand among her sister churches of this city, established upon the true principles of the Gospel, maintaining the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ in its purity, and built on Him as the chief cornerstone."<sup>6</sup>

In 1868 Abraham Oakey retired as Sexton after serving the church for forty years and nine months. He was ordained an Elder in March of 1870 but died August 25, 1870, at the age of seventy-two. The Consistory recalled the sensitive way he had handled people over the years especially in his responsibilities of caring for burials in the church yard: "Full of kindness and sympathy, he was faithful in his intercourse with the sick and the afflicted, and from the peculiar nature of his duties he was often called into the families of bereavement, who found in him a prudent counselor and a sympathetic friend."<sup>7</sup>

In the fall of 1869 stone stoops and iron railings were placed at the front entrances of the church.

Judge Nicholas Booraem, a highly respected politician in Middlesex County, died December 9, 1869, at age 83. He had been a surveyor, Justice of the Peace, Deputy Sheriff, Judge of the County, a member of the state legislature, County Clerk for 26 years and County Collector for 42 years. He had become a member of the church in 1812 at the first communion in the new sanctuary. He served the church as a deacon two years and an elder fourteen years. He was in attendance at worship every Sunday, even after he became deaf, and had daily prayers in his home. He was widely known for his integrity, sincerity as well as his piety. The New Brunswick Daily Fredonian said of him, "He was a man of catholic charity, and instances have become known to his friends of his having largely and substantially aided a violent political opponent, even during the existence of warm party contention." The New York Tribune of Dec. 30, 1869, noted his passing saying that he was "a Radical Republican, an earnest supporter of the War, an Abolitionist, and favoring negro suffrage and home protection." In the sermon preached at his funeral Dr. Steele described him, "Of large frame, courteous and dignified in bearing, scrupulously neat in dress, his gray locks flowing over his shoulders, he walked the streets a patriarch whom all men respected and all children loved. He was a gentleman of the olden time. His mode of address and proverbial liberality to the poor were in accord with the religion he professed."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Steele, p. 136

<sup>7</sup> Minutes of Consistory of Sept. 27, 1870.

<sup>8</sup> "The Good Man," A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of Nicholas Booraem, Dec. 9, 1869, by Richard H. Steele, D.D., New Brunswick, Terhune & Van Anglen, Printers, 31 Albany St., 1870.

On February 12, 1870, thirty-seven officers and teachers of the Sabbath School petitioned the Consistory to provide them with better accommodations for holding Sunday School classes.

The church was shocked by the sudden death of Mrs. Emily W. B. Schenck who died June 20, 1870, at age 32, of heart disease. She was the wife of Abraham V. Schenck. Dr. Steele said at her funeral that she had been "a woman of great worth and nobility of character." He said, "To a mind of great original force and decision, there was added the highest culture and refinement fitting her for the elevated sphere in society which the Providence of God had marked out for her."<sup>9</sup>

In July, 1870, final approval was given for construction for a building called a Lecture and Sabbath School Room, but later called the Chapel. Mr. Augustus Hatfield was the architect. The Building Committee was Johnson Letson, Dr. R. H. Steele, John Clark, Joseph Fisher, Ira C. Voorhees, Isaac Voorhees, and George Buttler. The corner stone was laid Sept. 14, 1870, by Dr. Steele.

The completed building was fifty by sixty-eight feet. The cost was \$14,381.32. Subscriptions by the end of the year totaled \$7060 so \$8000 was borrowed. But in January, 1872, when the building was dedicated John Clark gave a donation of \$4000 to cover half the debt and found subscribers to cover the rest of it. At the dedicatory service Dr. Steele preached on Haggai 11:9 and Dr. William Campbell addressed the assembly.

John Clark was a generous contributor to the church in his lifetime. When he died in 1875 the church received a mortgage and bond of \$10,000 from his estate.

Gilbert S. Van Pelt was the last Sunday School Superintendent to lead the school in the galleries. On January 3, 1872, he led the students into the new chapel. He himself had helped to make the building possible by his advocacy of it and generous financial contributions. There were then four officers, 48 teachers and 221 scholars. Mrs. Steele was the Assistant Superintendent, Mr. J. H. Tapping, Secretary and Treasurer, and John D. DeHart, Librarian.

From 1872 V. M. W. Suydam was Superintendent of the Sunday School for twenty years. It was said of him "that he made no mistakes and that he gathered around him the enthusiasms of teachers and scholars." His wife worked with him organizing the infant department in the new building. Teacher's meetings were held every week to make lesson plans. Summer

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<sup>9</sup> Address Delivered at the Funeral of Mrs. Emily W.B. Schenck, June 23, 1870, by Richard H. Steele, D.D., New Brunswick, N.J. Terhune and Van Anglen, Printers, 31 Albany St., 1870.



excursions of the Sunday School down the Raritan River were "days of enjoyment never to be forgotten."<sup>10</sup>

In 1872 it was decided that it would be well to have the Sexton live on the church property. The old Consistory Room was renovated to make a home for the Sexton. John C. Voorhees had been elected Sexton in 1868 and paid a salary of \$225 a year. His salary was then changed to \$125 with rent free housing.<sup>11</sup>

From 1840 to 1880 Dr. Abraham B. Hasbrook was on the faculty of Rutgers. During that time he was a member of First Reformed Church.

A long-standing tradition was broken in 1873. That year the Consistory did not give permission to the college to use the sanctuary for commencement. The annual graduation ceremonies had been held in the church for many years.

One of the most outstanding events in the life of the church was the revival of 1876. On one Sunday, June 4, 1876, 102 persons were received into the membership of the church by confession of faith and twenty-three by certificate. 650 persons were in attendance as these new members were welcomed, twenty-three of them baptized, and communion celebrated. Among the new members were fifty who came from the Sabbath School and twelve who came from Three Mile Run where students of the college and seminary were holding special services.

The next day the New Brunswick Times reported: "Sunday was a Sabbath of great interest, and one that will be long remembered in the history of the First Reformed Church of this city. It is known to our community that a revival of great power and interest has been in progress in this congregation for two months past, and that a great religious movement has been going on. The extra services have been continued for several weeks, and while not held every night as in other churches, yet with no diminution of interest from the very commencement. The services are all solemn, earnest and, as far as possible, removed from all appearances of excitement. Rev. Dr. Steele, the Pastor of the church, always presided, and gave direction to the services, and he was supported by his officers, who number in the present Consistory some of our best business men, as well as by his excellent Sabbath-school Superintendent and a very large band of well organized young men. The Pastor uniformly preached a short sermon, or made an address equivalent to a sermon, but the exercises were largely in the form of prayer, brief remarks by the members and very spirited singing. The large chapel was filled night after night, with the parlor and infant class room, and as many as 500 have been in attendance."

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<sup>10</sup> Pockman, p. 64.

<sup>11</sup> Minutes of Consistory of March, 1872.

On the first Sunday of 1878 the church began using a new hymn book recommended by General Synod entitled "The Hymns of the Church."<sup>12</sup> Copies for the pulpit, choir and consistory were purchased by the church. The members were expected to furnish their own. A Chorister was president of the choir association and director of church music. A soprano was the only paid member of the choir. She was also the song leader for the week night meetings.<sup>13</sup> A few years later a bass was also hired.

The growth of the church corresponded with the development of the city. At mid-century New Brunswick became an industrial town. About 1839 Horace H. Day started a little rubber making shop on Dennis Street. He made rubberized fabric for carriage tops, rubber shoes, and other items. The factory expanded until it filled most of the block. Day's difficulties with the Goodyear patents caused him to sell the business to John Meyer in 1869. Meyer expanded the business. In 1876 a fire destroyed the plant. Meyer built a new plant on Little Burnet Street. Another major industry in town was Janeway & Company which made wall paper. Their plant was on Water Street. Other industries were the Consolidated Fruit Jar Company, the New Brunswick Carpet Company, The Norfolk and New Brunswick Hosiery Company, The National Iron Works, the Empire Machine Works, a pottery establishment of A.J. Buttler. In 1873 there were companies in New Brunswick making such products as boats, sails, boxes, carriages, soap, candles, sashes and blinds, slate roofing, coffee and candy. There was a brewery, a lime kiln, a marble works, a saw mill, a taxidermist, six weaving shops and three foundries. The population had grown to 17,000. There were over 600 places of business, four banks and three insurance companies. The Phoenix Engine Company, a fire company founded in 1798, built a firehouse at 24 Dennis Street in 1876. The Home News office was on the corner of Hiram and Dennis Streets. Its print shop, built about 1870, was next door at 29 Dennis. Turner Hall, a vaudeville theatre at 10-12 Dennis Street, was built in 1884. The King Block on Burnet Street was built 1874-1876. It housed a department store for a time. Apartment buildings were built by the end of the century. The one at the corner of Neilson and Liberty was built in 1885.

In 1879 Dr. Steele's health was declining. His physicians recommended a "sea voyage," and the Consistory granted him a three month leave of absence. The Pastor made a trip to Europe.

Dr. Richard Steele was Pastor during some of the years of New Brunswick's industrialization and the years of the Civil War. His pastorate covered the years 1863 to 1880. It was said of him: "In the pulpit he was warm, clear, ready; and above all Scriptural. He brought to the production of

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<sup>12</sup> Minutes of Consistory of October 8, 1877.

<sup>13</sup> Minutes of Consistory of April 30, 1878.

his sermons strong natural abilities, as well as the culture of the schools, and was always an acceptable preacher to all classes of people. Revival after revival followed his ministrations, and he looked carefully after his church members. His churches always prospered, and were filled with energetic members, who caught the spirit of the under shepherd, even as he had been quickened with the life of the Great Shepherd.

"He was also a good citizen, alive to all the interests of the community in which he lived. He was outspoken and aggressive against municipal crookedness and political corruption. During the Rebellion of the Slave States he was loyal to the core. He was also eminently a man of home affections. His household was one of peace and joy. Although a man of warm temper, which needed guarding, yet he had a still warmer heart, whence flowed out perpetually streams of love to his family, to the people of his church, to all Christians, as well as to the communities in which his lot was cast. There never was a better pastor, one more devoted to his people; more sympathetic at the open grave; more prompt at the bedside of sickness, or in rendering aid to distress in any form."<sup>14</sup>

Dr. Steele resigned in September 1880, having served the church nearly seventeen years. He left the church to become the Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

When Dr. Steele became Pastor the membership was 316. When he left it was 520. Dr. Steele credited the Sunday School with being the major source of this growth.

Elder Johnson Letson was elected to preside at Consistory meetings. Seminary President Dr. Wm. H. Campbell, Classis appointed Moderator, assisted with the preaching and candidates for the pulpit were heard.

Elder Letson and Deacon Howard V. Buttler were designated a committee to devise a new pulpit.<sup>15</sup> The new pulpit, built by J. and R. Lamb was soon occupied. In March, 1881, a call was extended to Rev. Thomas Chalmers Easton.

Dr. Easton's tenure was a very exciting time for the church. 1881 to 1886 were years of phenomenal growth for the church. Dr. Easton had been born in Scotland and received his theological education at Edinburgh. He served as Pastor of a Presbyterian church in Belvidere, Illinois, before moving east. His wife Cornelia and daughters Lizzie and Debbie were members of the Bedford Ave. Reformed Church in Brooklyn when they came to New Brunswick. He was awarded a Doctor of Divinity Degree by Lake Forest College in 1881. He later served churches in Newark, San Francisco and Washington, D.C. Dr. Easton was installed on May 11, 1881. Rev. Cornelius Brett of the Bergen Reformed Church in Jersey City preached the

<sup>14</sup> Corwin, pp. 750-751.

<sup>15</sup> Minutes of Consistory, Nov. 9, 1880, Feb. 8, 1881.

sermon. Dr. Campbell gave the charge to the minister and Dr. Mancius H. Hutton, Minister of the Second Reformed Church, gave the charge to the congregation.<sup>16</sup> Rev. Easton's first sermon was on Numbers 11:14, "I am not able to bear all this people alone because it is too heavy for me." Stating that "the ministry that will command respect" is one that will "bring the pungent truths of the gospel to bear upon every phase of our national character and hold the land for Christ." He preached in an eloquent, oratorical style. Asking the people's prayers he said, "Sermons...must be fired with the electric flame of the Eternal Spirit. A praying pew creates a powerful pulpit."<sup>17</sup>

Six weeks later the nation was shocked as President James Garfield was shot on July 2, 1881, in Washington. The President died at Elberton, New Jersey, September 19, and was buried in Ohio September 26. This was the second assassination of a President in twenty years. On the weekend of the funeral activities First Church was draped with "somber trimmings, two vases of white roses at each side of the pulpit, in front of the pulpit a large gilt monogram of Garfield's initials. The National emblem hung from the ceiling." The church was filled to capacity on Sunday as Rev. Easton preached on the topic, "Israel's Beauty Slain." He spoke of "maintaining the purity of our land and thus preserve our civil and religious liberties." He assured the people that "God's government and providence will prevail when empires perish." He addressed the question of who was responsible and said, the assassin fired the bullet but he "drew inspiration from the fashionable Godless theories that flood the public press and public mind: A low estimate of human life--the disposition to give free rein to greed and ambition without regard to a judgment to come...the Nihilistic contempt of all authority. He reminded his hearers that Garfield had stood by the remains of the murdered Lincoln and said, "The President dies, but the Nation lives." Dr. Easton concluded, "President Garfield is dead but the Republic lives, and God lives, and as He is sovereign on the throne of the universe, the principles of free government will roll on in progressive splendor and power."<sup>18</sup>

In 1882 Sunday afternoon worship services were changed to Sunday evening.

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<sup>16</sup> Minutes of Consistory of May 11, 1881.

<sup>17</sup> Inaugural Discourse: Mutual Responsibilities of the Pulpit and Pew. A Discourse Delivered in the First Reformed (Dutch) Church in New Brunswick, N.J., by Rev. Thomas C. Easton, M.A., On His Assumption of the Pastorate, May 15, 1881. New Brunswick: Fredonian Steam Printing House, 36 Dennis St., 1881.

<sup>18</sup> In Memorium, "Israel's Beauty Slain." A Memorial Discourse by Rev. Thomas C. Easton, D.D. Upon the Death of James A. Garfield. New Brunswick: Fredonian Steam Book and Job Printing House, 36 Dennis St., 1881.

In the Spring of 1882 major repairs were made to the church. The sanctuary was redecorated. A heating system was installed. The total cost was \$4,353.58, most of which was raised by the women of the church.<sup>19</sup>

The congregation mourned the loss of Mrs. Mary Kirkpatrick How who died in 1882 at the age of eighty-nine. She was the widow of Dr. Samuel B. How, and granddaughter of Colonel John Bayard, a friend of Washington and member of the Continental Congress.

One Sunday in March, 1883, 119 persons were received into the church by confession of faith and 21 by certificate of transfer. Three adults who requested immersion were baptized using the baptistry of the First Baptist Church that evening.

The General Synod asked First Reformed Church to host anniversary services marking the one hundredth anniversary of theological education in the Reformed Church in October, 1884, and the church extended them a hearty welcome. Services were held on October 28 in the afternoon and evening at First Reformed Church, on October 29 in the morning at the Second Reformed Church and again that afternoon and evening at First Reformed Church with lectures by the professors and ministers of the denomination. Out-of-town visitors were housed in homes of church members. The congregation was asked to contribute to the expenses of the event. The "colored people" of the congregation were thanked by means of a special resolution of the Consistory for their generous support of this effort.<sup>20</sup>

There was a great concern for temperance in the community at the time. Various temperance organizations were granted use of the Lecture Hall for their meetings.

In the span of three months in 1885 three of the Elders of the church died, Edward Miller, James Garretson and Johnson Letson. Edward Miller had made confession of faith just six years previous and had gained the respect and confidence of the church. James Garretson had been a member for 32 years and had served several times as Deacon and Elder. Johnson Letson, Esq., had been a member for 48 years. The Consistory voted, "It is the desire of Consistory to make a minute of his acknowledged Christian integrity that after generations may take knowledge of the esteem, in which he was held by his fellow Christians, and thus be a source of profit, and emulation to others who had not the advantage of his association, or acquaintance. The interests of the "Old Dutch Church" were always very dear to him, even before becoming an active member. During the 48 years of his membership, he gave more years of service as an office bearer, than any other layman of whom we have record; having filled the offices of Deacon, Elder, and Sunday School Superintendent in his church and frequently appearing as

<sup>19</sup> Minutes of Consistory of April 14, 1882.

<sup>20</sup> Minutes of Consistory of Nov. 3, 1884.

delegate to Classis, and Particular Synod, and giving many years of continuous service on the standing committees of General Synod."<sup>21</sup>

A lot on Liberty Street, 60 feet wide, next to the school, was leased in August, 1885, to the Edison Illuminating Co., with the option to buy at any time for \$2200.<sup>22</sup>

The Sexton's House, which was the old Lecture Hall, was sold for \$31. A bid was accepted from M. H. Berdine to build a "cottage" to house the Sexton on the same site on Bayard St., next to Church Alley.<sup>23</sup> A petition signed by fifty-two members of the church was received by the Consistory at its next meeting protesting the placing of the Sexton's House on Bayard Street. But the Consistory informed the protestors that the contract was already signed and could not be changed. Joseph Waker was chairman of the building committee.

Weekly prayer meetings were held. The nature of the meetings can be sensed from these written instructions: "Endeavor to make prayer meetings sociable, colloquial and cheerful. A simple remark--with or without rising--a verse of Scripture or of a hymn, often contributes very largely to the profit of a meeting. Testimony of individual experience honors Christ, and promotes faith and brotherly love. Allow no 'gaps.' Make the meeting interesting even to those who have no spiritual life."

In February, 1885, Dr. Easton resigned to accept the call of the First Reformed Church in Newark. In his resignation letter he expressed gratification that he would leave behind "a strong, united and prosperous church." The Consistory was most reluctant to accept the resignation. Dr. Easton had brought dynamic leadership to the church and the church had grown. The Rev. Dr. Jacob Cooper, Professor of Greek at Rutgers College, voiced the feelings of the Consistory to the Classis: "Only because the Master requires him do we acquiesce. Our Pastor came to us in the fullness of the Gospel of Christ. He has not shunned to declare unto us the whole counsel of God. He has won the highest honor that is possible for man to gain, by imitating his Master in preaching the Gospel to the poor. He has received the choicest recognition of Divine approval on his labors by the seals to his ministry which during the five years he has been among us are reckoned by hundreds."<sup>24</sup>

Later, at the time of his death, a San Francisco newspaper said of him: "Rev. Thomas Chalmers Easton, M.A., D.D., one of the country's most prominent clergymen and a man who has been a personal friend of every American President from Abraham Lincoln to Woodrow Wilson, died at the

<sup>21</sup> Minutes of Consistory of April 6, 1885

<sup>22</sup> Minutes of Consistory of August 21, 1885.

<sup>23</sup> Minutes of Consistory of Nov. 23, 1885.

<sup>24</sup> Minutes of Consistory of February 25, 1886.

Whitcomb Hotel early yesterday morning at the age of 87 years. Rev. Easton's position in the American clergy during the past forty years has been that of a leader and during his life time he has made personal friends of many great men, including Thomas A. Edison, Chauncey M. Depew, John Wanamaker, Henry Ward Beecher and William Jennings Bryan.

"Rev. Easton was born in Jedburgh, Roxburghshie, Scotland, November 12, 1836. He was educated at the Latin Nest Academy and came to America in 1855 when 22 years old. He was a strong critic of the practice of slavery and during the slave years he would have Negroes sent to him from the South in barrels as merchandise. Then releasing them from the barrels he would allow them to go free. In 1861 Rev. Easton met Abraham Lincoln in the Delevan Hotel, Albany, N.Y. At the same time he met Stephen M. Douglas. In this year he also became Pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Glastonbury, Conn.

"Rev. Easton was a great admirer of Dr. T. de Witt Talmadge, whom he first assisted in the Brooklyn Tabernacle in 1883. He was also a poet and dedicated a volume of his poetry to Dr. Talmadge. In 1889 Rev. Easton went to San Francisco to become the Minister of the Calvary Presbyterian Church. He remained here until 1893.

"From Calvary Presbyterian Rev. Easton went to the Eastern Presbyterian church in Washington, where he remained for sixteen years."<sup>25</sup>

Elder John V. H. Van Cleef was elected President for the interim in which the church was without an installed Minister. He and Elders P. Hampton Wyckoff and Charles E. Spencer and Deacon Howard V. Buttler were the committee in charge of supplying the pulpit.

In June, 1886, the church was host to the General Synod. This involved feeding and housing 134 delegates. They were provided rooms in The City Hotel, White Hall Hotel and homes of First and Second Reformed Church members.

A request from thirty-one members that unfermented wine be used in communion was granted by Consistory Sept., 1886. But four years later the use of fermented wine was reinstated.

In 1885 Dr. Easton reported that he had made 1,925 pastoral visits, conducted 44 funerals and 24 weddings. In the previous year the congregation had contributed \$7,927.95 for congregational purposes and \$3,380.98 for benevolences. The Sabbath School numbered 526. When Dr. Easton began his ministry in New Brunswick there were 200 families and 529 communicant members in First Reformed Church. In the five years he was pastor the church grew to 373 families and 759 communicant members. There were also members dismissed so that the roll was revised in 1886 to 654

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<sup>25</sup> From a newspaper clipping of a San Francisco newspaper on the day after the death of Dr. Easton in 1923.

members in 262 families. But it was an exciting time of growth. 404 new members were received, 295 by confession of faith and 109 by transfer. 157 were received in one year, 1882. With Dr. Easton's spellbinding oratory and dynamic leadership it was an exciting time for the church.



## MINISTRY IN AN ERA OF INDUSTRIALIZATION

The flamboyant style of Dr. Easton had given the church some exciting years of growth. He had helped the church reach many newcomers in the community. At the same time Second Reformed Church was growing. And the Suydam Street Reformed Church was organized in 1884. In their first six years two-fifths of their membership came from First Church. In 1890 the Highland Park Reformed Church was organized. Twenty-one of their members in the first sixteen years came from First Church.

The number enrolled in membership reached its peak in 1884. But it remained over 600 members for some time. With the coming of the Rev. Philetus Theodore Pockman as Pastor the church entered a period of steady leadership that maintained its strength. The tenures of just two pastors would span the next fifty years.

Rev. Philetus T. Pockman grew up in New York state and was a graduate of Rutgers and New Brunswick Theological Seminary. After two short pastorates in New Jersey at Fairfield and at Greenville, Jersey City, he came to New Brunswick in 1887 to stay for twenty-four years. At his installation service, January 19, 1887, the Rev. Dr. Mancius H. Hutton, Pastor of the Second Reformed Church preached on the text II Timothy 3:14.

Rev. Pockman was a genial man and an excellent pastor. Edward Corwin said of him, "Wherever he labored he was a power for righteousness."<sup>1</sup>

During Rev. Pockman's pastorate the city underwent great changes. It grew as an industrial town. The Brunswick Refrigerating Company was incorporated in 1900. The Michelin Tire Company built a plant in the city in 1907. Johnson & Johnson, which began manufacturing in 1886, built offices on George Street in 1896 and a complex of fourteen buildings known as the Red Cross Cotton Mills. In 1902 the New Brunswick Cigar Company built a factory on Somerset Street. And there were many others. Downtown New Brunswick was becoming more and more a center of commerce and manufacturing.

Under Rev. Pockman's direction a Society of Christian Endeavor was organized for the young people on October 6, 1887. The first officers were Eldridge Voorhees, William Waldron, Sallie Wilson and Laura Snedeker. Twenty-nine young people joined the organization. Among their first actions were to send Howard V. Buttler and D. H. Sebring as delegates to the state convention of Christian Endeavor. The group sponsored prayer meetings and social activities. A Temperance Committee kept a concern over alcohol abuse on the agenda.

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<sup>1</sup> Edwin T. Corwin, *A Manual of the Reformed Church in America* (Board of Publication of the Reformed Church in America, New York, 1922), p. 452.

A Sunday School teacher, Miss Garetta J. Bevier, was alert to the fact that Chinese people were moving into New Brunswick. Mrs. V. M. W. Suydam had brought one Chinese boy, Hing Sing, into her Primary Department and was tutoring him at home. Miss Bevier wondered if the others were receiving any Christian education. So one day she entered one of the Chinese laundries on Church Street and asked the two young men working there if they ever attended Sunday School. Their answer was, "Oh, yes, we go to one in New York every Sunday." She asked them if they would come to her Sunday School in New Brunswick. They assured her they would after they had first gone to New York to explain what they were doing. In two weeks Miss Bevier had recruited a teacher and they were ready when one Chinese boy came to Sunday School. The next Sunday there were two, then six. That was the beginning of "The Foreign Department" of the Sunday School which in time grew to ten students. Each student had his own teacher to communicate most effectively. Later one of the teachers of this department became a missionary in Japan. In 1893 Hing Sing became a member of the church on confession of faith.<sup>2</sup>

In January, 1888, the Consistory elected John Beekman and Joseph Cornell to be delegates to a convention of the W.C.T.U in Trenton for the purpose of urging the state legislature to approve a special election on "the question of prohibiting the traffic in intoxicating drinks."<sup>3</sup>

Investments held by the church increased as \$1000 was received from "the Porter Estate", \$250 from the sale of land on Liberty Street to E. V. Addis,<sup>4</sup> and eighteen shares in United R. R. stock and \$400 from the estate of Miss Ann H. Van Liew.<sup>5</sup> Miss Margaret Post left \$9000 to the church, \$1000 of which was to be invested and the interest and dividends used to maintain the graves of her family.<sup>6</sup> The \$8000 of the Post legacy was invested and the proceeds divided equally for four purposes: Domestic Missions, Educational Purposes, Church Purposes and the Sabbath School.

A new system of raising money for "incidental expenses" of the church was instituted in 1888 as "the envelope system" was adopted. The result of a canvass of the members was that 144 took envelopes and made a pledge, 241 took envelopes but refused to pledge and 50 refused to take envelopes even though some of them were "regular and liberal contributors."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Philetus T. Pockman, *Centennial of the First Reformed (Dutch) Sunday School at New Brunswick, N. J., May 21, 1899* (Paper presented to the Historical Club of New Brunswick, Oct. 19, 1899), pp. 69-74.

<sup>3</sup> Minutes of Consistory of January 22, 1888.

<sup>4</sup> Minutes of Consistory of May 7, 1888.

<sup>5</sup> Minutes of Consistory of September 3, 1888.

<sup>6</sup> Minutes of Consistory of February 10, and Nov. 3, 1890.

<sup>7</sup> Minutes of Consistory of December 3, 1888.

The annual report of the church for 1889 indicated that prayer meeting was held every Sunday at 10 a.m. Sunday worship services were held at 10:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. Bible study and Sabbath School met at 2:30 Sunday afternoon and cottage meetings were held at 4 p.m. Every Tuesday evening there was a lecture and prayer meeting. And on Friday evening there was a prayer meeting at 8 p.m. at the same time as the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor met in the parlor of the Chapel. Communion was celebrated on the first Sunday of December, March and June and the second Sunday of September. A preparatory service was held on each Saturday preceding communion at 3:15 p.m. There were 300 families in the church. The membership totaled 683 communicants. There were 539 students in the Sunday School and 460 receiving catechetical training. The annual contributions amounted to \$4,569 for congregational purposes and \$3,457 for benevolences.

The Treasurer was Gilbert S. Van Pelt. The Almoner was Eldridge C. Voorhees, the Collector Isaac V. Van Doren, and the Sexton, John C. Voorhees.

The President of the Ladies Missionary Society was Mrs. Pockman. Their meetings were held on the first Tuesday of each month at 3 p.m. in the Parlor of the Chapel. The Ladies Society had a membership of 200. The President of the Young Ladies Mission Band was Miss S. H. Wilson. They met every two weeks on Thursday nights in homes of members. Their membership was 50. These two women's organizations maintained a high interest in missions. They contributed to the expansion of the church in the western part of the United States and to missionary work overseas. The President of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor was Mr. A.S. Howell. There were about 100 members in this organization.

December 7, 1892, there was a meeting of young women in the chapel to organize the Young People's Missionary Guild. Their purpose was to be an "auxiliary" to the Women's Boards of Domestic Mission and of Foreign Mission. They adopted the motto, "The World for Christ." In addition to missions overseas and in other parts of the United States they supported the Throop Avenue Mission in New Brunswick. Their first officers were Miss Helen Buttler, Miss Rena Voorhees, Miss Florence Schenck and Miss Wilhelmina Wyckoff.

The music director was Prof. Loren Bragdon and the organist Prof. Alfred C. Garland. There were six sopranos, four altos, six tenors and five bases. The Organ Blower was Mr. D. Elbertson. (Pumping the air in the bellows.)

The annual report included these notes:

"The Pastor can be seen at the parsonage, 354 George St., every day, except Monday, upon matters of temporal or spiritual concern from 8 to 9

a.m., from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. or from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. And he earnestly desires his people to use these opportunities freely.

"Be sure to take some Religious Paper for your family. For Missionary Intelligence about our Reformed Church work take 'The Mission Field,' 50 cents per year, or 'The Mission Gleaner,' 25 cents per year. Avoid reading the Sunday issue of the secular Newspapers.

"The absence of any member from the Tuesday Evening Prayer Meeting is conspicuous.

"If any depart from the faith, or in walk or conversation behave unworthy of the Christian profession, they are subject to rebuke, admonition, suspension from the privilege of approaching the Lord's Table, and finally to excommunication.

"If you have neighbors on your street who have no church home, invite them to come with you, and give their names and address to your Pastor.

"Strangers and New-comers always find a welcome at the First Reformed Church.

"Let prayer be the key of the morning and the bolt of the evening."<sup>8</sup>

On the first Sunday of 1890, 108 persons became members of First Reformed Church. Half of them came from the Sunday School.

January 8-9, 1890, the church participated in city-wide evangelistic services conducted by B. Fay Mills.

The Minister and Elders met eight to twelve times a year. New members were received by the Elders. On March 1, 1890, eighty-three persons made confession of faith and seven were received on transfer from other churches. Members who were not living a consistent Christian life were suspended. Those who expressed repentance before the Elders were received back into communicant membership. Frequenting a saloon, being convicted of a civil offense, or neglect of church attendance would result in suspension until repentant. September, 1891, Rev. Pockman and Elder V. M. W. Suydam were "appointed a committee to wait upon certain members of the church who keep their Drug Stores open on the Sabbath for promiscuous business. Also upon other members who have been conspicuous by their absence from church."

Mr. and Mrs. V. M. W. Suydam were leaders of the Sabbath School for twenty years, resigning in 1892. The Consistory recorded the following words of appreciation: "We recognize in Mr. Suydam, who has had charge of the main department of the school, the right man for the position, and one which he had eminently filled. We would also recognize his regular attendance; his deep interest and love for the work; his earnest prayers and labors that all the scholars might become Christians; his efforts to procure the

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<sup>8</sup> The 1889 annual report from which this information was gleaned is in the archives of First Reformed Church.

best teachers, and his executive ability in presiding over the largest and best conducted Sunday School in our city. We also recognized in Mrs. Suydam, who has had charge of the Primary and Intermediate Departments, one divinely qualified and one peculiarly fitted for this position and there are many parents, who as long as life lasts, will ever remember with gratitude her who instilled in the minds of their children early in life, such sound doctrines, pure thoughts and Christian teachings, which afterwards ripened into useful and Christian lives."<sup>9</sup>

The 1892 report of the Sunday School listed 68 officers and teachers and 373 scholars.<sup>10</sup>

In 1891 Consistory gave permission for the first of the memorial windows to be placed in the church. The first one was installed at the northwest corner of the sanctuary behind the Deacons seat, it was given by Mrs. Ira C. Voorhees. The Consistory stipulated that the windows had to be of at least \$200 in value and follow a consistent pattern in their borders. In 1894 Consistory approved using income from the Post Legacy for a window in memory of Misses Margaret and Abbie Post. In 1898 Lewis A. and I. Edgar Powelson gave a window in memory of their parents, Mr. & Mrs. Cornelius Powelson. In 1903 a window was given by Dr. J. Ackerman Coles in memory of his grandparents. It depicted the angel's message to shepherds: "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy. There is born to you a Saviour." In 1905 Dr. Coles' sister, Miss Emilie S. Coles of New York City, gave a window in memory of her uncles George, Warren and James Harvey Ackerman entitled "The Ascension." She gave another window of "The Resurrection" in memory of her aunts, Mrs. Jane C. A. Bucknell and Mrs. Mary S. A. Hoyt. Then she donated eight windows for the balconies in grateful appreciation for the instruction she had received through the Sunday School. Later Miss Coles also gave the windows over the doors and in front of the church. Along with that she and Dr. Coles paid for painting the vestibules and renovation of the belfry room. Miss Coles also put leaded glass in the inside doors of the vestibules.

During July and August of 1892 Rev. Pockman travelled in Europe. Dr. Jacob Cooper, Greek Professor of Rutgers, attended to pastoral care during that period.

Two members of First Reformed Church had been named each year as Trustees of the Lancastrian School Fund, later known as the Hall Educational Fund after William Hall who had designated a fund from his estate to be used for the "education of poor children in the city of New Brunswick." The Lancastrian School was located on Schureman Street and had 143 students

<sup>9</sup> Minutes of Consistory of February 29, 1892.

<sup>10</sup> Pockman, Centennial of the First Reformed (Dutch) Sunday School at New Brunswick, N. J., p. 67.1

enrolled. From time to time the City Council appropriated funds to operate the school. By 1892 public school education was well established and so it was no longer necessary for the fund to operate a school. It was decided to use the fund to assist poor children in another way. The Trustees representing First Reformed Church at the time, Gilbert S. Van Pelt and George V. Smith, resigned and the Consistory designated an orphanage, The Children's Industrial Home of the City of New Brunswick, to be Trustee of the fund.<sup>11</sup> But on Oct. 30, 1893, Messrs. Van Pelt and Smith were again elected Trustees of the fund.

A social gathering was held for all the men and young men of the church on January 26, 1893. The Rutgers College Glee Club sang. The women of the church prepared the food and the "colored brethren of the church" waited on tables.

In the 1890s Seminary commencements and various special lectures were held at First Reformed Church. Dr. John P. Searle's installation as Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology took place in the church Sept. 26, 1893. His address was entitled, "The Source of Authority."

Extensive repairs were made to the church properties in 1892 including repair of the steeple and the cornice over the front entrance of the church. The parsonage at 354 George St. was sold in 1896 for \$8200. A committee of V. M. W. Suydam, P. H. Wyckoff, G. S. Van Pelt and John Waldron were appointed to procure a new one.<sup>12</sup> They recommended the purchase of a home owned by John H. Randolph at 219 Townsend Street which was approved by the Consistory. The purchase was made for \$7000. (Later in 1898 an additional fifteen feet of property was purchased for \$555.) In 1896 approval was given to the construction of a kitchen under the Chapel. The committee in charge was Lafferd Totten, John V. Conover, George R. McDowell and George K. Parsell. A committee of eight women were invited to the Consistory meeting of Feb., 1897, to express their wishes regarding the kitchen. Space was excavated under the Neilson Street end of the building and a kitchen installed.<sup>13</sup>

In 1894 Rutgers College recognized Rev. Pockman's work and ability with a Doctor of Divinity degree.

In 1897 the Consistory approved a contract with Muller and Abel organ builders of New York to build a new organ for the church at the cost of \$3600. It was placed behind the pulpit. A place for the choir was made to the south side of the organ and a room made in the southwest corner to be the music room. A similar room was built at the northwest corner to be a robing room for the pastor. Two pews at the front of the sanctuary were removed

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<sup>11</sup> Minutes of Consistory of Nov. 28, 1892.

<sup>12</sup> Minutes of Consistory of March 6, 1896.

<sup>13</sup> Minutes of Consistory of March 27, and Nov. 18, 1896.

and five of the pews to the left and right of the pulpit were removed leaving only three of the right angle pews on each side. With all the remodeling required the total cost of the project was \$5768.34. The committee was Charles E. Spencer, Chr., Theodore E. Townsend, V. M. W. Suydam, Abraham S. Howell, and Gilbert S. Van Pelt.<sup>14</sup>

The Consistory approved use of a new hymn book beginning January 1899. The title of the book was The Church Hymnary. Each volume also contained the Reformed Church standards and liturgy.<sup>15</sup>

A popular program for the church at the end of the century was a presentation of "steropticon views" using an electric projector to show pictures. Dr. Pockman gave illustrated sermons on Sunday evenings. And at special programs pictures were shown of mission fields. The church supported missionary efforts of the church. In 1896, \$536.43 was given to Domestic Missions and \$616.99 to Foreign Missions. In the same year \$395.41 was given to the church's Poor Fund. In that year there were 677 members in 305 families with 437 in the Sunday School. Education funds were used to assist seminary students with their expenses. To help the Highland Park Reformed Church to build a sanctuary \$80 a year for five years was pledged to the Board of Domestic Missions.<sup>16</sup>

In 1898 a baptismal font was presented to the church by George Bethune Boice in memory of his wife, Margaret A. Zabriskie.<sup>17</sup>

During these years a number of persons served terms as Sunday School Superintendent: Eldridge C. Voorhees (1892-94), Howard V. Buttler (1894-98), Peter Van De Ripe (1898-99), and Edward Dawson (1899-1901), who was a seminarian. Among the women officers were Mrs. T. Henry Skillman, who was widely known for her teaching abilities; Mrs. Lyle Van Nuis, and Annie Fisher. For the last quarter of the century the librarian was Walter W. Wilson. He took care of acquisitions, cataloguing, and oversaw circulation of the large and growing library.<sup>18</sup> In 1901 V. M. W. Suydam was again called upon to be Superintendent. Dr. John H. Raven, Professor at the Seminary, was Superintendent for two years, 1905-07, and he was followed by Rynear Y. Sutphen. In 1909 Ambrose F. Randolph took the office.<sup>19</sup>

In January, 1897, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Sunday School's use of the Chapel was celebrated. Former Pastors Dr. Steele and Dr. Easton

<sup>14</sup> Minutes of Consistory of December 21, 1896.

<sup>15</sup> Minutes of Consistory of Sept. 20, 1897.

<sup>16</sup> Minutes of Consistory of Dec. 20, 1897.

<sup>17</sup> Minutes of Consistory of Dec. 18, 1898.

<sup>18</sup> Pockman, Centennial of the First Reformed (Dutch) Sunday School at New Brunswick, N. J. pp. 66-68.

<sup>19</sup> "The Story of One Hundred and Fifty Years in the Life of the Sunday School of the First Reformed Church of New Brunswick, N.J.," p. 10, in the archives of First Reformed Church.

returned for the festivities. And in 1899 the one hundredth anniversary of the School was celebrated. Mr. and Mrs. V. M. W. Suydam presented the Sunday School with a new piano.

For a time First Church made annual donations to the City Mission. It had an ongoing program of directly assisting persons in financial need through the Poor Fund administered by the Almoner. Some people were given monthly allowances to assist them.

In 1898 First Church purchased the mission on Throop Avenue for \$950 with the understanding that Second and Suydam St. Reformed Churches would also be sponsoring the mission. Three Trustees were named, one from each church. V. M.W. Suydam was First's appointee. At the mission there was a Sunday School with an enrollment that reached 173 in the year 1907 and worship services were held on Sunday and on Wednesday evenings. The mission continued until 1920. At one time First Church supplied the Superintendent, Primary Teacher, Librarian, Organist and Sexton for the staff of the mission.<sup>20</sup>

The task of being church treasurer had grown greater and greater as the church gained investments and established various funds. Investments were made as wisely as possible in bonds, stock and real estate as well as bank funds. Gilbert S. Van Pelt was treasurer with responsibility for investments. His death in 1899 ended twenty-four years of service in that office. The Consistory expressed gratitude that God had "given unto us so long the example and fellowship of one so noble and Christlike." They said, "we shall ever cherish his memory so fragrant with gentleness, generosity and strength." He had also served as a term as a Deacon, three terms as Elder and eight years as Sunday School Superintendent. He had conscientiously and faithfully given his talent to the church. His wife followed written instructions he left in making a gift of \$1000 which is what was needed to complete payment for the new organ project and \$850 he had set aside for the church, \$256.58 of which was used to pay off some other debts and \$573.40 used to put a wrought iron fence in front of the church as a memorial to him.<sup>21</sup> When Mr. Van Pelt's last will and testament was read it stipulated a donation of \$10,000 to the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in America. Howard V. Buttler was elected Treasurer in his place.<sup>22</sup>

As the new century began the church had 275 families, 663 communicant members and 426 enrolled in the Sunday School. \$5874.22 was raised for congregational purposes during the year and \$2332.27 for benevolences.

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<sup>20</sup> Pockman, p. 76.

<sup>21</sup> Minutes of Consistory of Jan. 21, 1901.

<sup>22</sup> Minutes of Consistory of Sept. 18, 1899.



A communion set with individual cups was received from Miss Anna H. Fisher, in 1901, in memory of her father and mother.<sup>23</sup> A "handsome keyless" electric clock was given to the Sunday School by Miss Emilie S. Coles in 1902.

Eight feet of property on Liberty Street was sold in 1902 to Charles E. Spencer for \$250.<sup>24</sup> The Edison Company's lease of 60 feet on the north side of Liberty Street was for twenty-one years to 1906. This was purchased by Public Service in 1906 for \$2200. The Electric Company also leased 50 feet north of Liberty Street which it gave up and which was then rented by the Webb Wire Works. Sixteen feet of the Foundry property was sold to George K. Parsell for \$150 July 20, 1906. A piece five and a half feet wide on the south side of Liberty Street was sold to Mr. Parsell in 1909 for \$125. The Webb Wire Works bought the lot it was renting, paying \$2500 for it in 1909.<sup>25</sup>

For some years the church had been closed for two Sundays in August. In 1902 an arrangement was made with Second Reformed and First Presbyterian Churches whereby union services were held for six weeks in the summer, two weeks in each church. Subsequent summers union services were held with Second Reformed Church.

In 1902 the church began holding Sunday afternoon musical concerts on the first Sunday of each month. Parts of oratorios were presented. Large audiences attended. The Amateur Orchestral Society and Chorus performed Stainer's "Crucifixion" in the church on April 6, 1906.

The congregation mourned the loss of Dr. Jacob Cooper, who died Jan. 31, 1904, at age 73. Professor of Greek, Logic and Philosophy at Rutgers College, he had been associated with First Church for 37 years. The Consistory said, "His scholarly attainments, his powerful preaching, his deep sympathy for all in trouble and his unswerving friendship made him a tower of strength among us."<sup>26</sup>

On the twentieth anniversary of his being Pastor, Dr. Pockman reported that during his pastorate there had been an average of forty new members received each year. He conducted an average of twenty-eight funerals each year. A total of \$94,000 had been contributed for congregational purposes and \$48,000 for benevolences in the twenty years.

Rev. Pockman said that in his preaching he tried to keep three things in mind: "1. To be doctrinal. To furnish a solid foundation of truth for the superstructure of character. To cover the ground...as laid down in the Heidelberg Catechism, because it furnishes such a symmetrical presentation of

<sup>23</sup> Minutes of Consistory of Sept. 16, 1901.

<sup>24</sup> Minutes of Consistory of May 13, 1902.

<sup>25</sup> Minutes of Consistory of Dec. 21, 1909.

<sup>26</sup> Minutes of Consistory of April 18, 1904.

a well-defined system of truth...2. To be emotional. My ideal of a preacher has never been the logical, dogmatical heavyweight thrower. It has rather been that of a man hurling quivering darts, in quick succession...life or death darts; just such as had pierced his own heart again and again...It does not seem to me possible that a preacher of the gospel can face an audience in which there are lost souls, unyielding to the truth and dead to the appeals of Jesus Christ the Son of God, and not shed tears sometimes...The emotional preacher has many ecstatic moments--in 'seasons of rejoicing from the presence of the Lord'--when not only his soul but the soul of the audience may be in raptures, caught up and in sympathy with the angels in their rejoicing over sinners returning to God, and of prodigals returning to their father's house... 3. To be evangelistic...To do the work of a prophet, a teacher, a pastor, and also to do the work of an evangelist in my own parish, in our own city...In the open air, in mission hall, in factory, in union services, I have earnestly striven to carry the Gospel to the unchurched, and by a great variety of illustrated sermons and other unusual services have I labored to bring the surging crowds of unsaved and unshepherded men within these sacred walls, especially on a Sunday evening...whenever I could I have pursued men into wretched homes, into prison, into some of the vilest dens; to lead them out into the light of God's everlasting truth and unto the salvation there is in Christ through faith in his complete atonement."

Dr. Pockman said, "Truly God has been gracious to me! This ministry of twenty years has been one of joy for many reasons. First of all, because of a colorful disposition bestowed upon me by my Creator, for which I have thanked him a thousand times... I always try to walk on the sunny side of the street, and keep a smile upon my face. My burdens are borne with the thought of an infinite helper always at hand, and the disappointments of life are forgotten as soon as possible. My trust in God, and truth, and redemption through Christ, and the fulfillment of all God's promises to his believing followers is undeviating. I can trust just as well on a rainy day as on a sunlit day; and I want to be remembered by my children and friends, not as a grouchy, dyspeptic Christian, whose absence is far more agreeable than his presence, but as a happy, confiding child of God, walking under clouds and through dark forests leaning upon his arm and upon his understanding."<sup>27</sup>

Dr. Pockman led the church in cooperative efforts with other churches in the city. The congregation voted in 1907 to join in forming a Federation of the City Churches. The Honorable Henry W. Cooper was elected lay delegate to represent the church along with the minister.<sup>28</sup> A delegation of eight

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<sup>27</sup> Philetus T. Pockman, *Twenty-year Anniversary Sermon*, (The Consistory, First Reformed Church, New Brunswick, 1906)<sup>29</sup>. Minutes of Consistory of Dec. 10, 1907.

<sup>28</sup> Minutes of Consistory of Dec. 10, 1907.

persons were appointed with the minister to represent the church at meetings for the prevention of tuberculosis in the city.<sup>29</sup>

In November, 1908, the State Convention held its 50th anniversary celebration at First Reformed Church. A men's class was added to the Sunday School in 1909. A paid orchestra of five men accompanied the singing for the Sunday School.

At the special meeting, January 16, 1910, the Consistory passed a resolution as a memorial to V. M. W. Suydam: "In the death of Van Marten Wyckoff Suydam, this church has suffered the loss of one of the most active and useful members. He united with this church on confession of faith forty-eight years ago, served two terms as Deacon, and four terms as Elder and was for nearly twenty-five years the efficient Superintendent of the Sunday School. During all his career he was a wise counselor and generous helper in every good cause. The respect in which he was held by business men, and his liberality toward the poor, deserve a permanent record, as well as our love and esteem for so true a man and noble a citizen. His gentleness and cheerfulness won him many friends. His steadfastness of Christian character, his calm victory in the hour of death and his generosity toward the church in his last will and testament deserve a grateful recognition on our part." A legacy of \$1000 was received by the church. P. H. Suydam presented the Sunday School with a portrait of V. M. W. Suydam by which he could be remembered by succeeding generations.

In 1910 John C. Voorhees retired as Sexton due to declining health. He served forty-two years. John Letts was named his successor.

The church silver was loaned to the Metropolitan Museum of Art for exhibit there in 1910.

A new heating system was installed in the church and the organ was renovated in 1911.

In the early years of the century population shifts began to take their toll on the numbers of members in the church. A hint of this is expressed in Dr. Pockman's 1905 report when he said, "Too long we have been nestled under the town clock while people are moving uptown." By 1912 the church had declined to 125 families, 365 communicants, and 275 enrolled in Sunday School. In that year \$5,309 was given for congregational expenses and \$1,448 for benevolences.

Dr. Pockman served the Reformed Church in America as a member of the denomination's Board of Education and as President of that board 1908-1912. In 1911 he was elected President of the General Synod. At that time he retired to take a smaller church. He moved to Alden, New York, to become Pastor of the Presbyterian Church there. In the twenty-four years he was in New Brunswick, Dr. Pockman had not only exerted a lasting influence

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<sup>29</sup> Minutes of Consistory of Jan. 28, 1908.

upon the members of his large congregation but also upon hundreds of young men who attended the college and seminary.<sup>30</sup> The Consistory expressed "profound appreciation of the diligence with which he has wrought among us, the purity and moral beauty of the life he has lived before us and the blessing of God which has so abundantly rested upon the manifold labors of these twenty-five years."<sup>31</sup>

Dr. Pockman died Nov. 17, 1919. The Consistory passed a resolution written by his successor, Dr. Hogan, which said, "Coming to this church in early manhood, he gave it the best portion of his life. In his preaching he adhered strictly to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures; his trumpet gave forth no uncertain sound. In his pastoral work he ministered to all classes alike, and was the friend of young and old...As a Christian man his life radiated the good news which he was commissioned to proclaim. His genial spirit won friends everywhere. Beyond the boundaries of the congregation his ability was recognized and he was called to leadership in city affairs, in state organizations and in the denomination...the memory of his works will long abide in this household of faith."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Minutes of the General Synod, 1920.

<sup>31</sup> Minutes of Consistory of Jan. 3, 1912.

<sup>32</sup> Minutes of Consistory of Jan. 6, 1920.

## THROUGH TIMES OF WAR AND DEPRESSION

Dr. Pockman was succeeded by the Rev. Jasper Samuel Hogan. Rev. Hogan became Pastor of the church in 1912. He had been born in Guilderland Center, New York, October 10, 1867. He was a graduate of Rutgers and New Brunswick Theological Seminary. He served churches in Glen, New York; Pompton Plains, New Jersey; and Lafayette, Jersey City, New Jersey, before coming to New Brunswick. His call stipulated he be given an annual salary of \$2500, the use of the parsonage and one month vacation.

Rev. Hogan and his family moved into the renovated parsonage at 219 Townsend Street. A tall, erect and stately looking man, Dr. Hogan was always neatly dressed. Dignified in his actions, he was by nature reserved and quiet but warm and friendly toward people. He took a deep interest in each person. He was easy to talk with. He had strong convictions and was not afraid to express them. Always sincere he was highly respected in the church and the community.

The Classis elected Rev. Hogan to be their representative on the Board of Superintendents of New Brunswick Theological Seminary.

In September the one hundredth anniversary of the dedication of the First Reformed Church sanctuary was celebrated. Drs. Easton and Pockman were guest speakers. The services included music by the Sunday School orchestra, and prayers by Dr. J. Preston Searle, Dean of the Theological Seminary and Dr. W. H. S. Demarest, President of Rutgers College. In his anniversary sermon Dr. Hogan said, "Let us not venerate this sanctuary merely for its age, and preserve it as an ancient landmark because it is rich in tradition. It is worth vastly more than that. It has stood, and will continue to stand, for the permanent principles of righteousness, and the immutable rock upon which character should be founded. We live in a restless age, pleasures and possessions allure as never before; assaults from many quarters are made upon the faith. As this grand old edifice has weathered the storms of a century, so shall the truth for which it stands outlast every weapon formed against it. Do your part, I beseech you, to preserve and increase its usefulness. Pray for it. Plan for it. Provide for it in your wills. Prove that you cherish it by making it the place of your communion with God. Go forward with the confident assurance that your prayer will be answered: 'Jehovah our God be with us as he was with our fathers.'"

At the end of his first year there were 409 active communicant members and 305 on the absent list. There were 322 enrolled in Sunday School including the Throop Avenue Mission. \$1810 was contributed for benevolences, \$7293 for congregational purposes. There was \$15,000 in trust funds. John Voorhees was Clerk of the Elders, Harold R. Segoine Clerk of Consistory and Howard V. Buttler Treasurer. John T. Letts was the

Sexton. The paid choir was Miss Orrel Wrench, soprano; Miss Emma J. Skewis, contralto, Charles W. Crouch, tenor and G. Harold Buttler, bass. Ambrose F. Randolph was the Superintendent of the Sunday School. Mrs. J. Preston Searle was President of the Woman's Missionary Society and Mrs. Edwin L. Van Cleef was President of the Ladies Aid Society. There was a Young People's Missionary Guild, a Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, a Junior Christian Endeavor Society. A Men's Club and a Boy's Club were organized. The basement of the Chapel was enlarged and renovated. The "Duplex" envelope system of giving was adopted for the financial support of the church.<sup>1</sup>

In a 1913 report to the congregation Rev. Hogan said, "After carefully studying the condition of the church, I am persuaded that one thing in particular is greatly needed, viz. a sense of personal responsibility. We need more of that individual interest which manifests itself in real zeal. The enthusiasm which is lacking can only come from God, as the word signifies, -God in us. When our young people, as well as those who are older, possess such zest in serving Christ, we shall be eager to bring forth the "much fruit" by which God is glorified...I plead for a more earnest communion with God. May he give us a vision of the possible usefulness and power of this church! May he lead us to realize what a force it may be for righteousness in the city; what an agency for winning others to Christ; what a factor in helping to evangelize the nations!"<sup>2</sup>

The annual report dated April 1, 1914 indicated an increase in attendance at worship and a positive financial balance despite the fact that "an unusually large number have moved from the bounds of the congregation."<sup>3</sup>

In 1914 Rev. Hogan was elected president of the Particular Synod. The following year Rutgers conferred on him the Doctor of Divinity degree.

In the spring of 1916 the Sunday Schools of the city had a rally with 2030 children attending. The Protestant Schools sponsored a trip to Asbury Park in the summer.

The church received \$65 from the city in 1915 for the decoration of the town clock.<sup>4</sup>

In 1916 an electric motor and blower were installed for the organ at the cost of \$272.00<sup>5</sup>

A popular activity of the Boy's Club was basketball played upstairs in the Chapel.

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<sup>1</sup> Elder's Minutes, 1887-1941, pp. 193 & 194.

<sup>2</sup> Year Book of the First Reformed Church, 1913.

<sup>3</sup> Elder's Minutes, 1887-1941, p. 198.

<sup>4</sup> Minutes of Consistory, Jan. 6, 1915.

<sup>5</sup> Minutes of Consistory, Aug. 23, 1916.

Rev. Hogan was an active participant in the Federation of Churches in New Brunswick. The efforts of the Federation included the promotion of church attendance and Bible reading. A special collection from all the churches was sent to Ohio for flood relief. In cooperation with the Pastor's Union Dr. Hogan and members of the congregation participated in the evangelistic services of Billy Sunday in Trenton in 1916.<sup>6</sup>

Dr. Hogan visited his congregation frequently. It was his practice to visit every family in the church at least once a year. Usually his wife accompanied him on his visits.

The church was the location for some of the festivities celebrating the 150th anniversary of Rutgers College. At a special service in the church Dr. Hogan said: "Our congregation has had more than ordinary interest in the celebration...the closest relations have existed between the college and our church for all these years...it has been most gratifying to us that certain of the anniversary exercises were held in our church, in which have occurred so many important college functions for more than a century...We congratulate you...We join with you in the desire that its (Rutgers College's) service may even be richer and more far-reaching in the years to which you are so hopefully looking."<sup>7</sup>

During his pastorate Rev. Hogan suffered personal tragedy. His wife, Ella Bronson, died December 16, 1916. Their son Harold Bronson Hogan lived with his father for a time and then moved to California so they saw each other infrequently for a time. His second wife, Evelyn, was a school teacher in New Brunswick. She became very actively involved in the women's organizations of the church. She organized the women's groups into circles which met in neighborhoods. This doubled the number of women participating.

At its April meeting in 1917 the Consistory appointed a committee to "further church interest and zeal." On the committee P. L. Van Nuis represented the church, Mrs. E. H. Wikoff the women, A. F. Randolph the Sunday School, O. O. Stillman the men, Mabel Stotoff the young women and Jacob Wyckoff the young men. The annual report of 1917 indicated 59 persons had become members of the church, many of whom made confession of faith as a result of an evangelistic campaign led by an evangelist named Anderson. The new members helped to maintain the size of the congregation. Members were being lost through death and moving out of the community.

In May of 1917 the Consistory considered the suggestion that Sunday morning services be shortened so that residents of River Road could make an earlier trolley. It was voted to excuse them during the singing of the last hymn.

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<sup>6</sup> Minutes of Consistory, Oct. 13, 1915.

<sup>7</sup> Minutes of Consistory, Sept. 6, 1916.

The two hundredth anniversary of First Church was celebrated in 1917. Frederick S. Lamb of the J. and R. Lamb Company in New York redecorated the interior of the church. The side walls were painted light tones of tan with ornamentation of colonial yellows. The pews and other woodwork were painted white with a Mahogany trim. Six large electric chandeliers were hung from the ceiling, all a gift of Mrs. Gilbert S. Van Pelt. Emblems were painted on the walls to each side of the organ. Major repairs were done on the organ by the J. H. & C. S. Odell Company.

The anniversary committee was Dr. Hogan, J. S. Berge, H. V. Buttler, Dr. J. P. Searle, R. Y. Sutphen and P. L. Van Nuis.

A week of special services were held for the anniversary. Dr. Easton and Dr. Pockman returned to deliver special addresses on Sunday, October 21, 1917. The newspaper reported, "There were many in the congregation on last evening who recalled when Dr. Easton was their Pastor and they listened with rapt interest to the powerful sermon he delivered. To the younger ones, those who did not know Dr. Easton, and who indeed was the Pastor long before they were born, his sermon and his personality were a distinct surprise. Dr. Easton is now more than eighty years old, but by no querulous voice, no palsied hand, no hesitating gait and speech, and no dimming of his rich intellectual powers, was there evidence that he was anything other than in the prime of life...he spoke shrewdly and with sophisticated worldly wisdom, regarding the things of the present day, the war, and democracy. Dr. Easton declared that 'no man-made laws, no refinement of industrial or social progress, will ever solve such problems as child labor, over-work of women and other industrial evils. It will be the influence of an upright Christian faith that will accomplish remedies.' He said, 'There are no less than 100,000 young stalwart Americans on the battle field of France tonight, the church of the living Christ must be wide awake to see that democracy is made safe for the world. Can it be accomplished? Yes, I believe with all my heart it can be done but only when all our churches cease delegating its work of saving men to outside agencies, and become herself frenzied with an agony of prayer to see her altars crowded with penitents, churches aflame with revivals not man made, but awakenings conceived of the Holy Ghost...That passion to save the souls of men is the quintessence of the kingdom of God, and the love of Christ must be the one dominating factor if she ever hopes to be triumphant.'"

Services through the week included greetings from other churches in New Brunswick, an address by Dr. W. H. S. Demarest, President of Rutgers and Dr. W.I. Chamberlain, Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in America.

A Sunday afternoon vesper service featured a choir of 57 voices under the direction of Howard D. McKinney.

The war had its effect upon the church. Dr. Hogan told the congregation: "Many of our young men have been called to take up arms



against the insane monster that threatens the overthrow of Christian civilization. Their absence lays increased responsibilities upon us in carrying on the work of the church...These are times when we should realize that the church should be kept at its best for the sake of the nation, as well as for the kingdom of God. He is a poor patriot who does not strive to promote the righteousness by which a nation is exalted."<sup>8</sup>

A service flag honored those in the armed service. Allied flags were placed over the pulpit.<sup>9</sup>

In the winter of 1917-18 Sunday evening services were combined with Christ Episcopal and Second Reformed Church to save fuel and light. Contributions were made to Second Reformed Church to make their basement "a general headquarters for the Soldiers and Sailors who frequent our streets and who have no particular place to go."

When the war was over Dr. Hogan gave thanks to God that all thirty-nine of the members of the congregation who had served in the armed forces had returned home. Members of the church served on the Mayor's committee for the city's soldier's homecoming.

Deacon and Sunday School teacher, Raymond B. Searle, was a graduate of Rutgers and admitted to the bar. He had been disappointed that he could not serve in the armed forces because of poor health. He exhausted himself working for the draft board and died January 25, 1920.

July 16, 1918, the Consistory sent a protest to the Commissioners of the city against Sunday motion pictures. They said, "Such secularizing and commercializing of any part of the day which God has bidden us to preserve holy undermines the religion upon which public morals must rest."

The Particular Synod of New Brunswick celebrated its fiftieth anniversary at First Reformed Church May 6, 1919.

Summer union services were held with Second Reformed and First Presbyterian Churches. In 1918 the Consistory declared itself in favor of church union. It said, "We, as a representative body of the First Reformed Church in New Brunswick, are in accord with the general movement of Church Brotherhood. This body expressed themselves as in favor of this movement, looking to closer church relations with officers and members of other churches and that we are prepared to meet with official bodies of other churches for further conferences on this vital subject."<sup>10</sup>

In 1920 the church was supportive of efforts made for Christian unity. Official delegates were sent to the Middlesex Convention of the Interchurch World Movement held at Second Reformed Church in 1920. Contributions were sent to the Federal Council of Churches.

<sup>8</sup> Year Book of the First Reformed Church, 1918.

<sup>9</sup> Minutes of Consistory, Sept. 11, 1918.

<sup>10</sup> Minutes of Consistory, Feb. 6, 1918.

The church also participated in a denomination-wide program called the Progress Campaign. A bulletin for November 23, 1919, said these were the objectives of the program:

1. Double the membership of the church.
2. Find some one for the ministry.
3. Improve the efficiency of the Sunday School.
4. Train the young people.
5. Get everybody to read what the church is doing.
6. Start men working for missions.
7. Get every woman into missionary organizations.
8. Enlist yourself for giving.
9. Determine to give "pro rata" to the Boards. (Mission and program boards of the Reformed Church in America.)
10. Make the church a social servant.

A quota was given to each church of requested contributions to the Reformed Church in America. Dr. Hogan was very much committed to the program of the Reformed Church and through his leadership the church gave to the denominational programs. Over half of the benevolences given went to the Board of Foreign Missions, the Board of Domestic Missions and the Ministerial Pension Endowment Fund. Contributions were also made to the Arabian Missions, the Women's Board of Foreign Missions, the Church Building Fund, the Women's Board of Domestic Missions, Middlesex General Hospital and the church's own Poor Fund. The church supported New Brunswick Theological Seminary. Contributions were made to Hope College, Central College and Western Seminary.

Dr. Hogan was close to the people of his church and of the community. As he became aware of financial needs assistance was given through the Poor Fund. Some people were helped on a regular basis with paying the rent or putting food on the table.

In January, 1920, the Throop Avenue Mission property was sold to the Presbyterians for an Italian Presbyterian Church. The proceeds of the sale went to the three churches which had sponsored the mission, First, Second and Suydam St. Reformed Churches. The \$1491.36 First Church realized was invested in Victory Bonds.

The Young Women's Church League for Service was organized in 1920.

In December of 1920 Bronson Hogan, son of Dr. Hogan, presented a plan to Consistory for dances to be held for young people in the second floor room of the Chapel. This was approved as an effort to interest the young people in the church.

In 1920 Howard V. Buttler resigned his position of church Treasurer, a position he had held for twenty-one years. The Consistory passed a resolution expressing "their appreciation of his long and faithful service in this

responsible position." The resolution was framed and presented to Mr. Buttler.

Mr. Shubel K. Siver, a deacon, was elected to take his place. But May 11, 1921, Dr. Hogan announced to the Consistory that Mr. Siver had disappeared leaving his home and family and missing were the securities that had been placed in the church's safe deposit box valued at \$6000. After that it was voted to have the treasurer bonded. The treasurer was to be accompanied by the Minister or Finance Committee Chairman when going to the safe deposit box and all checks were to have two signatures. Charles W. Crouch was elected treasurer. It was voted to pay the treasurer a salary of \$100 per year. Bronson Hogan was asked to audit the books. The Consistory decided to prefer charges of embezzlement against Mr. Siver. But the legal advice received was that the church was not able to recover the stolen bonds. Later, in 1924, when Mr. Crouch found the position too demanding the office of Financial Secretary was created to keep accounts of Sunday offerings. A small salary was attached to this position as well. Willard Van Nostrand and George B. Howell each served short terms in this office and then A. O. Rappleyea began a long tenure in that office. Mr. Crouch continued to be treasurer until 1929 when Edward Cortelyou was elected.

In 1920 a bathroom and kitchen were added to the Sexton's House at a cost of \$2100 by the Highland Park Building Company.

In 1921 major repairs were done on the organ.

On January 12, 1921, the Consistories of the First, Second and Suydam Street Reformed Churches met together in the Chapel of Second Reformed Church to receive the report of a special committee which had been asked to present a plan for the possible union of the three churches. The initial suggestion for such an effort had come from the Consistory of the Second Reformed Church. The special committee had on it two representatives of each church. Mr. O. O. Stillman and Dr. Hogan represented First Church. The committee met several times and gave their report. The combined consistories passed the following resolutions:

FIRST, That some union of the First, Second, and Suydam Street churches is desirable for the increased efficiency of their forces along religious, educational and social service lines.

SECOND, that the sale of the Second and Suydam Street church buildings is advisable, if such sale is satisfactory to each congregation respectively, as a prerequisite to any organic union.

THIRD, that the First Church property be held intact for historical and practical reasons.

FOURTH, that the selection of a site and the erection of a modern church edifice be left to future consideration.

The resolution was recorded in the minutes of the Consistory. The issue was next officially discussed by the Consistory Sept. 10, 1924, when

"Mr. Van Nuis spoke of the possibility of combining the 2nd & 4th (Suydam St.) Reformed Churches with ours. This subject was quite thoroughly discussed but it was decided that at the present it was not just the time to offer such a suggestion to them as it had been talked over in the Second Reformed Church before and they had never felt so inclined."

The practice of holding union summer services with Second Reformed and the Presbyterian Church continued.

When Second Reformed Church sold its building at George and Albany Streets the Consistory directed Dr. Hogan to extend an invitation to Second Church to worship with First during the time they would be without a sanctuary. Dr. Hogan's letter of March 18, 1925, continued, "The hope has also been expressed by our Consistory, that our two congregations might be consolidated and together undertake a much larger community service than is possible for us separately. We have plenty of room for expansion and are in the section of the city which is becoming the center of increasing church activities. The old mother church will cordially welcome you and be pleased to join forces with you in any program of service, which will best meet the need of modern times."

The Consistory of Second Reformed Church responded on March 24, 1925, "We desire with your consent to hold this matter in abeyance until we are able to canvass thoroughly all the possibilities and decide on such course as shall meet with the approval of the majority of our people."<sup>11</sup>

By July they had reached their decision: "to maintain our identity as a separate church...and state that it is our hope to maintain separate congregational services during the period of the erection of a new church edifice." The letter continued, "We wish to renew at this time our previous assurances of deep appreciation of your generous and brotherly attitude during this critical period in the life of our church; and we wish to assure you that our action against consolidation and in favor of separate corporate existence was taken only after the utmost deliberation and careful weighing of every possible factor entering into the making of such a decision, especially the definitely expressed opinion of a majority of our congregation in favor of the action we have taken. This action we feel confident will prove to be the wisest under the peculiar circumstances, and will mean the greater glory of the Kingdom."<sup>12</sup>

After Second Reformed Church moved to College Avenue a new combination of churches held union summer services. Beginning in 1929 four downtown churches held combined worship services for eight weeks in the summer, two weeks in each. The churches were First Baptist, First Methodist, the Presbyterian and First Reformed. Thus began a close association of those churches which was to continue for years to come.

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<sup>11</sup> Minutes of Consistory, April 8, 1925.

<sup>12</sup> Minutes of Consistory, September 16, 1925.

*The Town Clock Church*

The endowed funds of the church continued to grow through legacies left to the church. The minutes of Consistory of Feb. 2, 1921, record that Ira C. Voorhees left \$1000 requesting that his burial plot and that of his grandfather, Ira C. Voorhees, be kept in good condition. The money was invested in U. S. Rubber 1st preferred stock, which was paying 8% at the time. The church received \$5000 from the estate of Lafferd Totton the income to be divided equally between the church and the Sunday School. Another bequest from Mrs. C. Van Pelt of \$6000 was for the church and Sunday School. The income was equally divided.<sup>13</sup> \$5500 came to the church from the Thomas H. Riddle estate, all of the interest to be used for the Sunday School.<sup>14</sup>

On July 26, 1922, Dr. John P. Searle died. For nearly 30 years he had been Professor of Systematic Theology at the New Brunswick Theological Seminary. During that time he and all his family were active members of First Church. A resolution of the Consistory expressed the sentiments of the church: "His presence in his family pew, as a reverent worshiper and a thoughtful hearer of the word, has been an example to us all. On many occasions he has preached to us with all the fervor of his strong faith and administered the holy sacrament. By his prayers on many special occasions he has brought us into the very presence of God and impressed us with his profound conviction of the hand of God in the history of this church and the denomination which he so ardently loved...His presence in our social gatherings promoted good fellowship. Many have been helped in their troubles by his gentleness, sympathy, faith and encouragement."<sup>15</sup>

Deacon J. Bertram Howell was chairman of a special committee on church attendance. As a result of their efforts to have members sign attendance pledges he reported at the December, 1922, meeting of Consistory that there was an increase of 40 in attendance on Sunday mornings and that the evening services had increased by 15-20.<sup>16</sup>

To help bolster attendance in 1924 "stereoptican views" were used in some of the evening services.

A shortage of coal in the winter of 1922-23 forced the church to hold services in the chapel.<sup>17</sup>

The Sunday School and other programs of the church were needing more space than the church and chapel provided. In the fall of 1926 a committee was appointed to formulate plans for the enlargement of the chapel. Another committee of Dr. Hogan, Mr. Randolph, Mr. Stillman, H. Crouch,

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<sup>13</sup> Minutes of Consistory, September 15 & October 6, 1926.

<sup>14</sup> Minutes of Consistory, February 4, 1931.

<sup>15</sup> Minutes of Consistory, Dec. 6, 1922.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Minutes of Consistory, January 3, 1923.

P. L. Van Nuis, W. R. Van Nostrand and Dr. Bayles was in charge of fund raising. After the fund raising committee reported a positive response from the congregation a building committee was appointed to proceed with the addition and alteration of the chapel: P. L. Van Nuis, Chairman, E. H. Stines, W. R. Van Nostrand, Henry Shiffner, George B. Howell, R. E. Watson, and Dr. Hogan, ex-officio. Mr. Alexander Merchant was employed as the architect. The addition to the building added two rooms to both floors on the north end of the building extending it twenty-seven feet. Graves were moved from that area at a cost of \$1000. A kitchen was installed on the first floor. The gymnasium upstairs was expanded and basketball backstops and baskets set up. Lockers and showers were installed in the basement. A steel stairway replaced the wooden one at the Bayard Street entrance. A new heating system was installed for both the chapel and the church. The project was completed by the end of 1927 at a total cost of \$29,510.90. The members pledged their contributions over a three year period.

In 1926 the method of election of consistory was changed, with permission of Classis, from election by the congregation to election by the consistory.

The church still owned some land on Liberty Street. In 1917 the church had constructed a garage on the property which had been rented. In the sales agreement it was called the "Opera House garage." In 1927 that property was sold to Joseph Kopelman and Max Kaplan for \$10,000.<sup>18</sup>

In celebration of the Tercentenary of the Reformed Church In America in 1928 a Service of Praise and Thanksgiving was held at First Reformed Church with the congregations of Second, Suydam Street and Highland Park Reformed Church. A choir of 60 voices sang under the direction of Prof. J. Earle Newton.

Ambrose F. Randolph resigned as Superintendent of the Sunday School in 1924. He had been a distinguished figure in the church and a dependable leader of the Sunday School for seventeen years. Chester Moore, a college student, and Emil Jache were elected Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent.<sup>19</sup> In the fall of 1925 Mr. Randolph returned to the Superintendency. In 1928 Howard Crouch was elected to succeed him and served until 1936.<sup>20</sup> In the eight years of Mr. Crouch's tenure he was never once absent or late.

February 3, 1928, the Consistory authorized Dr. Hogan to extend an invitation to the Suydam Street Reformed Church to affiliate with First Reformed. Union services of all four Reformed Churches in New Brunswick

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<sup>18</sup> Minutes of Consistory, May 4, 1927.

<sup>19</sup> Minutes of Consistory, February 6, 1924.

<sup>20</sup> "The Story of One Hundred and Fifty Years in the Life of the Sunday School of the First Reformed Church of New Brunswick, N.J.," p. 5.

were held on Sunday evenings the first three months of 1929. The next winter evening services were abandoned for the winter months with "illustrated services" held in the afternoon instead. With Sunday evening worship services attended by only about thirty persons the Consistory voted in 1931 to discontinue attempting to have them independently. In the spring of 1931 evening services were held jointly by the downtown churches. For one or two more years Dr. Hogan held Sunday evening services in the spring. But they were eventually given up altogether. Sunday evening became the time for youth meetings.

Dr. James P. Schureman, a physician and member of First Church died in 1931. He was a direct descendent of Jacobus Schuremen, the voorlezer and school master who assisted the first Pastor of the church.

The City of New Brunswick celebrated its 200th anniversary in 1930. First Church, the oldest in the city, participated in the festivities. The gymnasium was loaned as the location for sewing the costumes. Four old communion beakers were placed in the exhibit of historic items. Experts at the event declared two of them to be valued at \$250 each and the other two to be worth \$1500 each. After learning that, the beakers were put in a safe deposit box. A special service of the four Reformed Churches in the city was held at First Church on October 12 with Senator Frelinghuysen, descendent of the first minister, as the speaker.

John Letts resigned his position as Sexton, December, 1930, having served over twenty years. For over a century the church had been served by only three Sextons. John W. Fairest was selected to be the next Sexton.

Much emphasis during Dr. Hogan's ministry was placed on missions. In 1921 the congregation gave \$4931 for benevolences out of a total of \$11,105 raised. In 1922 the Consistory established a policy of at least 25% of contributions be given to benevolences with a goal of 28% if possible. In 1925 the church gave \$5824 to benevolences out of \$15,398 in total giving. Furloughing missionaries used the mission house at the Seminary and would be available to meet the people of the church. In 1931 the Rev. John D. and Dora Muyskens, missionaries to India, were in New Brunswick. Rev. Muyskens preached at a worship service and Mrs. Muyskens spoke to the Women's Missionary Society. In 1932 Walter de Velder and his wife Margaret transfered their membership to the church from Hope Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan. Walter was then a student at New Brunswick Theological Seminary and was later to become a missionary to China.

Dr. and Mrs. J. S. Hogan wrote a "Historical Missionary Pageant" for the centennial celebration of the Women's Missionary Society of the First Reformed Church, New Brunswick, which was held April 22, 1925.

On April 3, 1932, a pageant, "The Highway of the Lord," was presented in First Church with ten area Reformed Churches each presenting different episodes. Dr. Hogan noted that "again our church has served as the

rallying center for the Reformed Churches of this vicinity and the Classis of New Brunswick. The pageant commemorated the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Founding of our Board of Foreign Missions...Probably more than a thousand people witnessed the scenes which brought before them the outstanding incidents and features of our organizations to give the Gospel to the nations of the world."<sup>21</sup>

Mrs. Hogan was the founder of ecumenical women's work in the community. She called together the ministers' wives of the churches of New Brunswick in January, 1932. Subsequent meetings were held with representatives from each of the churches. The group called themselves the "Federation of Missionary Societies of New Brunswick and Vicinity." Mrs. Jasper Hogan was elected their first President. The organization was later called Church Women United.

Rutgers College asked that First Church be represented at the inauguration of their president, Robert Clarkson Clothier, in May of 1932. Dr. Hogan was delegated to represent the church.

In 1932 the active membership stood at 440. Its highest point during Dr. Hogan's ministry was 531. The Sunday School enrollment, including the cradle roll and the home department was 381 in 1932. It had reached its highest point during Dr. Hogan's tenure in 1919 when the total enrollment was 508 including the children attending the Throop Avenue Mission. Invested funds had risen to \$79,784.54.

The Sunday School was meeting at 10 a.m. on Sunday mornings and Sunday worship was held at 11 a.m. The Christian Endeavor Society met at 7:15 Sunday evenings. A Prayer and Praise Service was held on Tuesday evenings. The Women's Missionary Society, the Ladies' Aid Society and the Young Women's Church League for Service each met monthly. Communion was served on the first Sunday of March, June, October and December. A preparatory service was held on the Tuesday evening preceding each communion Sunday. The Elder's met after each preparatory service.

In 1932 Louis B. Shipman was Clerk of the Consistory, Jacob Wyckoff was Clerk of the Elders. The Treasurer was E. V. M. Cortelyou, the Financial Secretary A. O. Rappleyea. The Sexton was John W. Fairest. Miss Adella W. La Rue was Organist and Director of the choir of four paid soloists.

In the fall of 1932 a Young People's Chorus was formed and soon had about sixty members. They rehearsed on Sunday evenings following Christian Endeavor meeting. Under the leadership of Miss Adelle La Rue the group sang for worship services and at special occasions in other churches. In 1934 Miss La Rue organized a children's choir.

A typical service in 1933 went as follows:

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<sup>21</sup> Year Book of the First Reformed Church, 1932.



## *The Town Clock Church*

Organ Prelude  
 Processional Hymn  
 Responsive Call to Worship  
 Invocation, Lord's Prayer, Salutation  
 Summary of the Law, Response by the Chorus--Kyrie  
 Anthem by the Quartette  
 Responsive Reading  
 Gloria Patri  
 Scripture Lesson  
 Children's Story Sermon  
 Hymn  
 Prayer, Response by the Chorus  
 Announcements  
 Offertory Anthem by the Chorus  
 Doxology, Prayer of Dedication  
 Sermon  
 Prayer  
 Benediction, Response by the Quartette  
 Organ Postlude

The church was a "spiritual home" away from home for students of the Seminary. For example, in 1934 Marion De Velder, from Boydon, Iowa, became a member of the church. He helped direct athletic activities for the church and sang bass in the choir. He was later to be the General Secretary of the Reformed Church in America. Each year one or two seminary students were given financial assistance. In return they assisted the church in Sunday school, choir, youth, and recreational activities. This gave the students valuable experience working in a church. Professors of the Seminary were often of much assistance in the ministry of the church. Dr. Theodore F. Bayles served as an Elder on Consistory.

Annual events included the congregational dinner and the mother and daughter supper. Tickets for these events cost twenty-five cents for adults and fifteen cents for children.<sup>22</sup> Various activities were done each year on "Father and Sons Day."

The Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist Churches were within a couple blocks of First Reformed Church. The clergy of the four formed the Clergy Union which planned united holy week noontime services, union Sunday evening services at times and union services held in the summer. In 1931 a Union Sunday School Excursion went to Asbury Park. On September 30, 1934, a special service sponsored by the Pastor's Union was held at First Church to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the New Brunswick Theological Seminary.

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<sup>22</sup> Minutes of Consistory, April 5, 1933.

The gymnasium received much use for both basketball and volleyball. The Boy's Club sponsored basketball games. In addition groups from the Suydam Street Reformed Church and First Baptist and the YMCA were allowed to use the gym. There was a girl's night for volleyball.

These were the years of the depression and in March, 1934, Finance Committee Chairman Willard Van Nostrand reported that envelope collections had dropped \$1800 in the last five years. The Consistory approved an "Every Member Canvass" to try to raise the level of giving. The suggestion of a "public card party" was offered to the Consistory as a means of raising money. The Consistory said that "public dances and card parties are not in keeping with the character of the church and are not approved as a policy of the First Reformed Church."<sup>23</sup> Declining income led to a reduction of the benevolence budget to \$1000. It also led to a discontinuation of the paid quartette. The wardens were struggling to keep up with repair of the buildings. Roofs were leaking on both the Church House and the Sexton's House. The basement of the Church House was flooded on several occasions causing damage to the furnace. And major repairs were needed on the tower. This was postponed for a time. The \$300 a year received from the city for the clock helped.<sup>24</sup> But major repairs on the steeple were the responsibility of the church.

In June of 1934 Henry Shiffner and George Howell, architect, reported the church tower to be in excellent structural condition but woodwork and flashings were in need of considerable repair. Bids were received. A fall meeting of the Greater Consistory was held to discuss the financing. Pledges were made by consistory members, one of \$300, two of \$200 and one of \$190. Others followed with what they were able to give. The City of New Brunswick contributed \$200.<sup>25</sup> The Highland Park Building Company did the repairs and repairs of the main roof for \$1610 plus \$90 for gold leafing the clock.

The chairman of the wardens committee had a big job trying to maintain the property with limited funds. In the fall of 1935 the Consistory expressed their appreciation to A. O. Rappleyea for his performance in that capacity and named him "Superintendent of Church Property."<sup>26</sup>

It was a special day for Dr. Hogan and the congregation when on Sunday, November 11, 1934, his two brothers, Rev. Orville Hogan of Closter, and Rev. Robert Hogan of Mayfield, N.Y., shared in leading the service.

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<sup>23</sup> Minutes of Consistory, March 14, 1934.

<sup>24</sup> Minutes of Consistory, April 4, 1934.

<sup>25</sup> Minutes of Consistory, October 10, 1934.

<sup>26</sup> Minutes of Consistory, October 2, 1935.

In the spring of 1935 the Consistory proposed a merger of the First and Suydam Street Reformed Churches. They wrote to the Suydam Street Consistory: "The people of our two churches have been closely associated in many ways and we have each rejoiced in the other's blessings. Since the work of our churches is carried on along parallel lines, the question has arisen in our minds whether we could not obtain better results by uniting our forces."<sup>27</sup> The Consistories of the two churches met and appointed a committee to design a plan of union. The committee consisted of three from each Consistory. Bertram Howell and Willard Van Nostrand were appointed from First Church along with Dr. Edward Worcester who was named chairman of the committee. Dr. Worcester was a professor at New Brunswick Seminary. The plan they proposed called for the selling of the Suydam Street Reformed Church and the retention of both ministers, with Rev. Theodore Brinkerhoff, the Suydam St. Church Minister, to be the Associate Minister. At a congregational meeting, April 9, 1935, 85 members of First Church voted in favor, two were opposed. The Suydam Street Church had more difficulty reaching a decision. They asked for six months to consider it. When they took their vote in September there were 44 for merger and 34 against it out of a membership of 278.

On October 2, 1935, Dr. Hogan announced to the Consistory that he would retire the following January due to his failing health. This was viewed by the First Church Consistory as a complication in the matter of union with the Suydam Street Reformed Church causing them to reconsider their position. The Consistory asked that a joint committee again be formed to revise the plan. The Consistory sent a letter to the Consistory of the Suydam St. Church expressing their misgivings about moving ahead with merger with such a small majority of the Suydam St. congregation in favor. They wrote that they felt the number of their members in favor "appears to be too far short of the unanimity desirable in so important a matter to make it the success we are all seeking...in view of these things it does not seem wise to effect the merger at this time." And so the matter was dropped.

Dr. Hogan retired January 1, 1936, after being Pastor of the church for nearly twenty-four years. He was 68 years old. He purchased a home next to the parsonage on Townsend Street. He continued to be actively associated with the church and was a supportive neighbor and helpful assistant to his successors. The Classis declared him Pastor Emeritus. The church gave him a retirement grant of \$500 per year. He resided in New Brunswick until his death July 9, 1954.

Retired minister, Rev. Oscar M. Voorhees, had become a member of the congregation and served as "acting pastor pro tem" when Dr. Hogan's

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<sup>27</sup> Minutes of Consistory, March 12, 1935.

retirement took effect.<sup>28</sup> Dr. Bayles and Dr. Worcester helped with the preaching and pastoral work. Dr. Bayles was named President pro tem of Consistory.

The Classis expressed their appreciation of Dr. Hogan for his work in the Classis saying, "Ever desirous for the extension of the Kingdom of God, his wise counsel and kindly spirit have been placed at the disposal of the church, and especially so in encouraging and sustaining the work of our Magyar churches." The Classis noted his "rare gift of friendship." And recalling his work for the classis and denomination, they said, "he has served the Boards of the church through these many years and faithfully presented and pled their cause upon the floor of classis with a passion that stirred our hearts...(and) with a spirit of humility...Our best tribute to this devoted pastor and friend is 'that we have seen that he has been with Jesus and learned of Him.'"<sup>29</sup>

Dr. Worcester composed the resolution passed by the Consistory to express their gratitude and affection for Dr. Hogan: "The great war, the uncertain peace, the rush of illusive prosperity, and the perplexities of continuing depression, have brought the world, the community and the individual under unaccustomed strain...How much we severally owe to Dr. Hogan's Christian example and leadership through such a period is not easy to estimate, nor how much it has cost him to be what he has been; but we know that the needed qualities were there, and that we have found strength and courage in them.

"We acknowledge the sincerity and simplicity with which he has taught us the mind of Christ and proclaimed the eternal gospel. We are grateful for the persuasiveness of his word and his life. We bear tribute to the unfailing faithfulness of his pastoral ministry...As officers who have shared with him in responsibility and counsel, we bear tribute to his ability to lead without self-assertiveness, to compose differences by the fairness of his own outlook.

"The present membership of the church and the church school...bear testimony not so much to favorable conditions...as to united and sustained endeavor in which the minister himself was foremost.

"In ways unknown to most as well as in ways of which all are aware Dr. Hogan has given to this church and this people of his time, his means, and himself, without reluctance and without stint. Even when his own burdens were heaviest he has sought to share the burdens of others, and in so doing found relief for both. The troubled who have turned to him for counsel, the poor who have experienced his liberality, the lonely whom he has befriended, the sick whom he has cheered, and the sorrowing to whom he has

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<sup>28</sup> Elder's Minutes, 1887-1941, p. 257.

<sup>29</sup> Resolution written for the classis by Frederick Zimmerman, Milton T. Stauffer, and Charles J. Scudder.

brought companionship and comfort, will permit us to speak for them here of much that cannot be committed to formal records."

"Nor is it only our sorrows into which he has entered. His readiness for enjoyment has given added zest to pleasure and made many an occasion memorable."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Minutes of Consistory, December 18, 1935.

## MINISTRY AND MISSION IN A TIME OF WORLD WAR

Daniel York Brink was called to become the Minister of First Church in June, 1936. Born in Shokan, New York, he was a graduate of Rutgers College and New Brunswick Theological Seminary. He had been Pastor of the North and Southampton Reformed Church at Churchville, Pennsylvania, before coming to New Brunswick. He was married to Frances Stephens. The Brinks moved to New Brunswick in September. He was thirty years old at the time. His installation was on October 13, 1936. Dr. John W. Beardslee, Jr., President of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, preached the sermon from John 18:36. Rev. Brink's father, Rev. Henry W. Brink, gave the charge to the pastor. And Pastor Emeritus, Dr. Hogan, gave the charge to the congregation.

Two weeks later the church was host to a mass meeting held by the General Synod for the Reformed Churches in the New Brunswick area for the "Greater Things Campaign," a fund raising effort of the Reformed Church in America. First Church participated with an every member canvass on a Sunday in November. Teams of two men each called on every family.

One of the first things Rev. Brink did was to start a monthly church newsletter entitled "First Reformed Church Messenger."

In December, 1936, the average attendance at Sunday worship was 228. 264 attended the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. The young people's chorus and the junior choir sang. Miss Adella La Rue's organ playing was complemented by seven violinists.

That year the Consistory members were elders Dr. Theodore F. Bayles, Steward H. Kindt, Alstyn F. Randolph, A. Oliver Rappleyea, Willard R. Van Nostrand, Percy L. Van Nuis, and deacons J. Emery Dederick, Frederick M. Dickey, John P. Kirkwood, Frederick H. Sasse, Louis B. Shipman and Frederick N. Van Deripe. The Treasurer was Edmund V. M. Cortelyou. The Superintendent of Church School was Frederick M. Dickey. Miss Florence E. Waldron was President of the Women's Association and Mrs. Dorothy Van Nostrand and Mrs. Frances Brink were Vice-Presidents.

The average attendance of the church school was 146. Fred M. Dickey served as Sunday School Superintendent from 1936 to 1938. Everitt A. Dunn followed him serving as Superintendent from 1939 to 1941. Both applied their business knowledge to the organization of the Sunday School.<sup>1</sup> In addition to Sunday classes there were activities such as an Easter program, a children's day service and an annual dinner of the staff.

In January, 1937, forty men reorganized the Men's Association. The officers elected were Percy L. Van Nuis, Frederick H. Sasse, A. Oliver

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<sup>1</sup> "The Story of One Hundred and Fifty Years in the Life of the Sunday School of the First Reformed Church of New Brunswick, N.J.," p. 11.

Rappleyea, George C. Shiffner, Thomas F. Bruton and Gustave H. Haas. Speakers and programs on various topics of interest were scheduled for each month. The association installed portable bowling alleys in the Church House.

A new pulpit Bible was presented to the church by Miss Jan Kirkpatrick May 15, 1937.

The Lenten prayer meeting was divided into four groups in geographical areas. The groups met in homes of members in their area. All groups were given the same topic for discussion.<sup>2</sup>

Elder A. Oliver Rappleyea was in charge of setting up the elements for communion. In 1938 he presented the church with a home communion set. Mr. Rappleyea was also Superintendent of Building and Grounds and Financial Secretary.

Another large endowment was received by the Sunday School in 1937. \$2500 was received from the estate of Otto O. Stillman specifying that it "shall be safely invested in good bonds, and shall be known and called "The Mr. and Mrs. O. O. Stillman Sunday School Fund." It was invested in A.T. & T., Standard Oil and Inland Steel.<sup>3</sup>

The budget for the fiscal year April, 1937, to March, 1938, totaled \$9087.75. It called for salaries of \$2400 for the minister, \$900 for the sexton, \$625 for the organist, and \$300 for the choir, \$100 for the treasurer and \$100 for the financial secretary. \$1000 was budgeted for benevolences, \$750 for fuel, and \$700 for repairs. With fresh enthusiasm the congregation contributed well. In October the Consistory was able to increase the minister's salary to \$2550. The year ended with a positive balance and the budget for the next year was increased. A note for \$4775 was still outstanding for money borrowed to complete the addition to the Church House.

Dr. Edward Worcester died June 25, 1937. The Consistory expressed appreciation of the "manly Christian character, enriched by an intellectual life of a high order and rare spiritual fervor." Contributions were made to the renovation of the New Brunswick Theological Seminary chapel which was renamed the "Dr. Worcester Memorial Chapel."

In January, 1939, Miss Florence Waldron gave the church a Steinway piano.<sup>4</sup> In November, 1941, an anonymous donor gave 250 new hymnals.

Rev. Brink was an excellent preacher. His "full of fun" nature was an asset in strengthening the young people's activities. A Young People's Forum was held on Sunday evenings. The Brinks had a handicapped

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<sup>2</sup> Minutes of Consistory, February 3, 1937.

<sup>3</sup> Minutes of Consistory, September 15, 1937.

<sup>4</sup> Minutes of Consistory, February 2, 1939.

daughter, Carol Louise. Their son, Stephen, was born while they were living in New Brunswick.

Mrs. Brink sang in the choir, supervised the Town-Clockers' Youth Organization, taught the young women's Bible class and was President of the Women's Association.

On May 19, 1939, the men of the four Reformed Churches in New Brunswick had a dinner in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Arabian missions. Held in the Church House, two hundred attended. The speaker was Dr. Samuel M. Zwemer, who also spoke at the Sunday worship service that weekend.

In his retirement Dr. Hogan performed a service for the church that has been of great value ever since. He gave considerable time to compiling records of the cemetery and he made a file of baptism records from the beginning of the church. A map of the cemetery dated July 28, 1936, was drawn by people employed through the Veterans Graves Registration project of the government Works Progress Administration which provided jobs during the depression.

A family picnic was held at Washington's Crossing State Park in Pennsylvania on Saturday, June 22, 1940. The group left from the church by car caravan at 2 p.m. Hiking, swimming, games and races were on the agenda for the afternoon. After a picnic supper there were stunts presented by four church organizations and the day concluded with a bonfire and group singing, leaving by caravan at 9:30 p.m.

The custom continued of having two seminary students involved in the life of the church and aided financially by funds of the church. In the academic year 1940-41 the students were Orville Hine and Peter Vanden Berge.

A meeting of the Greater Consistory on October 27, 1940, began planning for the 225th anniversary of the church. Rev. Brink suggested goals of paying off the church debt which then was \$3340 and of rearranging the front of the church so that the choir need not be seated in the gallery. He expressed the hope that the men's association might be revived, as it had been discontinued and that the church continue to receive bequests to help meet its large expenses. The first activity planned for the anniversary was a Frelinghuysen service in January, 1942, at which time the first Pastor of the church was remembered. A second special service was held April 19, 1942, at which time old records of the church were displayed.

Some of the investments of the church turned sour. For example in 1940 four Lehigh Valley bonds of \$1000 matured but the company could not pay because of financial difficulties. The church investments were reviewed



and it was decided they were as safe as any "under the present unsettled world conditions."<sup>5</sup>

Rev. Brink was active in ecumenical efforts. He was a participant in the Pastors' Union serving a term as President. The Pastor's Union sponsored vesper services in the summer at Antilles Field, held Week of Prayer for Christian Unity services in January and organized Wednesday afternoon religious training for children. Classes were held at First Baptist, the St. James Methodist Church and at First Church. The classes at First Church were for students of the Lord Sterling and Bayard Street schools. In 1942 Rev. Brink was a founder of the New Brunswick Council of Churches. The Council was endorsed by the Consistory of First Church which became a charter member. He also served a term as Executive Secretary of the Clergy Club. He was a Trustee of Neighborhood House, a member of the Board of Superintendents of the New Brunswick Seminary, President of the Hall Educational Fund, and served in numerous other organizations.

Since 1937 the congregation had been supporting Rev. and Mrs. De Velder as missionaries to China. They had become acquainted with the deVelders as Walter served as a Student Assistant Minister while he was studying at New Brunswick Theological Seminary. The church took a half share in their support, paying half their salary (\$675.00).<sup>6</sup> As world conditions became more tense the congregation had deeper and deeper concern for the safety of missionaries. It was an emotional occasion when Rev. and Mrs. Walter de Velder were present at a communion service, March 2, 1941, just before returning to war-torn China where the de Velders were missionaries in the Amoy mission. After their return letters were received regularly by the congregation informing them of the de Velder's work.

1938-1940 Jack M. Stein was organist and choir director. He left to do graduate study during which time Davis Miller Simpson became the organist and choir director and Robert C. Litch filled in for about three months in 1941. In the fall of 1941 Mr. Stein returned. Under his direction a Palm Sunday performance of *Messiah* by Handel was presented in the church by a choir of First Reformed and the Presbyterian Churches. There were sixty members of the choir and 230 attended. The combined choir established a schedule of performing twice a year. Mr. Stein resigned in the fall of 1943.

After the Pastor of the Suydam Street Reformed Church, Rev. Theodore Brinkerhof, left, the Consistory expressed the desire to explore with the Consistory of the Suydam Street Reformed Church the possibility of uniting the two congregations. A letter was sent to the Suydam St. Consistory. The minutes of the April 1, 1941, meeting of Consistory state that a reply was received but do not state what it said.

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<sup>5</sup> Minutes of Consistory, September 3, 1940.

<sup>6</sup> Minutes of Consistory, September 15, 1937.

A public meeting was held in the church on March 3, 1941, addressed by the Dutch Ambassador Dr. Alexander Loudon. The title of his talk was "Minister from the Netherlands to the United States."

The annual report for the year 1940-41 contained these remarks about the condition of the church: "Changing conditions of population in the area about the church are reflected in a downward trend in the enrollment of our church school. Few of our constituency any longer live near the church. Further restrictions in parking regulations handicap our weekday programs. Yet we are not disheartened. The congregation is united and loyal. Good attendances are maintained at the services. The young people's activities are better organized and secure better support than in other years. Our Women's Association continues its remarkable, full-rounded program. A number of new men, who have never served before, have been elected to consistory, and there is promise of a strengthening of the men's program." A "Visitation Sunday" was declared with emphasis upon members bringing visitors to church.

In the fall of 1941 a men's program was held with a Pork and Kraut Dinner. But again a sustained program did not get off the ground. This, later Consistory minutes said, was "due to the multiplicity of outside activities brought on by the present emergency." A Young Married Couples club was organized.

The organ was breaking down. The pneumatic action and leather valves were wearing out. But the estimated cost of \$6500 for rebuilding seemed out of reach. A special committee was appointed: Willard Van Nostrand, Charles P. Stevenson, George B. Howell, Dr. Hogan, Dr. Bayles, A. F. Randolph, and P. V. Van Nuis. The committee went to Hagerston, Maryland, to visit the Moeller Organ Co. They were impressed. They reported, "Fine workmanship seemed to be their motto in all that they did. The 'diapason chorus', the hearing of which was the purpose of the trip, exceeded their expectations and in their minds was the instrument to be desired for our worship services." The cost would be approximately \$9260. It was also reported that the Acoleon Skinner Co. estimated a cost of \$5000 for rebuilding the present organ or \$15,500 for a new three manual instrument using the present pipes.<sup>7</sup>

The next day, January 20, 1942, the congregation decided to purchase a new organ. Seventy-five members were present at the special meeting. Minutes of the meeting state that Elder George Howell "pointed out the fallacy of rebuilding our present organ in that it would be a patched up job with it's life limited." Mr. Jack Stein "stated that rebuilding in the present location was foolhardy since its workings are crowded and furthermore stated that a complete modernization was impossible due to the antiquity of the leather

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<sup>7</sup> Minutes of Consistory, January 19, 1942.

seats and wind chests." Elder Van Nostrand stated that from \$10 to \$100 would be required from each of the 400 members if the organ was purchased. Dr. Bayles spoke about the importance of an organ in worship. Mr. P. L. Van Nuis made the congregation aware of the urgency of purchasing the organ before supplies needed were no longer available because of the war. Dr. Hogan pointed out the benefits of the \$30,000 project of enlarging the Church House (with just \$2500 still due) even though it seemed a very large task at the time. The "Messenger" reported, "Member after member arose to testify to his loyalty to his church and his willingness to sacrifice that its services might be maintained. The meeting was a thrilling manifestation of the devotion of our members to their beloved church." The congregation approved the purchase of a new organ from the Moeller Organ Company, of Hagerstown, Maryland. A. Franklin Deuble was the Clerk. That year the Moeller Organ Company stopped building organs for the duration of the war. But they offered to install a studio organ from their factory, to be built around the diapason chorus the committee liked so much. The Highland Park Building Company made chambers for the pipes back of the rear balcony above the stairways and the console was put in the balcony. Four months were required to install the organ. It has 2903 pipes ranging from the size of a pencil to sixteen feet in length. A seven and a half horse-power motor furnishes wind for fifteen chests. There are 12,000 moving parts, 53,500 feet of wire and 3,622 sterling silver contacts. The diapason chorus was especially designed for the acoustics of the building by Richard O. Whitelegg, a renowned tonal expert. The cost was \$11,531.

Race relations Sunday was observed February 8, 1942, with the Rev. Jesse L. Lee, Pastor of the Sharon Baptist Church preaching.

The "china connection" of First Church was further emphasized when a dinner of Chinese food remembering David Abeel on the one hundredth anniversary of his founding the Amoy mission in China was held in the Church House February 24, 1942. The dinner was sponsored by the Classis. 305 persons of the Reformed Churches were fed. The speakers were Miss Tena Holkeboer of the China Mission and Dr. Tehyi Hsieh of China.

The church picnic was canceled in 1942 due to the war.

July 24, 1942, Rev. Brink announced his decision to accept a call to the Trinity Reformed Church in West New York, New Jersey. His resignation became effective September 15.

In the six years of Rev. Brink's pastorate 110 persons united with the church. He officiated at eight adult baptisms, forty infant baptisms, thirty marriages and sixty funerals. He made 3500 pastoral calls.

Rev. Daniel Brink later served churches in Scotia, New York, and Hackensack, New Jersey. Rev. Brink was President of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, 1955-56, and was awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree by Central College.

Elder George B. Howell was elected President during the period in which the church was to be without a minister. Dr. Hogan was named the classis Supervisor.

The Consistory again raised the question of the desirability of merger with Suydam Street Reformed Church. A committee was appointed to meet with the Suydam Street Consistory. But a favorable response was not received from Suydam St.<sup>8</sup>

The Consistory decided that the valuable Adrian Banker and Henry Leup silver beakers which had been stored in the National Bank storage vault be placed with Rutgers University special collections on "loan for exhibition...in the care and custody of Rutgers University until such time as the proper authorities of the First Reformed Church request their return."<sup>9</sup>

In December, 1942, the average attendance at Sunday worship was 166. The church school enrollment was 109 with an average attendance of 80. A note in the "Messenger" said "Now that you are going to save rubber by staying in New Brunswick weekends we'll be seeing you oftener, won't we?"

The editorial in the "Messenger" said, "Our nation is at war. Abhorrent as war may be to the Christian conscience, we cannot escape the grim fact that we are in the midst of it. These are days that test the soul. Many are worried about loved ones. A number of our young men are in the armed forces. The shock of the world situation disturbs our complacent faith, awakens new moral problems. Disturbing and drastic changes are taking place in the world missionary program of Christianity. If ever we needed the church and the power of religion to steady us, to guide us, to intercede for us, this is the time. Our Christian duty is to meet regularly with our fellow-believers, for worship, for prayer, for that sense of fellowship which we need in a bewildering world. We need to pray for each other, for those who suffer, for the boys in service, for our country in its time of crisis, and for our enemies too, as our Lord commanded."

Because of world hostilities there was a fuel shortage in the winter of 1942-43. The oil furnace was converted to use coal. Worship services were held in the Church House.

Charles Fisher was Sunday School Superintendent from 1941 to 1943. He was tenor soloist and resigned from that position also in 1943 after thirteen years of service to the church. He had done much to develop the music of the Sunday School.<sup>10</sup>

March 21, 1943, a service flag was dedicated at a worship service led by Dr. Hogan. There were twenty-five members of the congregation in the

<sup>8</sup> Minutes of Consistory, December 1, 1942.

<sup>9</sup> Minutes of Consistory, July 24, 1942.

<sup>10</sup> Minutes of Consistory, April 6, 1943.

armed forces at the time including Dr. T. Bevier Bayles, M.D., and Rosaline L. Clark, R.N. By fall the number of members in the armed forces was forty-two. A committee was formed to help keep in touch with them, sending letters and The Upper Room devotional booklet. One evening a month women of the church provided refreshments and a friendly place at the Service Men's Center in the area.

The Women's Association was meeting each month usually with programs on mission work. Mrs. Brink was President until she moved away. Gladys Hoagland was President from 1942 to 1945. Other officers were Mrs. Theodore Bayles, Mrs. Willard Randolph, Mrs. Frederick Cole, Mrs. George Howell, Mrs. John Suydam and Mrs. J. P. Schureman. There were four circles and a Girl's League.

Orville Jay Hine, who had been a student assistant at the church, was well liked by the congregation. In light of the fact that Dr. Hogan was available to give him advice from years of experience the Consistory recommended that he be called to become the Pastor of the church. The congregation agreed in March, 1943. After his graduation from New Brunswick Theological Seminary Orville Jay Hine was ordained and installed as Minister of the church, June 13, 1943. Mr. Hine had been born in Chicago and was a graduate of Hope College, Holland, Michigan. Before coming to New Brunswick Theological Seminary he had earned a Masters degree at Boston University.

As he began his pastoral duties Rev. Hine made a special point of visiting homes of service men "in order to bring to the mothers and fathers a sense of trust in our Father who rules over all."

Rev. Hine also accepted the responsibility of being Superintendent of the Sunday School. He made calls aimed at building the enrollment of the Sunday School. He sparked interest in the Sunday School with a series of movies on the life of Paul. Attendance pins were offered to encourage faithful attendance.<sup>11</sup> Movies were also used in the youth meetings. A series on Latin America was shown as well as the series on the apostle Paul.

Willard R. Van Nostrand was elected Treasurer in 1943 on Mr. Cortelyou's resignation.

Anniversary celebrations were postponed because of wartime fuel shortages and delays in completing the organ construction and the preparation of memorial tablets. The main events in celebration of the anniversary of the church were rescheduled for October 10 and 12, 1943. The emphasis now was placed on the anniversary of the founding of the Three Mile Run Church, the earliest origins of First Church, in 1703. So it became a celebration of the 240th anniversary. Dr. Oscar M. Voorhees and Dr. Jasper S. Hogan were the chief architects of the event. Dr. W. H. S. Demarest delivered an historical

<sup>11</sup> Minutes of Consistory, October 5, 1943.

address. Two commemorative tablets were placed in the walls of the sanctuary in memory of Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen and Dina Van Bergh by the Raritan Valley Netherlands Association. This was done on Sunday morning, October 10, 1943. In the afternoon the new organ was dedicated and a recital played by Albin D. McDermott, organist of the Holy Name Cathedral in New York City. In the evening of October 12 a community service was held at which Dr. John H. Raven, Trustee of Rutgers University and Professor Emeritus of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, spoke on "Our Church and Education;" Dr. Cordie J. Culp, Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in New Brunswick, spoke about "Our Church and Other Churches;" Rev. Daniel Brink spoke about "Our Church and the Future;" and Dr. Robert W. Searle, General Secretary of the Greater New York Federation of Churches spoke about "The Church and the World."

The anniversary program said that 4,591 persons had been received into the membership of First Reformed Church since 1717 and 160 members of the church had entered the ministry.

The de Velders wrote that they were forced to go to India because of the Japanese advances in China. Thanksgiving offerings of the church were devoted to the Emergency Fund of the Reformed Church in America.

In 1943 the organist and choir director was Harry McCord, an experienced organist who was in the armed services stationed at Camp Kilmer. He was succeeded by Eileen M. Engberg who received a Masters of Sacred Music from Union Theological Seminary.

The polio epidemic struck terror in the hearts of many children and parents. The cause of this paralyzing disease was not known. Classes for children in the Sunday School were not held for the first three Sundays of September, 1944, because of the prevalence of infantile paralysis in the city.

The years of World War II were times of great anxiety. Some of the young men of the church were in combat. An Honor Roll was dedicated June 18, 1944, with fifty-seven names of servicemen on it. The first gold star was placed on the service flag for William C. Benhardt who was killed in the South Pacific. By November, 1944, the number of stars on the service flag had grown to sixty. The loss of two more members was mourned on March 4, 1945, when Pastor Orville Hine led the congregation in a service of holy communion and of memorial and intercession. Remembered were Frederick S. Howell, killed in action in Belgium December 24, 1944, and Raymond A. Pfeiffer, killed in action in the South Pacific October 29, 1944.

In March of 1945 Rev. Walter de Velder spoke at the church during a return visit to the United States. June 23, 1946, he was again at the church when a special offering was received to help him bring a station wagon back with him to China.

In the April "Messenger" of that year it was announced that all pledges toward the cost of the organ had been received and no debts remained.

Tuesday, May 8, 1945, after a proclamation by the President of the United States that hostilities in Europe had ceased a service of thanksgiving was held. Rev. Hine preached on the theme, "We Dedicate Ourselves to Thee." Dr. Milton J. Hoffman, Professor of New Brunswick Seminary, also presented a message on the topic "We Remember Thee." The closing hymn, "Rise Up, O World," was sung to the tune of Finlandia. In succeeding weeks there were happy reunions as service men returned. Edgar Van Nuis returned home after spending five months in a German prison camp. Robert W. Hoelzle had suffered paralyzing injuries. A total of sixty-four men were in the armed forces in World War II. On World Communion Sunday, October 7, 1945, a special collection was received for emergency relief in areas devastated by the war.

In 1945 the church reported 223 families with 321 communicant members. There were 186 in the Church School. Contributions in the previous year had been \$10,663 for congregational purposes and \$2,163 for denominational benevolences.

Under Rev. Hine's leadership the church continued its ecumenical cooperation with other churches. The church was an active member of the New Brunswick Council of Churches. Union services were held on Thanksgiving Eve and Good Friday with First Reformed Church hosting these services from time to time. The church participated in an evangelistic "Go to Church" drive of the Council in 1946. The Church House was used for the Vacation Bible School of the Council in the summer of 1947. Rev. Hine was director of radio broadcasts of worship services of churches of the Council on the local radio station. Summer services continued to be union services. By the summer of 1948 there were five churches included with two weeks at each: The Presbyterian Church, the Baptist Church, First Methodist Church, the Livingston Ave. Reformed Church (Evangelical and Reformed, now United Church) and First Reformed Church.

After the war attention was given again to improvements needed on the church property. A new oil burner was installed in the Church House at a cost of \$1200 and a new roof put on the Church House at a cost of \$700. The sanctuary was redecorated. Richard Segoine and Percy L. Van Nuis gave a gift of paying for the cost of redecorating the interior of the sanctuary. The sanctuary was filled with scaffolding and services were held in the Church House during the time of redecorating. The front wall was decorated by a New York artist, bringing into bold relief the gold leaf cross which had been placed there in memory of voorlezer and school master Jacobus Schureman. The cross was a gift of Mrs. James P. Schureman. The mural was given by Dr. Theodore F. Bayles in memory of his wife, Mary Bevier. A new white colonial pulpit and matching balustrade was provided by Mr. and Mrs. J. Bertram Howell in memory of their son, Frederick Suydam Howell. Two

pews at the back of the sanctuary were removed. The thirty-two men who did volunteer work were honored at a congregational dinner.

The steeple and exterior wood on the church was painted in 1946 at a cost of \$2000. Stones were pointed where needed and porseal applied to the brownstone. Chimes were added to the organ in 1947 as a memorial to John Ashley Dixon by his wife at the cost of \$600. In the same year the church yard was landscaped with trees planted and some of the head stones reset. In 1950 the city electrified the clock (at the cost of about \$2500). Between November, 1951, and September, 1952, the church parlor in the Church House was furnished and renamed the "Randolph Room", a ladies rest room was provided on the first floor and the ceiling of the church insulated.

In 1945 the choir, under the direction of Miss Eileen Engberg had twenty-three members. The Consistory thanked the volunteer group with a banquet given to them at the Oak Hills Manor in Metuchen. On November 18, 1945, the redecorated sanctuary was rededicated. Miss Engberg gave a Vesper Organ Recital in the afternoon. In December the choir combined with that of the Emanuel Lutheran Church to present Handel's *Messiah* at First Church. Over a thousand people attended the performance. The next year the choir was expanded to a 150 voice "Oratorio Choir" to sing *Messiah* again. *Elijah* was presented the last Sunday of April, 1947. Mr. Frank Bohnhorst was organist and choir director in 1947.

In 1948 Mrs. Earl Kane began her tenure as choir director. Several different organists worked with her over the next several years. Mr. Roger Boyd was organist in 1948-49 in an arrangement whereby he was also organist at the Anshe Emeth Temple. Miss Perkins was organist in 1949-50 and Mrs. Marie Cowan organist in 1951.

When the Suydam Street Reformed Church was again without a minister the Consistory repeated their request of the church that the two congregations be combined.<sup>12</sup> When the Presbyterian Church building on Paterson Street burned in 1947 the Consistory invited them to use First Reformed Church and consider merging the two churches. But their Session declined the invitation deciding to rebuild.

In 1946 a Sunday evening activity for children age eight through twelve was started by Miss Shirley Buttler and Miss Jean Shiffner. A Couple's Club was organized. Officers were Mr. and Mrs. A. Franklin Deuble, Mr. and Mrs. H. R. Segoine, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Charles O'Rourke, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Rue, and Mr. and Mrs. George Outcalt. There was a Young People's Fellowship and a Junior High Fellowship. Monday evening was boy's basketball night. A Girl's League met once a month.

In 1945 the Sunday School Superintendent was Warren Henseler, then a college sophomore. Robert Norland became Superintendent of the Sunday

<sup>12</sup> Minutes of Consistory, January 8, 1946.



School in 1946. "He was a young man of good business ability, with a real appreciation of the best in religious education and of a genuine spiritual nature."<sup>13</sup> He led the congregation in some fun at a congregational dinner. A trio of accordion, bass viol, and clarinet and a men's quartette of Stanton Randolph, Bob Foley, Lewis Ballschmidt and Earnest Jacobson provided music.

The Sunday School again enrolled some students of Chinese origin. As Garetta J. Bevier had done fifty years earlier, Esther Howell went into a Chinese laundry, this time on Neilson Street, and asked the parents of two little Chinese girls if she might take them to Sunday School. The answer was "Yes", so Sunday morning she brought them to Sunday School. In time they brought their younger sister with them. Esther Howell, interestingly, was a member of the Bevier family, descendants of Louis Bevier who settled in New Paltz, New York, in 1677.<sup>14</sup>

Bequests left to the church continued to build its investments. The will of Florence E. Waldron designated \$10,000 for the church.<sup>15</sup> The Investment Committee decided to invest this money by purchasing a mortgage in Plainfield. Income from money left by Laura E. Dunn was to be used for Reformed Church benevolences.<sup>16</sup> The church received \$21,021.89 from her estate for this purpose. Similar amounts were given to the Board of Domestic Missions and to the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in America.<sup>17</sup>

The church was asked to contribute \$3,816 to the denomination's United Advance Fund. The congregation was asked to make pledges and the goal was oversubscribed by \$400.<sup>18</sup>

A memorial service for Dr. Oscar Voorhees, who had become a beloved member of the church, was held October 19, 1947. Through research and writing he had helped the congregation know its history.

Dr. Jasper Hogan's eightieth birthday was celebrated with a gift of eighty dollar bills.<sup>19</sup>

In November, 1949 the Sunday School celebrated its 150th anniversary. The festivities were under the direction of Robert Norland, Superintendent. Other officers were Dr. Elizabeth Clark, Assistant Superintendent; Mrs. Edwin T. Gram, Corresponding Secretary; Raymond J. Clark, Recording Secretary; William Hoelzle, Treasurer; Leonard A. Jones,

<sup>13</sup> "The Story of One Hundred and Fifty Years in the Life of the Sunday School," p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>15</sup> Minutes of Consistory, November 5, 1946.

<sup>16</sup> Minutes of Consistory, January 7, 1947.

<sup>17</sup> Minutes of Consistory, February 1, 1949.

<sup>18</sup> Minutes of Consistory, January 7, 1947.

<sup>19</sup> Minutes of Consistory, October 7, 1947.

Supervisor of the Junior Department; Mrs. Earl Kane, Director of the Junior Choir, and Mrs. Robert Norton, Junior Choir Mother. There were seventeen officers and teachers and 213 students.

The Home Department of the Sunday School faithfully supplied Bible study books to some of the home bound members of the congregation. Mrs. Willard Randolph was President and Bertha Shipman Secretary from 1946 to 1959.

In 1945 the active communicant membership had dropped to 318, 226 families. But by 1950 the membership had grown until it was almost back to the 400 mark, there were 395 communicant members in 1950 and 270 families.

In 1950 the Consistory took action to include women in the governance of the church. Election to consistory was not permitted by the constitution of the Reformed Church in America. But the Consistory approved the appointment of an advisory committee of twelve women and that one or more women be on each standing committee of Consistory.<sup>20</sup> The following women were appointed Deaconesses for one year terms: Mrs. Charles O'Rourke, Mrs. Fred Cole, Mrs. J. B. Schureman, Mrs. W. R. Van Nostrand, Mrs. George B. Howell, Mrs. Daniel Force and Mrs. Robert Norland.

The Consistory members in 1950 were Elders P. L. Van Nuis, Alstyn F. Randolph, A. O. Rappleyea, LeRoy Soden, George B. Howell, A. Franklin Deuble, and Arnold Bishop; and Deacons Joseph Canepa, Robert Norland, Raymond Clark, Louis Shipman, Paul Smith, Edwin Gram, William Shiffner, Sr., and John Lenhart. Mr. J. Bertram Howell was Vice President; Paul Smith, Clerk, A. O. Rappleyea, Financial Secretary, W. R. Van Nostrand, Treasurer; and Edgar L. Van Nuis, Assistant Treasurer.

April 23, 1950, special recognition was given to A. Oliver Rappleyea. Since 1899 he had carried the responsibility of preparing the communion elements. A silver tablet was placed on the communion table in appreciation of Mr. Rappleyea who for fifty years had prepared the Lord's Supper.

The Classes of the Reformed Church in America voted in 1950 on the proposal that the denomination be united with the United Presbyterian Church of North America. The Consistory of First Reformed Church took a "straw vote" for advice to its delegates to Classis. The vote was unanimously affirmative.<sup>21</sup> However, the proposal did not carry throughout the denomination.

Leonard Jones was Student Assistant Minister in the academic year of 1950-51.

Walter De Velder was with the church again during the week of June 1 to June 6, 1951, before going to serve as a missionary in the Philippines.

<sup>20</sup> Minutes of Consistory, February 7, 1950.

<sup>21</sup> Minutes of Consistory, March 7, 1950.

The Women's Association met monthly except during the summer. A Turkey Supper and Bazaar was held in the fall, a Mother-Daughter Banquet in May, a Christmas party in December, a birthday party in January, the November and February meetings were devoted to missions. Women of the organization served at the veteran's center one afternoon and one evening a month. They met with the United Council of Church Women for such events as World Day of Prayer and World Community Day. In 1951 Mrs. Eunice Vander Kolk was President and Mrs. Bertha Shipman was Secretary. There were five circles which met monthly in homes. They were designated by letters A through E.<sup>22</sup>

Pastor Orville Hine resigned in 1952 to take a call to the Reformed Church in Warwick, New York. Later he was Pastor of churches in the Panama Canal Zone and Saugerties, New York. While living in New Brunswick the Hine's son Orville, Jr., was born. Orville Hine, Jr., later became a Reformed Church minister.

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<sup>22</sup> Minutes of the Women's Association, May 3, 1951.

## MINISTRY IN THE CITY

The Rev. Robert G. Dickson moved into the parsonage on Townsend Street to serve as Minister of First Reformed Church on Inauguration Day, January 20, 1953. Born in Brooklyn, a graduate of Rutgers University and of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, he had been Pastor of the churches at Hurley and North Marbletown, New York, and at Saugerties, New York, before coming to New Brunswick.

Elder Percy L. Van Nuis had been the presiding officer during the interim in which the church was without a pastor.

Rev. Dickson was a polished preacher, using many literary quotations in his sermons. In January, 1955, he was the speaker for Religion in Life week at Central College, Pella, Iowa.

Rev. Dickson actively sought new members from growing areas of New Brunswick such as Rutgers Village. Believing that "it pays to advertise," Rev. Dickson recommended that the church tower be lit with flood lights at night, signs be placed at various locations about New Brunswick, an ad be placed in the Home News each Saturday, and leaflets be placed on the doorknobs of homes in New Brunswick and vicinity.

Mrs. Ruth Dickson was actively involved in the women's activities of the church. The Dicksons had one daughter, Debbie.

With Rev. Dickson's coming the church office was placed in the Church House rather than the parsonage on Townsend Street. In 1955 a part-time Secretary was hired.

The practice of having Deaconesses actively participating in the work of the Consistory was continued. One of them, Eva Lou Spratford, was elected Clerk in 1953. Deaconesses took part in consistory discussions but did not vote. They served as greeters at worship services as the Deacons served as ushers. The Deaconesses also set up for communion and directed the nursery.

Rev. Dickson recommended that the church hold worship services every Sunday all through the summer. This was approved by the Consistory.<sup>1</sup>

The Consistory had been discussing plans and raising money for restoration and beautification of the church yard. Consideration was given to removal of many headstones and the creation of parking space. The Consistory decided against that plan in favor of one which removed the severely damaged headstones (about one fifth of them) and landscaped the grounds. On recommendation of George B. Howell and Robert L. Smock the restoration of the church yard was done in 1953. Improvements to the buildings were also needed. The Investment Committee of J. Bertram

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes of Consistory, October 5, 1953.

Howell, P. L. Van Nuis, and W. R. Van Nostrand were asked to suggest ways of financing this and the church yard improvements. The following amounts were expended: \$4,221.75 on the church painting and repairs, \$4,597.96 on the Church House painting and repairs, \$2,626.00 on partitioning the gymnasium for eight class rooms, \$12,760.93 on the church yard improvement, and \$16,581.00 on landscaping. To help meet these bills \$10,000 was borrowed from Peoples National Bank, \$10,000 from the Reformed Church in America and \$5,000 from two members of the congregation.

The Sunday School pledged \$500 a year toward the payment of the debt. The Women's Association likewise raised money to pay off the debt. "Joash Chests" were distributed to the congregation for special offerings toward the church debt.

It was the desire of the congregation to have all this work done in time for the celebration of the 250th anniversary. A week-long festival was held. On Sunday, October 11, 1953, an enactment of the payment of a peppercorn to Philip French was done in colonial costume. A men's dinner was held on October 16, 1953, with the Rev. Dr. Frederick Zimmerman, Pastor of the First Reformed Church in Albany and President of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America as the speaker. Also at the banquet were Dr. Lewis Webster Jones, President of Rutgers University, and Dr. M. Stephen James, President of New Brunswick Theological Seminary. A "Service of Re-Dedication" was held on October 18, 1953. Rev. Dickson preached on the topic, "The Venture in Faith." This prayer was offered to God: "Put thy name in this place. Sanctify it again by thy presence and thy constant abiding. Give power and effectiveness to thy gospel preached in it, and thy sacraments administered in it. Let thine ears be opened to hear the supplications of this thy people when they pray in this place."

The elders at the time were Harold P. Bowne, Louis R. Gons, George B. Howell, Alstyn F. Randolph, Walter J. Rue, and Justin Vander Kolk, Ph.D. The deacons were Joseph P. Canepa, Everett A. Dunn, Paul R. Haeseler, Charles Redfield, Louis B. Shipman, and Morgan H. Wikoff. There were also six "deaconesses:" Miss Elizabeth S. Clark, Miss Margaret S. Conover, Mrs. Otto Fleckenstein, Mrs. Martha C. Gilmore, Mrs. Leslie L. Soden, and Mrs. Walter L. Spratford. Edgar L. Van Nuis was Treasurer and Willard R. Van Nostrand Financial Secretary. Mrs. Theodore Pace was the President of the Women's Association with Mrs. J. Schureman Waker, Mrs. J. P. Schureman, Mrs. Louis B. Shipman, Mrs. M. Stephen James, and Mrs. Otto Fleckenstein, circle leaders. The Sunday School Superintendent was Robert E. Norland. Mr. and Mrs. Earl Hoagland were leaders of the Couple's Club. The Sewing Circle leader was Mrs. Hugh S. Torbert. John Fairest was the Sexton. Mrs. J. Howard Williams was Organist and Mrs. Earl Kane the Director of the Senior and Junior Choirs.

It became a tradition for First Reformed Church to host an annual performance of Handel's *Messiah*. At the ninth annual performance in 1953 The Oratorio Choir of the New Brunswick Council of Churches had eighty-four members. It was led by Mrs. Earl Kane. The organist was George F. Gillespie. Soloists were Margaret G. Kelly, Phyllis Buttler, Lois K. Brunner, Beverly Robertson, Frank Previte and Warren Slemmer.

Pastor Emeritus, Jasper S. Hogan, died July 9, 1954. The "pension" the church had been giving to him was continued to his wife for another six months. An outdoor bulletin board was placed at the front of the church in his memory.

September 26, 1954, a Sunday night supper featured a report by Rev. Dickson and Dr. Justin Vander Kolk on the meeting of the World Council of Churches which they had attended in Evanston, Illinois.

J. Bertram Howell gave a gift of stock in the New York, Chicago, and St. Louis Railroad Company, valued at \$5,900, to create a fund for debt reduction. The income from the fund was to be used for payment of debts and when no debts exist for general church purposes.<sup>2</sup> From time to time Mr. Howell added to this fund.<sup>3</sup>

Retired Seminary Professor of Christian Education, Dr. William A. Weber, gave active service to the church. In 1955 he was elected Vice President of the Consistory.<sup>4</sup> In 1960 he supplied the church with 350 hymnals in memory of his wife, Justina Lemmerman Weber. The Hymnbook had recently been published by the Reformed Church with several Presbyterian denominations.<sup>5</sup> Himself a musician, Dr. Weber, had been on the committee which prepared The Hymnbook.

When Mr. and Mrs. Robert Norland moved to Cranbury in 1954 he resigned his position as Sunday School Superintendent. Dr. Elizabeth Clark took charge while another Superintendent was sought. Franklin Deuble became Superintendent in 1955. In 1956 the Consistory established a Commission on Christian Education to oversee all the Christian nurture in the church. Its membership was to be drawn both from consistory and the membership of the church. The Commission was to have a chairman to preside over the committee and an executive director to superintend the church school. At the time Richard Coffill was a student at New Brunswick Theological Seminary. His father, Volney K. Coffill, Jr., was Works Accountant in the shipbuilding division of Bethlehem Steel and was an active lay leader who had been an Elder and Superintendent of the church school in the Flatlands Reformed Church in Brooklyn. Having recently lost his wife he

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<sup>2</sup> Minutes of Consistory, November 9, 1954.

<sup>3</sup> Minutes of Consistory, March 20, 1956, November 9, 1958, and June 21, 1960.

<sup>4</sup> Minutes of Consistory, April 5, 1955.

<sup>5</sup> Minutes of Consistory, June 21, 1960.

spent some time in New Brunswick visiting his son and moved into the area. Rev. Dickson met him and asked him to take on the task of being Superintendent of the Sunday School. This he did in 1957, transferring his membership to the church in October. In 1960 Dr. William Weber provided a course of training for the teachers. A bus was used to bring twenty to twenty-five persons to Sunday School each Sunday. It was reported in 1962 that eight or nine of these had no other way of transportation. From 1956 to 1960 the Sunday School enrollment grew from 161 to 168.

At the end of March, 1954, John Fairest retired as Sexton, having reached the age of 65. Mr. and Mrs. Fairest continued to live in the house and Mrs. Fairest did some of the cleaning with additional help hired by the church. A purse was presented to them April, 1958, in appreciation of the thirty some years they had been associated with the church. The Fairests lived in the Sexton's House until January, 1963. In 1955 Jeff D. Counts began working for the church doing maintenance. His duties were increased in 1958 especially in taking care of the church yard. He resigned in 1964.

The Evangelism Committee worked with the New Brunswick Council of Churches in making survey calls on people of the community. In April of 1955 the committee reported that three pairs of men had met on three nights during the third week of March, first for a dinner meeting at First Baptist Church and then going out on evangelism visits. The result of their efforts was that eighteen to twenty new members joined the church on June 5th. The Evangelism Committee also called on inactive members to try to bring them back into the life of the church. Dr. William A. Weber was Chair of the committee.

The average attendance at worship in September, 1955, was 159. It had been 131 the previous year.<sup>6</sup>

Thirty-two new members were received in 1955. But there were also four dismissed to other churches, six who died, and there were forty dropped from the roll because of inactivity.

The Genevan Fellowship began meeting at the church in October, 1955. This was a group for Reformed Church college students.<sup>7</sup> The Youth Fellowship was combined with youth of other churches.

The church contributed to the Seminary building fund in 1955, accepting a goal of \$1116. The church also contributed to a denominational fund drive called "Eendraght" using the Dutch word for unity to raise \$1.5 million for colleges and missions. The congregation was canvassed. \$1849.06 was raised. In a total budget of \$22,315 for 1956 \$5621 was designated for benevolences.

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<sup>6</sup> Minutes of Consistory, October 11, 1955.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

At the end of 1955 Edgar L. Van Nuis resigned as Treasurer. Willard Van Nostrand temporarily took his place in 1956 and A. Franklin Deuble was elected Treasurer in January, 1957.

Willard Van Nostrand also resigned as Financial Secretary. Louis D. Shipman was elected to that office in 1956. Willard Van Nostrand died March 18, 1958. The Consistory directed Rev. Dickson to write a letter of testimonial to Mrs. Van Nostrand expressing the appreciation of the church for his outstanding service as an officer of the church.

Sponsorship of a refugee family from Holland was assumed in December, 1956. The family's name was Mondriaan.<sup>8</sup> An apartment was furnished for them. Mr. Mondriaan was given a job in maintenance for Rutgers University. Two years later the Mondriaans moved to another apartment and the church assisted by loaning them the necessary funds.

In 1957 an early Sunday morning worship service was added. It began at 9:30 a.m. Total attendance increased as a result.

In February, 1958, Walter deVelder visited the church again during a furlough in the United States.

A Revised Standard Version pulpit Bible was given to the church by Margaret Suydam Sequine and H. Richard Segoin in memory of her parents, Phoebe Combs Suydam and Peter Hoagland Suydam in 1958.<sup>9</sup>

A student assistant was hired for the summer of 1958. Among his duties were the direction of a Vacation Bible School, visitation of possible new members, and other pastoral duties during the vacation of the minister. Similar arrangements were made in subsequent summers. Extra help was needed in the summer and fall of 1960 when Rev. Dickson was ill. Student Assistant James Ainsworth and Dr. Justin Vander Kolk helped with leading worship and pastoral work.

In 1958 a new slate roof was put on the church. It was guaranteed for two years but supposed to be good for sixty. The next year the steeple was painted at a cost of \$1,260. A paneled partition was placed in the chancel area of the church at a cost of \$1,260. The interior of the sanctuary was painted at a cost of \$5,250.<sup>10</sup> Colonial style lighting fixtures were hung in the sanctuary. They were given as memorials remembering the following persons: Willard R. Van Nostrand, Mr. & Mrs. Louis B. Shipman, Abram Suydam Howell and Elizabeth Brokaw Howell, Virginia Vail Howell, Dr. James Percy Schureman, Clara Weigel Van Nuis, Mrs. Theodore Titus Howell, Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. Scott, Lawrence E. Stark, Florence H. Dickson, Marie Weber and Bertha M. Acken. Twelve new lighting fixtures were also hung in the main room of the Church House.

<sup>8</sup> Minutes of Consistory, November 20, 1955.

<sup>9</sup> Minutes of Consistory, March 18, 1958.

<sup>10</sup> Minutes of Consistory, August 9, 1959.



In October, 1958, Rev. Dickson reported to the Consistory on his attendance of a two day workshop in New York on "the downtown church." He told the Consistory that the ministry of city churches was a new concern of the Reformed Church in America. He appointed a special committee to study the "downtown church" situation of First Church: Louis Gons, Donald Dorian, Julius Stewart, Shirley Kunderman, and Betty Gram.<sup>11</sup>

The church continued to be an active member of the New Brunswick Council of Churches. At one point three of the officers were from First Church: Rev. Dickson was President, Dr. Weber was Secretary and Volney Coffill, Jr., Treasurer.<sup>12</sup> In 1961 Percy Van Nuis was Chair of the Finance Committee and Deborah Dickson President of the Youth Council. Union services continued to be held on Good Friday and Thanksgiving. A men's mission dinner was held each year. Men's and a women's teams competed in the Council of Churches bowling league.

An adult study group called "Fortnighters" met twice a month in the homes of members. Among the books discussed were Modern Rivals of the Christian Faith and The Will of God.<sup>13</sup> Junior and Senior High Youth Groups met regularly.

The Women's Association continued annual events such as the Mother-Daughter Banquet and a turkey supper and bazaar. Two hundred and fifteen persons were served at the turkey dinner in 1959. Several of the women who served as Presidents in the 1950's were Mrs. Frances Pace, Mrs. Marjorie James, and Mrs. Marie Gons. Among those who served as Secretary were Mrs. Helen W. Schureman, Mrs. Betty Rue, and Mrs. Bertha Shipman. The Association took charge of Sunday nursery, flowers for worship services, setting tables for Sunday night suppers and assisted in mission projects such as sending boxes of clothing to Dulce, New Mexico.

A Prayer Fellowship was made of women who met Tuesdays at 10 a.m. for prayer and others who agreed to set aside time every Tuesday for prayer. About twenty-five women participated. Mrs. Ruth Dickson was the leader.

February 1, 1960, the Association agreed to change their name to the Guild for Christian Service and to reorganize along the lines recommended by Reformed Church Women.<sup>14</sup> Mrs. Bertha Shipman was President at the time. Others elected to office were: Secretary for Service, Mrs. Betty Rue; Secretary for Spiritual Life, Mrs. Ruth Dickson; Secretary for Education, Mrs. Eunice Vander Kolk; and Secretary for Organization, Mrs. Eleanor O'Rourke. Mrs. Dorothy Van Nostrand was named Chair of a committee to

<sup>11</sup> Minutes of Consistory, October 21, 1958.

<sup>12</sup> Minutes of Consistory, May 16, 1961, and June 20, 1961.

<sup>13</sup> Minutes of Consistory, January 19, 1960.

<sup>14</sup> Minutes of the Guild, February 1, 1960.

revise the constitution. The officers were elected for two year terms. Those who served as President 1962-1966 were Mrs. Esther Howell, Mrs. Dorothy Van Nostrand, and Mrs. Virginia Howell. Five circles met in homes of the members. Rummage sales were a major fund raiser for the circles. Meetings of the Guild were held most months for all the members. In 1962 speakers included Charlotte Wyckoff, Missionary to India; Mrs. Carol Hageman, and Dr. Beth Marcus.

Volunteers, led by John Van Dyke and James Bothwell refurbished three of the classrooms of the Church House during the summer of 1960.

That summer James Ainsworth was Student Assistant Minister. He directed a Vacation Church School and made survey calls on people in the area. His help was especially needed as Rev. Dickson underwent surgery for removal of a disc in his back. The Student Assistant Minister for the academic year 1960-61 was Carl Vogelaar.

In the summer of 1961 Arthur C. Heldman, Jr., was the Assistant and director of Vacation Church School. Mr. H. Eugene Speckman was Student Assistant Minister for the academic year 1961-62. Roeland Hartmans was Student Assistant in the summer of 1962.

"Family Night" covered dish suppers were held occasionally on Sunday evenings. A film "New Faces Over Africa," a report on a General Synod meeting, and program on migrant workers were several of the programs. The family night of January 20, 1963, honored Rev. Dickson for ten years of "extraordinary leadership and guidance." In May, 1963, a family night honored Grace Cole for thirty-six years of faithful service as a Sunday School teacher. A framed print of Christ standing at the door was placed in the large Sunday School room of the Church House in her memory.

On Sunday evening, January 20, 1953, the congregation threw a surprise tenth anniversary party for the Dicksons. Ruth Dickson was presented with an orchid and eight needle-point seat covers, and Rev. Dickson was given a large plastic bag stuffed with "folding money."<sup>15</sup>

By far the largest single bequest to the church came through the will of Anna S. B. Howell in 1961. Three-fourths of the residue of her estate was left to the church as an endowment fund, the income to be used for expenses of the church. The value of the securities received was \$140,000.<sup>16</sup>

Forty men gathered for a dinner early in December, 1960, to form a Men's Brotherhood. The national president of the Reformed Church Men's Brotherhood was the speaker. Officers elected for the local chapter were John Van Dyke, Anton Van Diest, Percy Van Nuis, and Roy Carter.

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<sup>15</sup> "The Newsletter," January 31, 1963.

<sup>16</sup> Minutes of Consistory, December 19, 1961.

In February, 1961, a Church House Building Fund for the purpose of building a new Church House was established with the initial \$6,000.<sup>17</sup>

The method of election of consistory members was changed in 1962 from consistory elections to congregational election. Advisory nominations were presented by the Consistory to the congregation for their vote. The by-laws were changed accordingly. The standing committees of Consistory at the time were Christian Mission, Church History, Council of Churches, Christian Education, Evangelism, Finance and Stewardship, Investments, Music, Nominations, Pulpit and Wardens. The officers were Charles O'Rourke, Vice President; William M. Kievit, Clerk; A. Franklin Deuble, Treasurer; Alexander Skorupsky, Assistant Treasurer; Louis D. Shipman, Financial Secretary; Head Elder, Robert L. Smock; Head Deacon, W. Theodore Pace; Head Deaconess, Mrs. James Bothwell; Warden, George B. Howell; Classis Delegate, Louis D. Shipman; and Finance Committee Chairman, Percy L. Van Nuis.

In 1962 the congregation participated in another fund raising campaign called "United Synod Advance." It was to contribute to building needs at the Seminary, the Reformed Church Home for the Aged, the purchase of Warwick Conference Center and the purchase of a building on College Avenue for campus ministry. Co-chairmen of the drive for First Reformed Church were Ray Clark and Louis D. Shipman. First Church was asked for \$10,391. The congregation pledged \$12,687.

The Board of Christian Education of First Church initiated a program to serve a need in the community in 1962. A supervised study area was created to offer junior high and high school students a quiet place to do their home work. The study room was on the second floor of the Church House over the Randolph Room. It was open four evenings a week from seven to nine.

The congregation took on the support of a second missionary in 1962. It pledged to contribute toward the salary of William Hoffman, who had been a student assistant at the church, as he went to be a missionary in India. The church also made a pledge of \$1000 toward the building of a church at Levittown, New Jersey.<sup>18</sup> Another new church in which the congregation had an interest was Brielle. Mr. and Mrs. Alstyn Randolph had become members of that new church.

Vacation Church School was held again in the summer of 1962 with a seminarian as director, Roeland Hartmans, who also led worship during the minister's vacation.

In February, 1963, Rev. Dickson suffered a heart attack. That spring the Lenten Midweek Services were cancelled to make a lighter schedule for the

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<sup>17</sup> "The Newsletter," February, 1961

<sup>18</sup> Minutes of Consistory, June 19, 1962.

Pastor. Dr. Vander Kolk and Dr. M. Stephen James, of the Seminary, assisted with some of the preaching and pastoral work.

To help with its ministry in the city the Board of North American Missions granted assistance (two-thirds of the salary) to the church for an intern. In September, 1963, seminary student Donald Dykstra accepted a one year assignment as an intern at First Reformed Church. Mr. Dykstra visited people living in the community near the church. He directed after school activities in the Church House for students of Bayard Street School. There was recreation in the Church House for fifth and sixth grade boys of Bayard Street school on Tuesday afternoons and for girls on Wednesdays. One of the results of his efforts was that almost a dozen black children were enrolled in the Sunday School. The Board of Domestic Missions granted assistance for a second year and the next intern hired was Glenn Van Oort. With his help Christmas baskets were given to needy families. A self-study of church and community was initiated. Twenty-two members of the church were enlisted in the study. Mr. Van Oort visited people in the neighborhood of the church. He found a need to assist people in dealing with alcoholism. Alcoholics Anonymous were invited to hold meetings in the Church House on Friday evenings. In addition to his community work Mr. Van Oort was advisor to the youth groups.

The Sexton's House was renovated in 1963 at a cost of \$6,000. Mrs. Margaret Barrie and her son David moved in and assumed the Sexton's work. In the interim Jeff Counts had given much extra service to maintain the buildings and grounds.

A gift of a \$5000 U.S. Treasury Bond was presented to the church by Dr. William A Weber, the interest earned from it to be used "for such expenses as are not provided for in the regular church budget."<sup>19</sup> The gift of a desk for the church office came from Dorothy Van Nostrand.

At the end of 1963 the operating account of the church went in the red by \$1821.35. The total envelope giving amounted to about \$21,000 for the year. Toward that three donors were giving \$1,000 each. Twenty percent of the contributors were paying seventy percent of the total. Fifty per cent of the contributors were giving less than \$25 a year.<sup>20</sup> By means of an Every Member Canvass directed by Ray Clark the pledges for 1964 were raised to \$25,000.

William Theodore Pace was elected Treasurer in 1964. A. Franklin Deuble became Assistant Treasurer.

The church began sponsorship of a Girl Scout Troop in 1964. Cadette Troop #79 met in the Church House on Friday afternoons.

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<sup>19</sup> Minutes of Consistory, November 17, 1963.

<sup>20</sup> Minutes of Consistory, May 21, 1963, and June 18, 1963.

Through 1965 Percy Van Nuis continued to give strong leadership to the church to the age of 83. He served twenty-seven years as a member of the Consistory. As chairman of the Finance Committee he guided the Consistory in the investment of the funds which were under their care. He also put his considerable expertise to work in increasing the investments of the Hall Educational Fund making it possible for that fund to grant several needy college students some assistance in meeting the costs of their education. Mr. Van Nuis compiled a history of all the actions of Consistory over the years with regard to physical property of the church. The document is called the "Evolution of the Property of the First Reformed Church in Chronological Order." He died May 8, 1967. The Consistory said, "Not only length but also quality and quantity of service were attributes of his contribution to the life of First Church. His Christian example inspired many to strive for greater levels of churchmanship and will continue in the history of our congregation to be the standard of leadership and service to which to aspire."<sup>21</sup>

When President John F. Kennedy was assassinated a memorial service was held at First Reformed Church and broadcast over station WCTC.

Although Rev. Dickson expressed reservations, the Consistory decided to build a new parsonage in 1964 at 922 River Road in Piscataway on property given to the church by Mr. and Mrs. H. Richard Segoine. The lot was valued at \$6000 with 114 feet frontage on River Road and 385 feet depth to the Raritan River, about one acre of land. Income from the Anna B. Howell bequest was dedicated to paying off the mortgage. Plans were drawn by Arnold W. Rose. The parsonage at 219 Townsend Street was sold to the Presbyterian Church for \$21,000.<sup>22</sup> The Consistory contracted with the Lattanzio and Ballai company to build the house for \$36,889.<sup>23</sup> A mortgage of \$22,236.25 was secured with the Security Building and Loan Association at 5% interest. The Dicksons lived with Mr. and Mrs. J. Bertram Howell during the interim of the sale of the house on Townsend Street January 14, 1964, until the new parsonage was ready for occupancy on March 17th.

In January, 1965, a Committee on Redevelopment recommended a campaign be organized to raise the money needed for a new Christian Education Building and a parking lot. They cited the delapidated condition of the Church House and its inefficient use of space. The committee chairman was Kenneth Huddy. Members were Mrs. Volney Coffill, Mrs. Walter Gates, Mrs. Richard Shipman, Roy Carter, and Richard Pace.

The New Brunswick Retired Citizens began meeting in the Church House in 1965 every Wednesday. The group was made of retirees of Squibb

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<sup>21</sup> Minutes of Consistory, May 16, 1967.

<sup>22</sup> Minutes of Consistory, November 20, 1962.

<sup>23</sup> Minutes of Consistory, September 17, 1963.

and Johnson & Johnson. It was one of the first senior citizen organizations in New Brunswick.

The Rev. Robert Dickson accepted a call to the Reformed Church in Hastings-on-Hudson, New York, in 1965. He had been Pastor of the church for twelve years. Later, in 1976, he became the Executive of the Particular Synod of New Jersey. His time of leadership had taken the church into the difficult decade of the sixties. With the unrest of the times and the deteriorating conditions of buildings in the neighborhood of the church the church struggled to hold its own. In 1955 there were 332 active communicant members and in 1965 there were 340. The number of families was almost the same, 180 in 1955 and 184 in 1965 although the following year only 175 families were reported. The Sunday School enrollment had been 168 in 1960. By 1965 it had declined to 140 and in 1966 to 124.

Rev. Dickson said on leaving, "These twelve years - since January 20, 1953, have formed just about the most significant portion of my life, and I am deeply grateful for the privilege of serving this historic church. I am also profoundly grateful for the opportunity given me of working with the devoted members of this congregation, and of sharing in the planning for the next challenging phase of its ministry in New Brunswick. Mrs. Dickson and I will take with us memories and affections that the years will not be able to erase. This parish and its people will be in our prayers; and we will rejoice with every fresh evidence that First Church advances the work of the Kingdom of God and honors the name of its Lord.<sup>24</sup>

Intern Glenn Van Oort took on more of the pastoral duties. He conducted the worship services once a month. Mr. Volney Coffill, Jr., was elected Vice President and so was presiding officer for the interim. Vacation Church School was operated jointly with the Methodist Church in the summer of 1965.

In the fall Rev. Edwin T. Jones became the Interim Minister with Glenn Van Oort as Assistant Minister. Rev. Jones had served churches in Albany, New York; Pompton Plains, New Jersey and Baldwin, Long Island. Mr. Van Oort was a senior student at New Brunswick Theological Seminary. He was from Matlock, Iowa, and a graduate of Central College, Pella, Iowa. Mr. and Mrs. David Barrie were hired as custodians but resigned July, 1966, to return to England. Mrs. Alberta Stier was church secretary.

The Pulpit Committee recommended that Mr. Van Oort be called to become the Minister upon his graduation from Seminary in May of 1966. Mr. Van Oort accepted the promise of a call with the understanding that if he became Minister he was interested in having the church serve the immediate neighborhood more thoroughly.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> "The Newsletter," March, 1965.

<sup>25</sup> Minutes of Consistory, January 19, 1966.

## MISSION TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Glenn N. Van Oort was installed September 11, 1966, as the nineteenth Minister of the First Reformed Church in New Brunswick by the Classis of New Brunswick. His brother, Rev. Harold G. Van Oort, Pastor of the Community Reformed Church in Teaneck, preached the sermon. Another brother, Rev. Sylvester D. Van Oort, read scripture and offered prayer. The two brothers vested him with a robe which was a gift from Glenn's mother. The Rev. Ayle Schutter, Minister of the Second Reformed Church in New Brunswick, gave the charge to the congregation. The Rev. Edwin T. Jones gave the charge to the minister. Following the service the Women's Guild held a reception in the Church House.

Rev. Van Oort and his wife, Eileen Quinn, had moved into the parsonage during the summer. Eileen was from the Bronx, New York, where she had been a member of the Williamsbridge Road Reformed Church.

Landscaping of the parsonage grounds was done under the expert guidance of Dr. Bruce Hamilton, who moved into the area to teach horticulture at Cook College and became a member of the church in November, 1966.

One worship service was held on Sundays. Rev. Van Oort taught an adult Bible Class at 9:30 a.m. at the time the Sunday School classes met. Twenty-two adults began study of the Covenant Life Curriculum.

November 12, 1966, Alfred and Catherine Williamson moved into the Sexton's House as he took over the duties of Sexton.

The Consistory supported Rev. Van Oort in his effort to reach out in ministry to the neighborhood. A Student Assistant Minister, Jack Jenner, was hired to assist Rev. Van Oort. A Sunday Afternoon Center for Neighborhood Children was under his direction. It was for sixth through eighth grade children of the neighborhood.<sup>1</sup> Fifteen young people participated in Bible study, arts, crafts and games. Dr. Bruce Hamilton assisted in a gardening project teaching neighborhood people how to grow plants. In the second year of the program Student Assistant Minister Bob Anderson, Jr., added Negro history to the program for neighborhood young people.

The neighborhood Girl Scout group continued to meet in the Church House.<sup>2</sup> Cadette Troop #79 was led by Ellen Hamilton with the assistance of Eileen Van Oort and Jean Hance.

The Church House was used increasingly by community groups. A 4H program for Puerto Rican boys, a group of the Emanuel Tabernacle Pentecostal Faith, and the Human Rights Commission of the City of New Brunswick were among those using the Church House.

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of Consistory, October 20, 1966.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of Consistory, November 15, 1966.

A junior choir, under the direction of Margaret Schoen had twenty-five singers. The senior choir purchased thirty new robes in 1966.

A Sewing Circle, under the direction of Mrs. Bertha Shipman, met every Tuesday morning. They made aprons and other items for the bazaar, hospital gowns for the Visiting Nurses Association, a patchwork quilt for Mrs. Van Oort, and they sent used clothing to Annville, Kentucky.

The New Jersey Bell Telephone Company asked the church to sell its interest in Church Alley and to join them in asking the city to vacate the alley. The Telephone Company wanted to put in underground oil tanks and be able to use the alley for trucks. John S. Kuhlthau of Hicks, Kuhlthau, Nagle, and Stroumtsos was hired to look after the church's interests in the matter.<sup>3</sup> A title search conducted by the telephone company revealed that if the city vacated the alley full title would revert to the church. The telephone company offered the church \$13,500. The Consistory asked for \$23,000 but agreed to settle for \$16,250. A congregational meeting was held April 9, 1967. The vote was seventy-three to one in favor of the sale. A contract dated April 25, 1967, stipulated that the Telephone Company must give the church a license to use Church Alley. The license granted the church permission to use Church Alley as a driveway for egress to Bayard Street from behind the Sexton's House. The Telephone Company can terminate the license subject to ninety day notice.

In the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January, 1967, joint services were held in various Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. There was strong interest from both Catholic and Protestant residents of the community. For the service at First Church the sanctuary was filled, there was standing room only.

The ecumenical cooperation of the church with other churches in the community continued to be strong. A sense of mutual support was important in the midst of social ferment. The church continued to be an active member in the New Brunswick Area Council of Churches. Volney Coffill served as Treasurer and Rev. Van Oort filled several offices including that of the presidency. One of the significant ministries of the Council was the "Transient Aid Fund." Many people encountering emergency needs were helped. A downtown "Cluster of Churches" had representatives of several churches in central New Brunswick meeting to address needs of the city.

A close relationship was developed with the First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens with the Rev. C. H. Brown, Jr., as Pastor. Through this relationship the church became better acquainted with the black experience and worship in the black church. Several pulpit exchanges were arranged between Rev. Brown and Rev. Van Oort.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*



Several major currents of social change converged to make this a volatile time. The civil rights movement, race riots in many places, and the Viet Nam War protests profoundly affected the neighborhood. In the local neighborhood there was poverty as African American and Hispanic people lived in low rent, substandard housing in the Hiram Street area.

In an effort to meet some of the housing needs of the community the church joined others in forming the Raritan Valley Community Development Foundation. Elder Walter Gates and Rev. Van Oort were among the founders of the organization. In June of 1967 Consistory authorized a gift of \$100 to the organization. Rev. Van Oort was named to represent the church in the corporation. Both institutions and individuals were members of the Foundation. Receiving block grants from the city the corporation restored old houses in the city and sold them to families in need of housing at below market cost. The church provided the organization a meeting place and an address to get started.

In the spring of 1967 some of the stained glass windows were repaired and protective storm glass installed over all of them. The work was done by Westminster Studios at a cost of \$3445.

Percy L. Van Nuis died May 8, 1967, at the age of 85. He had been ordained a deacon in 1905. He served the church sixty-two years in office as deacon, elder and member of the Finance Committee. The Newsletter noted that that was the longest length of service of anyone in the history of the church. A memorial fund was established to provide facilities for displaying items of general historical interest.

In 1967 the Reformed Church in America asked the church to contribute to an effort to raise six million dollars to undergird the denomination's colleges and seminaries and assist mission churches. The Consistory agreed to contribute \$6100 to the Development Fund.<sup>4</sup> Visits were made on every family and pledges asked from them.

Student Assistant Minister for the summer of 1967 was Paul Tanis.

Average attendance at worship in the first half of 1967 was 130.

Mr. George Harper was hired to be the Sexton, October, 1967. The Sexton's House was rented to the White Construction Company while they were constructing a new building for Bell Telephone. Damage was done to the basement wall which the telephone company later repaired.

In 1967-69 Gladys M. Hoagland was President of the Women's Guild for Christian Service. Four meetings were held during the year. The Guild took charge of serving the Family Night Suppers, had a "Mother-Daughter Banquet", held a ham supper and bazaar, and a "scrub day" of cleaning was done in the church. The Guild was represented at meetings of the Classical Union, Church Women United, and "Time Out" at Warwick Conference

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<sup>4</sup> Minutes of Consistory, June 20, 1967.

Center. Four circles met on a monthly basis. They were designated by letters of the alphabet, A, C, D and E. R. Irene Bode, Spiritual Life Chairman, reported twenty-five women were attending the Prayer Fellowship. Eleanor Samuelson was named leader of that group.

Those who served as President of the Guild through 1976 were Mrs. Dorothy Shipman, Mrs. Eleanor Samuelson, Mrs. Ellen Hamilton and Mrs. Sue Garback. The circles were reorganized in November, 1969, according to preference of time of meeting. One circle held morning meetings, one met in the afternoon and two in the evening once a month.<sup>5</sup> The Guild collected items for school kits and health kits to be distributed through Church Women United. Members of the executive board attended an interfaith dinner at Anshe Emeth Temple in 1970.

December 3, 1967, the 250th anniversary of the location of the church in downtown New Brunswick was observed as Rev. Glenn Van Oort presented a sermon preached by the Rev. Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen. In the evening Handel's *Messiah* was presented by an 79-voice choir from twenty-five churches. They were joined by the 65 voice a cappella choir of New Brunswick High School on the Hallelujah chorus. A congregation of over five hundred attended. Lillian Kane was director and Aletha Williams organist. Seven soloists participated in the presentation.<sup>6</sup> On Christmas Eve the presentation was broadcast on radio station WCTC.

January 15, 1968, the Rev. Dr. William Weber died. He had been Professor of Christian Education at New Brunswick Theological Seminary from 1925 to 1950. In retirement he had been a member of First Reformed Church, had served on the Consistory and taught the Adult Bible Class. His colleague, Dr. Milton Hoffman, said of him, "His gentleness of spirit, his loyalty to the faith in which he was reared, his unstinted devotion to his task will remain as an abiding inspiration."

In the fall of 1967 missionary Walter deVelder preached at the church on a Sunday and he and Harriet told about their ministry in Hong Kong in the Adult Bible Class. In the spring of 1968 they spoke at a Family Night Supper. The church continued to support their missionary work.

The church contributed \$200 to a local credit union as part of an antipoverty program.<sup>7</sup>

In 1968 a major renovation of the Church House was undertaken and a new heating system was installed. A men's room was put on the first floor, the women's room enlarged, the offices were moved, and the old basement shower room was made into an all purpose meeting room. Two new boilers were installed, one to heat the church and the other for the church house with

<sup>5</sup> Minutes of the Guild, November 20, 1969.

<sup>6</sup> *The Daily Home News*, New Brunswick, Nov. 22, 1967, p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> Minutes of Consistory, May 21, 1968.

an independently controlled hot water heating of the offices and the Randolph Room. The cost of this work was \$38,977.00. Joseph Fenyo was the contractor. Arnold W. Rose was the architect. In 1970 the kitchen was renovated using much volunteer labor. The cost was \$2,567.92.

The late 60's was a chaotic time for the church in the midst of the inner city. Break ins were frequent. Rev. Glenn Van Oort would get calls in the night from the Sexton that another building on Hiram Street was on fire. One afternoon as Pastor Van Oort was leaving the Church House he heard moaning coming from Neilson Street. When he went over to investigate he saw that a local shop keeper was being robbed and, as he approached, the robber pulled a gun and turned it on Rev. Van Oort. Glenn froze. So did the robber, for a moment, and then took off running.

There was real concern over the potential for race riots in the summer of 1968. Rev. Van Oort met with leaders of Christ Church in an organization called MUST (Metro Urban Service Training). Bob Seamon of Woodbridge was given permission to hold meetings on Sunday evenings in the Church House. The group called "Soul Force" was intended to give constructive leadership to young people in "the riot age group".<sup>8</sup> A black student at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, William L. Rhines, was hired to work with the church for the summer of 1968. He directed arts and crafts programs for youth, took them on trips and engaged them in summertime recreational activities. He started a Teen Canteen which was continued in the fall as a coffee house in the basement of the Church House.

Unfortunately, acts of vandalism occurred which were claimed to have been caused by teenagers leaving a dance at the church. A story printed in the *Daily Home News* on Sunday, September 15, 1968, stated windows were smashed on George Street and a Rutgers University student was beaten by "a roving band of teen-age boys and girls, on leaving a dance at a downtown church."<sup>9</sup> The next day the newspaper quoted officers of the police department who claimed there had been "a lack of proper adult supervision on the teenagers when the youths and girls leave the dance."<sup>10</sup> On September 25 a letter to the editor was printed from Rev. Van Oort pointing out the discrepancy in the claim that teenagers leaving the dance could have committed the vandalism that occurred since the breaking of the window on Neilson Street happened at 10:30 p.m. and the dance was not over until 11:30 p.m. Another window breaking had not occurred until 12 midnight and the assault of the Rutgers student occurred at 1 a.m. He questioned why the teens who were at the dance were accused of these different acts at different times and places. He pointed out that only members of the club and their guests were

<sup>8</sup> Minutes of Consistory, June 18, 1968.

<sup>9</sup> *The Daily Home News*, New Brunswick, Sept. 15, 1968.

<sup>10</sup> *The Daily Home News*, Sept. 16, 1968.

admitted and an off-duty policeman was hired for each dance to help enforce that rule.<sup>11</sup> The Consistory prepared a report on what actually took place to try to set the record straight. Rev. Van Oort met with the newspaper and the police chief. He wrote to the congregation, "We began work in the neighborhood four years ago with the conviction that every Christian congregation bears a responsibility to let its light shine in the community where it worships. We have found that fulfilling that conviction is at times difficult. The question is should we allow those difficulties to overcome our convictions."<sup>12</sup> The Consistory voted to continue the program.<sup>13</sup> The Administrative Director of the City of New Brunswick, Mr. Aldrage B. Cooper, wrote the Consistory, "I appreciated your role in working with the teenagers. I agree that this work is good, and that it must continue." Mr. Rhines help was retained for the following school year. During the year Mr. Rhines taught Afro-American history and held various social activities for high school young people. A basketball team was entered in the New Brunswick Council of Churches Basketball League. A photography club was organized by Joe Favale, another seminarian, in February, 1969.

The slogan of the Black Coffee House was "Say it loud...I'm Black and I'm Proud." William Rhines told a *Home News* reporter the goals of his coffee house program for black youth, "We want to develop the whole individual. We hope to make these teenagers proud of being black, to give them a quest for life, to help them function as a black individual in today's society, and to guide them in a thirst for knowledge of their Afro-American history, heritage and culture." Stating where he stood Mr. Rhines said, "I am hoping to attain our goals only with a Christian attitude. We must first believe in Christ, and seek first the Kingdom of God." Discussion sessions with Mr. Rhines drew 35 to 50 teenagers weekly. Weekly dances drew as many as 150. Tutoring services were provided with the help of area teachers and college students for those with academic problems. Mr. Rhines acknowledged the help of the church and of Rev. Van Oort. "Too many, almost all, churches are apathetic," he said, but First Church had reached out to help.<sup>14</sup>

Mr. J. Bertram Howell died during the summer of 1968. The Consistory approved a memorial resolution recalling his life and fellowship in First Church. A bequest to the church of \$5,000 was included in his will.

December 1, 1968, an ecumenical choir from sixteen churches under the direction of Mrs. Earl Kane presented a program of Advent and Christmas music at First Reformed Church.

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<sup>11</sup> *The Daily Home News*, Sept. 21, 1968, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> "The Newsletter," September 25, 1968.

<sup>13</sup> Minutes of Consistory, September 17, 1968.

<sup>14</sup> *The Daily Home News*, Sept. 25, 1968.

In June, 1968, Volney Coffill, Jr., resigned as Superintendent of the Sunday School having served for nearly a decade. A family night supper October 27, 1968, was devoted to thanking him for his outstanding work. Harold Delhagen took over the direction of the church school. Each year a major activity of the Sunday School was a picnic in June. Parks as far away as Duke Island were used for this occasion. Dr. James Bothwell directed the picnic for several years. The Sunday School continued to decline in enrollment. In 1967 it had 119 students and teachers. By 1970 the total was 73. As Volney Coffill resigned he attributed the decline to the lesser number of children in church families and the inability, so far, to attract neighborhood people into the church. A library of visual aides was built up. The Covenant Life Curriculum was used. The Treasurer of the Board of Education, which handled funds designated for Christian Education, was Franklin Deuble. In May of 1969 the Junior Youth Fellowship gave a surprise dinner for the teachers of the Church School to show their appreciation to them.

Mr. Robert Shipman served as acting Sexton for about a year 1969-70.

One of the stormiest General Synod meetings in the history of the Reformed Church in America was held in New Brunswick in June of 1969. Business meetings were at Hickman Auditorium on the Douglass Campus. At that meeting James Forman spoke demanding restitution for the treatment blacks had received in the past. Two bus loads of women marched through the auditorium demanding equal rights for women in the church. And, in desperation over the defeat of a proposal for merger with the southern Presbyterian Church, Harold Schut made his famous motion to dissolve the denomination resulting in the appointment of a special committee to study the future of the denomination. The communion service was held at First Reformed Church. The choirs of Magyar Reformed and First Reformed Churches sang the anthem and the responses for the service.

William Rhines resigned as director of neighborhood programs effective August, 1969, stating that the majority of black people had moved away from the immediate community and Puerto Ricans had taken their place. He felt that the programs he directed had "a tremendous influence" on the lives of at least a few of the young people involved. His suggestion was that the church invest in the purchase of empty buildings on Hiram Street renovating them and making them available to low-income occupants.

For the summer of 1969 Joe Favale, a New Brunswick Seminary student, was director of the Sunday Center as well as the camera club which he had started. He assisted Louis Diggs and Jack Raymore in a summer program called "Reconciliation 1969." The program was sponsored by seven Reformed Churches. It provided arts and crafts, story telling and recreation for children age six to twelve at Robeson Village, at a "tot lot" at Richmond and Dennis Streets and at the Memorial Homes housing development, two weeks at each site. In the afternoons the children were invited to homes of

church members. It was this part of the program which was especially designed to achieve reconciliation. Norma Rezac, Bruce and Ellen Hamilton volunteered much of the help with the arts and crafts.

In the fall of 1969 a dinner was held to honor Mrs. Earl Kane who had been choir director for twenty years.

The Consistory wrote a letter to the Suydam Street Reformed Church in October, 1969, proposing that the two churches explore together their ministry in the area. Ray Clark and Volney Coffill were designated to talk with them. Subsequently the Classis declared the church a mission church and a ministry to the Hispanic Community was initiated there.

A portion of the ceiling in the church fell in October, 1969. While inspection and repairs were made, for two Sundays worship services were held at the chapel of New Brunswick Theological Seminary.

The Rev. Dr. David Waanders was ordained in First Reformed Church on May 24, 1970. He was called to teach pastoral care at New Brunswick Theological Seminary.

Ten cottage meetings were held in May of 1970 to receive ideas from the members of the church. Ninety-eight persons of forty-seven families participated. Among the results were the scheduling of communion on the first Sunday of every month except August and having more lay participation in the worship services.

The summer program of 1970 was conducted with the help of four other Reformed Churches as well as the Presbyterian and the Emanuel Lutheran Churches in New Brunswick. It was called "Celebration 1970." Bruce Hamilton and David Waanders did much of the work of organizing First Reformed Church's participation in the program. Seminarians Joseph Favale and Robert Chase were coordinators along with Louis Diggs. Six Youth Corps workers helped. Again three sites in the city were used for recreation, arts and crafts and Bible stories for children every morning for two weeks at each site and trips were made to host families and churches and the YWCA in the afternoons. The film club continued under the direction of James Moise. A seminary student was hired to reactivate inactive members and to visit unchurched families in the greater New Brunswick area. Stanley Baumgarten was asked to do this.

The Consistory approved a loan of \$10,000 to help the New Brunswick Theological Seminary purchase the old Frisch Hardware building at 48-50 Hiram Street which had been closed for a year and a half. The projected cost of purchase and remodeling was \$165,000. The intention was to lead the way in rejuvenating the area. Fourteen one-bedroom apartments were planned for married student housing and for elderly or low-income residents of the area. Walter Gates was Business Manager at the Seminary as well as an Elder at First Reformed Church. He said the plan was in keeping with the effort of the seminary "to move out of its academic campus and into

deep involvement in the adjourning urban society."<sup>15</sup> Students would live with minority people, Gates pointed out, and the building would become "a living and working laboratory." Edgar L. Van Nuis reported to the Dean of the Seminary, Dr. Norman E. Thomas, that there was close to unanimous agreement in the congregation in support of the purchase. The *Home News* enthusiastically endorsed the plan as "A spark of hope for our blighted downtown area." Residents told Dean Thomas of the Seminary they welcomed the plan. The zoning and planning boards of the city gave their approval.<sup>16</sup>

The property was purchased for \$34,000 and by the end of February, 1970, a contract was signed with Jenner Construction Company of Franklin to renovate the building creating thirteen apartments for a cost of \$140,000. Due to increased enrollment at the seminary just two apartments were scheduled for community residents. Architect, John Fischer's colonial design was inspired by Princeton's Palmer Square. Seminary students, led by Joseph Favale and Robert Chase, protested the lower number of community people served and the architect's design. They invited Princeton University architectural students to meet with seminary officials and criticize the plans as "inappropriate to the Hiram Street neighborhood," calling them "an affront to the residents" of a depressed area. The students met with residents of the Hiram Street neighborhood encouraging them to form a co-op to take over control of the project. People from the neighborhood were joined by members of United Puerto Rican students in a march on the seminary and seminary students and residents staged a two-day sit-in at the headquarters of the Reformed Church in America in New York City. About sixty people including community representatives met with the executive committee of the Board of Theological Education to discuss the formation of a cooperative to take over the apartment building. The committee agreed to the demands for community control and a revised plan of housing for eight families. But the resources for that were not available and work that had been done was destroyed when a fire was set in the building in January, 1971. The request from the Seminary for assistance from First Church was withdrawn. The Board of Theological Education withdrew support and the Seminary sold the building at a considerable loss.<sup>17</sup>

Bequests continued to increase the investment of the church. One for \$5,000 came from Anna B. Bittenheim early in 1970.

A Self-Study Committee was appointed in 1969. The co-chairmen were Walter Gates and Volney Coffill, Jr. Members were Margaret A. Rue, Raymond Clark, Diana Shipman, Richard Pace, Dorothy Van Nostrand,

<sup>15</sup> *The Sunday Home News*, Oct. 26, 1969, p. A-12.

<sup>16</sup> *The Home News*, Nov. 3 & 8, 1969.

<sup>17</sup> *The Home News*, Feb. 25, p. 12; March 3, 25, 31; April 9, 10, 12 & 14, 1970.

Sutemi Murayama, Bruce Hamilton, and L. Richard Gons. The committee sponsored ten meetings in homes of members which were attended by 98 people. The suggestions which came out of these meetings were recommended to the Consistory. The committee recommended a reorganization of consistory committees. Standing committees were reduced to six: Finance & Stewardship, Christian Education, Outreach, Worship, Properties, and Nominations. The chairmen appointed to these committees respectively were: Edgar Van Nuis, Bruce Hamilton, James W. Bothwell, Robert Shipman, Nelson Anderson, and Raymond Clark.

Mrs. Theresa Ramon Molina was hired in 1970 to be the Sexton. She and her family consisting of her husband, a daughter and a son moved into the Sexton's House. She was originally from Cuba and had been living in New Brunswick for five years.

Also in 1970 Sue Garback began assisting with the work of the church Secretary, Alberta Stier.

On October 24, 1970, two elders of the church died. Louis R. Gons and Walter C. Gates had both given outstanding service to the church. The Consistory minutes state, "Both were dedicated churchmen who went beyond the call of duty in their service to this congregation. We thank God for their years knowing that those who labor in the Lord shall not labor in vain."<sup>18</sup>

In 1971 and 1972 the upstairs floor of the Church House was used for the New Brunswick Multi-Service Center to operate an after school recreation program for children age five through twelve called "S.O.S." Douglass and Rutgers students conducted the activities led by Barbara Van Abs. Thirty-five to fifty children participated four days a week.

The Multi-Service Center was a program of the Middlesex County Economic Opportunities Corporation. In March, 1971, approval was given for the Center to use the Church House for courses for the Spanish community of New Brunswick in preparation for high school equivalency exams and in basic English. The program had forty students at the time and expected to increase to 150. This program was under the direction of Jose Gonzalez. It came to be known as "Esquela #1." It was supported by Christ Church Episcopal in partnership with First Church.

In the spring of 1971 the main room of the Church House was redecorated. A new ceiling was hung. Volunteers worked on each Wednesday in Lent. Refreshments and a brief Lenten service were also parts of each evening. Chairman of the project was Nelson Anderson.

May 29, 1971, at about 9 a.m. an arsonist set fire to the chancel area inside the church. At 9:18 the first alarm was sounded. Someone pulled the fire alarm box on Neilson Street and others telephoned as flames were seen shooting from the rear of the building. Firemen broke through the front doors

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<sup>18</sup> Minutes of Consistory, November 17, 1970.



of the church. Within an hour they had the blaze under control. The first firemen rescued the Bible from the pulpit. The fire was confined to the chancel area but there was heavy smoke and water damage throughout the building. Firemen broke the stained glass windows to ventilate the superheated air inside the church. Two Tiffany windows, valued at \$10,000 each, had already blown out. The heat was so intense it melted lighting fixtures and keys on the organ. Communion plates were fused together. The Steinway piano was ruined.

As members arrived at the scene they protested the destruction of the stained glass windows. Deputy Chief Julius S. Kara replied, "If we saved the glass we'd lose the building."<sup>19</sup> Bob Shipman begged the firemen not to break doors and windows. He told them keys were available and it was possible to partially open the windows. But they determined there was not time and the heat was too intense.

It was a heart-rending day as members of the church received word and rushed over to the church to see if anything could be done. They watched smoke pour out of the windows. Little Debra Shipman watched from behind a tomb stone. Through it all the Town Clock in the steeple continued to keep time and toll the bell.

As soon as possible members helped remove items from the church. Members of the youth group aiding in saving hymn books as firemen hosed down remaining burning embers. Bruce Hamilton carried out the partially charred baptismal font. And the salvaging of pieces of stained glass began.

In California, on vacation at the time, Pastor Van Oort took a midnight flight back and arrived an hour before the worship service to be led by Dr. David Waanders in the Church House. He told the congregation of his visit to the redwoods, trees 3,000 years old, which have repeatedly been scarred by forest fires but remain the tallest and strongest trees in the forest.

Thirty-nine-year-old Andres Mendoza Negron was arrested four days after the fire in a cafe a half block from the church. He was charged with arson in connection with the fire. He was taken to Marlboro State Hospital and later sent to the New Jersey State Hospital in Trenton.<sup>20</sup> One year earlier Negron had set fire to a Spanish-speaking Pentecostal Church in downtown New Brunswick. He had been treated following that at Marlboro State Hospital.

Windows of the church were boarded up. Worship services were held in the Church House. Worship services were continued at the 10 a.m. time in the fall, dismissing the children to upstairs rooms after the first twenty minutes. Coffee time was from 11 to 11:15 with the church school beginning at 11:15.

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<sup>19</sup> *The Home News*, May 30, 1971.

<sup>20</sup> *The Home News*, Dec. 21, 1972, p. 29.

The congregation discussed whether the 160 year old sanctuary should be renovated or if it was time for the church to move to a different location. A questionnaire was sent to the membership asking them if they favored restoration, continuing as a congregation using the Church House, selling and disbanding, selling and merging with another Reformed congregation, selling and relocating or another course of action. Ninety-seven were in favor of restoration, two for merger and the other options received no votes. The congregation was also asked what kind of restoration they favored. Fifty-six voted for restoring the sanctuary to look as closely as possible as it did before the fire, twelve favored redesign to make it more adaptable for other uses, and fifty-three were in favor of restoration in accord with the original 1812 design. Thus the congregation overwhelmingly decided to stay and continue a ministry in New Brunswick.

The Restoration Committee was Nelson Anderson, Chairman, A. W. Rose, Grace Gates, Walter Rue, Naomi Coffill, Linda Rezac, A. F. Deuble, Margaret Schoen, John Garback, Elsa Bothwell and Leon Schoen. Mr. Frederick Elsasser was hired as architect.

Some of the Hispanic residents of the neighborhood contributed \$112 for restoration. Sexton, Theresa Molina, had collected this offering and presented it to the Clerk of Consistory, Sue Garback.

\$151,912.92 was received from insurance. With this money new frosted windows were installed, new wood cornices were constructed around the ceiling, the damaged portions of the balconies were removed and partitions built to provide rooms on both the first and second floors at the northwest and southwest corners of the building. This provided a classroom, a choir robing room, a music room, a minister's robing room and two closets. The platform was made large to provide space for performances of choirs and chancel drama. Back of the chancel a backdrop was made of colonial design. A place was provided in which the one stained glass window, of Christ the Shepherd, that remained intact after the fire could be mounted and back lighted. A pulpit and a lectern were placed at each side of the chancel area. The communion table was put at the center of the platform with the restored baptismal font next to the lectern.

Providentially a four manual Moeller organ console was available from the Calvary Baptist Church in Brooklyn. The church was able to purchase it for \$2,000 although Mr. Francis Gorman, whose Church Organ Company rebuilt the organ, said it may have been worth \$15,000 at the time and by 1985 was worth \$30,000.

As restoration work was in progress the ministries of the church continued. The summer program in 1971 was done in cooperation with Second Reformed Church and First Baptist Church. College students and

Youth Corps workers were hired to direct it.<sup>21</sup> Sixty children went on fifteen trips and went swimming daily at the Jewish Community Center in Highland Park.

Beginning with the use of upstairs space, Esquela #1 grew to use main floor and basement space opening a Spanish Community Center in the basement. Space at Suydam Street Reformed Church was also used. Funding was received from the Synod of New Jersey. Jose Gonzales and Ken Buttler, directors, spoke to the Consistory and congregation about their community service plans. Virginia Rose and Diana Shipman worked as volunteers in the program. A Thanksgiving dinner was served in the Church House November, 1971. Wear and tear on the Church House became a concern. Homeless persons were sleeping in the building overnight, something which had not been authorized by the Consistory. The afternoon S.O.S. program was not always well supervised. Attempts were made to correct the problems by setting down clear rules for use of the building. Jose Gonzalez left the program. Rev. Van Oort and Ken Buttler disagreed on administration and philosophy of the program and so agreed that Esquela # 1 should leave the facilities of First Church. While the program had been promising when originally founded by Rev. Gilberto Matto Garcia, Minister of the Suydam Street Reformed Church, aiming at "renewal and rehabilitation of the people and environment in the Hiram Street area" it had disintegrated into "a disjointed, rambling, floundering organization in 1972." The Consistory gave notice that "while it accepted Esquela's goals and objectives we disagreed with some of Esquela's methods and procedures. We have determined that close cooperation with a community organization such as Esquela requires a greater amount of participation and coordination than our staff or Consistory can presently provide."<sup>22</sup>

The family night supper in March, 1972, honored Mrs. Aletha Williams in appreciation for eighteen years as organist. Mrs. Williams moved to Denver. In August Miss Jean Volk, a graduate of Wagner College, became the Organist.

August and September, 1972, members of First Church made several trips to Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, to aid flood victims. Homes were cleaned and repaired. August 27 Jim Bothwell made a report to the congregation with slides on the effort.

Ralph Tartaglia was Student Assistant Minister in 1971-2.

The restoration of the church had taken nineteen months. By Christmas, 1972, the church was reopened. On Christmas Eve day, which was a Sunday, Rev. Glenn Van Oort led a procession from the Church House to the sanctuary with Vice-President James Wilcox carrying the pulpit Bible.

<sup>21</sup> Minutes of Consistory, June 22, 1971.

<sup>22</sup> Minutes of Consistory, June 20, 1972.

In the processional litany the minister said, "A minor miracle has been accomplished." And the people responded, "We are ready to go forth." Rev. Van Oort's sermon was on the text, "Let us go to Bethlehem, and see this thing which has come to pass."

It was a memorable Christmas Eve. In his annual report Pastor Van Oort commented on the indelible memory of that day. Then he said, "However the greater memory for all of us should be the spirit in which the entire project was undertaken and completed. I have experienced no better expression of the meaning of Christian fellowship than that of the congregation of the First Reformed Church during 1972. Time, energy and talents freely given; trust and confidence openly expressed; burdens and joys mutually shared; each striving and working toward a larger goal...let us not forget the past year. Let us remember the graces of it and the lesson that when we work and share together the rewards are great. To God be the glory, now and forever."

Many memorial gifts were given for the restored sanctuary: The American flag was given in memory of Dr. and Mrs. Alfred W. Reeve by Mr. and Mrs. Walter Rue; the Christian flag was given in memory of Alexander Matusz by Dr. and Mrs. James W. Bothwell; pulpit scarves and Bible markers were given in memory of Dr. and Mrs. William A. Weber by Mr. and Mrs. Volney Coffill; deacon's chairs were given by Volney Coffill; the chancel cross was given in memory of Michael A. Goddard by his family and friends; linens were given in memory of Rev. W. Rudolf F. Stier by Mrs. W. Rudolf F. Stier; large candelabrum were given in memory of Duncan A. LaPlante by Mrs. Duncan A. LaPlante; illuminative Lighting of stained glass windows was given in memory of Louis R. Gons by Mrs. Louis R. Gons and Mr. and Mrs. L. Richard Gons; a new large pulpit was given in memory of Charles A. G. O'Rourke by his friends and family; a chancel end table was given in memory of Rev. W. Rudolf F. Stier and Mrs. Walter E. Fleming by Mr. and Mrs. E. Theodore Stier; another chancel end table was given in memory of James and Susan Hance by Mr. and Mrs. James A. Hance; a candle lighter was given in memory of Reva Rogers by Mr. and Mrs. James E. Wilcox; green and red communion table scarves were given in memory of Walter C. Gates by Dr. and Mrs. Walter C. Gates, Jr.; a purple communion table scarf was given in memory of loved ones by John Adamcik and family; a white communion table scarf was given in memory of loved ones by Mr. and Mrs. John W. Lenhart; silver vases were given in memory of Elizabeth Stark by her grandchildren; chancel and organ draperies were given in memory of H. Richard Segoine by Mrs. H. Richard Segoine; four communion plates were given by Harold Bowne; a communion plate was given in memory of G. Earl Hoagland and Mr. and Mrs. A. Oliver Rappleyea by Mrs. G. Earl Hoagland; the memorial repositiorials were given by the communicants class of 1973, the restoration of

the baptismal font was given in memory of Percy L. Van Nuis and Dr. William A. Weber by their families and friends.

A Service of Rededication of the Sanctuary and commemoration of the 270th anniversary of the church was held on Sunday, February 25, 1973. It began with an organ concert by David Drinkwater, organist of Kirkpatrick Chapel of Rutgers University. Greetings were brought by former Pastors Rev. Daniel Y. Brink and Rev. Robert Dickson and by Dr. Marion de Velder, General Secretary of the Reformed Church in America. The sermon was preached by Dr. Howard Hageman on "A City Without Walls." The choir director was Mrs. Earl Kane and the organist George Gillespie. The Consistory at the time were elders James Wilcox, James Hance, Sr., Louis D. Shipman, Theodore Pace, Walter Rue, Nelson Anderson, James Bothwell and Richard Pace. The deacons were James Hance, Jr., Robert Shipman, Harold Delhagen, Sue Garback, Patricia Goetz, Eleanor O'Rourke, Phyllis LaPlante and Betty Rue.

Three days later Deacon Richard Pace died, having undergone heart surgery. His death was a great shock to the congregation. The Consistory stated, "His faithful performance of responsibilities as a deacon, a church school teacher, and financial secretary all stand as reminders of his dedication to the First Reformed Church of New Brunswick and his Lord Jesus Christ, and as an example worthy of our emulation."<sup>23</sup> A dogwood tree was planted next to the Church House in his memory and a framed print of Jesus as the Good Shepherd was placed by the Church School in a classroom upstairs in the Church House with a plaque noting his service as a church school teacher.

Rev. Van Oort led the youth of the church in many activities. They made trips to Warwick Conference Center, had square dances, swim parties, suppers, picnics at the parsonage, and helped with decorating the church at Christmas and assisted the church in a variety of ways.

The Guild redecorated the Randolph Room. They held an annual Bazaar and Turkey Dinner, a Mother and Daughter Banquet, and rummage sales. Four circles met for discussion of study themes supplied by Reformed Church Women. The circles took care of the coffee hour on Sundays, the nursery during worship services and hospitality at family night suppers. The sewing group, led by Bertha Shipman made hospital gowns and Raggedy Ann and Andy dolls. In 1975 ninety-two dolls were made. Frances Pace arranged for flowers for worship service. Phyllis Baier led a physical fitness program for about eight women. A group of ten women attended the 1973 R.C.A. women's triennial conference in Long Beach, California.

A group called the Stained Glass Crafters formed to make candle holders and window hangings out of the broken pieces of stained glass from the church windows. The items they made were sold and the income given to

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<sup>23</sup> Minutes of Consistory, March 20, 1973.

the church. By the end of 1975, \$2,415 had been raised through the sale of items they made. Members of the group were Naomi Coffill, Jean Hance, Betty Rue, Dorothy Shipman, and Josephine Wilcox.

In 1972-73 the Sunday Church School had an enrollment of 32. Harold W. Delhagen was Chairman of the Christian Education Committee. The teachers were Mrs. Sue Garback, Mrs. Mildred Shipman, Mrs. Eileen Van Oort, Miss Patricia Goetz, and Dr. Bruce Hamilton. Miss Jenny Parker and Miss Susan Fischer were assistants. The new classroom in the church was named the Dr. Elizabeth Clark Room in memory of Dr. Clark who was a teacher in the Sunday School for many years. The Sunday School had an enrollment of twenty-six in the fall of 1974 with an average attendance of sixteen. Discussions were held with the Methodist Church considering the possibility of merging the two Sunday Schools. Harold Delhagen had shouldered the responsibility of directing the church school since 1969. In 1975 he resigned from that position.

In 1973 the Outreach Committee, Ellen Hamilton, Chair, launched a program aimed at increasing the congregation by fifty new families in five years. The program included visitation of inactive members, telephone calls and letters to new people in the area, welcoming of visitors, and follow up visits to visitors. The telephone calls were made to people on a list purchased from Consumer Market Research. An initial call would establish religious preference. This was followed by three letters sent at two-week intervals.<sup>24</sup> By March, 1974, many telephone calls had been made and 263 letters sent with no response received.<sup>25</sup> The purchase of names was discontinued.

Dr. and Mrs. Walter de Velder were honored at a worship service, September 2, 1973, on their retirement. The service also was a time of dedication for the de Velders as they were taking on an assignment as volunteer missionaries in Taiwan for two years. The retirement gift the congregation gave them was to help meet the expenses of their doing that volunteer work.<sup>26</sup>

In the fall of 1973 a family camping weekend was held at Warwick. Home meetings were held throughout the congregation to discuss Christian education.

October 1, 1973, the inauguration of Dr. Howard Hageman as President of New Brunswick Theological Seminary was held in First Reformed Church with a reception following in the Church House.

A ski weekend was led by Ray and Susanne Clark with twenty-four people from the church in January, 1974.

<sup>24</sup> Minutes of Consistory, January 16, 1973.

<sup>25</sup> Minutes of Consistory, March 19, 1974.

<sup>26</sup> "The Newsletter," August 21, 1973.

The Central College A Cappella Choir sang a concert in the church March 1, 1974.<sup>27</sup>

Representatives of the church were members of a Cluster of Churches in downtown New Brunswick meeting on a regular basis to discuss ministry to the city. Ministries supplying food and clothing were supported. Block parties were held for people of the neighborhood. Some of these were held on Bayard Street next to the Church House with the street temporarily closed.

Rev. Glenn Van Oort accepted a call to become Pastor of the Emmanuel Reformed Church in Castleton, New York, in 1974. He had been Pastor of the church for eight years. During his tenure Glenn and Eileen had two children: Glenda, born January 18, 1968; and Randall, born September 4, 1969. Their third child, Heather, was born November 2, 1975. His resignation took effect March 20, 1974. As he resigned he told the Consistory to look ahead as there were signs that the city was about to undergo redevelopment.

During the decade from 1965 to 1975 the church declined in membership. In 1965 there were 340 active communicant members on the membership rolls, 184 families. In 1975 there were 171 active communicant members and 128 families.

During the interim between pastors Dr. Charles Wissink, Assistant Professor of Christian Education at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, filled the pulpit. Students Roger De Young and Robert Hoffman helped with some of the pastoral duties. Dr. David Waanders assisted with pastoral care. The officers of Consistory were: James Wilcox, Vice President; Arnold W. Rose, Clerk; Theodore Pace, Treasurer; John Garback, Assistant Treasurer; Volney K. Coffill, Financial Secretary; Raymond Clark, Chair of the Finance and Stewardship Committee; Harold Delhagen, Chair of the Christian Education Committee; Dorothy Shipman, Chair of the Outreach Committee; Dorothy Van Nostrand, Chair of the Worship Committee; and Jim Hance, Chair of the Property Committee. The Rev. Donald Brevet, Pastor of the Metuchen Reformed Church was the Classis appointed Supervisor.

Mrs. Earl Kane resigned at the end of 1973 as choir director. A gift was presented to her at a Sunday worship service to express the appreciation of the congregation for her twenty-six years of labor directing music for the church. She moved to San Diego, California. Mr. George Gillespie, who had been the organist, became both choir director and organist. He offered free organ, piano and voice lessons to all who would participate in the music program of the church. Five instrumentalists from the congregation also contributed to the music of worship. At Christmas the choir presented a Madrigal Concert of Carols.

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<sup>27</sup> "The Newsletter," February 5, 1974.

In memory of two outstanding Sunday School teachers the Board of Christian Education placed pictures with memorial plaques in two of the classrooms. In memory of Richard Pace "The Lord is My Shepherd" was placed in the Junior High Classroom in the Church House. In memory of Dr. Elizabeth S. Clark "Jesus the Children's Friend" was put in the Elizabeth S. Clark Room in the church.<sup>28</sup>

Dr. Hugh Koops, Professor at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, was asked by the Classis of New Brunswick to conduct a study of the churches in New Brunswick. First Church participated in the study analyzing its future course. A Saturday meeting was held December, 1974, at the Seminary. The statement produced said, "The goal of First Reformed Church is to grow and develop as a community of believers and doers." The following specific goals were given top priority:

1. Enlarge our membership.
2. Develop greater participation.
3. Minister to personal needs.
4. Equip Christians to minister.
5. Serve the needs of all.

The Adult Bible Class became a forum for the discussion of these ideas. They studied the book, Old First Church.<sup>29</sup>

Mrs. Alberta Stier had been doing secretarial work for the church for ten years. Only because her eyesight was failing did she give it up. She would like to have continued because she enjoyed her work and was dedicated to the church. She had led a colorful life, having been married to a YMCA director, who for a time worked in Japan and other countries. Sue Garback had been sharing the work of the church office since 1970 and in 1975 took over the position of Secretary completely. The office was open four days a week, four hours each day. Grace Gates was editor of the Newsletter. (Which she continued until 1980.)

About a thousand women of the Particular Synod attended the centennial celebration of women's organizations in the Reformed Church in America at First Reformed Church May 5, 1975, with Hansi as the keynote speaker. One of the speakers was the Rev. Rudolph Kuyten, missionary in Japan. For the next six years the church contributed a share of his salary.

On June 1, 1975, a family night supper was held to thank those who had given pastoral leadership to the church during the time the church was without a minister. Dr. Charles Wissink was thanked for his biblical preaching, Dr. David Waanders for assisting with pastoral care, Rev. Don Brevet for his guidance, and Student Assistant Ministers Roger DeYoung and

<sup>28</sup> "The Newsletter," February 28, 1974.

<sup>29</sup> "The Newsletter," January 4, 1975.



Robert Hoffman for their help with the youth and educational activities of the church.

## MINISTRY IN A TIME OF TRANSITION

The Rev. John David Muyskens accepted the call of the church to become their Minister in 1975. He came from the First Reformed Church in Union City, New Jersey, and had previously served as Pastor of the Reformed Church in Pottersville, New Jersey. Rev. Muyskens had been born in Sheldon, Iowa. He attended Northwestern College, Orange City, Iowa, and Central College, Pella, Iowa. He was a graduate of Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. He had also earned a Master in Theology degree from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1962 and was awarded the Doctor of Ministry degree by Princeton Theological Seminary in 1978. Rev. Muyskens and his wife Donna moved into the parsonage with their son, Mark, and two daughters, Julia and Deborah.

Rev. Muyskens was installed on Sunday, June 29, 1975. Dr. Howard G. Hageman, President of the New Brunswick Theological Seminary preached the sermon entitled, "Seeking the City to Come." Dr. Charles Wissink delivered the charge to the congregation and Rev. Mark C. Hesselink the charge to the minister.

Student Assistant Robert Hoffman agreed to stay on during his senior year at seminary. Experienced in working with the congregation he was of much help to Rev. Muyskens.

George Gillespie had energetically provided leadership for the music program of the church. His enthusiasm and commitment to enrichment of the worship of the church had helped bring the congregation through a difficult time without a minister. Rev. Muyskens' first hospital visit as Pastor of First Church was to see George Gillespie in St. Peter's Medical Center. Mr. Gillespie had a relapse of pneumonia and was seriously ill. Prayer and the gift of healing brought him through so that he returned to his work with renewed vigor.

George Gillespie was eager to have the church purchase a set of handbells. He had persuaded the Consistory to begin a fund for them. In 1976 he asked Mrs. Donna Muyskens if she would be the handbell director. Not knowing fully what was involved she said, "Sure, I'll do that." Armed with that commitment George asked and the Consistory agreed to purchase a two octave set of brass handbells from Schulmerich Company. Eight teenage young people, Carol and David Shipman, Susan Bothwell, Carmen Davila, Valerie Rose, Julie, Debbie and Mark Muyskens, formed the first group.

Natalie Hoffman, wife of Robert Hoffman, volunteered to reorganize the junior choir. She asked Mrs. Muyskens to accompany on the piano. The next year Donna Muyskens also became director of the junior choir of children grades three through eight.

A recorder quartette was formed in 1976 playing for worship services on occasion. And a harpsichord was rented by George Gillespie and used

with Margaret Schoen's cello and Ellen Hamilton's flute to form a chamber group. The Senior Choir performed anthems for Sunday worship services and special services. Solos were sung by Phyllis Baier and Lewis Ballschmidt. An organ fund was begun by the choir sponsoring a Dutch Dinner with the original intent of adding pipes to the organ. The Consistory later declared that the fund should be used for major repairs needed to maintain the quality of the organ. George Gillespie offered some recitals himself and arranged for guest organists to offer recitals on several occasions.

The Outreach Committee canvassed the residents of the New Brunswick Apartments and Raritan Gardens. Members of the committee met with representatives of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Lutheran Churches. This "Downtown Cluster of Churches" held more block parties, conducted a united Thanksgiving Service, held a family night emphasizing world hunger, and sponsored a seminar on correctional programs in Middlesex County.<sup>1</sup> The Outreach Committee sponsored a concert of the Hope College Choir in March, 1976.<sup>2</sup>

A mood of optimism was growing in the area about the future of New Brunswick. Johnson & Johnson and other businesses had initiated an effort to enlist community backing for the revitalization of the city. An organization called New Brunswick Tomorrow was organized in 1975 with a board of trustees drawn from various businesses and institutions of the community. Richard Sellers, retired Chairman of the Executive Committee of Johnson & Johnson, and John J. Heldrich, a Johnson & Johnson executive, gave leadership to the effort. Johnson & Johnson purchased twelve acres of property extending their holdings to Albany Street between George Street and the Raritan River to construct a new international headquarters in New Brunswick.<sup>3</sup>

October 5, 1975, the Church School presented the play about Noah and the Ark entitled, "100% Chance of Rain," directed by June Shipman and George Gillespie. Children representing the animals wore large paper mache heads which had been made under the supervision of Naomi Coffill. The Church School program was under the direction of the Christian Education Committee. Eleanor Samuelson and Grace Gates together chaired the committee.<sup>4</sup>

A fall Bazaar and Turkey Dinner enlisted the help of many of the women of the church. Items for sale at the bazaar were handcrafted by the women for many months before the event.

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<sup>1</sup> The Newsletter, June 30, 1976, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Annual Report, February 15, 1976, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *A Company That Cares*, by Lawrence G. Foster, Johnson & Johnson, New Brunswick, N.J., p. 140.

<sup>4</sup> Annual Report, February 15, 1976, p. 6.

On Maundy Thursday of 1976 a "Meal of the Upper Room," patterned after the Seder meal, was held prior to communion. This ceremony became part of the church's observance of holy week for several years.

June 20, 1976, members of the church participated in the New Brunswick observance of the Bicentennial. A play was presented in Boyd Park depicting a typical scene at the entrance of First Church prior to a worship service in 1776. The play was written by Eleanor Samuelson.

On Sunday, July 4, 1976, a service was conducted in the manner in which services were conducted in 1776. Many in the congregation were in colonial attire, women seated on one side of the church and men on the other. The sermon preached by Rev. J. David Muyskens contained excerpts of sermons originally delivered by the Rev. Johannes Leydt who was Pastor during the Revolution, and the Rev. John Witherspoon, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Elder Harold Delhagen was the voorlezer. The deacons, James Bothwell and Volney Coffill, in colonial costume, received the offering in bags on long poles. An hourglass was on the pulpit.<sup>5</sup>

On May 15, 1977, the service of installation of the Rev. Robert Dickson as Executive for the Particular Synod of New Jersey was held at First Reformed Church.

During the Lenten seasons of 1977 and 1978, Rev. Muyskens and Student Assistant Minister, Craig Hoffman, led a series of inter-generational meetings. Children and adults met together on Wednesday evenings for a meal with group activities and discussion.

A Family Enrichment Program was begun in 1976 by the Christian Education Committee. A family camping weekend was held at Warwick one year and at Swartswood State Park another. Rev. and Mrs. Muyskens led a Family Enrichment weekend at Warwick Conference Center, June 19-July 1, 1979. Several couples of the church attended Marriage Enrichment weekends. New books were added to the church library for parents and families. A Sunday afternoon seminar was held for parents.

In 1975 the church steeple was painted and aluminum coping installed. A new roof was put on the Church House in 1976. Members of the Property Committee, Richard B. Shipman and James Hance, Sr., directed these projects and did a considerable amount of volunteer work themselves. They installed a plexiglass protective covering over the round stained glass window of the church tower.

Beginning in March, 1976, the church provided the basement room of the Church House to the County Probation Department for the operation of a juvenile probation day care program under the direction of Philip Hill and other probation officers. The program was called "Pippin," (Probation Incentive Program Promoting Individual Needs), named after the Broadway

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<sup>5</sup> Annual Report, February 20, 1977, p. 4.

show about the son of Charlemagne who was trying to find himself. Young people aged sixteen to eighteen on probation were brought together for group interaction under the leadership of two trained officers. The purpose of the program was to get them back into school or a job. The program was highly successful, 74% of the participants went back to school or got a job. But it was discontinued in 1980 because the county cut back its funding.<sup>6</sup>

On Palm Sunday, 1977, the men of the church began what became an annual custom of holding an early morning communion service and breakfast for fathers and sons with the men and boys of the United Methodist Church in New Brunswick.

On January 22, 1978, with much snow on the ground, a service of the four Reformed Churches in New Brunswick was held at First Church commemorating the 350th anniversary of the Reformed Church in America. The service included a reenactment of the arrival of the first minister in the New Brunswick area, the Rev. Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen. Another event commemorating the anniversary was a special concert by the Rutgers Glee Club in First Church on February 26, 1978.<sup>7</sup> Some of the members of the church attended the anniversary banquet held by the Particular Synod at the Martinsville Inn. The Handbell Choir of First Reformed Church played for the program at that banquet. Donna Muyskens was the Director.

The Handbell Choir, composed of youth of the church, travelled to play at several other churches. In June, 1978, they participated in a festival at Riverside Church in New York City. A second group was started with junior high young people.<sup>8</sup>

The Youth Fellowship met most Sunday evenings. Its advisors were Rev. Muyskens and the Student Assistant Minister. In the fall they participated in the New Brunswick CROP walk raising money for relief of hunger. A workcamp trip was made to Bushkill, Pennsylvania, where Roger De Young was Pastor. In 1978 and 1980 exchange visits were made with the youth fellowship of the Reformed Church at Berne, New York, where Robert Hoffman was Minister. The group participated in Classis roller skating nights. The youth took out some of the partitioning walls that had been placed in the gym of the Church House for Sunday School Classes and made room for a volley ball court. Money was raised through a pancake breakfast, a strawberry festival and collecting newspapers.<sup>9</sup> Craig Hoffman was Student Assistant Minister for two academic years, 1976-1978, Daniel Meeter was Student Assistant Minister from 1978 to 1980. He was ordained in First

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<sup>6</sup> Minutes of Consistory, February 15, 1977.

<sup>7</sup> Annual Report, February 18, 1979, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Reformed Church, September 7, 1980. In the school years of 1980 to 1982 Ray VandeGiessen was Student Assistant Minister.

In the summer of 1976 neighborhood Bible schools were held in three locations for one week each. In the summers of 1977 and 1978 Vacation Bible Schools were held with Second Reformed Church one week in each church. In 1980 a one week Vacation Bible School was held at First Church.

In 1977 Sue Garback resigned as Church Secretary. Debbie Shine served for six months then Virginia Carbeck was Secretary for the next five years. She was succeeded by Merrijane Gottshall.

The Reformed Church Home for the Aged in Irvington, N.J., asked the church to contribute \$6500 to their expansion. Pledges were requested from the congregation in 1978. Over \$8,600 was raised by the church.<sup>10</sup> Ruth Calabrese and Volney Coffill together chaired the effort and Agnes Haeseler, Dorothy Van Nostrand and Louis Shipman were members of the expansion fund committee.

Partial support was given toward the salary of the Rev. Rudolph Kuyten, missionary in Japan, 1975 through 1982. Rev. Kuyten conducted his ministry in Sapporo, Japan thru a coffee house and his artistic work as a wood carver. He was guest preacher September 20, 1980.<sup>11</sup>

The church was the meeting place for an organization called the Historic Hiram Market Preservation Association. They held their first meeting January 18, 1978. The Consistory endorsed their goal of having the Hiram Street district placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The organization sought to promote an awareness of the heritage represented in the old buildings still existing in the district, some dating from the early 1800s. Forces of economic development led, however, to many of the buildings being demolished for new buildings to be constructed in their place. Mayfest and Oktoberfest events provided opportunities to educate people about the history of the area and to provide tours of the church.

In June, 1978, a surprise party was held for Rev. Muyskens celebrating his earning the Doctor of Ministry degree at Princeton Theological Seminary. A doctoral academic hood was presented to him.<sup>12</sup>

A large number of clergy and members of the churches of the Classis were present at First Reformed Church for the service of ordination of Klaire Miller on November 12, 1978,<sup>13</sup> conducted by Rev. Muyskens, who was then President of the Classis. Klaire had become a member of the First Church during her time at the New Brunswick Theological Seminary and had been taken under care of the New Brunswick Classis as a candidate for the

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<sup>10</sup> Annual Report, February 17, 1980, p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> "The Newsletter," September, 1980, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Minutes of Consistory, June 20, 1978.

<sup>13</sup> Minutes of Consistory, October 17, 1978.

ministry. She was one of the first women ministers in the Reformed Church in America. Her father, Rev. William Miller, Pastor of a Reformed Church in Springfield, SD, preached the sermon. She began her ministry at the United Reformed Church in Jersey City. First Church supported her work by contributing to the assistance the Particular Synod gave each year for that inner city ministry.

Group trips were made to places such as the Amish country of Pennsylvania and theatre nights such as hearing the presentation of the Gospel of Mark by Alex McGowen in Princeton, Nov. 15, 1978. Twenty-six members of the church went on retreat at the Fellowship Deaconry, Liberty Corner, NJ, October 12-13, 1979.<sup>14</sup>

Family nights included talks by speakers such as Rev. Elia Tema of South Africa and Mr. and Mrs. John Hubers who had taught in Bahrain. A January progressive dinner was an annual social event.

Women of the Guild for Christian Service met at least four times a year. The group participated in both Reformed Church Women and Church Women United. Circles met monthly. They were reorganized in 1979 and 1980. Four circles, designated by the letters A, B, C and D, were reorganized into three and then two, one meeting at an afternoon time and the other in the evening. They were called the Afternoon and the Evening Circles. In 1978 June Shipman was President of the Guild. Grace Gates filled that office for the next two years. Sue Garback and Janet Waanders shared the leadership in 1982.

During Lent of 1979 the church began sponsoring five-minute broadcasts on radio station WCTC. The programs consisted of a meditation presented by Rev. Muyskens and announcements inviting people to the church. The program was presented on five Saturdays and again on four Saturdays in Advent. The broadcasts were continued in subsequent years but switched to Sunday mornings.

In the spring of 1979 the church hosted concerts by the Hope College Symphonette and a benefit concert presented by Janet Weisberger and Jane White for the Reformed Church Home expansion fund.

The First Reformed Church bowling team won the championship in the Friday Night Church Bowling League in 1979. Members of the team were James Wilcox, James Hance, Sr., James Hance, Jr., Joseph Olivo, Fred Shans, Ted Pace and Mike Jevic.

In 1980 the decision was made to accept the sponsorship of a refugee family. When Church World Service asked the Presbyterian Church in New Brunswick to sponsor a large family from Laos, the Thiangthams, they asked First Church to join them in sponsorship. The church accepted. John

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<sup>14</sup> Minutes of Consistory, September 18, 1979, and "The Newsletter," November, 1979.

Garback was chairman for First Church and ten other members of the church were on the committee.<sup>15</sup> The family was made of twelve members, father and mother, Seuth and Phamy Thiangtham, seven children ranging in age from two to twenty, and two grandchildren, aged one and two. They were from Savannakhet, Laos, and had spent three years in Ubon refugee camp in Thailand. Expecting the family to arrive in the fall, they came July 15th. Since housing could not be found immediately the family was provided shelter in the Church House for two months. During this time members of the church became acquainted with them and provided help by way of introduction to the English language, escorting them on short trips to become familiar with American life, supplying food and clothing, arranging for medical care, inoculations, social security numbers, etc. Members of the family were enrolled in English classes. A home was found for them to rent and employment for the father and the oldest son.<sup>16</sup>

In 1981 the God Squad, a social service agency of the New Brunswick Area Council of Churches, had an office on Church Street from which they were providing counseling and emergency help. They were in need of more space for their clothing bank. The Church supplied that need by providing three rooms of the basement of the Church House for their clothing bank. This was done until the God Squad relocated all their services to a place on French Street in 1984.

A Prayer Fellowship met on Wednesday evenings from the fall of 1978 through the spring of 1981. Meetings included Bible study and intercessory prayer. Interest in the group was generated in part by the charismatic movement. The meetings were discontinued when several regular attenders left the church to become members of Pentecostal churches.

Theresa Molina resigned as Sexton in July, 1981, after working for the church for eleven years. She was presented with a Bible and a cash gift from the church in appreciation of her services. A kind person who visited the sick and taught Sunday School in her Hispanic church, she had endeared herself to many. Ray Timms served as Sexton of the church for two years, the Sexton's House providing him and his family housing while he was a student at New Brunswick Theological Seminary. During the summer of 1983 Ray Timms also served as Student Assistant Minister. He conducted survey visits in the community and directed a film festival.

The handbell choirs continued to provide inspiring music for Easter and Christmas services as well as playing for other churches from time to time. A few more bells were added thru gifts to the memorial fund. Then a birthday gift fund was contributed in honor of Mrs. Elizabeth Emmett who was 100 years old in July, 1981. She was informed of this special gift at a party for

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<sup>15</sup> Annual Report, February 12, 1980, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> Annual Report, February 15, 1981, pp. 11,12.



her in the Randolph Room. With it bells were purchased to make a three-octave set of Schulmerich brass handbells.<sup>17</sup> Mrs. Emmett died in November and the new bells were dedicated in her memory on Mother's Day, 1982.<sup>18</sup>

In 1981 New Brunswick Theological Seminary began a campaign to raise money for library renovation, campus reorientation and urban studies, in anticipation of their 200th anniversary in 1984. The church was asked to contribute \$3,544. The Consistory approved this goal.<sup>19</sup> \$1000 of the church's share was given by George and Esther Howell in memory of Dr. Theodore Bayles.

October, 1981 Gertrude Bennington LaPlante died. Her earlier work as a Sunday School teacher was remembered with a framed print of "Jesus Blessing the Children" by Bernhard Plockhorst placed in the primary room of the Church House.

George Gillespie died February 17, 1982. His service as organist had inspired the church since 1973. Gifts in his memory were added to the organ fund which was named the George F. Gillespie Organ Fund. Renovations costing \$4280 were made in his memory with the balance and future contributions were to be used for maintaining the organ. His wife, Lois Gillespie, and Donna Muyskens assisted the church as substitute organists. Lillian Kollar and Joseph Suchocki were employed as organists each for a short time. Mr. Ronald Leu began his work as organist and choir director in May, 1984.

L. Alberta Stier, former church secretary, died September 20, 1982. Since both she and George Gillespie had been interested in the appearance of the church yard it was decided to landscape the area behind the sanctuary in their memory. The project was directed by Bruce and Ellen Hamilton with a Cook College class being taught by Dr. Hamilton taking on the project of laying the brick for a patio. This area was used for fellowship and refreshments after summer services. The new patio and landscaping provided a pleasant place for such events. The patio was dedicated on June 24, 1984.

A leader in the church since 1957, serving on Consistory as an elder, Financial Secretary and Finance Committee Chairman, and for the church as Trustee of the Hall Educational Fund, Volney K. Coffill, Jr., resigned September 15, 1981, due to illness. In gratitude for his work the Consistory presented him with a large print Bible. He died September 22, 1982. Rev. Muyskens wrote of him in "The Newsletter": Volney Coffill "was a man who you knew had deep faith in God and an unswerving loyalty to Christ. He was also one who could look at the lighter side and brought many a good laugh with his puns and jokes. He...served in such an outstanding way that he was

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<sup>17</sup> Annual Report, February 21, 1982, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> Annual Report, February 13, 1983, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> Consistory Minutes, October 20, 1981.

an inspiration to us all."<sup>20</sup> Memorial gifts amounting to \$1000 were given in his memory to the Camp Warwick fund to build a youth camp at the Warwick Conference Center in New York.

In 1980 George Rezac took over the duties of the office of Financial Secretary. In 1981 Edwin Baier was elected Finance Committee Chairman and Trustee of the Hall Educational Fund.

A planning retreat for the ministry of First Church was held at the Van Wickle House, Easton Avenue in Franklin, on February 13, 1982.<sup>21</sup>

A son of the church, Harold M. Delhagen, graduated from New Brunswick Theological Seminary in May, 1982. He was presented with a pulpit robe as a gift from the church. His ordination to the ministry of the word and sacraments in the Reformed Church in America was held in the church on June 20, 1982.

From April, 1981, to April, 1982, Rev. Muyskens was President of the Particular Synod of the Mid-Atlantics. The Synod's annual meeting was held at First Church in April, 1983, on a Friday evening and on Saturday at the Sheridan Inn in Piscataway with people representing all the churches present. Rev. Muyskens was chairman of the committee planning that event.

During the summer of 1982 a major restoration project was begun. The first step was to replace rotted window sashes and exterior wood trim on the Church House and have all the exterior woodwork painted. Ray Clark was the contractor who did this work completing it in the fall. The cost was \$18,000.<sup>22</sup>

The next step was undertaken mostly with volunteer labor in February, 1983. The first floor rooms and upstairs class rooms of the Church House were painted.

In order to raise money for these projects and work needed on the church a banquet was held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel April 7, 1983, with the goal of raising \$60,000 over the next three years. The event marked the 280th anniversary of the church. The handbell choir played. A slide presentation recalled the history of the church. A musical program was presented by Joel Gordan, the Cantor of Anshe Emeth Temple. The Rev. Dr. Robert Newbold, Associate Stated Clerk of the United Presbyterian Church, was the guest speaker. Mayor John Lynch brought greetings. Edwin Baier was chairman of the Restoration Fund campaign, John Garback was chairman of the banquet and Harold Delhagen Master of Ceremonies. Other members of the Restoration Fund Committee were Ruth Calabrese, Dorothy Van Nostrand and Agnes Haeseler. Over two hundred persons attended. Pledges to the Restoration Fund exceeded \$55,500.

<sup>20</sup> "The Newsletter," November, 1982, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Consistory Minutes, January 19, 1982.

<sup>22</sup> Consistory Minutes, November 16, 1982.

Paint Smart Company of Belleville was given the contract to do the restoration work necessary on the church building. The painting and repair of the exterior woodwork began in the fall of 1983. The cost was \$16,580. When the clock faces were taken down they were found to be in bad condition. Douglas Rose was asked to build new ones over the winter months. The total cost of restoration of the clock, including gold-leafing the numbers and hands was \$6,386.50. \$2,500 of that was contributed by the New Brunswick Development Corporation. The new and freshly painted clock faces were raised into place on a windy day in June, just in time to have them ready for the meeting of General Synod.

In June, 1984, the General Synod met at New Brunswick Theological Seminary and Rutgers. The pre-Synod Festival was at First Church with over 500 people attending the services. Dr. Ernest T. Campbell was the speaker.

In 1983 Norma Rezac was elected to the office of President of the Women's Guild. The last bazaar was held in the fall of 1982 in connection with the Oktoberfest held in downtown New Brunswick. For the next three years the women set up tables selling Dutch foods adjacent to the Church House for the Oktoberfest with the theme "A Touch of Dutch." Dutch costumes were worn and the Dutch klompen dancers under the direction of Ellen Hamilton performed. A dinner was served each fall as an annual fund raiser.

The Rev. Peter Paulsen was installed as the Executive for the Synod of the Mid-Atlantics at First Reformed Church September, 25, 1983.

As the church was chosen to be the site for events such as the Synod's installation the Women's Guild was called upon to host the receptions. Because they were always done in style with an abundance of tasty finger foods the women gained a reputation for being good hostesses. Regular events of the year for the Guild were the event near Mother's Day for mothers and daughters and the Advent breakfast. Spiritual retreats were held from time to time. Members of the group participated in Synod events such as conferences at Harvey Cedars and at each triennial of the Reformed Church Women there has been a significant delegation of women from First Reformed Church in New Brunswick.

The Youth Fellowship continued to meet on Sunday evenings. Each year trips were taken to such places as Camp Bernie, Warwick, The Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City and to Great Adventure amusement park. Volleyball was a recreational activity in the winter months and games were sometimes arranged as the means of getting together with other Reformed Church youth groups. The group raised funds by serving an Italian Dinner, a soup and salad lunch and pancake breakfasts.<sup>23</sup> During the school years 1982-1984 Moira Poppen was advisor as she served as Student

<sup>23</sup> Annual Report, February 26, 1984, p. 7.

Assistant Minister. In the years 1985-1987 students of New Brunswick Seminary who were Student Assistant Ministers were David Martin, Warren Russell and Richard Meunger. In the school year 1989-90 John Spencer was Student Assistant Minister.

In 1983 the Outreach Committee initiated closer contact of the church with the residents of the United Auto Workers Retired Citizens building on Neilson Street. A Strawberry Festival, an October sing-a-long, and a Christmas carol sing in December were held there by a group of people from the church.<sup>24</sup> Serving a Roast Beef Dinner became an annual means of raising money for the publicity and service projects of the committee.

In the fall of 1984 Agnes Haeseler moved to a North Carolina retirement home. Farewell was said to her at a covered dish supper. A nurse, Agnes was loved for her concern for people. She was often at people's homes to pay a visit and bring a thoughtful gift such as homemade raspberry jam or home baked bread.

The National Council of Churches held their annual board meeting at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in New Brunswick in November, 1984. On the evening of November 9 the service of installation was held in First Reformed Church installing the Rev. Dr. Arie Brouwer as General Secretary of the Council. Rev. Brouwer is a Reformed Church minister and was a college and seminary classmate of Rev. Muyskens. The preacher for the service was Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa.

The Consistory held a special meeting with Synod Executive, Peter Paulsen, on November 3, 1984, in an effort to develop some long range plans. Cottage meetings were held throughout the congregation during the spring of 1985. These meetings generated a number of ideas which were given to the committees of the church.<sup>25</sup>

Bertha Shipman had been a member of the church since 1922, a leader of the women's Guild and of the sewing circle and a faithful attender at worship and Bible classes. She died June 1, 1985. Rev. Muyskens wrote in the Newsletter: "She was one of those solid Christians, with deep and unshakable conviction along with a loving concern for people, who has a profound influence upon others. She did not consider herself a powerful person, small of stature and humble in spirit. But her firm faith and unwavering determination was powerful. Her concern was that people may know Christ and his love. And if you knew her, you couldn't help being affected by that concern as it grew out of the love in her heart. We thank God for her spirit, which inspires us to go about our tasks with faith and determination."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> Minutes of Consistory, September 17, 1985.

<sup>26</sup> "The Newsletter," September, 1985, p. 2.

The Sewing Circle continued to meet on Wednesday mornings with the leadership of Frances Pace.

The Sunday Church School held classes for children, youth and adults every Sunday at 9:45 a.m. Special events each year were the Easter Egg Hunt, the Children's Day worship service and church picnic, and the White Gift Service. Several of the teachers who served for a number of years were Helen Pace as Primary teacher for eight years, Ruth Calabrese as Junior teacher for over twelve years and Bruce Hamilton as Youth teacher for over eighteen years. Rev. Muyskens taught the adult class.

In June, 1985, the Muyskens had been with the church for ten years. Special recognition of this was made in the presentation of a gift of \$1000 to be used for a trip of their choosing. They chose a January trip to Arizona visiting Donna's parents at their winter home in Mesa.

A "Share the Word" project was initiated by the Outreach Committee in the fall of 1985. Scripture Courtesy Centers were set up to make Bible literature published by the American Bible Society available at the church, at Middlesex General University Hospital and at the U.A.W. Senior Apartment Building. Christine Delhagen, Sue Garback and Vernon Espi-Tallier were volunteers doing this project.

December, 1985, Louis Bellafiore became Sexton of the church. He left at the end of 1987 and January, 1988, Hector Rivera became the Sexton.

Beginning in January, 1986, the Mine Street Coffee House moved to the basement of the Church House. The coffee house, which began in the 1960's at Second Reformed Church on Mine Street, is open Saturday evenings. Performers from near and far present traditional and original folk music with a variety of acoustical instruments.

On February 23, 1986, the Rev. Dr. Robert White was installed as President of the New Brunswick Theological Seminary. The installation was held in First Reformed Church and a reception held in the Church House.

Ray and Susanne Clark and their daughter, Kolbe, went to China January through September of 1986. Susanne received the idea of using her sabbatical as a public school teacher teaching there from a presentation made in the church by a representative of an organization that was placing Americans in China to teach English. Through arrangements made by Mrs. Geraldine Poppen she taught in a technical high school in Hangzhou.

Ronald Leu resigned as organist and choir director at the end of October, 1986, due to illness. A service of thanksgiving for his work was held at the Anshe Emeth Temple where he was also organist. The choir and members of First Reformed Church participated in that service. He died January 3, 1987. The choirs of First Reformed Church and the Anshe Emeth Temple combined their voices to sing for his memorial service.

Christina Shrewsbury became organist and choir director February, 1987. In May, 1987, a festival of music was held at First Church with ten

area church choirs participating. In the summer of 1988 she moved to New York State. For the academic year 1988-89 Kevin Freaney, a student at Westminster Choir College, was the organist and choir director. He was succeeded by another student at Westminster Choir College, E. William Allred, II.

In 1985 the Reformed Church in America had produced a new hymn book called "Rejoice in the Lord." Some copies had been purchased for the choir with gifts in memory of Patricia Y. Vosteen who had been an enthusiastic member of First Reformed Church for only a short time before she died. In the fall of 1987 a gift of \$1000 was received from Robert Holthausen for the purchase of new hymn books in memory of Ronald Leu. Others gave books in memory of loved ones and Rejoice in the Lord hymnals were placed in the pews.

For the period of July 2 through August 5, 1987, the Rev. William J. "Willard" Kelly, of Northern Ireland, was guest preacher at First Reformed Church. Rev. Muyskens exchanged pulpits with him during that period preaching at the Clogher and Glenhoy Presbyterian Churches in Northern Ireland.

During the academic years of 1987-1989 Kuen-Chih "Brandon" Chang, a Taiwanese graduate of Northwestern College, was a graduate student at the School of Social Work of Rutgers University. He became a member of First Church and taught the Junior High Sunday School Class. He was aided with scholarship assistance from the church. In 1989 he returned to Taiwan to be a Christian counselor there.

Under the guidance of the Chair, Harold Delhagen, the Outreach Committee began in October, 1988, to take the second Friday evening of each month as First Church's night to serve a meal for the hungry at Christ Church. A program which came to be called "Elijah's Promise" provided lunch and supper every day of the week. Volunteers from First Church cooked and served the meal every second Friday. Margaret Schoen organized the cooks and Cheryl Pennick and Betsy Snope coordinated the servers. This program continued under the leadership of the next Outreach Committee Chair, Bill Cook.

The church also participated in a rotating temporary shelter for the homeless. The rotating shelter was held one week at a time in several of the churches and one synagogue in the city during the winter. In the winters of 1989, 1990, and 1991 the church provided shelter for homeless men for two weeks each winter. Volunteers from First Church and others who came to help spent the night operating the shelter with cots in the gym of the Church House. Bill Cook was Coordinator.

January 28, 1989, First Church was host to the Synod Rally for a denominational fund drive called "Putting People in Mission." Its purpose was to raise money for new ministries of the Reformed Church in America

including campus improvements and library expansion at New Brunswick Theological Seminary and renovations at Warwick Conference Center. First Church responded to the campaign by holding cottage meetings presenting the opportunities for mission to the members. Members of the church pledged \$21,540 to the program.<sup>27</sup> Vernon Espi-Tallier was Treasurer of the drive for First Church.

In December of 1988 repairs to the town clock cost \$1819.40. This bill was paid by the City of New Brunswick. During the summer of 1989 all interior walls of the church were painted at the cost of \$33,000 and the fire alarm system was upgraded at a cost of \$2235.<sup>28</sup> The roof of the Church House was repaired including the bolstering of supporting beams.

In 1989 the Taiwanese/American Fellowship Presbyterian Church was invited to share the facilities of First Reformed Church. The congregation had been meeting at the Kingston Presbyterian Church. Since the Rev. Benjamin Hsieh had come from Taiwan to be their Pastor the church had grown and decided to locate in New Brunswick to strengthen their ministry to Taiwanese students of Rutgers. August 20, 1989, the first Sunday of their worshiping in First Church, a united worship service was held. The service was conducted in Taiwanese and English. Rev. Muyskens preached the sermon. It was translated by Dr. Larry Chen. A large Taiwanese Choir sang.

Sunday worship services were moved up to 10:30 a.m. starting in September, 1989. Sunday School classes began at 9:30 a.m.

The Taiwanese/American Fellowship Presbyterian Church held their worship services on Sundays at 12 noon. Their Sunday afternoon activities included a Chinese lunch, Sunday School classes, language classes, and group meetings.

A founder of the Taiwanese/American Fellowship Presbyterian Church, Rev. Andrew Kuo, and his wife became members of First Reformed Church. In 1990 Rev. Kuo returned to Taiwan to teach in Seminary there.

On December 24, 1989, a choir of singers from both the Taiwanese American Fellowship Presbyterian Church and First Reformed Church, under the direction of Victor Shen, sang most of Parts I and II of Handel's Messiah at an 11 a.m. worship service.

Officers of the church in 1989-90 were Edwin Baier, Vice President; Lauren Bernhofer, Clerk; Theodore Pace; Treasurer; David Shipman, Assistant Treasurer; George Rezac, Financial Secretary; Edwin Baier, Finance Committee Chair; David Waanders, Worship Committee Chair; Jane Parker, Christian Education Committee Chair; William Cook, Outreach Committee Chair; and Raymond Clark, Property Committee Chair. Others on the Consistory at the time were Elders John Garback and Ellen Hamilton, and

<sup>27</sup> Annual Reports for 1989, p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> Minutes of Consistory, May 16, 1989.

Deacons Bruce Baier, Rosalie Davis, and Ruth Calabrese. In 1990 and 1991 Margaret Coakley, Betsy Snope and James A. Hance, Jr., were elected Deacons and Betsy Snope became Clerk.

The Church Secretary was Merrijane Gottshall. The Sexton was Hector Rivera.

Officers of the Women's Guild for Christian Service were Norma Rezac, President; Phyllis Baier, Secretary; Jane Parker, Treasurer; Grace Gates, Education Chair; Margaret Schoen, Service Chair; Sue Garback, Spiritual Life Chair; Donna Muyskens, Organization Chair; Margaret Schoen, Chair of the Afternoon Circle; Christine Delhagen, Chair of the Evening Circle; and Betty Gram, Church Women United Representative.

Sunday School teachers were Lauren Bernhofer, John Spencer, Dr. John Coakley, Dr. Bruce Hamilton, and Rev. Muyskens.

Total receipts for the operation of the church in the year 1990 were \$132,029. Of that \$46,328 came from offerings, \$66,472 was income from investments, and \$19,229 from bequests. \$26,220 was given to benevolences.<sup>29</sup>

Bequests were received from the estate of Lewis Ballschmidt who died May 8, 1988, of over \$33,000 and from the estate of Margaret Conover who died February 6, 1989, of over \$100,000.

Rev. Muyskens was active in community service. For a number of years he administered the "Clergy Fund" of the New Brunswick Rotary Club, a fund which gave assistance to persons with emergency needs. Because of his concern for meeting the need for low and moderate-income housing he was a Trustee of the Housing Coalition of Middlesex County and of the Brunswick & Raritan Housing Corporation. For several years he was the Secretary-Treasurer of the Clergy Club. He continued in that office as the group was reorganized in 1990 to become the Interfaith Leadership Association of Central Jersey. He was a Trustee and executive committee member of East Jersey Olde Towne, a museum village in Johnson Park. He headed the committee of East Jersey Olde Towne in charge of the church in the village which is a replica of the Three Mile Run Church. He served as a Trustee and President of the Hall Educational Fund.

While serving as Pastor of the church Rev. Muyskens also was elected to several denominational responsibilities. He served terms as President of Classis, President of the Particular Synod of the Mid-Atlantics, Member of the General Synod Executive Committee, Trustee of Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa, and Chair of the Theological Students Committee of the Classis of New Brunswick.

In 1990 William T. ("Ted") Pace resigned as Treasurer. He served in that office for twenty-six years. George Rezac was elected Treasurer. Ted

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<sup>29</sup> Annual Reports for 1990, pp. 1 & 3.



Pace handled the work of the Financial Secretary until 1991 when Elizabeth Hance was elected to that office.

In the early months of 1991 many prayers were said for the American troops engaged in the Gulf War and for peace in the Middle East. Matthew Parker served as a Navy officer on a ship in the Persian Gulf.

In 1991 Janet Waanders was elected President of the Reformed Church Women at First Church and Grace Gates Vice President.

Twenty-two members of the congregation went on a retreat at the Fellowship Deaconry, Liberty Corner, NJ, February 15-16, 1991. Ideas were generated for the ministry and programs of the church.

Side chairs for the chancel were given by Richard B. and Dorothy Shipman in 1991 in memory of her mother and father, Axel and Jennie Hansen, chairs to which Dick had applied his skills of refinishing.

In the summer of 1991 the tower was repaired and all exterior wood on the Church and Church House painted by Robert Lynch & Sons at the cost of \$24,000. Westminster Studios removed the storm glass protective coverings over six stained glass windows on the front of the church and replaced them with lexon at a cost of \$2790. They also repaired the round window of the tower.

The years of Rev. Muyskens' ministry coincided with the time that New Brunswick Tomorrow and the New Brunswick Development Corporation were organized as agencies to promote the revitalization of New Brunswick. With the backing of Johnson and Johnson many physical changes occurred in downtown New Brunswick. In addition to the Johnson and Johnson international headquarters, a Hyatt Regency Hotel was located near the church between Neilson and Burnet, Albany and Hiram Streets. New office buildings and retail stores were built in the business district.

On February 13, 1990, a plan for condominium housing called "RiverWatch" was announced for the Hiram Street area and the nearby waterfront.

All of this development was designed to make downtown New Brunswick a vital and attractive community. It is expected that new opportunities and challenges will be offered to the church as it continues to be faithful to the call to ministry in the New Brunswick area. "On the Way" is the title of an emphasis on reaching out with the gospel adopted by the Reformed Church in America. The Consistory elected to share in this emphasis. The goal is to increase the membership. In 1985 there were 128 communicant members with thirty-five students and teachers enrolled in the Church School. In 1990 the communicant members numbered 129 and the Church School

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<sup>30</sup> Annual Reports for 1990, p. 1.

Unlike a digital readout which tells only the present moment, the "Town Clock Church" bears witness to the presence of God in the past and points to a future in which the grace of God will continue to guide.

Its history provides inspiration as we see the hand of God at work in the past. The church's history and its site reminds us of the "great cloud of witnesses" who have given years of service for Christ. Now we are engaged to "run with perseverance the race that is set before us." We are called to be engaged in ministry, taking up the work of Christ in our time, on the way toward the future of the kingdom of God.

The following "Statement of Purpose" defines the mission:

"The First Reformed Church in New Brunswick is a congregation of people seeking to praise and serve God in all of life. Together in worship, friendship, and service we give thanks to God for grace given to us through Jesus Christ.

"Known as the Town Clock Church, we believe that Jesus is Lord over all our minutes and days. This faith is informed by the Bible and the witness of the church reformed according to the Word of God.

"Our hope is in God's reign of justice and peace toward which we are led by the Holy Spirit.

"Our ministry is to give expression to the love of God for the people of the New Brunswick area, and, with the Reformed Church in America and the whole church, for the people of the world. Toward that end we build the church as a communion in which faith is nurtured, hope is renewed and love shared because the times are in God's hands."

Abeel, David, 32, 92  
Anderson, Nelson, 121, 123, 126  
Baier, Bruce, 145  
Baier, Edwin, 139, 144  
Baier, Phyllis, 103, 126, 145  
Ballschmidt, Lewis, 98, 145  
Bayles, Theodore, 79, 82, 85, 87, 91, 138  
Bennet, Abraham, 2, 3  
Bernhofer, Lauren, 144, 145  
Bertholf, Guiliam, 2, 7  
Bevier, Garetta, 59, 98  
Booraem, Nicholas, 48  
Bothwell, James, 107, 118, 121, 124, 125, 126, 133  
Brink, Daniel, 87, 89, 90, 92, 126  
Brink, Frances, 87, 89  
Brouwer, Arie, 141  
Buttler, G. Harold, 71  
Buttler, Howard, 52, 56, 58, 64, 65, 70, 73, 75  
Calabrese, Ruth, 135, 139, 145  
Campbell, Ernest T., 140  
Carbeck, Virginia, 135  
Chang, Brandon, 143  
Chen, Larry, 144  
Choir, 51, 60, 66, 71, 73, 79, 81, 87, 90, 97, 102, 113, 115, 117, 118, 128, 143  
Christian Education Fund, 42, 59, 78, 88, 108  
Christian Endeavor, 58, 60, 71, 81  
Church House, 49, 63, 71, 75, 78, 83, 88, 96, 97, 101, 102, 105, 107, 108, 110, 115, 121, 124, 126, 133, 134, 139, 144  
Church Repair, 35, 41, 44, 48, 52, 54, 62, 64, 65, 68, 73, 79, 83, 89, 92, 96, 101, 105, 114, 116, 119, 123, 133, 140, 144, 146  
Church Women United, 81, 100, 114, 136, 145  
Clark, Elizabeth, 98, 102, 103, 127, 129  
Clark, John, 24, 26, 40, 41, 44, 46, 49  
Clark, Ray, 98, 99, 108, 109, 119, 120, 121, 127, 128, 139, 142, 144  
Coakley, John, 145  
Coakley, Margaret, 145  
Coffill, Naomi, 123, 127, 132  
Coffill, Volney, 103, 106, 111, 113, 118, 120, 125, 128, 135, 138  
Cole, David, 39, 40, 46, 47  
Cole, Grace, 99, 107  
Coles, Emilie, 62  
Condict, Ira, 19, 22, 24

Conover, Margaret, 102, 145  
Cook, William, 143, 144  
Council of Churches, 67, 72, 74, 90, 96, 104, 106, 113, 117, 137, 141  
Davis, Rosalie, 145  
De Velder, Marion, 82, 126  
De Velder, Walter, 80, 90, 95, 99, 105, 115, 127  
Delhagen, Christine, 142, 145  
Delhagen, Harold, 118, 126, 127, 128, 133, 139, 143  
Delhagen, Harold M., 139  
Deuble, Frank, 92, 97, 99, 103, 105, 108, 109, 118, 123  
Dickson, Robert, 101, 102, 103, 106, 107, 108, 111, 126, 133  
Dickson, Ruth, 101, 106, 107  
Easton, Thomas, 52, 55, 64, 70, 73  
Egerton, Matthew, 24, 35, 36  
Emmett, Elizabeth, 138  
Endowments, 42, 59, 68, 76, 78, 88, 90, 98, 103, 107, 109, 110, 117, 120, 145  
Episcopal Church, 12, 14, 25, 35, 74, 121  
Espí-Tallier, Vernon, 142, 144  
Ferris, Isaac, 31, 33, 47  
Fisher, Hendrik, 8, 10, 12, 14, 17  
Fonda, Jesse, 29, 34  
Freeman, Bernardus, 3, 4, 6  
Frelinghuysen, Theodorus Jacobus, 5, 7, 8, 11, 17, 80, 89, 95, 115, 134  
French, Philip, 12, 102  
Garback, John, 123, 128, 137, 139, 145  
Garback, Sue, 115, 121, 123, 126, 127, 129, 135, 136, 142, 144  
Gates, Grace, 110, 123, 129, 132, 136, 145, 146  
Gates, Walter, 114, 119, 120, 121, 125  
General Synod, 41, 42, 47, 54, 56, 68, 87, 92, 107, 118, 140  
German Reformed Church, 41  
Gillespie, George, 103, 126, 128, 131, 132, 138  
Gottshall, Merrijane, 135, 145  
Gram, Betty, 98, 106, 145  
Guild, 33, 37, 46, 60, 72, 75, 80, 81, 82, 87, 100, 102, 106, 112, 114, 126, 129, 132, 136, 140, 145  
Haeseler, Agnes, 135, 139, 141  
Hageman, Howard, 126, 127, 131  
Hall Educational Fund, 21, 62, 90, 110  
Hamilton, Bruce, 112, 119, 121, 122, 127, 138, 145  
Hamilton, Ellen, 112, 115, 119, 127, 132, 138, 144

- Hance, Elizabeth, 146  
Hance, James A., Jr., 136, 145  
Hance, James, Sr., 125, 126, 128, 133, 136  
Handbell Choir, 131, 134, 138, 139  
Hardenbergh, Jacob, 14, 17, 21  
Hardenbergh, James B., 34  
Highland Park Reformed Church, 58, 64, 79  
Hine, Orville, 94, 95, 100  
Hiram Street, 29, 114, 118, 119, 120, 124, 135, 146  
Hoagland, Gladys, 94, 102, 114, 125  
Hoffman, William, 108  
Hogan, Evelyn, 72, 80, 81  
Hogan, Jasper, 29, 69, 70, 72, 75, 80, 83, 84, 87, 89, 91, 93, 94, 98, 103  
Holthausen, Robert, 143  
How, Samuel, 31, 38, 40, 42, 46, 54  
Howell, Anna, 110  
Howell, Bertram, 78, 84, 99, 102, 103, 110, 117  
Howell, Esther, 94, 98, 99, 107, 138  
Howell, George, 76, 79, 83, 91, 93, 99, 101, 102, 108, 138  
Hsieh, Ben, 144  
Hymns, 41, 51, 64, 88, 103, 143  
James, Stephen, 109  
Janeway, Jacob, 36  
Jones, Edwin, 111, 112  
Kane, Lillian, 99, 102, 115, 117, 119, 126, 128  
Kirkpatrick, Jan, 88  
Kirkpatrick, Jane, 39  
Kunderman, Shirley, 97, 106  
Kuo, Andrew, 144  
Kuyten, Rudolph, 129, 135  
LaPlante, Gertrude, 125, 138  
Leu, Ronald, 138, 142, 143  
Leydt, Johannes, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 133  
Library, 47  
Livingston, John Henry, 18, 23, 25, 26, 28, 31, 32, 33, 36  
Ludlow, John, 30, 34  
Memorials, 64, 65, 66, 97, 99, 103, 105, 138, 143  
Messiah, 90, 97, 103, 115, 144  
Methodist Church, 82, 90, 96, 111, 127, 132, 134  
Middlebush Reformed Church, 36  
Milledoler, Philip, 37  
Miller, Klaire, 135

Muyskens, Donna, 131, 134, 138, 142, 145  
Muyskens, J. David, 131, 135, 139, 142, 143, 145  
Muyskens, John & Dora, 80  
New Brunswick Theological Seminary, 11, 23, 24, 29, 37, 44, 52, 58, 63, 64, 69, 70, 75, 78, 82, 87, 88, 90, 94, 101, 102, 104, 108, 109, 119, 127, 129, 137, 138, 139, 142, 144  
O'Rourke, Charles, 97, 108, 125  
O'Rourke, Eleanor, 99, 106, 126  
Oakey, Abraham, 48  
Organ, 63, 65, 68, 71, 76, 91, 95, 97, 123, 126, 138  
Pace, Frances, 102, 106, 126, 142  
Pace, Richard, 110, 120, 126, 129  
Pace, Ted, 108, 109, 126, 128, 136, 144  
Parker, Jane, 144  
Particular Synod, 74, 124, 129, 133, 134, 136, 139, 140  
Paulsen, Peter, 140, 141  
Pennick, Cheryl, 143  
Pockman, Philetus, 58, 62, 63, 66, 68, 70  
Presbyterian Church, 9, 15, 26, 31, 38, 74, 77, 82, 90, 95, 96, 97, 110, 119, 132, 136  
Property, 12, 30, 34, 36, 42, 44, 46, 55, 63, 66, 79, 110, 113, 146  
Randolph, A. F., 72, 87, 91, 99, 102  
Randolph, A. O., 108  
Randolph, Ambrose, 64, 71, 78, 79  
Rappleyea, A. O., 76, 81, 83, 87, 88, 99, 125  
Rezac, George, 139, 144  
Rezac, Norma, 119, 145  
Rose, A. W., 110, 116, 123, 128  
Rue, Betty, 106, 126, 127  
Rue, Walter, 97, 102, 123, 125, 126  
Rutgers, 14, 17, 22, 23, 27, 28, 34, 37, 44, 45, 46, 50, 58, 63, 69, 70, 71, 73, 81, 87, 101, 102, 104, 105, 108, 121, 134, 143  
Samuelson, Eleanor, 115, 132, 133  
Schoen, Margaret, 123, 132, 143, 145  
Schureman, Jacob, 6, 8, 12, 15, 28, 80, 96  
Schureman, John, 28  
Second Reformed Church, 41, 53, 54, 56, 58, 65, 66, 74, 76, 77, 79, 112, 123, 135  
Segoine, Margaret, 105  
Segoine, Richard, 96, 97, 105, 110, 125  
Sewing Circle, 46, 113, 126, 142  
Sexton, 48, 50, 60, 68, 71, 76, 80, 81, 88, 102, 104, 109, 111, 112, 114, 116, 118, 121, 123, 137, 142, 145

- Sexton's House, 50, 55, 83, 104, 109, 112, 113, 114, 121, 137  
Shipman, Bertha, 99, 100, 106, 113, 126, 141  
Shipman, David, 144  
Shipman, Dorothy, 110, 115, 127, 128, 146  
Shipman, June, 136  
Shipman, Louis B., 81, 87, 99, 102  
Shipman, Louis D., 105, 108, 126, 135  
Shipman, Richard B., 133, 146  
Shipman, Robert, 121, 122, 126  
Sing, Hing, 59  
Snope, Betsy, 143, 145  
Stained Glass Crafters, 126  
Stained Glass Windows, 62, 133, 146  
Steele, Richard, 46, 47, 49, 51, 64  
Stier, Alberta, 111, 121, 125, 129, 138  
Student Assistant, 82, 89, 90, 99, 105, 107, 108, 109, 112, 114, 116, 117, 118, 119, 124, 128, 131, 133, 134, 137, 141  
Sunday School, 20, 30, 34, 39, 40, 46, 47, 49, 52, 56, 59, 60, 61, 62, 64, 68, 70, 71, 72, 74, 75, 78, 79, 81, 82, 87, 88, 93, 94, 96, 97, 98, 99, 102, 103, 104, 109, 111, 112, 118, 126, 127, 129, 132, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146  
Suydam Street Reformed Church, 58, 65, 76, 79, 83, 84, 90, 93, 97, 119, 124  
Suydam, V. M. W., 49, 61, 63, 64, 65, 68  
Taiwanese/American Fellowship Presbyterian Church, 144  
Tema, Elia, 136  
Tennent, Gilbert, 9  
Thompson, Frederick B., 35  
Three Mile Run Church, 1, 2, 6  
Throop Avenue Mission, 60, 65, 70, 75, 81  
Town Clock, 35, 68, 71, 83, 140, 144, 147  
Tutu, Desmond, 141  
Van Bergh, Dina, 19, 20, 95  
Van Bunschooten, Elias, 24  
Van Doren, Sarah, 20, 30, 34  
Van Dyke, Lydia, 44  
Van Noatrand, Willard, 99  
Van Nostrand, Dorothy, 87, 99, 105, 106, 109, 120, 128, 135, 139  
Van Nostrand, Willard, 76, 79, 83, 84, 87, 91, 94, 102, 105  
Van Nuis, Edgar, 99, 102, 105, 120, 121  
Van Nuis, Percy, 72, 73, 77, 79, 87, 91, 96, 99, 101, 102, 106, 107, 108, 110, 114, 126  
Van Oort, Eileen, 112, 113, 127, 128

Van Oort, Glenn, 109, 111, 112, 113, 115, 116, 122, 126, 128  
Van Pelt, Gilbert, 47, 49, 60, 63, 64, 65  
Van Vlecq, Paulus, 2  
Vander Kolk, Justin, 102, 103, 105, 109  
Volney, Coffill, 119  
Voorhees, John, 60, 68  
Voorhees, Minne, 9, 15  
Voorhees, Oscar, 84, 94, 98  
Waanders, David, 119, 128, 130, 144  
Waanders, Janet, 136, 146  
Waldron, Florence, 87, 88, 98  
Weber, William, 103, 104, 106, 109, 115, 125, 126  
White, Robert, 142  
Whitefield, George, 9  
Wilcox, James, 125, 126, 128, 136  
Williams, Aletha, 102, 115, 124  
Wissink, Charles, 128, 130, 131  
Zwemer, Samuel, 89



