The background of the cover is a photograph of a white, multi-tiered church steeple. The steeple has a black clock face with gold hands and Roman numerals. The top of the steeple is topped with a weather vane. In the foreground, there are branches of a tree with pink blossoms, likely cherry blossoms, partially obscuring the lower part of the steeple. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

*Church and
Community*

1675 - 1975

*The Story of the
First Presbyterian
Church of Smithtown,
New York*

Second Edition

CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

FIRST EDITION

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SECOND EDITION

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*Church
and
Community
1675-1975*

*The Story of the
First Presbyterian Church
of Smithtown, New York*

J. RICHARD MEHALICK

The re-issue of "Church and Community 1675-1975" with additional material, is dedicated to Dorothy Mehalick, 2010.

In recognition of historians Bradley Harris and Noel Gish for keeping the stories alive.

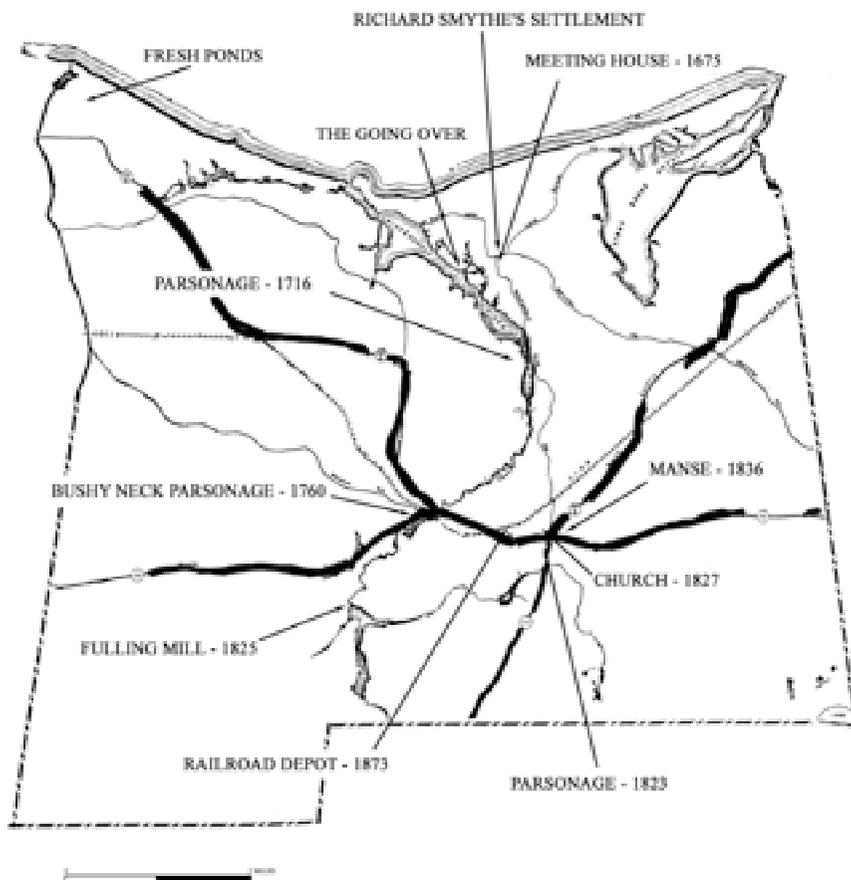
Thanks to Zena S. Nunziata for editing this history.

*For inquire, I pray of you of bygone ages,
and consider what the fathers have found.*

*Will they not teach you and tell you
and utter words out of their understanding*

JOB 8:8, 10

LOCATIONS OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE WITHIN THE TOWN OF SMITHTOWN



AUTHOR'S NOTES

In preparing this book, I have strived to present to the reader an overview of the day to day topics and environment that prevailed in the First Presbyterian Church and within the Town of Smithtown during the three hundred years they have been growing together. The history emphasizes events rather than persons. This is not intended to minimize the influence and dedication of those individuals who brought about these events. To search out and give proper credit to all the deserving people could result in unfair omissions. Thus, where names have been used, it has not been with the intent to single out individual efforts, but only because it enhances or is necessary to the continuity of the story.

It will be apparent in reading the quotations from certain old documents that the spelling and grammatical details are not always correct by today's teachings. Where they existed in the original documents, these discrepancies have been intentionally incorporated into the text to further project the image of the period.

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LOVE DIVINE

Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven, to earth come down,
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,
All Thy faithful mercies crown!
Jesus Thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit
Into every troubled breast!
Let us all in Thee inherit,
Let us find the promised rest;
Take away the love of sinning;
Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith, as its Beginning,
Set our hearts at liberty.

Come, Almighty to deliver,
Let us all Thy Life receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Nevermore Thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above;
Pray, and praise Thee without ceasing,
Glory in Thy perfect love.

Finish, then. Thy new creation;
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see Thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in Thee;
Changed from glory into glory,
Til in heaven we take our place,
Til we cast our crown before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.

REV. CHARLES WESLEY

1747

Chapter One

The First 100 Years

1675-1775



Prologue to the First 100 Years

1675-1775

The First Presbyterian Church of Smithtown traces its heritage back in time to 1675 when the first organized church was formed in Smithtown. No original records remain concerning the formation, but this date is accepted by historians of Long Island. When first organized, the Church members followed the Congregational tradition. Initially this may be surprising, but it becomes quite logical when the history of the settlement of Eastern Long Island is studied as well as the background of Richard Smythe, the patentee and founder of the township.

In 1675, it had been only fifty-five years since the first Pilgrims or Separatists arrived and formed the Plymouth Colony and forty-six years since the Puritans formed the Massachusetts Bay Colony. It is important to remember that these were religious refugees, fleeing from the Church of England because they so strongly wanted the right to worship God freely and without governmental influence.

The name Puritan encompassed all who adhered to a simple religious belief, manner of worship and church organization and their numbers included the devout “Congregationalists.”

The “Congregationalists” derived their name from their belief that each individual congregation should be governed by its members, free of higher church authority. Each church could frame a statement of belief and determine the form of worship to be used. Congregational Churches had been organized on Eastern Long Island, at Southold and Southampton in 1640, East Hampton in 1650 and Setauket in 1665.

Richard Smith was part of this migration to the New World. Born and raised in England, he came to America, perhaps to Lynn, Massachusetts. Afterwards he migrated across Long Island Sound to Southampton where the early settlers were members of the Congregational Church. It is here, in the year 1643, that the earliest documented reference to Richard Smith is found. Records show that he was a land owner and the site of his home is identified. By 1661 he was living in Setauket and in 1663 he bought from Lion Gardiner the “Nesaquake Lands” which comprise most of present day Smithtown. Mr. Gardiner, whose residence was on the island

that bears his name between the forks of Eastern Long Island, was an old friend of Richard Smith.

Gardiner had received an Indian title to the "Nesaquake Lands" in 1659 from Chief Wyandanch of the Montauk Indian Tribe. The Montauks had been frequently attacked by the Narragansetts and were forced to pay tribute to this mainland tribe. In one raid, the daughter of Chief Wyandanch was kidnapped by the Narragansetts on the eve of her wedding. Gardiner, who years before had earned the respect of the Narragansetts as a British military commander, was instrumental in negotiating her release. Tradition states that father and daughter were reunited at the home of Richard Smith. As an expression of gratitude, Chief Wyandanch deeded to Gardiner the land described as the "Nesaquake Lands." The name was derived from the Indian tribe that lived along both shores of the river that is now called the Nissequogue.

The deed Richard Smith received from Lion Gardiner was only recognized as an Indian Deed. In March 1665, dating by the Gregorian calendar in use by Great Britain at that time, or March 1666 under the Julian calendar we use today, Richard Smith obtained a patent for the land from Richard Nichols, who was then ". . . Governor under His Royall Highness, James, Duke of York & of all his Territories in America." However, the ownership of land west of the River remained in dispute with several Indians and the Town of Huntington.

The same young Indian princess who, according to tradition, had been reunited with her father several years earlier in Smith's home, convinced him that the claims of the Indians were just. Thereupon Richard Smith settled that portion of the dispute by paying the Indians the following: one gun, a kettle, twelve coats, one blanket, three hands of powder and three handfuls of lead.

However, the dispute with the Town of Huntington persisted for a dozen years. Through court cases and appeals to English and Dutch Governors who alternately ruled the area during those years, he eventually obtained clear title to the lands he interchangeably called Smith-field and Smith's Town.

As a condition of obtaining clear title from the Governor, he was obliged to settle ten families within three years and twenty-five families within five years after all boundaries were resolved. No precise record exists as to the date, but as Richard Smith's legal problems were resolved, he settled on his land at what is now the intersection of River Road and Moriches Road. Evidently he settled there before 1670, since a deed from that year exists in which he gave a 100 acre tract of land to his son, Obadiah, on the west side of the River. Six other sons, Jonathan, Richard Jr., Job, Adam, Samuel and Daniel all had homes in the immediate vicinity of the intersection of River Road and Moriches Road on the east side of the River.

Smith's two daughters married and moved from the area. Elizabeth married Captain William Lawrence of Flushing, New York. Her younger sister, Deborah, married Major William Lawrence, son of Captain Lawrence by an earlier marriage. Elizabeth married Governor Carteret of New Jersey following the death of Captain Lawrence.

Obadiah, who had been given the farm on the west side of the River, drowned in 1680 and is presumed to be the first settler buried in the Town.

By today's criteria, Moriches Road and River Road might seem like a strange place to establish a frontier settlement. But three hundred years ago the proximity to important natural resources made it an ideal site for a new community.

The Smiths farmed their lands, growing most of their food. Necessary drinking water was provided by fresh springs that are still flowing today. The nearby Sound provided clams, oysters, and lobsters as well as salt water fish. For additional food they hunted fowl and small game.

The site's proximity to the River permitted the collection of marsh grass from the tidal flats, to be used as a basic staple fodder for feeding the settlers' cattle. The fresh water river also yielded food, for in those days the river abounded with shad. The river provided a convenient harbor for trading ships that came to buy and transport cordwood to New York City. The abundance of hardwood trees gave the settlers a profitable cash crop, since wood was the primary fuel for heating buildings in New York City. Additionally, the lumber was useful to these settlers in building their homes and later was the catalyst that brought shipbuilding to Smithtown as an early industry. A number of shipyards existed along the River in those early days and the town became the home of a number of sea captains.

Thus, probably within five to ten years after the founding of Smithtown, the first "meeting house" was built in the midst of the Smith family settlement. The date is generally accepted to be 1675.

It is interesting to note that in 1675 America was still frontier territory. Jamestown, Virginia, which was established in 1607 and was the first enduring English settlement, was still experiencing major raids and warfare with the Indians. It is also interesting as well as ironic that one year before the arrival of the Pilgrims in Massachusetts in search of religious freedom, the first African slaves were sold in this country to that Jamestown settlement.

With the early history of Congregational Churches on eastern Long Island, it is easy to understand that the Smith Family should have estab-

lished a church following the Congregational tradition. The first minister was most likely Reverend Nathaniel Brewster, who founded a Congregational Church in nearby Setauket in 1665 and served there until 1690. It was common in those days for a minister to serve several scattered congregations. The first recorded minister to serve the Smith-town church was Reverend George Phillips who succeeded Nathaniel Brewster in Setauket and made an agreement to include Smithtown as part of his charge.

The Church's Congregational beginning is also quite logical in view of the fact that in 1675 Congregational Churches had been established on eastern Long Island for 25 years while it had been only three years since what was possibly the first Presbyterian Church in the New World was organized. This occurred in Jamaica at the western end of Long Island.

These early Long Island settlers were Puritans, and the "congregationalists" and "presbyterians" within them were not different denominations, but rather people emphasizing different approaches to church organization. The government of the "presbyterians" was more structured with a level of authority above the local church called the Presbytery. Later, groups of Presbyteries were formed into Synods. The "congregational" government did not extend outside the local church.

References have been made to "Presbygational Churches" in these early years, because there was so much commonality. As late as the 1830's the Congregational Seminary at Andover sent nearly half its graduates into Presbyterian Churches.

One text on early church history in New York State records: "It is not to be forgotten that in the beginning people of other denominations were among the first settlers, and their missionary work and church organization grew beside those of the Congregationalists and Presbyterians. But, unquestionably, these two were the commanding churches at this early time, in numbers and in influence in the young Towns. What the people wanted commonly was a Christian church and a minister. It is significant that a frequent name for the incorporated body of a church was a "Religious Society" or sometimes "Ecclesiastical Society," without denominational label. Some churches were incorporated with the name "Presbyterian-Congregational."

Chronicle of Events

1675 to 1775

- 1675** Smithtown is nine years old and the first church in the town is built near the junction of River Road and Moriches Road. The first minister probably was Nathaniel Brewster who was the minister of the Congregational Church of Setauket from 1665 to 1690.
- 1676 Bacon's rebellion in Virginia, the colonial uprising to gain protection for the settlers against the Indians.
- 1676** Richard Smith receives clear title to the land comprising Smith's Town.
- 1681 William Penn receives a charter from King Charles II for the land known as "Sylvania."
- 1683 Members of the Mennonite religion settle in Germantown, Pennsylvania. They are noted for pacifistic and anti-slavery philosophy.
- 1687 Isaac Newton publishes his theory of the laws of motion and gravity which the scientific world accepts for 200 years as the official guide to the universe.
- 1688** Inhabitants of Smithtown deeded what is now the Landing Park by Richard "Bull" Smith, the founder of Smithtown, for "... their landing and spreading of creek Thatch. . . ."

These Presents witnesseth, that I Richard Smith Senr.. of Smithtown, in the County of Suffolk, upon Long Island, Gent. for ye wellfare & benefit of the Inhabitants of Smith-town aforesaid for their landing and spreading of creek Thatch, Hath given and granted & doth by these [presents] give & grant unto Jonathan Smith, Richard Smith, & their associates the Inhabitants aforesaid. Five acres of upland adjoining to the east side of Nissequogue river, on the fittest place for landing to the southward of William Lawrence his meadow. To Have and to Hold the

said five acres of upland to the said Jonathan Smith and Richard Smith & their associates aforesaid, their heirs and successors forever. To the only proper use, benefit and behoofe of them the said Jonathan Smith, Richard Smith and their associates, their heirs and successors forever.

In Witness whereof the said Richard Smith hath hereunto set his hand & scale the 30th Day of August in the fourth year of His Majestyes Reigne, Annoque Dom. 1688.

RICHARD SMYTH

- 1692 In the colony of Massachusetts, persons are tried and executed for witchcraft.
- 1692 Richard Smith, founder of the township, dies.**
- 1693 Second college is founded in colonies, William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia.
- 1693 The Church of England is established in New York by law. The church lacks influence because the colonists refuse to accept the resident bishop.
- 1697 The first recorded minister to serve the Church is George Phillips, who succeeded Rev. Brewster at the Setauket Church. Rev. Phillips was born in Rawley, Massachusetts, in 1651, the son of a minister. He was educated at Harvard; graduated in 1686. Town of Brookhaven records show that on April 30, 1697 he entered into an agreement to perform the duties of minister in these two towns.**
- 1701 Fort Detroit is built by the French to secure control of the profitable fur trade in the area.
- 1701 Brookhaven Town Meeting, June 12, 1701. "It was voted and agreed that Mr. Phillips shall have 100 acres of land somewhere near the west line where it shall be convenient for him so long as he remains our minister."**
- 1703 The earliest known use of an organ in a colonial church takes place in Philadelphia in a Swedish church.
- 1706 The first Presbytery is organized in Philadelphia.

- 1712** The first resident minister is Daniel Taylor. He had graduated from Yale in 1707 and was twenty-eight years old when he was installed as minister of this Church in 1712. His young wife died during his ministry here and is buried in the Smith family cemetery on the north side of Moriches Road, opposite the site of the original Church. After four years of service. Rev. Taylor was given fifty acres of land by the sons of Richard Smith. Rev. Taylor also served as the town clerk from 1715 to 1718. He moved from Smithtown to Orange, New Jersey where he died at the age of fifty-six.
- 1715** Earliest record of a town meeting.
- 1717** The Suffolk Presbytery is formed by the Churches of Jamaica, Newtown, Southampton and Setauket. The Smithtown Church did not join, apparently choosing to remain a Congregational Church.
- 1718 The city of New Orleans is founded.
- 1732 Benjamin Franklin publishes his first issue of POOR RICHARD'S ALMANAC.
- 1732 George Washington is born.
- 1733 The colony of Georgia is founded.
- 1735 Trial of John Peter Zenger establishes the basic doctrine of freedom of the press.
- 1735** Rev. Abner Reeve is minister. He was born at Southold, Long Island in 1710 and graduated from Yale in 1731. When installed here he was twenty-five years old and his wife, Mary, was twenty-one. Their son, Tappan Reeve, founded a law school in Litchfield, Connecticut, which was the most distinguished in this country before the Harvard Law School was established. Later, Tappan Reeve became chief justice of New York State. Mary Reeve died at age thirty-three and Abner left the area soon after. He moved first to New Jersey and then to Vermont, where he was still actively preaching at eighty-four. He died in 1795.
- 1742 Franklin stove invented. First stove to heat a room more efficiently than a fireplace.

- 1742 Handel composes THE MESSIAH with the famous “Hallelujah Chorus.”
- 1745 Town meeting, first Tuesday in April. “It was voted at this Town meeting that no hogs shall go on the Commons without rings (in the nose to prevent them from rooting) on penalty of being put in the pounds and the owners to pay one shilling per head.”**
- 1746 The Presbyterian College of New Jersey is founded. Becomes Princeton University in 1896.
- 1749 Frontier settlers move into Ohio Territory.
- 1749 On April 13th, two members make application on behalf of the Smithtown Congregation to affiliate with the Suffolk Presbytery.**
- 1750 Land at the present location of the Church is given by Obadiah and Epenetus Smith. The Meeting House is dismantled and moved.**
- 1751 The University of Pennsylvania is founded in Philadelphia.
- 1751 Town Meeting, first Tuesday in April. “Voted no hogs on the Commons without rings on the penalty of I shilling per hog so wanting. Voted no sheep to be turned on the Commons the penalty of one shilling if found in any mans enclosure and if found on the Commons to forfeit 3 pence.”**
- 1751 Rev. Naphthali Dagget is ordained and installed as Minister, September 18. Rev. Dagget was born in Atterborough, Massachusetts, in 1727 and graduated from Yale in 1748. He married Sarah, daughter of the third Richard Smith. He left the Church in 1755 for lack of financial support and in 1756 he began to teach at Yale College (later Yale University) and became its sixth president. During the Revolution he advocated patriotism, but was mocked by some of his students. Once he was beaten and paraded, on a forced march in the hot sun because of his political beliefs. It is said this event hastened his death, which occurred November 25, 1780 when he was fifty-three.**
- 1752 Formation of the first general hospital in the city of Philadelphia.
- 1754 Kings College founded in New York City. Now Columbia

University.

1755 Most of the larger landholders own from one to six slaves. Census records show ninety slaves in Smithtown in 1755 and fourteen hundred in Suffolk County in 1771.

1755 Population of Smithtown is 716.

1760 Town Meeting, first Tuesday in April. “At a Town meeting in Smithtown it was voted that the small pox should not be brought into the town by inoculation under the forfeiture of 10 pounds to the inoculated and the same sum to the inoculator until April the 1st which will be in the year 1761.”

1762 Town Meeting, April 1762. “Voted that Caleb Smith and William Phillips shall have the oversight of the parsonage and be the persons that Mr. Lewis is to apply to in case he is wanting of the firewood that is subscribed and in case the fences are out of repair and to lay out or divide the parsonage, and to judge of how much Mr. Lewis shall have of the Parsonage and divide it unto him in such manner as they think reasonable. Voted that Floyd Smith shall have the oversight of getting the parsonage thatch.”

1763 The Reverend Thomas Lewis of Fairfield, Connecticut, becomes the Minister. He also attended Yale, graduating in 1760. He served as stated supply until 1769, at which time he moved to New Jersey and continued preaching there. His daughter, Anna, married James Phillips, the grandson of Rev. George Phillips, an early minister of the Church.

1764 In Scotland, James Watt builds the first practical and efficient steam engine.

1765 The British Parliament imposes the Stamp Act. This is the first direct tax on the colonies. This tax was on newspapers, pamphlets and insurance policies.

1765 Patrick Henry makes his “Treason Speech” before the Virginia Legislature.

1766 The first Methodist church is organized in New York City.

- 1767 Daniel Boone makes the first exploration west of the Appalachian Mountains and founds the frontier community of Boonesborough in 1775.
- 1769 Napoleon Bonaparte is born. He died in 1821.
- 1771 Rev. David Avery is Minister. It is presumed he served as a part time supply minister by appointment of the Presbytery.**
- 1774 Oxygen discovered in England, the element comprising *one* fifth of the atmosphere that is necessary to all life.
- 1774 Boston Tea Party. The colonists again express resentment over British taxation of the colonies.
- 1774 Rev. Joshua Hartt is installed as Minister. He was born near Huntington in 1738; graduated from Princeton in 1770. In 1772, he was ordained as an evangelist, preaching in Smithtown and other communities in this vicinity. He was an outspoken patriot during the American Revolution which took place in the next century of the Church's history. He served here until 1787.**
- 1775 Paul Revere and William Dawes warn Massachusetts colonists as British troops march on Concord. The British and colonists exchange shots at Lexington, Massachusetts, initiating the Revolutionary War for independence from British rule.
- 1775 Town Meeting, first Tuesday in April. At the annual meeting the previous year it was "Voted that all the privilege of getting and the improving and farming of the soft clams in Smithtown shall be and hereby is vested in the hands of Lemuel Smith and he is to sell clams to strangers for three coppers per bushel and to make return to the overseers of the poor." In the 1775 meeting a soft clam concession was given to Jesse Smith and the price was changed to "four pence a bushel and that Jesse Smith retain in his hand one penny for his trouble on a bushel."**

The First Meeting House

No documentation exists which firmly records the precise location of the original Church building. Two authoritative histories (THE HISTORY OF LONG ISLAND by Thompson, written in 1843, and A HISTORY OF LONG ISLAND by Ross/Pelletrau, published in 1903) give conflicting information.

The earlier text states, “a more ancient house of worship existed at Nissequogue and stood eastward from the River upon an eminence on the south side of the highway and nearly opposite the Smith Family cemetery.” This is identified as “Possible Site A” in the illustrations. The latter text states, “The first church in the Town was erected on the land of Caleb T. Smith and near his gate at the corner of Horserace Lane,” which would have in the vicinity of “Possible Site B” in the illustrations.



Artists' Conception: As it might have been

An argument that supports site B is that the Ross/Pelletrau history was written nearly 60 years after Thompson and the author certainly must have read the earlier work and know of the earlier version.

However, there are several exiting landmarks that tend to support site A. One is a depression in the ground at that location which is obviously man-made and most likely was the foundation of a building. Immediately to the east of this depression are a number of vertical stones in the ground having the appearance of grave markers. Since it was the practice then and for years after, for a church yard to contain the cemetery, these two landmarks tend to reinforce each other.

It is also known from the Ross/Pelletrau volumes that at one time the parsonage was at the top of the hill above where the foundation and graves are found. Today the road leading up the hill to the homes in that vicinity is named Parson's Lane. It seems likely that with the parsonage in this location, site A would have been the more convenient and likely location. Additionally, a small etching on the page 138 of Ross, *Volume I* is captioned "the church on the hill." While it does not make an associa-



Possible Hillside site A - 1975



*Old Foundation - 1975
Possible site A*



Grave marker - 1975
Possible site A



Possible Meadow site B - 1975

tion with any particular church, it does indicate that at least one congregation built its church on a hillside such as the terrain of site A. In an 1875 sermon by Rev. Sinclair covering the history of our Church, he states: “Whether the Church edifice at Nissequogue was in existence at this early date (sic 1675) I have not as yet ascertained, there is little doubt, however, that there was a church building at that place near the original cemetery, some traces of which, as I am informed, are yet to be seen.”

Although not conclusive, the evidence seems to support site A. Therefore, it was decided in the artist’s conception to depict the original church as being on the hillside. The architecture shown was arrived from general references of church buildings of the period which indicate the buildings were unheated, thus there would be no chimney. Wood shingle roofs were typical as was unsquared clapboarding for siding. The interior would have been unfinished with the supporting timbers visible as well as the roofing and siding material. Lighting would naturally have come from candles or whale oil lamps.

The Move to the Branch

In 1750, after 75 years at the original site, it was decided to change the location of the Church to the present intersection of River Road and Main Street, which were then known as Nissequogue Road and Middle Country Road. By 1750 the business center of the Town had evolved at the present general location which probably prompted the move. One likely reason for the growth at this location was that travelers and stage coaches could cross the River at any time near the present statue of the bull. However, crossing the River “at the going over” where Moriches Road met the Nissequogue River, could only be accomplished at low tide. Also, in 1750, the Church was without a minister. Possibly part of the reason for the move was to attract a new resident minister.

Separate parcels of land to provide a site for the Church at the new location were given by Obadiah Smith and Epenetus Smith in June 1750. The transaction also involved the assistance of the Highway Commissioners. They shifted the “highway to Brookhaven,” which is now called Route 25A, presumably to join the two parcels of land.

In an historical sermon preached by Rev. Sinclair in 1875, during the centennial celebration of the United States, he makes reference to the quarter acre of land donated by Obadiah Smith saying “This piece of land is what is now known as the old burying ground adjacent to this building.” Records show that in 1897 cemetery plots were moved in order to build a chapel which today is the Church library. When the Parish Hall was built in 1950, another grave was moved to permit construction. It is therefore concluded that the Meeting House moved from Nissequogue was reconstructed in the vicinity of the western side of today’s library.

In 1750 the road to Brookhaven crossed diagonally through what is now the Church property, intersecting Main Street about where old Route III, or Singer Lane as it is called, now intersects. It then ran northeast, blending into what is now Route 25A. Precisely where it crossed before the 1750 land transaction is not known, but after the transaction it ran close to the front steps of the present Church. In these days the site of the present Church was open yard.

Dedication ceremonies for the rebuilt Church were conducted by the

Rev. Naphthali Dagget, who was ordained here in September 1751. At the time of the dedication there were only seven Church members. They were Obadiah Smith, Susannah Smith, George Phillips, Elizabeth Phillips, William Saxton, Dorcas Saxton and Mary Blydenburgh. Records show that soon after, fourteen others joined. These added the family names of Wicks, Platt, Newton, Norton, Wickes and Peter, a Negro who had no last name, probably having been brought here as a slave during his youth.

JUNE 12, 1750

DEED FROM OBADIAH SMITH TO THE CHURCH

To all Christian people Whome these presents may concern, Know ye that I Obadiah Smith of Smithtown on Nassau Island, in the Colony of New York for Divers Considerations me thereunto moving, but more especially from the Desire I have to promote the Gospel of Christ among my Brethren and Townsmen, Do by these presents voluntarily, freely and absolutely Give and grant unto my Brethren with all the Inhabitants of the Township of Smithtown & to their heirs & successors forever, a certain peace of land scituate in Smithtown aforesaid near adjoining the Country road. Between the dwelling Hous of Mr. Richard Blydenburgh & the dwelling Hous of Epenetus Smith, Bounded on the west by the road leading to Smithtown, on the southeast by the path leading to Brookhaven & extending as said path runs five rods, from thence running such a course to the road leading to Smithtown as will Include a Quarter of one acre between said paths to be appropriated to the sacred use of Building a hous upon for the publique Worship of God in a Prisbiterian Dissenting forme forever, & I the said Obadiah Smith for myself and heirs executors & administrators do covenant with the Inhabitants of Smithtown their heirs and successors, that before the ensealing hereof I am the true sole and lawful owner of the above granted premises, and am lawfully seized & possessed of the same in my own right as a good estate of Inheritance in fee simple & have in myself Good rightful power & lawful authority to grant the same in manner as aforesaid, and that the Inhabitants of Smithtown may from time to time & at all times hereafter lawfully Quietly & peaceably hold and use the above granted premises in manner and form for which it (is) alone appropriated, free and clear from all manner of former Gifts, grants, sales or Incumbrances whatsoever. Furthermore I the said Obadiah Smith do Covenant and agree to warrant and defend the Inhabitants of Smithtown their heirs and successors in Quiet and peaceable possession of the premises against the just & lawful

claims and Demands of any persons whatever forever hereafter. In testimony whereof I do hereunto set my hand & seal this 12 day of June in the twenty fourth year of his Majesties Reign Anno Dom. 1750.

In presence

OBADIAH SMITH

DANIEL SMITH Jr.

EPENETUS SMITH

JUNE 19,1750

HIGHWAY COMMISSIONERS RECORD

June ye 19 Day 1750. It is agreed on by the Commissioners, Daniel Smith and Timothy Mills and the principal men of the town, that the meeting house now in building shall be set some part on the Road that comes from the Town to the Branch by Epenetus Smith's home lot, on the north side of the Country road, by us.

DANIEL SMITH
TIMOTHY MILLS

JUNE 27,1750

DEED FROM EPENETUS SMITH TO THE CHURCH

To all Christian People to whome these presents may come know ye that I Epenetus Smith of Smithtown on Nassau Island in the Colony of New York, for Diverse Considerations me thereunto moving but especially for the Value I have for the Gospel of Christ, Do give and grant unto my Brethren & the rest of the Inhabitants of the Township of Smithtown and their heirs forever the land where the Road was formerly asserted Leading from Nesequog into the Country road between my dwelling house and the house of Richard Blydenburg beginning at a certain Red Oak tree and thense running to the Country road. Including all the land whense the Road formerly was ascerted, which land is given to me by the Commissioners of highways for Smithtown by vertue of an Act of Assembly, Commissioning them to lay out a highway through the corner of my lot which land I give to be appropriated to the use of a protestant prispiterian Dissenting Meeting House, always provided that there shall

never be any alteration made in aforesaid road as now altered and ascert-
ed to the damage of me or my heirs att no time hereafter forever.

Given under my hand and seal at Smithtown the 27th day of June Anni
Domini 1751

EPENETUS SMITH

GEORGE PHILLIPS

CALEB SMITH

JUNE 27, 1750

DEED FROM HIGHWAY COMMISSIONERS

TO EPENETUS SMITH

By virtue of an Act of Generall Assembly for such cases made and
provided wee the Subscribers Commissioners of the Highways for
Smith-town, Do by the authority by said Act to us given and by consent
of the Majority of the Town as well as by the consent of Epenetus Smith
owner of the land, Do see fit for the conveniency of the public as well
as for the more convenient accomodating and setting of the Meeting
house in this Town to alter the highway which leads from Nesequog to
the Country road between the dwelling house of Epenetus Smith &
Richard Blydenburg to turn out of the Road as it was asserted, at a red
oak tree marked on each side thense running a straight Course to a
White Oak Bush Whence Epenetus Smith's fence now stands by the
Country road' so as to take off the corner of Epenetus Smith's lott
between the above mentioned line and the road as it was asserted for a
publique road & wee the Commissioners by virtue of authority to us
given by said Act do give unto Epenetus Smith the land where the road
was formerly asserted and his heirs forever to have, hold use occupy
and possess. In testimony of which wee the Commissioners do hereunto
set our hands this twenty-seventh day of June in the year of our Lord
Christ one thousand seven hundred and fifty

EPENETUS SMITH

WILLIAM PHILLIPS

TIMOTHY MILLS

DANIEL SMITH

And the Prosperity of Fools Shall Destroy Them

*Excerpts from a Sermon by
Reverend Naphali Dagget, June 1, 1751*

Were it not, that God can bring Good out of Evil, and get Himself glory from the Sins of His Creatures, He would, I may say, lose the benefit and miss the end of His works: for His creatures pervert not only themselves, and refuse to answer the end of their being; but they also abuse everything they have to deal with, and seem in a sense to frustrate the design of God in all His dispensations towards them, turn that which is good into evil, and make it to sinful purposes. This is the unhappy case with the grace of men; who were created to glorify God. And now God being thus cheated out of that Glory which is due His Name, His way to right Himself is to reward the offenders according to their deserts, letting them eat of the fruit of their own way.

And to the Prosperity which foolish Sinners are blessed with, often proves the occasion of their ruin, and a circumstance to aggravate their final destruction. They would not hear when He called them, nor regard when He stretched out His Hand: And now God tells them, that shortly their time should come, when they should call, and then He would refuse to hear: He would carry it towards them in the same measure as they had behaved towards Him.

So God will recompense them in their own kind, not out of revenge, but out of Justice and Equity; thus they shall not escape: their own ways and works shall be recompensed upon them: the injuries and frauds which they have done to the innocent and helpless, shall procure them an aggravated punishment, and retaliation. The Prosperity which they have enjoyed in the world and especially that which they have got by unjust and oppressive measures, shall both prove on the occasion of their destruction.

They shall, like Dives, review their evil things and be tormented. You may observe in the words the character that is given to Sinners, they are

called fools, which is the frequent language of scripture, not because they are void of common sense but because they are destitute of true grace, and are without wisdom or discretion and particularly they pervert and abuse that which is good, and destroy themselves by that Prosperity, with which they are favored of God. It is no uncommon thing for that which is good to prove evil in the event and consequences of it: it is frequently so, that which is designed to be a medicine to save life, is abused to unhappy purposes, and so becomes deadly poison in the end.

We need not spend time, in proving to you the truth of this doctrine, the text alone is proof enough of it. We need only illustrate it by showing:

1. How prosperity becomes the destruction of foolish sinners.
2. Show you that it is an argument of folly thus to be destroyed by prosperity.

We will consider and show how prosperity becomes the destruction of foolish sinners. Destruction is not the natural consequence of prosperity, but only an accidental one. It doesn't destroy by what it is in itself; but by the use to which it is put. And so prosperity is not properly the cause, sin is the whole and only cause of it, and prosperity is only the occasion of it, as it is abused to sinful purposes: whereas if it were used aright, it would be really beneficial and helpful to the life and happiness of the creature. It is our corrupt nature that feeds itself upon prosperity and so makes it prove ruinous. Put a wholesome cordial *into* a vessel that is tainted with poison, and ye cordial itself will become of a poisonous nature, and prove deadly to the person that takes it. And just so it is with prosperity: it receives its destructive influence from our own nature, which turns that which is wholesome into deadly venom.

Frequently the unhappy effect of prosperity is to make the sinner neglect the duties which God requires of him. And particularly the *first* and great command of loving God with all the heart is violated by the sinner under his prosperous circumstances, in that he then sets his affections on the enjoyments which he has, and cheats God out of ye love which is his due. It hardens him with a sense of conceit of his own strength and sufficiency, and so prevents his fear of God, or dependence upon him. Very often prosperous circumstances shut up sinners compassion, and make them uncharitable and unkind to the poor. Hence that prosperity commonly begets covetousness, which makes persons selfish and narrow spirited; and so causes them to neglect those deeds of charity which they owe to their neighbor. And in a word prosperity keeps sinners from com-

ing to Christ and following him, and laying up of treasure in heaven.

And thus the prosperity of fools destroys them, as it occasions them neglect those duties which God requires. And so when sinners are exalted high in worldly prosperity and spread themselves like a green bay tree they are a fair mark for satan to shoot at, and are in double danger of being destroyed by ye destroyer. Under prosperous circumstances the sinner lies especially exposed to numerous temptations:

1. Blindness of mind and spiritual ignorance . . . The splendor of prosperity generally so dazzles the eyes and engages their attention, that they are blind as to spiritual objects. It is a common, as well as unhappy case, for sinners minds to be blinded by the god of this world, (II Corinthians 4:4) The dust of this world does, as it were, get into the eyes of sinners, and deprive them of sight.
2. Great security and unconcernedness about the things of eternity . . . With great reason are foolish sinners directed to go to school to the provident to learn the wisdom of providing for the time to come, (Proverbs 6:6,7.) For we plainly see that they ail with little, or no forethought with regard to spiritual and eternal things. They are resolved to live as they go and take ye pleasure while they can, and make themselves easy in the enjoyment of what they have, and run ye venture of what is to come. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink and tomorrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant. (Isiah 56:12.)
3. Prosperity is very commonly the occasion of covetousness, which is idolatry . . . And so The more that any person has, the more his desires are enlarged and extended to want and crave, but are not in the least satisfied with what they have.
4. It commonly produces ingratitude and unthankfulness. . . . This perhaps may seem stranger yet, that that prosperity, and those bounties, which so loudly called for thankfulness, should be the occasion for ingratitude and unthankfulness; but yet it is sadly true experience proves it. When ungrateful Israel had received a full supply of flesh in ye wilderness, they sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play, (Exodus 32:6.) But there was no giving of thanks, among them, as we have reason to think, and if there was, it was not to God, but to the dumb idol they had made. When sinners are fed to the full, and delighted with a constance sense of prosperity, they seem to be wholly taken up with the enjoyment of what they have, and thereby stupified with a sottish forgetfulness from whence it comes.

5. Creature contentment is another sin that is commonly occasioned by prosperity . . . This is a provoking evil, to take up satisfied with the favours and bounties of God, and so stop short of Him. They are apt to think and say tis good for me to be here; Soul take thine ease and happiness, eat, drink, and be merry. Thus sinners will commit idolatry with ye creatures God gives to lead them to himself.
6. Creature dependence is also another sin that commonly attends prosperity . . . When Jesus had said to His disciples, (Mark 10:23) How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God; He explains His meaning in the following verse. Children, says He, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God. Whence we may see that there is such a thing as trusting in riches. And when they abound by prosperity, there is then the greater danger of it.
7. Prosperity often produces a downright neglect and contempt of God . . . Corrupt, proud nature swells with prosperity to that degree, as to neglect and condemn God; and seems to incline the sinner to think, that he has no better or superior. Godly Agur was Sensible of this Danger attending Prosperity, and therefore he prays against Riches; lest, says he, I be full and deny thee, and say who is the Lord? (Proverbs 30:9.)
8. Pride is another unhappy Evil that Prosperity exposes Sinners to . . . There is no Sin that Corrupt Nature more inclines to than to Pride: and no circumstances like Prosperity to feed and pamper Pride. And hence Israel is particularly warned of, and cautioned against Pride, when they should be come into ye Good Land, and be blessed with affluent circumstances, (Deuteronomy 8:13,14). And as the History of Urziah informs us, that after he had been prospered for awhile, and strengthened himself in his Kingdom, that then his Heart was lifted up to his Destruction, (II Chronicles 26:16.)
9. Intemperance in Eating and Drinking is another Sin that commonly attends Prosperity . . . Prosperity, and Affluence of earthly enjoyments gives sinners opportunity to consult their appetites, and lay out themselves for the gratifying of them. And so it happens, that when God gives them liberally and plentifully instead of eating and drinking to the Glory of God as much as necessity or convenience requires, they consume God's Mercies upon their lusts purely for ye sake of gratifying and indulging their Appetites. This is a Shameful Abuse of Prosperity.
10. By continued Prosperity Sinners are often Emboldened in the Ways of Sin. . . . When God bears with the Sinner a long Time and gives

him no Sensible Tokens of his Anger, he is apt to think that God Takes no Notice of him, nor Regards his conduct; and this rightly encourages him in Sin. (Psalm 50:21). These things hast Thou done, and I kept Silence; thou thought oft that I was altogether such a one as Thy self.

11. Sensuality is another Sin that Prosperity exposes Sinners to. . . . (Ezekial 5,7,8) When I had fed them to the Full, they then committed Adultery, and assembled themselves by Troops in The Harlots Houses.
12. Prosperity generally produces idleness a Mis Spence of Time, which is a Door to all Sin. . . . Fulness of Bread and Idleness commonly go together. Thus we find them joined together, Ezekial 16:49. Behold this was the inequity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread and abundance of idleness was in her.
13. Prosperity sometimes destroys sinners in a judicial way being given to them in judgment as a punishment of their inordinate desires. . . . This was the case of Israel when they lusted exceedingly for flesh in the Wilderness, and tempted God in the desert; and he gave them their request, but sent leanness in their souls; (Psalm 106:14,15) When sinners have most inordinate and unbounded desires after any enjoyment, God then gives it to them in judgment, and so it proves destruction.
14. The Prosperity of Sinners is or will be a means of aggravating their destruction if they perish , . . . Because much shall be required of them to whom much is given. And all their abused Mercies will be brought against them.

Let what has been said serve to attack and end our inordinate and extravagant Desires after any worldly Enjoyments and teach us Resignation to the Divine Will in all things, and Contentment with ye wise allotments of his Providence. Is it so that the Prosperity of Fools destroys them? And that Prosperity is extremely dangerous? Then why should we be so anxiously concerned for to be in the Enjoyment of it? The wicked often flourish with Prosperity, and make such a splendid appearance in the World, as to move the Envy of those that behold them: But not withstanding all this Shining Appearance, if they be weighed in the Balance of the Sanctuary, and measured by ye Standard of Truth, they will be found light, and miserable.

Let what has been said be addressed by Way of Caution to all such as are prosperous in this World. God has distinguished you from others by

ye bestowment of worldly Favours, and has made your habitation prosperous; and happy will it be for you, if you do but know your own Happiness, and rightly improve the Price which you have in your Hand. And as miserable, if your Prosperity prove your Ruin. Methinks you have Need here of Special Care, yea, and of Special Grace too, lest this be your case. Attend to the Caution that the Lord gives you. (Timothy 6:17). Be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches, but in the Living God. Seriously confide that you are in great Danger; Prosperity has Damned thousands, and you are as likely to fall by it, as thousands it has destroyed. O, how hardly shall they that have Riches enter into the Kingdom of God? Yea, it is easier for a Camel to go thru the Eye of a Needle than for a Rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God, (Mark 10:23-25) Not many noble are called: and fear lest you be found of the Number of those who have their Portion in this Life. And let the awful End of Dives always be before your Eyes, and take Warning from ye dreadful Example. If he could, he would have one sent from the Dead to you, to warn you that you come not to that Place of Torment; but he is not permitted to do it; and indeed it is needless: for if you will not believe Moses and the Prophets, Christ and the Apostles neither would you be persuaded, if one should rise from the Dead, and come a Messenger to you.

Consider you are but Stewards of what you have in Possession, and must give an account of your Stewardship; and therefore take Care what an Improvement you make of the Talents committed to your Trust (I Timothy 6:18) Be rich in good Works. Guard against the Temptations that Prosperity exposes you to. See to it that you be not easy till you have given up yourselves and all you have to Jesus Christ and Secured an unfailling Title to the True Riches.



Mr. Avery's Lottery-1757

Humphery Avery was a large landowner in Patchogue in the town of Brookhaven. His land predominantly consisted of seven necks of land extending into the Great South Bay. Being in debt, he obtained permission from the Governor on November 27, 1756 to sell his estate by means of a lottery. He divided the land into 26 parcels valued at 20 to 1,000 pounds each and established approximately 1580 cash prizes of 3 pounds each. Chances were sold at 30 shillings each and there were 8000 tickets printed. The raffle was widely advertised and the parcels described as a place free and secure from the inroads and ravages of the enemy—a reminder concerning the War then raging between the French and British over North American territory that each country claimed.

The lottery was held on June 21, 1758. A number of Smithtown Church members subscribed money to purchase chances in the lottery and affixed their names to a document dated January 31, 1757 which read:

“With a humble reliance upon Almighty God, the Supreme Order of all events, for success in so laudable an enterprise, we do cheerfully contribute the several sums of money hereafter annexed to our names to purchase tickets in Mr. Avery's Lottery, the fortune of which tickets shall be appropriated to the maintenance of a goodly learned orthodox Presbyterian minister of God's word in Smithtown and no other. To be appropriated in such a manner as we shall hereafter agree upon among ourselves in case such tickets shall any of them prove fortunate.”

Accounts of the lottery list a few of the large winners but there is no indication that the Smithtown Church won any prize. This is further borne out by the fact that the next regular minister was not installed until 1763. These must have been difficult financial times throughout the area, for it is noted that Rev. Dagget was required to leave the Church in 1755 for lack of financial support.

It is interesting that Mr. Avery raised enough money through his lottery to purchase back several of the choice lots he had raffled off.

ONCE TO EVERY MAN AND NATION

Once to every man and nation
Comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of truth with falsehood,
For the good or evil side;
Some great cause, God's new Messiah,
Offering each the bloom or blight,
And the choice goes by forever
'Twixt that darkness and that light.

By the light of burning martyrs,
Jesus' bleeding feet I track,
Toiling up new Calvaries ever
With the cross that turns not back;
New occasions teach new duties,
Time makes ancient good uncouth;
They must upward still and onward,
Who would keep abreast of truth.

Though the cause of evil prosper,
Yet 'tis truth alone is strong;
Though her portion be the scaffold,
And upon the throne be wrong,
Yet that scaffold sways the future,
And, behind, the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow,
Keeping watch above His own.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

1845

Chapter Two

The Second 100 Years

1775-1875



Prologue to the Second 100 Years

For its members, the early portion of the Church's second century was one of turmoil, both politically and religiously.

On April 19, 1775 the skirmishes between the British troops and colonists at Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts, commenced the War for Independence from England. For the most part, the settlers of Long Island wanted independence, but there were factions who felt it was in their best interest if the colonies would remain under England's rule.

In August 1776, the British launched a major campaign to take control of New York City and Long Island. This campaign was known as The Battle of Long Island. The colonists were soundly defeated and the entire Island came under British military rule. Many residents fled across the Sound to Connecticut. The patriots and dissenters remaining who would not swear allegiance to the throne of England were frequently harassed by the local British troops.

Examples of this harassment are contained in "A Book of Claims" prepared June 16, 1783, at which time residents who had property confiscated by the British attested to the items and their value before a Town justice. These claims included numerous affronts against Smith-town residents including members of the Church and one against the Church building, all occurring between September 1775 and June 1783.

Blankets were taken from John Hart, Samuel Phillips, Jeremiah Platt and various members of the Mills and Smith families. Ebenezer Smith lost a blacksmith's vise and one horse while Obadiah Smith had three horses confiscated. William Hallock had a double team taken for three days by Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarlton and Job Smith had a team and driver taken for 21 days.

There are various accounts of the British soldiers being provided "victuals and drink" at Epenetus Smith's tavern as well as private homes.

Other claims include a half ton of hay taken from Jonas Mills; a wagon and harness taken from William Blydenburgh and 48 horses supplied with oats and hay that had been confiscated from Obadiah Smith.

Probably the most daring confiscation of all is recorded as follows in claims ledger:

"Nov. 1778

To Boards taken out of the Prysbyterian Church by an Exact
Computation 6396 feet at 20£ per thousand 127£ 18s 4d

"The above Boards were of the Best pine and taken for the use of
government by Col. Tarleton and Major Cochran

"This is a fact too well known to want attestation
Gilbert Smith, Justice"

It is difficult to imagine that the original Church was sufficiently large that 6396 feet of lumber could be removed without the Church being totally demolished. Since this building continued to serve the congregation until 1825 it is assumed that a portion of the lumber was taken from fencing and horsesheds on the Church property.

Other incidents involved Joshua Hartt, the minister of the Church from 1774 to 1787. He was an outspoken patriot even in the pulpit and was fired on by a British soldier during a worship service. On several occasions Reverend Hartt was arrested and placed in British prisons.

On a national level, formal discussions took place between 1766 and 1801 for uniting the Presbyterians and Congregationalists. In various plans for promoting union between the two groups, the governing rules provided that a particular church congregation could be either Presbyterian or Congregational and still have a minister of the other denomination. There were provisions for a single congregation being comprised partly of Presbyterians and partly Congregationalists. In such a case disciplinary matters were handled by a "standing committee" with each group having the right to appeal any disciplinary action to its respective authority. In the case of the Presbyterians, this meant to the Presbytery or Synod and in the case of the Congregationalists, this meant "the body of male communicants." Even though it had been over 100 years since the Pilgrims had left England to escape from a church ruled by the state, those of Congregational tradition were still sensitive to allowing authority of any kind to be exerted from outside the congregation.

Session records from the year 1797 show that the church was at a particularly low ebb and needed reorganizing. Although we can only surmise from the few remaining records, it appears that this 1797 reorganization was an ecumenical reconciliation between the Congregationalists and Presbyterians.

". . . as no records antecedent to the year 1797 can be found, For long season previous to the above mentioned year, the Church

and Congregation had been destitute of a pastor and were in a deranged and broken situation. To remedy that which it was thought expedient to apply to the Presbytery for advice and assistance. . . . As a result of the Presbytery suggestion, a Church committee was formed which drew up a Covenant . . . to be signed unitedly and all who sign it to be considered in the future as members of this Church as long as they walk agreeable to the rules of the Covenant. . . ."

Thus the Church was reorganized on November 15, 1797 under the following Covenant to which 18 persons affixed their names during the month of December.

"We do this day, in the presence of the Great Eternal and Holy God, Solemnly take the Lord Jehovah, Father, Son and Holy Ghost to be our God, and we do desire to give up ourselves Souls and Body to be at His disposal. Yielding ourselves to His service as willing and obedient Subjects, and as we are by Nature Children of Wrath, and have greatly dishonored God in Heart and Life; so we do now openly express our abhorrence and detestation of our former Life and Conversation, and desire forgiveness of God and Man and promise by the assistance of Divine Grace (without which we can do nothing) so to renounce our Sins, the Flesh, and the Devil. We do also solemnly promise to watch over one another in the Love of the Lord, and give up ourselves and ours to the discipline of this Church, according to the direction of Christ and that we will hold Communion with each other in the Worship of God, and in the careful and diligent Use of the Ordinance of Jesus Christ, so long as we continue together in this Relation by the Grace of God.

This we do promise. . . ."

The following signatures were affixed to the original Covenant: Rev. Luther Gleason; Elders Epenetus Smith, Samuel Phillips, Amos Willis; Elder and Deacon Thomas Blydenburgh; Members Moses Wicks, Stephan Burnett, Sebediah Mills, William Smith, Platt Mills, Ruth Blydenburgh, Hanna Smith, Rebecca Smith, Deborah Smith, Rachel Smith, Jane Merchant, Rumamah Wheeler, and Hannah Denton. It is significant to note that these signatures contain the first reference to an Elder in the Church records.

Approximately six new members were added each year, but with attrition the membership stood at only 27 in the year 1810.

It is evident that in 1787 strong Congregational feelings still

remained in churches belonging to the Presbytery of Long Island. For when the General Assembly was formed that year. The Presbytery of Long Island unanimously requested dismissal from the Synod of New York, because the proposed form of government involved too great an authority over the churches. Subsequently, these churches were convinced not to take that action. This incident does serve to point out that emotions still ran strong concerning the desirability of higher church authority.

This perhaps partially explains the conflict and upheaval that shook the Smithtown Church in 1806 and 1807, centering around the impeachment of Rev. Luther Gleason by the Presbytery of Long Island. The breach was so serious that the Church almost did not recover. In fact, it was 1811 before there again was a permanent and established minister in Smithtown.

Records from the Presbytery of Long Island show that the Rev. Gleason had been charged on six counts after nine years in the Smithtown pulpit. One charge read:

". . . that from an early period of his ministry his character, in the mouth of common fame, had been that of a man given to intemperance and associating with vain and wicked company."

The charges emanated from the Smithtown Church although Rev. Gleason was also minister to churches at Islip and Babylon at the same time. On four occasions Rev. Gleason refused to appear before the Presbytery to answer the charges. Finally, in October 1807, after months of meetings and investigation and one fast day to contemplate the situation, the following action was taken at a regular Presbytery meeting comprised of the ministers and representatives from the various member churches.

". . . and altho' they could not decide in the way of a regular trial, they still as individuals were convinced and felt themselves bound to declare their conviction of his awful guilt in a variety of particulars and of his entire unfitness on this account as well as for his contumacy, to sustain any longer the sacred office of a Gospel Minister.

"And Presbytery declared to the churches particularly affected by the deposition . . . that they stand prepared to lay before them the evidence of his guilt, which they doubt not will be conclusive in the mind of every candid man. In the meantime, they do earnestly and solemnly exhort and warn the Churches under their care to

abstain from that wicked man. . . ."

However, a number of members of the Smithtown Presbyterian Church with Congregational leanings did not agree with the action taken. In an October 1808 letter from the Presbytery addressed to the Smithtown Church we find:

"During the series of uncommon trial and temptation, through which both you and we have been called to pass in our attention to the case of Mr. Gleason . . . but the time seems now to have arrived in which it has become indispensable to take notice of these things.

". . . a majority of the Church of Smithtown have signified their disapprobation of the conduct of the Presbytery and their determination no more to send a delegate to Presbytery. . . .

". . . they have concurred in the employment of Mr. Gleason to preach for them since his regular deposition by Presbytery. . . .

"We learn also . . . that they do as individuals explicitly reject the Presbyterian form of government . . . declaring that they do not consider themselves under the jurisdiction of this Presbytery. Brethren, we shall deeply regret your departure from our Communion and if the step is not yet finally taken, we earnestly beseech you to pause and reflect. . . ."

At that same Presbytery meeting, another lengthy letter was approved to be sent to the Congregational Convention of Long Island. The Congregational Church had accepted Mr. Gleason into their body and most of the Smithtown congregation had transferred also. The letter discussed how differences existed between the two denominations for a period of forty years, but the two denominations had worked in harmony for the past fifteen years and now:

". . . This unkind treatment from the Convention and the deep conviction we now have of Mr. Gleason's guilt and the opportunity the Convention has had to obtain the conviction, renders it impossible any longer to continue our fellowship on supposition the Convention persist in acknowledging Mr. Gleason as a member of their body."

This Gleason episode so split the Church it was not functioning prop-

erly several years later. Records indicate the Congregationalists started using the Meeting House as their own. In June 1810, the Presbyterian Trustees padlocked the door, but it was broken open. Similar friction between members was encountered in the Babylon Church that Rev. Gleason had served concurrently. A cousin of one of these Babylon members who helped bring charges against Rev. Gleason, vehemently and vocally left the Church for thirteen years, believing the incident to be unfair. She later returned, and was a devout member for twenty years. At age 66 she was charged by her Session with "dancing" and was excommunicated on March 19, 1837.

Session minutes of March 9, 1810 record the following forlorn letter sent to Presbytery:

"The peculiar and unhappy situation of the Congregation is well known to Presbytery. It is now nearly four years since we enjoyed the stated administration of the Word and ordinance of the Gospel, during about three fourths of that time we have been entirely destitute of the preaching of the Gospel excepting now and then an occasional supply from the members of your body for which we beg you to accept our unfeigned acknowledgment. For the space of six months last past, we have enjoyed the benefit of a stated supply every other Sabbath, but of this we are now deprived and are at present entirely destitute."

The letter then requested a regular supply minister for two to three months and asked for recommendations for a minister who might become the pastor at the end of this time.

However, the next permanent minister, Rev. Bradford Marcy, was not installed until September 1811. Events were relatively placid for a while, with normal business being conducted and a growing membership which included several freed slaves.

Then in February 1813, another split of the congregation developed that was highly unusual 'but within the framework of Church union concepts that had evolved years before. Extracted below from Session records are excerpts relating to this ecumenical relationship between Congregationalists and Presbyterians united in a single Church;

"Whereas we the subscriber members of the Church of Christ in this place have different views relative to Church government and a part of the brethren are particularly attached to the Congregational or independent mode of Church discipline.

"This is to certify that we do draw a line of separation as it

respects Church discipline and form ourselves into two distinct Churches, one class to hold connection with the Presbytery as usual, and the other pursue the Congregational independent mode of Church government.”

The records then list five persons as Congregational and thirty-seven as Presbyterian with all attesting to articles of agreement that provided for:

- 1) The minister would be Presbyterian, but would cooperate with Congregational ministers in the area.
- 2) Members would care for each other in the love of the Lord, but discipline would be dealt by their respective Churches.
- 3) Should they be without a minister temporarily, then a committee from the two Churches would select guest ministers.
- 4) Communion would be served by a Congregational minister half the time. Every member of each Church had to attend the other's communion service and explain any absence.
- 5) A majority of members of either Church could request a joint meeting to amend or void the agreement.

The Congregationalists became inactive and drifted away several years later. Pleading letters to return were sent as well as personal visits made by Church members which resulted in some reaffiliating as Presbyterians. After this the congregation continued to grow and prosper with the decision made in 1823 to construct the present sanctuary.

In 1832 another episode commenced in the long search for identity between Congregationalism and Presbyterianism. This time the discussion was on a regional basis rather than between factions of the congregation.

Prior to this, the two denominations had formed a joint National Board of Missions. However, opposing schools of thought evolved. There were those who wanted to return to the old way, with each tradition sponsoring its own missions and those desiring to continue in the ecumenical manner. Feelings were so strong on these matters that the churches which favored continued cooperation with the Congregationalists formed a new Presbytery. It was called the Second Presbytery of Long Island and was formed with the approval of the Synod.

The organizational meeting was held at the Smithtown Presbyterian Church on October 30, 1832. Member churches were Babylon,

Brookfield (now Manorville), Brookhaven, Fresh Ponds, Huntington, Middle Town (now Middle Island), Moriches, South Haven and Sweet Hollow. Reverend Ithamar Pillsbury, Pastor of the Smithtown Church was appointed Stated Clerk. Subsequently the churches of Setauket and Westhampton joined the new Presbytery.

These differences also took place elsewhere in the country. Then in May 1868 each faction held its own General Assembly, one meeting in Albany, NY and the other in Harrisburg, PA. Each agenda included the topic of reunion.

On August 16, 1870, forty-eight years after its organization, the Second Presbytery of Long Island was dissolved.



Chronicle of Events

1775 to 1875

- 1775 British troops march toward Concord, Massachusetts and exchange shots with colonists at Lexington. Beginning of War for Independence from England.
- 1776 Population of Smithtown over age 16 is 387; under age 16 is 329.**
- 1781 Fighting with the British ends at the Battle of Yorktown.
- 1783 Travel by stagecoach from Philadelphia to Baltimore takes five days.
- 1784 The Church is incorporated as the Christ Church of Smithtown on April 6th.**
- 1788 Constitution of the United States ratified. 1788 Presbyterian General Assembly founded.
- 1788 Town Meeting, first Tuesday in April. "Voted that all cattle, sheep and hogs found trespassing shall be liable to be distrained therefore by person or persons grieved there-by who may impound them."**
- 1789 French Revolution begins.
- 1789 George Washington elected first President of the United States.
- 1790 First national census. Population four million. Life expectancy thirty-five years. Only five percent of U.S. population are full church members.
- 1790 George Washington stops at Smithtown. During a tour of the area following the Revolutionary War, Washington noted in his diary, "Baited the horses at Smith's Town at a widow Blydenburgh's -- a decent house 10 miles from Setauket." This refers to the tavern that stood in the vicinity of the present Town library.**

- 1790** Suffolk Presbytery is renamed Long Island Presbytery.
- 1791 Bill of Rights amendments to the Constitution.
- 1792 The New York Securities Exchange organized.
- 1793** Rev. Frederick Halsey is minister for two years.
- 1794 First macadam paved road in the United States.
- 1794** For twenty shillings, the Church buys from Epenetus Smith a parcel of land extending six feet to the north of the Church building and twelve feet to the west-"for the purpose of making a yard."
- 1794** Incorporated as the Corporation of the Presbyterian Church of Smithtown.
- 1795** Rev. Perkins is minister for one year.
- 1795** Town Meeting, June 11th. For "holding of a conference respecting the gratuity granted by the Legislature of the State of New York at their last session for the establishing of public schools." Voted -"that the Town receive the donation agreeable to the Act passed by the Legislature of this state on the 9th of April 1795 for the encouragement of schools." The county received state aid of 840 pounds. Smithtown's portion was 48.4 pounds for the first year.
- 1796 Discovery of vaccination against smallpox in England.
- 1796** Public auction to rent Parsonage and farm. "In two divisions (viz) the building and land on the east side of the road to be one division and the western division to be the lowermost lot next to the swamp." A Dr. John Howard rented the portion with the building.
- 1797** "For a long season the Church and Congregation had been destitute of an established Pastor, and was in a deranged and broken situation." A committee of the Long Island Presbytery met to assist the church to reorganize with 19 members.
- 1797** Rev. Luther Gleason of Stillwater, N.Y., is installed as Minister on

- December 1, 1797.** He served the Babylon Presbyterian Church concurrently.
- 1798** Caleb Smith and Isaac Blydenburgh erect a dam and grist mill at Head of the River.
- 1798** "The timber on the burying ground was sold to Mr. Benjamin B. Blydenburgh for eight dollars and a half."
- 1798** Rev. Gleason purchases the Bushy Neck Parsonage from the Church, including 120 acres, for 300 pounds and a 460 pound note.
- 1799 An act of the New York Legislature begins gradual abolition of slavery in N.Y. By 1827 slavery was non-existent in the state.
- 1800 Library of Congress organized with Thomas Jefferson's book collection as a basis.
- 1800** After five years state gratuities for public schools are discontinued. School financing reverted back to private subscription.
- 1802** First schoolhouse in Smithtown. Its location was near the western boundary of the present church property. It was a small one room frame structure and remains in use today as a real estate office. The poet, Walt Whitman, taught there in 1837 and 1838.
- 1803 Louisiana Territory purchased: 828,000 square miles for \$15 million.
- 1803 First steam locomotive operates in England.
- 1803** "The trustees again renting pews and seats." On January 19, 1803 a resolution was passed by the congregation authorizing the trustees to rent out the seats and pews of the Meeting House. This was done to "enable the Trustees to discharge the demands against them without breaking in upon the permanent funds of said church and congregation."
- 1804** Town Meeting, first Tuesday in April. "Voted that all persons in future coming after shell fish shall be under obligation to enter their boats with one of the overseers of said shell fish and deposit money sufficient to secure the duty thereon under the penalty of \$10 upon neglect or refusal."

- 1805 July 16, "Session agrees to appoint a fast day on Thursday next, on account of a drought."**
- 1807 First steamboat trip from New York City to Albany takes 32 hours.
- 1807 Rev. Gleason impeached by the Presbytery of Long Island; charged with "practices unbecoming his sacred office. . . . Much dissention followed with many members of the Church with drawing to the Congregationalists."**
- 1809 Rev. Richard S. Stores serves as Minister.**
- 1810 National population 7,239,000.
- 1810 Rev. Nathaniel S. Prime serves as Minister. He served temporarily, dividing his time between Smithtown and Fresh Ponds, which was in the vicinity of the area known today as Fort Salonga.**
- 1810 Disagreement continues between factions of the Congregation as to the use of the Meeting House. Caleb Smith, President of the Board of Trustees ordered, "July 10, 1810-at a meeting of the Trustees, resolved that no person be permitted to enter without permission." Caleb Smith's house is now located north of the Town library and is headquarters of the Smithtown Historical Society. Originally his home was located in Commack.**
- 1811 Rev. Bradford Marcy serves as Minister. During his pastorate, Articles of Agreement were drawn up reuniting dissenting members of the congregation. He served until 1814; was minister in Babylon concurrently. After leaving, he married and settled in western New York.**
- 1812 War of 1812 with British and frontier Indians.
- 1812 State aid to education reinstated.**
- 1813 First lead pencil.
- 1813 Incorporated as the First Presbyterian Church in Smithtown.**
- 1815 Napoleon defeated at Waterloo, ending French domination of Europe following the Revolution of 1789.

- 1815 A year of college education at Harvard costs \$300.
- 1815 Rev. Henry Fuller installed. He began preaching in 1815 and was ordained October 23, 1816 as pastor in Smithtown and Fresh Ponds. The subscription for his salary was twenty dollars. He urged the divergent factions of the congregation to remain together in Christian unity. He served as minister until 1820, at which time the Trustees were obliged to notify him that there were insufficient funds to continue his services.**
- 1815 Formal Sunday School commences.**
- 1816 Ministerial Fund is created. April 9, 1816-"At a meeting of the Parish of the Presbyterian order" it was resolved "that the established fund of said society in future be considered one thousand pounds, the interest of which to be appropriated towards a compensation to those who preach the Gospel in the Presbyterian order."**
- 1817 The Huntington and Smithtown Turnpike Company is formed. This toll road was still in operation and prosperous in 1883.**
- 1820 Resolution to collect delinquent pledges. September 5, 1820-Resolved "that the clerk of the Trustees be and is hereby directed to inform the persons who have refused to pay on the subscriptions for the three year support of the Rev. H. Fuller, that unless they call upon the clerk and pay the same within thirty days, the accounts will be delivered into the hands of a justice for collection."**
- 1821 Simon Bolivar leads revolution to free Venezuela and other South American countries from Spanish rule.
- 1822 First camera invented.
- 1822 Ebenezer Platt serves as Minister.**
- 1822 Richard Nicoll is Minister. He was a descendant of William Nicoll, the patentee of the Town of Islip and early settler of Shelter Island. He served one year before being ordained on June 25, 1823 and was dismissed by his own request in 1827. In connection with his call we find the following: "If the Parish will give me the \$400 as they proposed, and will finish off the house and**

give me the use of it, . . . and the use of the garden which is usually customary in the country-cut my firewood. . . . I am willing to allow them for the use of the land what any three judicious men whom they shall choose, say they would be willing to give for it, and come and settle with the people. To these propositions, I should like to have an answer as soon as it can be done.

R. F. Nicoll"

- 1823 The Congregation votes to build a new Church . . . "The Trustees having \$1410 for that purpose."
- 1825 The Old Meeting House is put up for sale at public auction. At a congregational meeting on Tuesday, April 5, it was voted that "the old Meeting House be put up for sale at public auction and proceeds go towards remunerating George Curtiss, the builder of the new meeting house, for his extra cost and trouble."
- 1826 Smithtown is the second night's stop of a three day stage coach trip from the eastern part of the Island to the Brooklyn area.
- 1827 Thirty-two members comprise the Congregation.
- 1827 "September 9th, the Presbyterian Meeting House was dedicated. The sermon and other exercises by Rev. I. Pillsbury." This is the only record of this historic occasion. Presumably the Church was without a resident pastor and Rev. Pillsbury officiated as a representative from the Presbytery. Indications are that the building had been completed two years earlier, but that the congregation did not dedicate it until all debts had been cleared.
- 1828 Smithtown has fourteen school districts with a total of 540 students.
- 1829 Boston luxury hotel has 170 rooms and eight water closets.
- 1829 Call sent to Ithamar Pillsbury on August 13 by the Session of the Church. ". . . do earnestly call and desire you to undertake the pastoral office in said Congregation; promising you in the discharge of your duty, all proper support, encouragement and obedience in the Lord. And that you may be free from worldly cares and avocations, we hereby promise and oblige ourselves to give you the use of our parsonage, and also to pay to you the sum of three hundred and forty dollars in yearly payments, during the

time of your being and continuing the regular pastor of the Church."

- 1830** The Church had 32 members when Rev. Ithamar Pillsbury was installed by the Presbytery of Long Island as pastor of the Smithtown Presbyterian Church on April 21. He attracted 52 new members to the congregation; 45 as communicants and 7 by certificate. He emigrated to Illinois and settled in the town of Andover.
- 1830** The Congregation votes to increase the number of elders and deacons to four each.
- 1830** Town Meeting, first Tuesday in April. "Voted that hogs be permitted to run in the streets of Smithtown by being sufficiently rung in the snout-one dollar per violation."
- 1831 Generation of electric power invented.
- 1831 First wagon trains head to the west.
- 1831** The Church begins sending annual reports to Presbytery.
- 1833** Various ministers serve as stated supply from Presbytery.
- 1835** Rev. James C. Edwards becomes Minister. He was born March 12, 1807 in Warren, New Jersey and graduated from Princeton College in 1830. During his first year he requested that he be discharged from his duties due to "the ill health of his wife, whom he thinks to be sinking under the climate of Long Island." The congregation, in compassion, voted unanimously not to accept his resignation and instead granted a three to six months leave of absence with pay, "for experiment of another climate congenial to Mrs. Edward's health." Unfortunately, her health continued to fail and she died in 1836. Rev. Edwards remained 17 years as minister, until 1852 when he accepted a call to the Presbyterian Church in Morristown, New Jersey. While in Smithtown, he remarried. His second wife was Sara Maria, daughter of Henry Conkling of Smithtown.
- 1835** Land for the present Parsonage is donated by William Blydenburgh. The manse was first occupied by Rev. Edwards and his family.

- 1836 Alamo under siege.
- 1837 June 17th, the Parsonage is appraised at \$1413.60, including the land.**
- 1840 The number of communicant members increases to seventy-four. Many old Smithtown names are recorded at this time; Smith, Blydenburgh, Wheeler, Miller, Mills, Hallock, Arthur, Saxton, Hawkins, Huntting, Halliock, Conkling, Davis, Wood, Vail, and Bailey.**
- 1840 Extract from Trustees' minutes. "July 3, 1840 . . . committee to receive applications from ministers of other denominations for use of the Church when not occupied by the Presbyterians."**
- 1841 Ten hour work day for federal employees.
- 1842 Anaesthesia first used during surgery in Jefferson, Georgia.
- 1844 Telegraph line operated between District of Columbia and Baltimore.
- 1844 Session record from March 31. "On Sabbath, March 31, 1844 The Psalms and Hymns approved and authorized by the General Assembly were introduced as "The Book of Psalmody" to be used in this Church."**
- 1846 Trustees pay \$200 for a parcel of land 72 by 190 feet which extended the present Parsonage property to the east.**
- 1846 The Female Charitable Society holds a fair at the home of Thomas Halliock. "On the 29th and 30th of July for the disposal of articles manufactured by the members . . . the complete success which produced \$150."**
- 1847 First professional baseball game. 1849 California gold rush-gold at Sutler's Mill.
- 1849 Safety pin patented.
- 1850 A Church bell is purchased for \$156.48 with a one year warranty from George H. Swords, an importer in New York City. It weighed 442 pounds.**

- 1852 **The first insurance coverage is taken on the Church building for \$2000. The premium was paid by Richard Blydenburgh.**
- 1852 **Rev. Rutgers Van Brundt becomes Minister, serving until April 22, 1856. Records show that until 1854, all or at least a portion of his services was paid for by wagon loads of wood from members of the congregation. Indications are that he came to Smith-town from Bedford, Massachusetts.**
- 1852 **The geographic distribution of Church families is as follows:**
- | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------|------------------------------|-----------|
| The Branch | 21 | Head of the Harbor | 5 |
| Mills Pond | 5 | Head of the River | 12 |
| Nesaquake | 7 | Hauppauge | 17 |
| New Mill | 3 | Indian Head | 4 |
| Commack | 2 | North Side (San Remo) | 10 |
- 1853 United States and Japan open ports to commercial trade with each other.
- 1854 **"Mr. Bailey agreed to procure locust poles for repairing the horse railing near the Church."**
- 1856 In England, an economical method of steel production is invented.
- 1856 **Ezra F. Munday is minister until 1861. He became quite perturbed with people who arrive late for worship services and on one occasion left the sanctuary because of talking in the choir during the service.**
- 1858 First U.S. oil well.
- 1858 Theory of human evolution proposed.
- 1859 First electric lights in a private residence.
- 1861 **Rev. Samuel McMullen is minister. Rev. Fuller, who had served here in 1816, presided at the congregational meeting calling Rev. McMullen. The Benevolent Society records show that a carriage was purchased for the use of the pastor. He requested dissolution of the association due to the illness of his wife and moved to Philadelphia in 1864.**
- 1863 Gasoline engine invented in France.

- 1863 Emancipation Proclamation.
- 1865 End of Civil War in the United States.
- 1865 March 12, Trustee Record. "We the following subscribers promise to pay unto the Trustees the sums opposite our names-the principle to be kept as a perpetual fund but the interest to be applied annually toward the salary of the minister." The amount pledged totaled \$2000.**
- 1865 Rev. James Sinclair begins his ministry here. A native of Lakeville, Livingston County, N.Y., he chose the ministry early in life as a result of religious education from devout Christian parents. After public school in his village, he attended Academies in Geneseo and Canandaigua. He then prepared for college with a clergyman in Schenectady; studied at New York University; graduated in 1848; attended Union Theological Seminary, graduated in 1851. He then served churches in New York City; Cutchogue, Long Island; and Rutherford Park, New Jersey before accepting a call to Smithtown in 1865. He remained here until his death in 1883. A newspaper article described him as a most agreeable companion, with a kind and pleasant word for all. His labors in the Sunday School, Teachers Meetings and Bible Study class were particularly notable.**
- 1866 First successful transatlantic telegraph cable.
- 1867 Alaska purchased for two cents per acre.
- 1869 School district and Church prepare boundary agreement. These two parties enter into an agreement to locate the southern boundary of the respective properties and establish a north-south line between the adjoining properties and move four horse sheds currently on the boundary.**
- 1871 "The Parsonage has been repaired and enlarged at a cost of \$1022.17."**
- 1873 The Long Island Railroad comes to Smithtown as a result of extending the line from Northport to Port Jefferson.**

Smithtown's Declaration of Independence

August 9, 1774

The events of a Town Meeting August 9, 1774 are presented here as they were recounted in an 1875 sermon by Rev. James Sinclair.

"In the Town records of this date we find that Smithtown was not behind the times; for at a Town meeting of the inhabitants of Smithtown on the ninth of August 1774, the following resolutions, almost equal to the Declaration of Independence which was promulgated two years later, were passed. Although this is digressing somewhat from the history of the Church, yet these resolutions and the action accompanying them, is, such a tribute to the patriotism of the people of Smithtown of that day, I that I think they are worthy of being transcribed and repeated in your hearing.

'RESOLVED:

First, That every man's property is absolutely his own, and that no man (has) a right to take it from him, without his consent expressed either by himself or his representative.

Second, That therefore all taxes and duties imposed on his Majesty's subjects, in the American Colonies, by Authority of Parliament are unconstitutional, and a plain violation of (the) most essential rights of British subjects.

Third, That the act of Parliament lately passed, for shutting up the Port of Boston, or other means or device, under color, or pretense (of) Law, to compel them or any other of his Majesty's American subjects to submit to Parliament's taxations, are subversive of their just and constitutional Liberty.

Fourth, That our brethren at Boston are now suffering in the Common Cause of British America.

Fifth, That therefore it is the indispensable duty of all ye colonies up on the Continent to unite in some effectual measures for the Repeal of ye said Act for shutting up the Port of Boston and every act of Parliament whereby they are taxed for raising a revenue.

Sixth, That it is the Opinion of this meeting that the most effectual means for obtaining a speedy repeal of ye said Acts, will be to break off all commercial intercourse with Great Britain, Ireland, and the English West India Islands.

Seventh, and we do hereby declare ourselves ready to enter into these, or such other measures as shall be agreed upon by a General Congress, and lastly we do choose and appoint Solomon Smith, Daniel Smith, and Thomas Treadwell for committee for this town, to act in Conjunction with the Committees of the other towns in the County, as a general Committee for the County to Correspond with, the Committee of New York. At a Town meeting of the inhabitants of Smithtown, on the ninth day of August 1774, it was voted, that the Committee mentioned in (that) within resolves are fully empowered in Conjunction with the Committees of the other Towns in this County, to Choose a Delegate or Delegates, to represent this County at the General Congress.

Eighth, That the Expenses of attending said Congress be a County Charge. That the said Committee be fully empowered on the behalf of this town, in Conjunction with the Committee (affords) to act and do all that shall be necessary in defense of our just rights and liberties, (against) unconstitutional attacks of the British Ministry and Parliament, until another Committee shall be appointed.

Daniel Smith, Clerk'

"Bear in mind this document so full of the spirit of our Declaration of Independence, was put forth by the people of Smithtown, in a Town meeting assembled more than two years before this Nation was declared free and independent of Great Britain by Congress. Thus showing that they were fully alive to the nature of the position they assumed, and prepared for the results."

The Reverend Joshua Hartt

Of all the ministers who have served the Smithtown Presbyterian Church, Reverend Joshua Hartt has the greatest fame because of his outspoken words against the British during the Revolutionary War. He was born near Huntington, Long Island on September 17, 1738, graduated from Princeton College in 1770, and was installed in Smithtown on April 29, 1774 just at the outbreak of the War. His patriotism in the cause of our country caused him to be arrested and imprisoned at least five times.

In his sermons, he openly preached resistance to British rule. He was one of the courageous few who openly kept alive the spirit of patriotism which the loyalists on Long Island sought to subdue. He frequently referred to the "tyranny of Kings" and "Kings slaves," the latter being British soldiers. From the pulpit, he warned the British not to interfere with the rights of free men, reminding them that the colonists had forged a new country out of the wilderness where free men could live together to the Glory of God. Typical quotations from his sermons are:



"He who hath no sword let him sell his garment and buy one!"

"Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning shears into spears and let the weak say I am strong."

"Standfast therefore in the 'liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage,"

"Liberty sounds pleasant in the ears of all mankind and neither men nor devils have the right to tyrannize it over men. God has never delegated power to either of them to act the tyrant and lord it over either the bodies or consciences of men. God has a right to rule as an absolute sovereign, but not man. For no man is equal to the task . . ."

The latter quotation came from a sermon on liberty that must have been a favorite of his. He presented it in the Church on November 3, 1775, repeated it on May 21, 1780 and again in 1787. He also delivered the same sermon while visiting Huntington in 1780 and Sag Harbor in 1784.

In view of these strong words, it is understandable that the British wanted him silenced. Once he was brought before a court martial held at Lloyds Neck, but was merely warned and released. Soon after, he was arrested again, tried and jailed in New York City from May 27 to October 25, 1777.

During this imprisonment at age 39, he came near dying from an illness and want of food. A fellow prisoner was the celebrated Colonel Ethan Allen, who had captured Fort Ticonderoga in the early days of the War.

Allen attended the ailing Rev. Hartt and by his lively manner and cheerful conversation did much to make his sickness and confinement endurable. One day Ethan Allen knelt at Rev. Hartt's bedside and prayed for his recovery. Soon after, Rev. Hartt, through the assistance of a Tory friend, was paroled from the prison. Upon his departure, Ethan Allen said to him with a farewell handshake: "Goodbye Rev. Hartt, when you go home tell your wife that while you were sick and nigh unto death, Ethan Allen, a servant of the Most High God, prayed over you and you recovered."

Although released from prison, Hartt was closely watched by the British. He continued to preach his sermon on Liberty. This particular sermon so enraged the British who were occupying Long Island, that it is said that two soldiers went to the door of the Smithtown Church and fired their rifles at Reverend Hartt while he was delivering this sermon

from the pulpit, but apparently Hartt was unharmed by the attack.

Rev. Hartt had married Abigail Howell of Moriches and they raised a family of ten children. He served this Church until September 1787. Afterwards, he served the Churches of Fresh Ponds and Hempstead. In 1795 and apparently at other times, he was employed by the Surveyor General in Albany. He performed surveys in Oneida County, New York as well as in Huntington. One interesting record he wrote in 1795 regarding the Town of Huntington, which at that time ran across the width of Long Island, was:

"Near ye south road as well as ye north road it has of late become very thickly settled. You can hardly ride half a mile without passing a house and many times three or four in half a mile. Many people have drawn themselves as near ye bay as they can for ye advantage of fishing and claming."

A reference to churches at that same time states:

"There are in ye Township of Huntington three Presbyterian Churches, two Presbyterian ministers . . . Nine tenths of ye people here, if they are anything, are Presbyterians."

He was often referred to as Priest Hartt and known as the marrying minister because he performed so many marriages. It was the general feeling of engaged couples of that period that they were not properly married unless Rev. Joshua Hartt performed the ceremony.

From his account books it is learned that he also acted as doctor, giving out potions and nostrums, as well as bleeding anyone who seemed to need it, all for a fee. He was also a local scribe and wrote many legal writs for residents of Smithtown and Huntington and also taught school. All this was to gain additional income that he might sustain himself as minister. One interesting note occurs in June 1791 when he paid his New York City attorney, Aaron Burr, for handling his claim against a Colonel Nicoll.

During the War of 1812, between the United States and England, he preached several sermons supporting the Government in declaring War. These sermons were printed and distributed extensively in pamphlet form.

He died on October 3, 1829 after a colorful and eventful life. At the time of his death, he was ninety years old and residing in Fresh Ponds, as minister of that Church. Joshua Hartt is buried in East Northport.

A True & perfect Inventory of all the real & personal Estate belonging to the Presbyterian Church & Congregation of Smithtown taken by us the undersigned Trustees this fifth day of January One thousand eight hundred and four -

| | | |
|---|-------------|-----------|
| W ^{ts} Meeting house and land | 120 | 60 |
| Burying ground | 1000 | — |
| Reverend Luther Glenn's bond on the 1 st of this instant | 75 | — |
| Do Do Do Note | 291 | 68 |
| William Hudson Bond | 72 | 86 |
| Do Do Note | 546 | 34 |
| Do Do Note | 149 | 79 |
| Cash on the hands of collector | 165 | 28 |
| One Cent Dice | 93 | 12 |
| | <u>2288</u> | <u>60</u> |

Indebted as follows

| | | |
|--|------------|-----------|
| W ^{ts} Reverend Luther Glenn on the 1 st | 265 | 50 |
| Major Mills Phillips | 15 | 00 |
| Thomas Weymouth & Thomas Hallack | 25 | 00 |
| Settle amount of Ballance | <u>305</u> | <u>50</u> |
| | 2985 | 10 |

Mills, Phillips

Caleb Smith

Thomas Hattery

William Mills

January 1804

"A true and perfect inventory of all the real and personal estate belong - ing to the Presbyterian Church and Congregation of Smithtown...."

We the Trustees of the Parish of Smithtown and a Committee of the
 Parish of Fresh Ponds do mutually agree with each other
 for the term of three years from the first day of August
 One Thousand Eight Hundred Thirteen to pay the Rev.
 Henry Fuller for his Pastoral services in the two parishes
 as follows (Viz) Two hundred & fifty Dollars by the
 trustees of the Parish of Smithtown, and two hundred &
 fifty Dollars by the Committee of Fresh Ponds. Also
 the Parish in which Mr. Fuller resides is to find him
 his fire wood and have the preference of his ministerial
 services on all public days excepting on the Sabbath.

| | |
|---|--|
| Mills, Philip. Isaac Bydunburgh Moses S. Miller Caleb Smith Rich. Smith Nathl. Smith, Jr | Trustees of the Parish of Smithtown |
| Jonathan Gardner Nathaniel Biggs Elias Melford Robert Rogers | Committee of the Parish of Fresh Ponds |

of incorporation annexed to the laws of the state

1816

Agreement between the Trustees and the Parish of Fresh Ponds (Fort
 Salonga) "to pay the Rev. Henry Fuller for his Pastoral services in the
 two Parishes as follows viz. Two hundred & fifty dollars by ...
 Smithtown and two hundred and fifty dollars by the committee of Fresh
 Ponds. Also the Parish in which Mr. Fuller resides is to find him his
 firewood and have the preference of his ministerial services on all the
 public days excepting the Sabbath."

We the subscribers, being two of the Deacons of the
 Church of the Presbyterian Church in Smithtown do hereby
 certify that the members of the said Church & Congregation
 having been duly convened on the Twenty ninth Day of
 April in the year of our Lord One thousand Seven Hundred
 & Ninety four agreeably to & in the Manner mentioned in
 an Act of the Legislature of this State passed the 15th Day of
 April in the year of our Lord One thousand Seven Hundred
 & Eighty four entitled "An Act to enable all religious
 Denominations in the State to appoint Trustees who shall
 be a body corporate for the Purpose of taking care of the
 Temporalities of their respective Congregations and for
 other purposes therein mentioned." did in pursuance
 of the said Act proceed to the Election of the said Trustees
 and that upon the Votes of the said Members of the said
 Congregation at their meeting House in Smithtown aforesaid
 assembled, being taken, the following Persons were by a
 Plurality of Votes elected to that office, namely Nathaniel
 Smith, Joshua Smith Junr, Jedidiah Mills, B. Blydenburg
 Church, Philetus Smith & Jerimiah Platt, and we do
 hereby further certify that it was then and there agreed
 that the Title & Name by which the said Trustees & their
 Successors should be thereafter known should be by the
 Name & name of the Corporation of the Presbyterian
 Church in Smithtown. In witness whereof we have
 hereunto set our Hands & seals this Twenty ninth Day
 of April in the year of our Lord One thousand Seven
 Hundred & Ninety four.

Signed & sealed
 in the presence of
 Samuel Mills
 John Platt

Epenetus Smith
 Jeffrey Smith

29th Day of April 1794

Certificate of Incorporation

"We the subscribers being two of the Deacons of the Presbyterian Church
 in Smithtown do certify that the members of said Church...having been
 duly convened...for the purposes mentioned in the Act of the Legislature
 of this State...did proceed to the elections of Trustees...namely, Nathaniel
 Smith, Joshua Smith Jun., Jedidiah Mills, B. B. Blydenburg, Philetus
 Smith & Jerimiah Platt...it was then and there agreed that the title and
 name by which the said Trustees...should thereafter be known should be
 by name of the Corporation of the Presbyterian Church in Smithtown."

Epenetus Smith
 Jeffrey Smith

The Constitution of the Female Charitable Society

April 18, 1816

We the subscribers being desirous of contributing our mite to the support and furtherance of the cause of religion do hereby form ourselves into a Society to be known by the name of the Female Charitable Society of Smithtown, and do severally bind ourselves by the rules and regulations following.

- I) Every person becoming a member of this Society, shall pay twenty-five Cents on admission, and one cent each week, so long as she continues to be a member, and more if any feel disposed.
- II) This society shall have a President, a Treasurer, and Secretary and Three managers, and a majority of the managers shall be competent to do business.
- III) The society shall meet Quarterly, at the call of the President, and the managers shall meet occasionally as found necessary.
- IV) The officers of this society shall be chosen at their annual meeting; the funds of the society shall be appropriated to charitable purposes, and the particular object shall be designated by a majority of the Society.
- V) A minister or male member of the Church shall be invited to meet with us, and open by prayer after which he shall withdraw, unless particularly requested by the Society to tarry.
- VI) This constitution shall be read at every quarterly meeting.



The New Meeting House

At a Congregational Meeting on February 5, 1823 it was "RESOLVED: to build a new house and not repair the old one" and it was further RE SOLVED: Shall be the property of the Presbyterian Church and the Congregation of Smithtown, but all ministers of the gospel be admitted to worship in said house when not occupied by the Presbyterian Society. Another resolution was "that said house shall be occupied exclusively for the purpose of public worship and for meetings of the Trustees." And finally it was "RESOLVED: to raise 200 dollars for the purpose by subscription. If a sufficient sum is not raised to commence operation, as determined by a vote of the parish, the subscriptions are then null and void."

The minutes of the April 1, 1823 Parish meeting at which the Trustees presented their subscription report stated:

"The Trustees reported that the sum of \$1400 was subscribed for the purpose of erecting a new house of public worship-it requiring a vote of said parish whether they shall commence building or not Voted that the Trustees commence building the new house on the sum already raised and anticipated to be raised without any delay-voted that the disposed (sic) of the old house be discretionary with the Trustees as they may think proper."

Then, just several weeks later, on April 26th, the Trustees signed an agreement with George Curtiss to build the new House of Worship. reads as follows:

"An agreement made this twenty-sixth day of April 1823 between the Trustees of the first Presbyterian Church and Congregation the Town of Smithtown one part and George Curtiss of the other part relative to the building of a new house for the Worship Almighty God.

"First The said Trustees agree to find all the material and deliver the same on or near the spot where the said building is to I erected and they do agree further that they will pay unto said George Curtiss the sum of Eight Hundred and Twenty Five dollars for the work and labor of erecting said house. The house to be forty-six

At a meeting of the parish members of the
first Presbyterian Church & in Southtown
met April 1st 1823

Joshua Smith was chosen moderator
& Charles A. Frazee Clerk

The Trustees reported that the sum of \$1600
was subscribed for the purpose of erecting
a new house of public worship —
& requiring a vote of said parish whether they
shall commence building or not —

Voted that the Trustees commence building
the new house on the sum already received
& anticipated to be received without any
delay —

Voted that the disposal of the old house
be discretionary with the Trustees as they
may think proper —

Witnessed since due
C. Frazee

April 1, 1823

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish at which it was voted to build the
present Church.

feet in length and thirty-four feet in width with a cupulo on the same. The money to be paid as follows, vis, one hundred when the frame is raised, one hundred when the same is enclosed and remainder when completed and to be completed by the 25th day of December next except painting.

"And the said George Curtiss agrees on his part in consideration aforesaid to do and cause to be done all the labour & work necessary for the completion of the Said House in a workmanlike manner & finish the same throughout & paint the same when the materials for painting shall be furnished say in the spring following and the said George Curtiss further agrees to do and cause to be done the work of said House in all respects equal to the Meeting House at Patchogue subject to the following alterations vis-the gallery to have twelve inches more pitch, the aisles to be somewhat wider and such other small alterations as may be agreed on between the said parties-And the said George Curtiss agrees to board himself and his hands at his own expense. But it is hereby understood that the said George Curtiss is to take the timber standing in the woods for the frame but the Trustees to cart the same either to the mill for sawing, or on the spot framing after the same is squared in the woods.

"In witness thereof the parties have here unto set their hands the day and year first above written."

Isaac Blydenburgh
 George Mills
 Moses Mills
 James S. Miller
 Henry Conkling
 John Floyd
 George Curtiss

It is apparent the Congregation wanted to be in their new Church by Christmas of the year construction began. However, for unrecorded reasons the accounting records were not closed on this project until December 1825, indicating a more extensive task than was first envisioned. It is interesting to note that there was no reference to drawings or detailed descriptions-only a statement that the work be equal to the Meeting House at Patchogue. It is known that the steeple was not part of the original agreement for during construction there was a separate subscription for this purpose.



The Snow Scene painting was made by Alexander Milne in about 1840; fifteen years after the new Church was completed. The building to the right is the Blydenburgh house and to the left of the Church is the school-house where the poet Walt Whitman taught school. To the far left is the home of Epenetus Smith.



Pencil sketch of church in village green by Alexander Milne about 1840

The original meeting house which had been moved to the Branch in 1750 was sold at auction in April 1825 and moved to the area then known as Bushy Neck where it was used as a fulling mill. This site is now known as Blydenburgh Park. The original meeting house was lost in a fire many years later. It is reported however that several large timbers were salvaged and used as vertical supports in constructing a barn on the premises, by the owner. This barn was destroyed by fire on June 28, 1973 and thus all that remains today of the original meeting house is a photo of these supporting timbers.



The new meeting house was officially dedicated on September 9, 1827 with the Reverend Pillsbury officiating. The architectural style is described as Federal with an air of elegance contributed by the arched windows and corner pilasters. There is a hint of Gothic style in the corner pilasters of the three upper tower stages. The Palladian window above the entrance was already passé in urban areas when the church was built but the elliptical entrance arch was up-to-date.



THE NEW MEETING HOUSE CONSTRUCTION COSTS



Date Started - October 1823

Date Completed - December 1825

Receipts

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Raised by subscription | \$1582 42 ¹ / ₂ |
| Cash from trustees | 547 21 |
| | \$2129 63 ¹ / ₂ |

Disbursements

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Cost of Materials | \$1194 68 ¹ / ₂ |
| To Geo. Curtiss | 900 00 |
| | \$2094 68 ¹ / ₂ |

Extracts from typical bills

| | |
|--|--------|
| 1. one day with my ox team and two hands at clearing away and leveling the ground for to lay the foundation | \$1.50 |
| 2. one days work by Oliver cutting lath logs | .75 |
| 3. carting lumber from the new mill | 1.50 |
| 4. carting lumber from the dock | 3.00 |
| 5. three days going to New York for supplies | 6.00 |
| 6. carting 7 loads of stone from the Landing | 4.00 |
| 7. going to N.Y.-5 days and one day unloading | 6.50 |
| 8. carting one load of plank from the Landing | .25 |
| 9. carting one load of plank from the harbor | 1.00 |
| 10. Capt. John Darling on sloop "Telegraph" 88 ¹ / ₂ O white roap | 13.84 |
| 11. for freight on board and freight up River | 33.00 |
| 12. 15 Tons of stone brought from Conn. cash paid in Conn. | 6.00 |
| freight of the same | 15.00 |
| 13. 13 three inch planks 330 feet & carting | 5.19 |
| 14. 11,000 shingles at .15 ¹ / ₂ | 170.50 |
| 15. 4 casks of lime and carting | 4.40 |
| 16. 3/4 lb. of glue | .24 |
| 17. 56 lites of Clafs | — |
| 18. 4 ³ / ₄ lbs. putty & 2 sheets sandpaper | — |
| 19. 8 bushels of hair (used for binding plaster walls) | — |

The Manse Through the Years

The first parsonage after the Church was moved from Nissequogue to the present site was situated on 120 acres south of Jericho Turnpike near the intersection with Brooksite Drive. This area was known as Bushy Neck and the parsonage had formerly been the residence of Benjamin Mills. The Church acquired ownership of the property in 1760. In 1798, the 120 acres of land and the parsonage were sold to the Rev. Luther Gleason, who was then the minister, for the sum of 300 pounds cash with the Trustees holding a mortgage for an additional 460 pounds.

In 1823, the next parsonage was acquired as a gift from William Blydenburgh. It stood on four acres of land on the west side of what is now Route III, Just south of the present post office. When Rev. Pillsbury moved here in 1827, he purchased that parsonage and resided in it while serving as minister. When he left, he sold it and the Church was again without a parsonage. That building was destroyed in a fire some time



About 1911. Note bay window which was later removed.

later.

On June 19, 1835 William Blydenburgh again made a donation. This time it was for the initial plot of land on which the present parsonage is situated. The Trustees then contracted with the same George Curtiss who had built the Church to build the manse. It was scheduled to be completed by November 1, 1835.

A parcel of land 75 feet by 90 feet deep and adjoining the eastern boundary of the property given by Mr. Blydenburgh was purchased in 1846 by the Trustees for \$200. Through subsequent additions to the manse, it now occupies portions of both properties; the last addition having been made in 1899.

With several earlier experiences of the Church selling the parsonage and subsequently not having a place to house the minister, William Blydenburgh stipulated in the 1835 deed that the land should always be the site of the parsonage and should it cease to be that, the ownership of the land would then revert to his heirs. This stipulation remained unchallenged until 1974, when the Trustees obtained a release from his heirs and a court ruling that lifted the restraint.



Interior Staircase, 1975



Exterior scene, 1975

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TRUSTEES AND
GEORGE CURTISS FOR BUILDING THE PARSONAGE (1835)

"Vis the said George Curtiss doth on his part agree to build a house of the following dimensions twenty-four feet in front and twenty-six feet in rear, the building to be two stories high with a kitchen adjoining, fourteen feet by thirteen feet and also to build a barn, twenty feet by eighteen feet and a necessary of convenient size and also to dig and stone a well and also to make a suitable fence around the door yard and garden. It is also agreed that the above G. Curtiss is to paint the house, the roof of the barn and doors and fence and all to be done in a workmanlike manner and the whole to be completed and finished by the first of November 1835- and it is further understood that the above G. Curtiss is to dig and stone a cellar under the kitchen of convenient size and the above named trustees on their part do agree to furnish all the materials and to deliver the same

on the spot where the above named buildings are to be erected and to pay unto the above George Curtiss four hundred and fifty dollars for his labor, & board."



The Reverend and Mrs. McMullen who resided in the parsonage from 1861 to 1864

At the Crossroads

In 1868 the structure at the left of this photograph was built as a public school by Peter Jane. This was the second public school building in Smithtown and was known as Academy Hall. It was later sold and moved west on Main Street where it now serves as a men's clothing store. The school building then stood on land that has since been acquired by the Church.

This placid scene at the intersection of several dirt paths was photographed before 1901. A close look at the Church steeple shows that a clock, which was dedicated in May 1901, did not yet exist.



River Road and Main Street, c.1897



River Road and Main Street, 1975

Now, in the year 1975, after seven or eight decades of so-called progress, this once peaceful crossroads is now a busy mixture of concrete, tarvia, painted lines, poles, signs, traffic lights, vehicles and noise.

The intersection has been the scene of many changes, beginning in 1750 when the Church was moved to this location and the highway commissioners rerouted what is now Route 25A to accommodate the building.

In 1823, the decision was made to build the present Church just south of the 1750 Meeting House. This would have caused the front steps of the Church to be practically at Route 25A. So, in 1823, the highway commissioners again shifted the road southeast. In 1857, this section of the highway was further shifted by the commissioners, thereby giving the front yard to the Church grounds. The intersection retained the same approximate look of that last change until 1967 when Route III was diverted so that it intersected Main Street at the present location. In 1975 another alteration was made to widen Main Street and Route III at the intersection and curve River Road a few feet so that it intersects Route 25A and avoids to some extent a five-way intersection with Main Street. In this change, the Church gained the small patch of lawn between the sidewalk and the curb at River Road.

In 1929, before the Church purchased the 1.7 acres where the school building stood, a special meeting of the school district was required. One hundred and four people attended and passed a resolution to sell the land to the Church for 5000 dollars. Of particular interest is the following extract from the Trustees' minutes regarding the reason the members of the community sold the land to the Church:

"RESOLVED, that whereas School District No. I of the Town of Smithtown, at the annual meeting held on the 6th day of August 1929, took action to sell to the Trustees of this Church the former school house site adjacent to the Church property; and

"WHEREAS, this congregation understands that said action was taken for the reason that the inhabitants of the School District believed the Meeting House of the Church because of its historical associations, the unusual beauty of its architecture and its religious, ethical and cultural value to the community, should be protected, and an adequate site therefore provided, particularly in case any change in the location of the existing highway should unduly encroach upon the present site or for any other reason it should prove advisable to move said Meeting House from its present location,

"NOW, THEREFORE, be it RESOLVED, that this congregation express its appreciation of the action taken by the School District."

Having included the following constraints in the deed for the land he gave the Church in 1750, it is interesting to reflect on what Epenetus Smith's reaction would be now, 225 years later!

". . . provided that there shall never be any alteration made in said road as now altered and aperted to the damage of me or my heirs or without the consent of me or my heirs at no time hereafter for ever."

HYMN TO JOY

*Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee,
God of glory. Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like hearts before Thee,
Opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness,
Drive the dark of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness,
Fill us with the light of day.*

*All Thy works with Joy surround Thee,
Earth and heaven reflect Thy rays,
Stars and Angels sing around Thee,
Center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
Flowery meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain,
Call us to rejoice in Thee.*

*Thou art giving and forgiving,
Ever blessing, ever blest,
Wellspring of the joy of living,
Ocean depth of happy rest!
Thou our Father, Christ our Brother,
All who live in love are Thine;
Teach us how to love each other,
Lift us to the Joy divine.*

*Mortals, join the happy chorus,
Which the morning stars began;
Father love is reigning o'er us,
Brother love binds man to man.
Ever singing, march we onward,
Victors in the midst of strife,
Joyful music leads us Sunward
In the triumph song of life.*

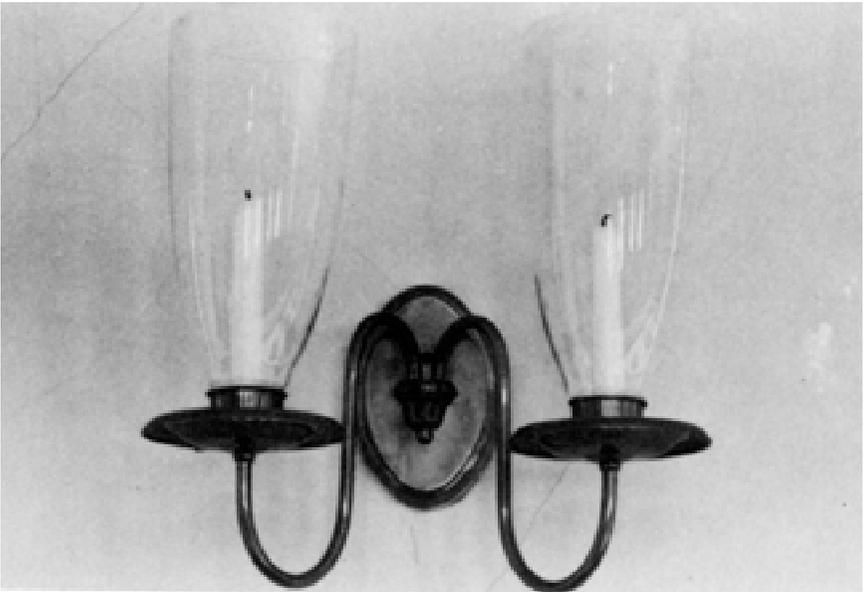
REV. HENRY VAN DYKE

1907

Chapter Three

The Third 100 Years

1875-1975



Prologue to the Third 100 Years

In 1875, Smithtown was still a farming community. It was less than two years since the summer of 1873 when the railroad service commenced, thus providing the residents a means other than the horse or sailing vessel for transportation to New York City. At this time, Smithtown was the center of agricultural activity on the North Shore and well known for the richness of its soil. Already the community was a bread basket for New York City, with grain and flour the main products. The coming of the rail line had significant impact on the destiny of the community in the late 1800's and early 1900s.

Prior to the arrival of the railroad, the business community was centered around the intersection where the statue of the bull is located. The post office was there, and it was convenient for river barges and the various mills at Head of the River and Stump Pond. The building of the railroad resulted in a shift of the population center toward the east, since it became more convenient for merchants to be close to the depot.

The availability of the railroad also greatly accelerated the expansion in the raising of crops such as fruits and vegetables. Although grain, flour, hay, fish and meat continued to make significant growth, the increase in fruits and vegetables was appreciably greater. This is attributed to the quick farm-to-market delivery afforded by the railroad. By 1900 there were nine trains daily out of Smithtown. The story of how the people of Smithtown obtained the rail service demonstrates the foresight and business acumen of the residents of that day.

Construction of the Long Island Rail Road started in 1834 when the plan was to have a line from Brooklyn to Greenport at the tip of the North Fork which would connect with New England by boat to provide a route to Boston. It was believed then that the rough terrain of Connecticut would preclude a direct rail link between New York City and Boston. Consequently, the line was constructed along the middle of the Island with its intent being the shortest, fastest way to Greenport. Then, in 1848, the Long Island Rail Road was rendered nearly useless when a New York to Boston line on the mainland was achieved. In order to survive, the rail road began expansion with branch lines to shore communities, but often to the detriment of the community with the take it or leave it attitude of the owner of the rail road resulting in many communities that then exist-

ed being either bypassed completely or the station being located so far out of town that an entirely new community resulted. To preclude this, the Smithtown and Port Jefferson Rail Road was formed and the line constructed at a cost of 200,000 dollars. The Long Island Rail Road contributed 60% of the cost and the remaining 40% was raised by a bond issue which the Town of Smithtown guaranteed. This required a public referendum which passed by a wide margin.

Prominent citizens of the community supported the concept and Lyman Beecher Smith, a member of the Church and Town Supervisor at that time, became treasurer of the Smithtown-Port Jefferson Line.

Through financial interest in the Line, members of the community were able to control some of Smithtown's destiny in terms of the location of the station and the junction point with the main line that then extended as far as Northport.

By 1880, the population of Smithtown had only grown to 2379 persons. It was comprised of 468 families living in 454 homes. Church records show there were 134 members in 1899, the four predominant family names, being Smith, Blydenburgh, Hallock and Arthur. At this time the minister's annual salary was 1,000 dollars.

By comparison, in 1975 the population of the Town exceeds 122,000 persons with 27,979 dwellings. The Church now has 622 communicant members and 441 families represented. Most of this growth took place after 1945, following World War II. Until then, Smithtown retained its rural charm and the Church stood as a quiet sentinel at the intersection of several country roads.

Those were apparently tranquil times in the Church, brought partially perhaps by the prosperity of the Rail Road. In the records we find the following statement by Rev. C. O. Gray on December 27, 1899:

"There is always danger when things are doing well for one to be content and not try to do better, and I have been thinking of this in connection with our Church."

A Deacons' report in 1902 stated that the congregation appreciated the new individual sacramental service. It suggested however, that the communicants kindly hold their communion cups in hand until the close of the service to avoid "the unpleasant click in the receiver rack."

In this year the congregation also had prominent visitors and speakers from Havana, Cuba; Alaska; India; and Peking, China. Since there was no radio, movies, or television, guest speakers were a special entertainment.

Prosperity still prevailed in 1903, when the Deacons' report noted:

"It is a blessed thing to have a community so prosperous in material things (as to have few or almost none who require aid of this kind) but it is also a blessed thing for the Church to have a hand ready to be extended and that hand always well filled."

It is interesting to note that from 1903 to 1962 only two ministers served the Church. This stability far exceeds any equivalent period in the Church's history.

As Smithtown's population grew, the Church membership grew and expansion of the facilities was necessary. The Parish Hall was added in 1950 and the Christian Education Building in 1963.

In 1975, the physical plant of the Church serves the community by providing meeting space for a variety of organizations. These include; Alcoholics Anonymous, Parents Without Partners, Senior Citizens, Boy Scout and Girl Scout Troops, Home Extension, week day nursery school, antique shows, coin and stamp club displays and sales, and garden club activities. These are in addition to various Church programs by the United Presbyterian Women, Kirk Club, Westminster Group and Senior Highs.

The outreach into the community is further fostered through the Church's benevolence fund which contributes to the support of a number of community organizations with Christian concerns. These include; Family Service League, Reading For the Handicapped, Smithtown Parkinson Therapy Center, Long Island Campus Ministries, Camp Incentive for all children of the congregation who attend Church Camps, Smith Haven Ministries, and Boy Scout Summer Camp Chaplain. Additionally, a large number of the congregation devote their free time to providing volunteer work within these and other community endeavors such as The Smithtown Historical Society, Society for Lending Comforts to the Sick, various civic associations, The Branch Preservation Society, The League of Women Voters, Red Cross, Heart Association, The Smithtown Town-ship Arts Council, YMCA and St. Johns and Kings Park Hospitals.

Both our Church and the community of Smithtown as we know them in 1975 are the result of a complex, inter-related, sifting and sorting that has been in process for 300 years. In this continuing evolution, what will endure from our time?



Chronicle of Events

1875 to 1975

- 1876 Telephone invented.
- 1879 Electric light bulb invented.
- 1881 Proposal from the Church to Board of Missions. "Rev. Sinclair presented an application looking to the placing the Church under the care of the Board of Missions, with a view to an increase of his salary, but the board would not entertain such a proposal from churches having established funds."**
- 1882 The population of Smithtown is 2379.
- 1883 Henry A. Porter is Minister until 1889.
- 1884 "It was voted to increase pew rents 33% to provide funds for painting the Church inside and out."
- 1884 Eligibility for Board of Trustees. "Resolved that no person shall be eligible to the office of Trustee of the corporation unless he shall be of the age of 35 years or over and shall have been taxed for not less than \$2500 real estate."
- 1886 American Federation of Labor organized.
- 1887 The Smithtown Amateur Dramatic Club presents "The Widow Bedott" at the Music Hall on February 9th.
- 1889 Motion picture invented.
- 1889 Henry A. Lewis becomes Minister, remaining until 1892. Dr. Lewis was born March 23, 1850 the son of a minister. He attended Amherst College, graduating in 1873; received his M.A. degree in 1877 and was ordained in 1880 after graduation from Union Seminary. New York State churches he served were in Carlisle, Ballston Spa and Saranac Lake. He built the Church of the Redeemer in California. In 1910 he returned east and served in Tappan, New York, retiring in 1919 to Richmond, Virginia where he died.**
- 1892 Rev. Schenck serves as Minister until 1894.

- 1893 Gasoline automobile invented.
- 1894 Charles O. Gray is Minister, serving until 1903. The use of envelopes for the church offering began in 1897, at the suggestion of Rev. Gray, as a means of increasing the finances of the Church.**
- 1895 X-ray discovered.
- 1897 The Ladies Aid Society is formed.**
- 1897 Pledges of \$1970 are received plus \$2000 from the Trustees to build the Chapel, currently the library.**
- 1899 Congress permits voting machines to be used in national elections.
- 1899 After many years of one regular meeting of the Trustees per year, it is voted to meet once every two months.**
- 1900 The Smithtown Hunt is established. Due to the terrain, this hunt was considered one of the most difficult on Long Island. It was almost impossible for horses to penetrate pine wood lands on many tracts.**
- 1901 Transatlantic communication by radio.
- 1901 Mrs. William Henry Mills donates the clock in the steeple in memory of her husband. It was started at 3:30 in the afternoon on Decoration Day, 1901 during a dedication service.**
- 1903 First airplane flight at Kitty Hawk, N.C.
- 1903 Dr. Edward W. Abbey serves as minister until 1937. He was a native of Watkins Glen, New York and the descendant of a family that arrived in Plymouth in 1633. He graduated in the 1871 class of Hamilton College in Ohio; attended Lane Theological Seminary, graduating in 1874. His first parish was Terre Haute, Indiana, where he remained six years. He then transferred to Hamilton, Ohio where he remained for twenty years, at which time he accepted a call to Smithtown. He was a stately and dignified man who was active in the community. He helped establish the first bank; campaigned for an organized fire department; worked earnestly for a new public school. His wife, Augusta. Hammill Abbey, died in 1934. Three years later, in his 89th year, Dr. Abbey retired for health reasons. He died in his sleep that same year at the Columbia University Club in New York City. After services in**

Smithtown he was buried at his hometown of Watkins Glen. On his 89th birthday he is quoted as saying, "People are my hobby. I love to meet them and help them with their troubles. And when I can no longer help people, I shall know my mission is over."

- 1905 Theory of relativity presented.
- 1905 Plastic revolution.
- 1905 June 11th is Children's Day in the Church. The service consisted of an invocation, responsive reading and various songs and hymns. In addition there was a recitation by each Sunday School class as well as individuals. Recitation titles included; The Bee, Little Bird, Not Self But Others, A Golden Sunbeam, Something to Give, The Wild Wood Concert, Love and Sunshine, Sunbeam and Flowers, and The Robin's Advice.**
- 1906 "The Strawberry Festival netted a profit of \$45.82 toward carpeting for the Sanctuary."**
- 1907 "It was deemed advisable to raise the insurance on the Church and Chapel to \$8000."**
- 1909 First expedition to North Pole.
- 1909 The pipe organ is installed in the Sanctuary. It was purchased from Odell Organ Company at a cost of \$1850, through the generosity of Mrs. Handley.**
- 1909 159 members in the Church.**
- 1909 The Ladies Aid Society decides to add a kitchen. A committee was appointed by the Ladies Aid Society to obtain permission for the construction of an addition to be used as a ladies parlor and kitchen.**
- 1911 U.S. population 92 million; four percent college graduates.
- 1914 World War I begins, lasting until 1918.
- 1915 Panama Canal opened.
- 1915 The Ladies Aid Society is given permission to proceed with a kitchen addition " . . . in strict conformity as per blueprints submitted to the Trustees." This addition was located at the northwest corner of the library and served as both a kitchen**

and ladies parlor. It was removed in 1950 when the Parish Hall was constructed.

- 1915** The Horse block on River Road is removed.
- 1915** It is voted to raise a fund of \$600 to install a steam heating plant in the Church. A unique pledging concept was used. Members were asked to pledge to pay for one or more lineal feet of the heating system piping. Prior to this, the Church had a hot air heating system. The very first heating system consisted of a wood burning stove situated in each of the four ward corner boxes with a pipe extending to the rear of the church which provided the heat radiating surface.
- 1916** The Church is wired for electricity.
- 1917 United States enters World War I against Germany.
- 1919** March 16, pew and seat rents are discontinued and the budget method is adopted.
- 1920 Commercial radio broadcasting begins.
- 1920 Women receive right to vote.
- 1920 Prohibition goes into effect.
- 1924** Mrs. Handley donates the property behind the Church kitchen on which her family's horse shed stands.
- 1926** At a joint meeting of the Trustees and Session, it is voted to adopt the Service Pension Plan for ministers.
- 1929 Beginning of the Great Depression.
- 1930** The western portion of the Church property is purchased from the School District.
- 1938** Raymond H. Case is minister. A native of Amagansett, Long Island, Raymond Case attended schools in that eastern Long Island community. He then attended college in Tennessee and the Bloomfield Seminary and three summers at Auburn Seminary in New York State. After eight years in the National Missions Field, Rev. Case came to Smithtown and served as minister for 24 years, until May, 1962. The Church underwent extensive growth during his pastorate, requiring addition of the Parish Hall and the detailed planning and fund raising for the Christian Education Building. During part of

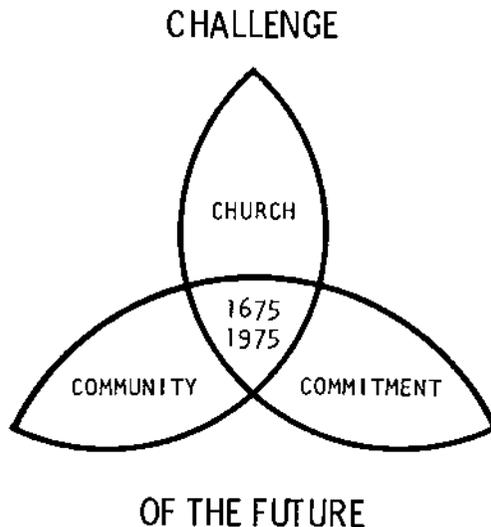
his ministry here Rev. Case also served as Moderator of Presbytery. In recognition of his work with the Indians at the Shinnecock Reservation, he was made a blood brother in 1935 and given the name Chief Speaking Wind. He is currently pastor in Falls Church, Virginia.

- 1939 Germany invades Poland thus commencing World War II.
- 1939 Marble baptismal font given by Edward N. and Samuel H. Abbey in memory of their parents.**
- 1941 Scheduled commercial television commenced.
- 1941 United States enters World War II after attack at Pearl Harbor by Japan.
- 1941 Discovery of penicillin, the first wonder drug.
- 1941 Statue of Whisper, Richard Smith's bull, dedicated on May 10th.**
- 1945 United Nations formed; World War II ends.
- 1950 Korean War.
- 1950 Parish Hall added.**
- 1953 The United States Post Office drops "branch" from the name of the local post office.**
- 1955 Polio vaccine demonstrated.
- 1956 Russia orbits first man-made satellite.
- 1956 The organ chimes are given in memory of Ethelbert and Ellen Smith Arthur by their family.**
- 1958 Austin Gary Angleberger begins service as student assistant minister and is ordained on June 12, 1960.**
- 1960 First man in space by Russia.
- 1960 Robert L. Seaman serves as Assistant Minister until February 1962.**
- 1961 U.S. population 180 million.
- 1961 Peace Corps created.

- 1962** William E. Brown Jr. is installed as Minister; remains until 1973. Mr. Brown was called at a congregational meeting on September 30, 1962, from his post as assistant minister at Montview Boulevard Presbyterian Church in Denver, Colorado. Rev. Brown was born in Erie, Pennsylvania on August 8, 1932. He received a B.A. degree from Yale University, where he was selected for Phi Beta Kappa in his junior year. His divinity studies were divided between the University of Edinburgh, Scotland and Yale Divinity School. He graduated from the latter in 1957. His wife, Margretha, holds a degree in theology from the University of Copenhagen in her native Denmark. Their son Neil was four years old when the Browns arrived in Smithtown and their daughter, Stina, was born while they served here. The Brown family moved to Columbus, Ohio when Rev. Brown was called to be Associate Executive for Synod Ministries with the Synod of the Covenant, having headquarters in Columbus, Ohio.
- 1963** Christian Education Building completed.
- 1964** Special census establishes population of Smithtown at 79,000.
- 1965 U.S. lands first man on the moon.
- 1965** The town of Smithtown celebrates its 300th birthday.
- 1966** Rev. Donald Knight is ordained on July 17; serves as Associate Minister until July 15, 1972.
- 1970 Earth Day, public awareness and demonstration against pollution.
- 1970** It is voted to modify the county government to include a legislature. Smithtown became part of two legislative districts. Local government continued under an elected Supervisor.
- 1973** Rev. Harry Buchanan Barrow serves as Stated Supply Minister from August 6, 1973 until June 16, 1974.
- 1973** John Underwood becomes Minister of Christian Education, serving from September 1, 1973 until June 30, 1975.
- 1974 First resignation of a United States president.
- 1974** William H. Edwards III commences services as Minister. A native of Paducah, Kentucky, he graduated from Yale University in 1952 and Yale Divinity School in 1956. He then served in the pastoral ministry in the towns of Chittenango,

Wappingers Falls, and Mt. Vernon, all in New York State. At an April 21, 1974 congregational meeting, attended by 190 communicant members of the Church, Rev. Edwards was called to leave Mt. Vernon and assume the pastorate in Smithtown. His first service as minister here was conducted on Sunday June 16, 1974. His wife, the former Estelle Zeis, graduated from West Maryland College and then majored in religious education at Yale Divinity School. Their family consists of three teenagers-Mark, Stephan, and Barbara. Rev. Edwards is the 32nd installed pastor of the Church.

- 1974 Smithtown High School West is dedicated. With this, the township has four senior high schools, six junior high schools, and twenty-three elementary schools, with a student population of over 43,000.
- 1975 Public awareness of world energy crisis.
- 1975 Ministerial office addition. A gift from the estate of Mr. David Weld is utilized to construct the office complex off the main hallway.
- 1975 The Church celebrates its Tercentenary with commemorative events throughout the year. "To memorialize our 300 year Christian heritage by involving the congregation and community in the challenge of the future"-statement of the objective of the celebration as prepared by the Tercentenary Committee. This emblem became the symbol of the celebration.



Youth Group Program - 1890

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| <p>OFFICERS</p> <p>President. Gen. W. Hallock Vice President. Clinton Darling Cor. Secretary. Nellie M. Hunting Rec. Secretary. S. Amelia Smith Treasurer. Herbert W. Hallock</p> <p>COMMITTEES</p> <p>PRAYER MEETING Adm. Duties. John Caffray Amelia Blydenburgh</p> <p>DOCKOUT Wm. Bishop. S. Amelia Smith Jennie L. Smith</p> <p>SOCIAL Anna B. Blydenburgh. Blanche Hallock. Mrs. Herbert W. Hallock. Richard Smith. Frank Gould. Herbert W. Hallock.</p> <p>FLOWER Stella I. Hommedien. Emma Brush. Nellie Caffray. Bessie Gould.</p> <p>Bertha Howell</p> <p>MUSIC Ellen L. Smith. Harry Newton. Ella May Whitman.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">* * * * *</p> <p style="text-align: center;">You are cordially invited to our Prayer Service Sunday Evening at 7.30 o'clock.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * * * *</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OUR OBJECT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To promote an earnest Christian life among our members, to increase their mutual acquaintance, and to make them more useful in the service of God</p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * * * *</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p style="text-align: center;">PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH</p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * * * *</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Young Peoples' Society * of * Christian Endeavor.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * * * *</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SMITHTOWN, L. I.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> |
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| <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p style="text-align: center;">OUR PLEDGE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Prayer Meeting Topics.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1890.</p> <p>JAN. 5. Week of Prayer. " Carry with us" Luke 24: 49-53</p> <p>General Summary: Missionary.</p> <p>12. The stewardship entrusted to us. 1 Cor. 9: 15-17</p> <p>19. The greatness of love. 1 Cor. 13: 1-13</p> <p>26. How to become strong Christians. 1 Cor. 16: 1-24</p> <p>FEB. 2. Those whom God approves. 1 Cor. 10: 1-18</p> <p>Missions in China.</p> <p>9. Not living to ourselves. 2 Cor. 5: 11-21</p> <p>16. Prone yourselves. 2 Cor. 13: 1-14</p> <p>Temperance Meeting.</p> <p>23. Helpers, not hinderers. 1 Cor. 8: 9-13</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Consecration Meeting.</p> <p>MAR. 2. "I gave my life for thee." Luke 23: 33-46</p> <p>Missions in Mexico and Central America.</p> <p>9. The joy of bringing others to Christ. Luke 15: 1-10; Dan. 12: 3</p> <p>16. The secret of Christian success. Josh. 1: 8; Gen. 39: 2-5</p> <p>Pentecost Meeting.</p> <p>23. Service of Song. Rev. 19: 1-16</p> <p>30. Turning away from evil. Ezek. 33: 10-20</p> <p>APR. 6. Looking into Jesus Matt. 27: 7; John 1: 29-30</p> <p>Missions in India.</p> <p>13. How can we help the troubled? Rom. 15: 1-13; Gal. 6: 1-5</p> <p>20. What more can we do for our Church? 1 Cor. 12: 27-31; Eph. 4: 1-12</p> <p>Maturity Meeting.</p> <p>27. The best gift, free to all. Isa. 55: 1-13</p> <p>MAY 4. The blessing of confessing Christ. Mark 8: 34; Matt. 10: 32</p> <p>Missions in Siam and Laos.</p> <p>11. Sowing all the time. Isa. 55: 1-10</p> | <p>MAY 18. How can we help our Pastor in his work? 1 Thess. 3: 1; Ex. 17: 8-13</p> <p>Temperance Meeting.</p> <p>25. Our enemies. Eph. 6: 10-18</p> <p>Consecration Meeting.</p> <p>JUNE 1. What is the Lord doing for me? Rev. 1: 4-6; Heb. 7: 25</p> <p>Missions in Africa.</p> <p>8. Prayer for the Sunday School. Isa. 54: 13; Ps. 78: 2-8</p> <p>15. How to make our days happy. Acts 4: 31-33; Isa. 26: 3-4</p> <p>22. Taking knowledge of us, that we have been with Jesus. Acts 4: 9-14</p> <p>29. The only way. How can we lead our friends into it? John 14: 1-6; Heb. 10: 29-13</p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * * * *</p> <p style="text-align: center;">"We are laborers together with God."</p> |
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Permanent Order of Worship - 1894

CHURCH SERVICES.
 Morning at Eleven. Evening at Eight.

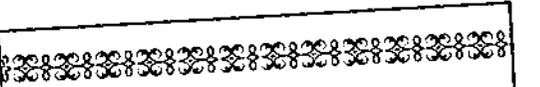
THE LORD'S SUPPER.
 AT MORNING SERVICE, 1ST SABBATH
 -- OF --
 March. June. September. December.
 -- OF --

PRAYER MEETINGS.
 Church, general. Thursday at 7:45 P. M.
 Christian Endeavor. Sunday at 7:30 P. M.
 -- OF --

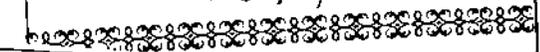
SUNDAY SCHOOL.
 THOMAS L. SMITH, Supt. Session opens at 11 A. M.
 All adults earnestly requested to join the Bible Class.
 -- OF --

WOMAN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY.
 First Wednesday of each month at 3 P. M.
 -- OF --

KING'S DAUGHTERS SOCIETY.
 Last Wednesday of each month at 3 P. M.
 -- OF --


 Smithtown Branch
 ○○○
 PRESBYTERIAN

 CHURCH.

 Rev. C. O. GRAY, Pastor.
 1894


Order of Morning Service.

1. ~~ANTIPHONA.~~
2. DOXOLOGY.
3. INVOCATION--Concluded with Lord's Prayer.
 (Congregation standing and uniting.)
4. PSALM--Responsive Reading.
5. HYMN--And Apostles' Creed.
 (Congregation standing and uniting.)

I BELIEVE in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
 I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

6. SCRIPTURE LESSON.
7. PRAYER.
8. HYMN.
9. NOTICES AND OFFERING.
10. SERMON.
11. HYMN.
12. BLESSING.

Order of Evening Service.

1. HYMN.
2. PRAYER.
3. RESPONSIVE READING--Concluded with Gloria Patri.
 Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world with out end. Amen.
4. SCRIPTURE.
5. NOTICES.
6. HYMN.
7. SERMON.
8. PRAYER.
9. HYMN.
10. BLESSING.

-- OF --

Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor has its service at 7:30; immediately before church service.

The Annual
Home Gathering - 1904

*The Annual Home Gathering
of the
Presbyterian Church
will be held on*

Friday evening, December thirtieth

*An address will be given by the Rev.
J. Howard Aubin, D. D., in the Church
at eight o'clock.*

*Supper will be served and informal ad-
dresses given in the chapel immediately fol-
lowing.*

You are cordially invited to be present.

By order of the Session.

*Edward W. Abbey, Pastor.
Smithtown, New York, 1904.*

Home Gathering Announcement

HOME GATHERING



NEW YEAR'S EVE, 1908
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

IN THE CHURCH

Address, "Horoscope of the Year," The Rev. Edgar W. Work, D. D.

IN THE CHAPEL

Reception by the Session.

Collation, served by the ladies, Mrs. R. H. Handley, Chairman.

TOASTS AND MUSIC

- | | |
|---|--|
| "Our Guests," | Mr. Theron L. Smith |
| Piano and Violin Duet, | Miss Tyler and Miss Thompson |
| "The Absent Ones," | Miss Amelia Blydenburgh |
| Hymn, "Gathering Home." | |
| "Country Life," | Mr. George L. Purick |
| "America's Mission to the World," | The Rev. William Holden |
| Piano Solo, | Miss Fannie Smith |
| "Our Town," | Guy H. Turrell, M. D. |
| "The Three Ruling Powers:"—The Press, the Pulpit and the Petticoat; the first spreads knowledge, the second spreads morals, and the third spreads considerably. | |
| | The Rev. J. N. Cox |
| Song, "A Cycle of Life." | Landon Ronalds |
| Prelude: | |
| "Spring" | |
| "Summer" | |
| "Autumn" | Mrs. Morgan Blydenburgh and Mrs. Caleb Smith at the piano |
| "Our Country," | The Rev. Dr. Work |
| Hymn, "My Country 'Tis of Thee." | |
| "Our Church Home," | Mr. Samuel M. Graffin |



BENEDICTION FOR THE NEW YEAR

Pastor:—The Lord Bless Thee and Keep Thee.

Congregation:—The Lord Make His Face to Shine Upon Thee and be
Gracious Unto Thee.

All:—The Lord Lift up His Countenance Upon Thee and Give Thee
Peace.

Thanksgiving

Excerpts from a Sermon by

Dr. Abbey, November 20, 1921

The Thanksgiving Day is at hand. We should stop a moment in special remembrance of God's blessings of the year and express our gratitude to Him, the giver of all good. . . . The first settlers found natural resources in prodigal abundance, uncut forests, unmined metals, untapped gas wells, rivers abounding with fish, the soil hungry for seed. . . . What spendthrifts our fathers were! How they began to waste their inheritance! The unthinking selfish expenditure has gone on and even today it has been only partially checked. What right have we to heap the table today and forget that there will be hungry children in the coming years? We are taking from the soil half and quarter crops for the most part from our board inheritance when the same soil and the same labor with scientific management would give us full crops. We permit 85 percent of our water to be wasted in freshets and floods, with no provision for conservation. We let irrigation be largely confined to desert regions and neglect to provide waters for the lands that are thirsty within the already cultivated zones. We have cut and slashed our trees in reckless fashion, burning valuable refuse and destroying the floors of the earth upon which nature had been working for thousands of years to make them rich in humus and fertility. We have crowned lumber kings and let them rob our inheritance of beauty and unduly enrich their pockets at the expense of our need. At the present rate of consumption, we shall have wood for commercial purposes for less than 50 years. We are using twenty five times as much wood per capita as England. We have mined our coal with little regard to the future, wasting at the mines and wasting again in its use.

Thanksgiving Day loses its joy when war and fighting take peace from the land. We give thanks for peace today. And in so doing we shall yield a portion of our thanks to the fighters of yesterday, to the men who were ready to risk life that our goodly heritage might be secure. Some of you can think back to the Thanksgiving Days of 1864. We can be thankful now, when we remember the sufferings and sorrows of those days, and that our inheritance unbroken was preserved. It has continued a goodly

heritage. In the days of the Revolution, there were brave men, far seeing in their vision, and loyal, who fought for the best things that men hold dear, and our hearts speak out our gratitude for their labors that have so greatly enriched our lives.

Greater gifts still have come to us—we give thanks for our intellectual and spiritual heritage; for the men who came across the sea to give their children a chance to have freedom and truth,—those most highly coveted blessings of all men who think and pray. Have we forgotten? Have we been led away by other gods? Tolstoy voiced America's forgetfulness of this spiritual heritage, when, with prophetic words, he once more told us: "Prosperity, prosperity! What a shameful plea that is, which your American platform makers address to the voters. They do not say, We will give you an honest, righteous government: but they say, We'll make you all fat and sleek. If you will vote for me, you will have a double chin. And no one arises to say, What will your full dinner pails profit you, if, while gorging your bellies, you lose your immortal souls,"

A thousand-fold more pitiful it would be to lose our spiritual inheritance, than to waste the land they left us. Now forests can be planted; our waste of water can be checked; better methods of mining can be adopted. But what can a nation expect when she has forgotten the glory of truth, and the beauty of purity, and the worth of simple righteousness! Was it not Oliver Goldsmith, who, a hundred and fifty years ago, said:

"Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates and men decay."

Such has been history, repeated again and again, and can still again be repeated. It is all determined by the moral character of the people. My humble, hearty thanks go out today to those men of the former days, who left us, under Cod's providence, the goodly heritage of a vital Christian faith. And my humble, hearty gratitude is deep beyond all words that I can use, for what I believe is the truth today, as it was expressed in a private letter shown to me one week ago from the editor of one of America's leading newspapers, wherein he said, "The one influence which has made possible this conference in Washington, and which promises a better world, has come from the Church." My humble hearty thanks go out to those men who fought the hard battles to make the home pure, and the business honest, and society clean, —who thought that God was worth more than gold. There are cynics who smile at such a statement; they have lost the richest part of our goodly heritage; they will not preserve it.

I would sing praises to those who made the family home. The American home, which was in our heritage, has been disintegrating under certain influences, whose outlook is ill. We have improved some features of it; the primary, essential features of it we have been losing in. We do not want the old Puritanism to return, but we do feel the deep desire that the standards in the home that prevailed in the American nation's infancy be remodeled to meet the needs of this day.

Dare I mention the new feminism without being misunderstood? Many seem not aware, or are oblivious of the subtle power herein working loose ideals of marriage and home and childhood. It is not the issue of wider scope for woman's freedom and activity, in politics or in industry, though it is so commonly confused with that. Some would say, that it's an imported spirit brought in by Russian barefoot dancers and such like. Alas, no; at least only in part. At any rate, the hand that stops rocking the



*Dr. Abbey as a student
at Hamilton College*



Dr. and Mrs. Abbey

cradle begins to rock the boat of our family life.

May I speak a word direct to your homes and families for the Thanksgiving Day? Thank each other old and young, for their share in the feast of the home life. You men appreciate the labors of your own good wife; you will see the light in her eyes that you saw long ago, when you were starting on the path together. And tell him, oh ye wives, of your thankfulness for his toil, his sacrifice. Your thanks are due him, and thereby genuine joy in hearing you speak it.

And, my friends, have you thought that you have done all that is required of a thoughtful mind and an honest heart, when you have thanked God for the blessings of your table? That is only part of the thanks that is due. God says to you, think of those who planted the wheat from which the loaf came; who cultivated it, harvested it; think of the miller who ground it and the dealer, and neglect not the one who fetched the flour or the loaf to your door. Beyond our boundaries, in lands across all the seven seas, men toiled months ago, preparing this table for you. They worked in the spice fields of Java, and the tea fields of China, and they were paid a mere pittance for their labor. A thousand people at least have handled, or in some capacity had to do directly with the articles that will be upon your table. How apt we are to eat and make merry with never a thought for these, who gave so much for our enjoyment.

When I have thanked the human folks who have lengthened God's arms and extended his love, I find myself the more ready, earnestly and reverently to thank Him who is back of all good gifts. Before ever man; came to this earth, He was making ready their gardens.

Except God be remembered in the feast, they labor in vain who have prepared it and except His children be thanked, those who partake shall find little joy and less of satisfaction.

Horse Sheds

When the horse and carriage was the only means of transportation, sheds were provided on the Church property to stable the animals while the owners attended services or social functions. The sheds were moved a number of times through the years and a small portion of one still remains to the west of the Christian Education building.

In the picture below, the small garage-like structure to the rear of the Church and facing on River Road was a privately owned horse shed and later automobile garage belonging to the Handley family who lived in Hauppauge. In 1924 the building and the land were donated to the Church. It then served as a Boy Scout meeting facility. In 1950 it was





Drawing of Church by Edith Nankwell, c.1901

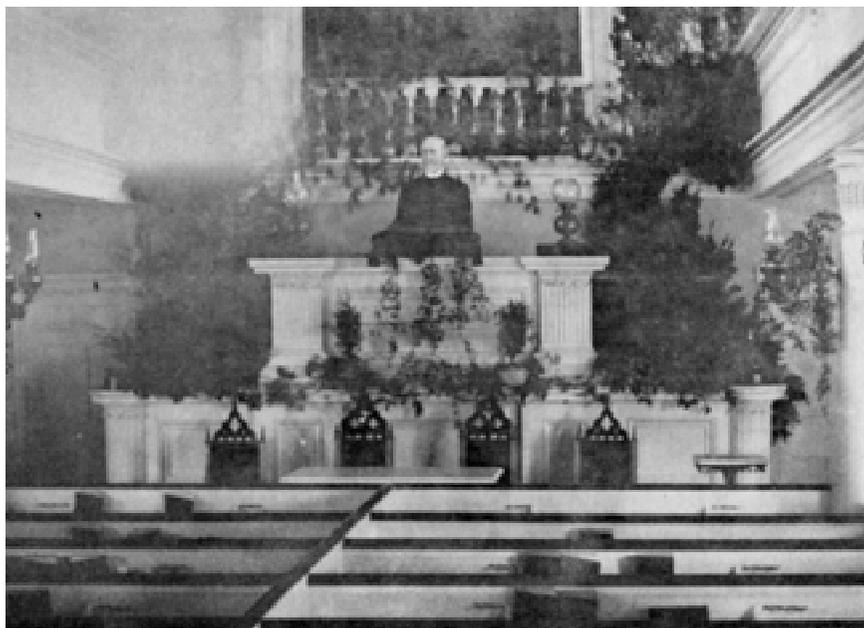
moved to wet boundary of the parking field in conjunction with the construction of the Parish Hall. The move provided the driveway access that presently enters from River Road. A number of years later, the building was lost in a fire.

In addition to the horse sheds, there existed in 1863 a long line hitching rails extending along Main Street from the Epenetus Smith Tavern to the front of the Church. It is said that it was great sport and quite a balancing act, for the boys to run on top of these rails, to see how many could do it without falling off.





Church interior, c.1919





Church interior, 1933



Presbyterian Church, Smithtown Branch, L. I.

NOTICE

Annual Congregational Meeting
 Wednesday Evening,
 May 9, 1928

INVITATION

The Young Ladies of the Church invite you to supper at 7 o'clock promptly. All to be seated and served at that hour

Congregational Meeting called to order at 8 o'clock
 Election of Trustees
 Reports of Church Treasurer
 Of the Session
 Of the Sunday School
 Of the Women's Guild
 Other business

Congregational Meeting Notice - 1928



Church exterior, c.1925





Church exterior, c.1925



Church exterior, c.1925

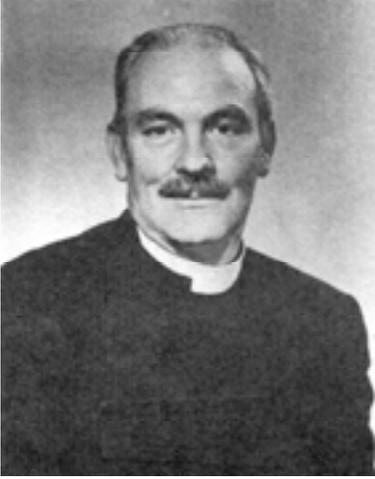




Church scene before 1950



Church scene, 1950 to 1963



Visitors Greeting

Reverend Case, 1961

Greetings:

The Church has but one reason for being, which is God's reason.

The Church shall remind people, and you are of this people, that God is their Father, and therefore mankind is a brotherhood.

The Pastor's sacred duty is to minister to the spiritual and moral needs of the people wherever and whenever in the providence of God he is called upon to do so.

Naturally, I am proud of my heritage as a Presbyterian minister; it is a goodly heritage.

But above and beyond that, I am anxious to provide for the Christian needs of the people in the several communities of our township, and to have you know that you may call upon the Pastor of this Church to minister to your spiritual needs.

God bless you in your home and in all of your relationships in the community.

I commend you to God's loving care and offer you my ministry in His name.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Raymond H. Case". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line that extends to the left.

The Sabbath School

In the early nineteenth century, "Sabbath Schools" were conducted by Churches throughout New York State, These schools were not only for the children of the congregation, but more particularly were for children of needy families outside the Church.

Thus, on August 20, 1817, The Female Charitable Society resolved to appoint a committee "to determine whether the indigent inhabitants in the vicinity would send their children to a Sabbath School provided The Society consider it expedient to attempt the formation of one." The answer was affirmative, for on October 5, 1817 a school was started in the Church with three teachers and thirty-eight students. Four additional teachers were added the following February.

Sometime before 1888, the Church operated two Sunday School Missions. One was at Nissequogue, having between 16 and 30 students, with Caleb T. Smith as superintendent. The other was at San Remo, or North Side, as it was then called. This Mission had 17 to 20 students and the superintendent was Willis S. Platt. Both schools discontinued in 1888, the North Side School having affiliated with the Methodists and families having moved away in Nissequogue.

The Sunday School continued meeting in the Church. After the Chapel was built in 1898, which is now the library, the Sunday School met there. It was the practice until about 1950 for all children of Sunday School age to meet in the Chapel at 10 o'clock on Sundays. At this time they would have a brief worship service. Then they would divide into age groups, the older students remaining in the Chapel, the younger age groups going into the sanctuary. There they would form into groups, with their teachers and hold classes, some in the boxes, others in the pews, and still others in the balcony. They would adjourn before 11 o'clock when the adults would arrive for the regular morning worship service. During some years, a Sunday evening service was also held but there was no Church School at this hour,

The Parish Hall was built in 1950 and for a number of years it provided space for the Sunday School. Moveable partitions were used to separate the classes. Then as the congregation and student enrollment continued to grow it became necessary to construct a building designed espe-

cially for religious education. So in 1963 the Christian Education addition was dedicated.

For a number of years, the Church claimed the highest Church School enrollment in the Long Island Presbytery. However, by 1972, a downward trend had started in the enrollment. In the age group 2 years through 6th grade, there were 400 registered in 1972. This dropped to 365 in 1973 and at the end of 1974 there were 302 registered. A dedicated teaching and support staff of 80, including 37 teenagers is required to conduct classes at both 9 and 11 o'clock each Sunday.

Conducting the Church School requires the contribution of a significant number of volunteer hours for recruitment and training in the curriculum in addition to actual class time.

Besides the regular Christian Education curriculum, there were special programs in 1974 such as; a joint program with Temple Beth Shalom in which Rabbi Spar demonstrated a seder, a presentation of the Psalms



Hayride, c.1945



Maypole, c.1945



*Library
Classroom*

in modern English by the sixth grade class, bible presentations to the third grade, a teacher recognition dinner, and a family Christmas party. In addition, for a number of years there has been a summer nursery and vacation bible school.

As youngsters graduate from Church School, after sixth grade, they may participate in the Westminster program and the Senior High activities which also boast a dedicated staff of teachers.

Young people interested in becoming members of the Church may join a communicants class, taught by the minister. Prior to 1965, those young people in the seventh grade of school were eligible to enroll in the communicants class. This was raised to the eighth grade and then in 1965 the minimum was changed to enrollment during the ninth grade. It was felt by the session that the thoughtful questions and probing considerations that accompany the act of confirmation seem to be more appropriate to the ninth grade age group.



Parish Hall Classroom



Christmas Party, 1974



*Class in Christian
Education Building,,
1973*

Fellowship

Introduction to October, 1966 Tidings Newsletter

by Reverend Brown

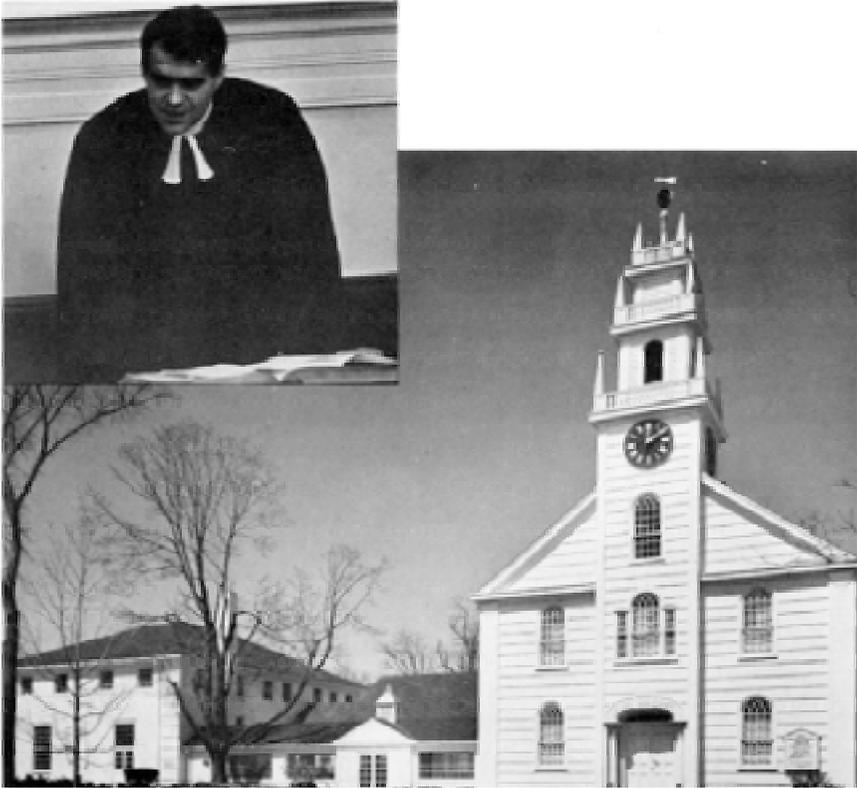
CHRISTIAN GREETINGS:

We're growing, just like Smithtown is. The church has a record fall attendance, a record Church school registration, and a gigantic problem. There are so many people about that it is impossible to know everyone. The Session is struggling to do something about it, though. We are again training and briefing neighborhood leaders, who will be in touch with you soon about some parish suppers we plan.

What are we trying to accomplish by subdividing the congregation into small geographic segments, and asking a layman to be responsible for each of the many resulting parish groups? Two things: first, we want to know who you are and what you want; second, we want you to know our concern for you.

The neighborhood leaders are doing this job for one reason only; they want to do everything they can to express their Christian faith through concern for others. They don't want to impose themselves upon you, but are open to be your friends. If you wish they will merely be a source of information about church programs. However, your neighborhood leader stands ready to introduce you to the groups in the church that may interest you. He is anxious to help you find the place for you in our congregation.

There are many ways of being involved in our church. Please find some area of church activity where you can express your commitment, for if you don't it may seem that our church is just a sea of unknown faces. To avoid that feeling of being "alone" when you come to worship, explore the possibility of a group for fellowship or study in the church. How about church school teaching? There are many who find teaching in Christian Education a significant deepening of their spiritual life. Or Woman's Association? Circles meet both days and evening. Or study groups? We have groups studying modern literature, the New Testaments,



Church scene, 1963 to 1974

"great books," the proposed confession of 1967, and basic Christian beliefs. Call the church office if any of these interest you. We have a Kirk Club with fun events for the whole family. There is a church bowling league, and a softball league. Some of the men play a bit of basketball. If sitting and sewing mounds sounds attractive, that's possible, too. But do become a part of the community of Christians in some way!

The church is growing, as did the church in the book of Acts. The primitive New Testament church maintained community grew in three ways. First, through worship, it grew through their awareness of God's purpose for their lives. Secondly, through the "apostles' teaching," that is through study of their faith, and thirdly, through "fellowship with one another." The church is a community and so fellowship is essential, too.

Cordially,
BILL BROWN

The Church Organ

In the years of the original meeting house on Moriches Road, there would have been no musical instrument used during the worship service. Most hymns were sung either as "rounds" or as refrains with the words and the tune led by a member of the congregation.

The bass viol was the instrument first used to lead the singing in the present Church building. The first organ type instrument was a melodeon which was an innovation resented by some of the older members. They looked upon it as an evil thing. The melodeon was replaced in 1862 by a harmonium at a cost of 380 dollars. It was located in the front of the Church on the raised platform by the first pew. This instrument did not give satisfaction and was changed for another organ whose tone was also





The Church Organ

never very musical. "All these instruments were played by volunteer organists; the salary of the choir leader and organist being now and then a gift of money."

About the time the Ladies Aid Society assumed the responsibility of meeting the expenses of salaried organist they also purchased a larger Mason and Hamlin Organ.

In 1909, the present pipe organ was purchased and it operated by air, manually pumped into a goat skin bellows by a long handled lever mechanism. The air supply was motorized in 1916. The organ served well for many years, even though with advancing age it would occasionally stick, skip a note, or go off key - to the amusement of the congregation but to the chagrin of the organist and choir director. Major refurbishment became necessary in 1973. It is interesting that original cost in 1909 was 1850 dollars, while the 1973 refurbishing cost was 19,750 dollars. Before proceeding with the refurbishments, there was a long debate within the congregation over this matter along with consideration such options as



buying an electronic organ. To the good fortune of the Church, those who favored restoring the faithful organ were the most persuasive. All the funds for the restoration were raised through special projects, memorials and donations.

Originally the pipes were colored gold. When the organ was refurbished, the pipes were re-voiced to provide a lighter less baroque tone and pipes were then painted pewter color to emulate the churches of Europe.

"Surrounded by So Great a Cloud of Witnesses"

Tercentennial Message by Reverend Edwards

We celebrate during 1975 the faith and life of a congregation that has worshipped and witnessed in Smithtown for 300 years. We have become aware again of men and women, some ordinary and some remarkable, who have gathered here over the years. As we listen to their words, we are sometimes puzzled at their zeal over issues that have long since lost their relevance. Beneath the specifics, however, we have in common something more basic: our faith in a common Lord.

We are celebrating during a troublesome time for our nation and world. The old foundations shake and the future seems uncertain. The pressing question is this: Is there in our heritage a fountain of hope and energy for our troublesome time? From the beginning, the churches have offered a vision to carry us toward the future; what vision do we have now?



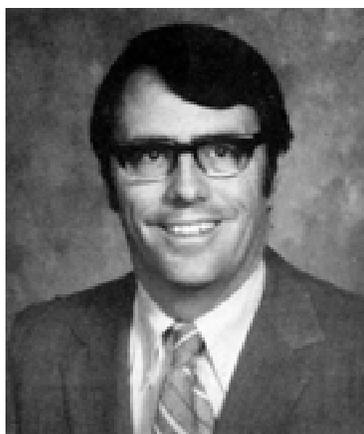
Church scene, 1975



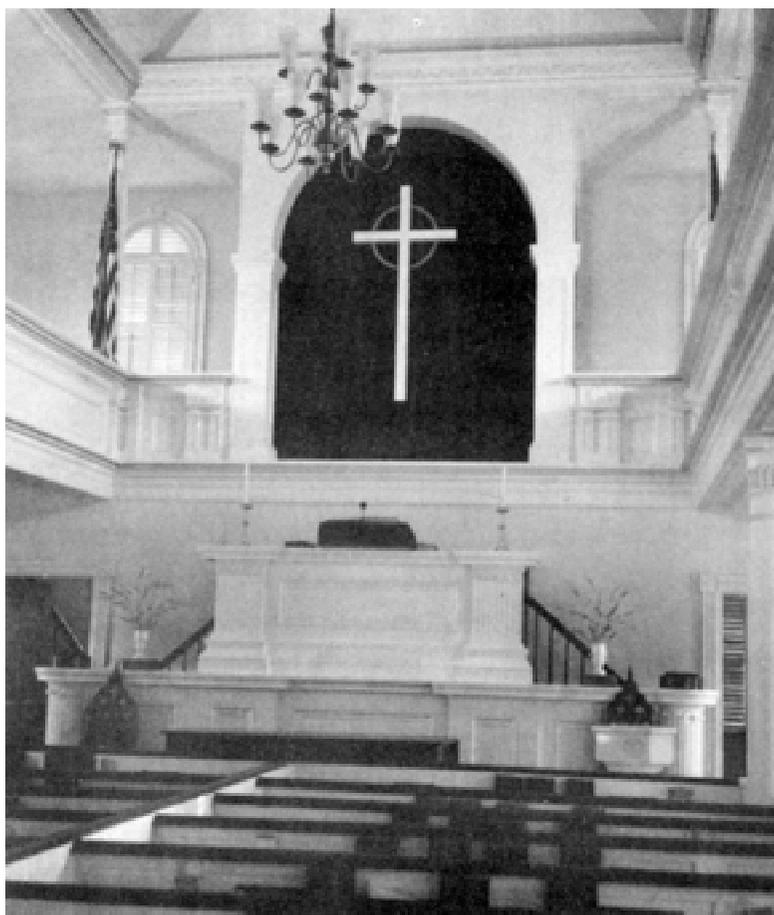
In recent years, there have been two movements in religious life that may give us a clue to an answer. First, there was the support for minority groups, the poor, women, and for the rights of individual conscience. And there has been some progress toward equal justice and opportunity. Later, the hunger for religious experience emerged within and outside the churches. That hunger may at times be a longing for peace amid public discord, but it is also a longing for new foundations out of which individuality and community can emerge. To have something to say to the times in which we live, we must hold both together: social awareness and a deep personal faith.

So we celebrate our beginnings not as past accomplishments, but as unfinished business. We are sustained by a faith our forebears shared, which we have made our own. "Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight . . . and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith . . ." (Hebrews 12: If)

W. H. EDWARDS
July 1975



Reverend W. H. Edwards



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

September 11, 1975

Dear Ms. Sammis:

Thank you, on behalf of the President and Mrs. Ford for your cordial invitation to attend the 300th anniversary of the founding of the First Presbyterian Church in Smithtown, New York, to be celebrated with a homecoming weekend September 27 and 28.

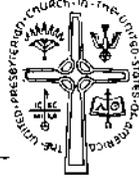
Their schedules will not allow them to be

First Presbyterian Church

William H. Edwards III

175 East Main Street
Smithtown, New York 11787

Telephone: 265-6151
265-5177



September 6, 1975

Dear Mr. President,

The First Presbyterian Church of Smithtown is celebrating the 300th year of its founding with a homecoming weekend September 27 and 28. We extend an invitation to you and Mrs. Ford to join us in the festivities at that time.

Sincerely,
Anna K. Sammis
Clerk of Session

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

September 17, 1975

TO THE CONGREGATION OF FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

It is a special privilege for me to send greetings to you on the joyous occasion of your three hundredth anniversary.

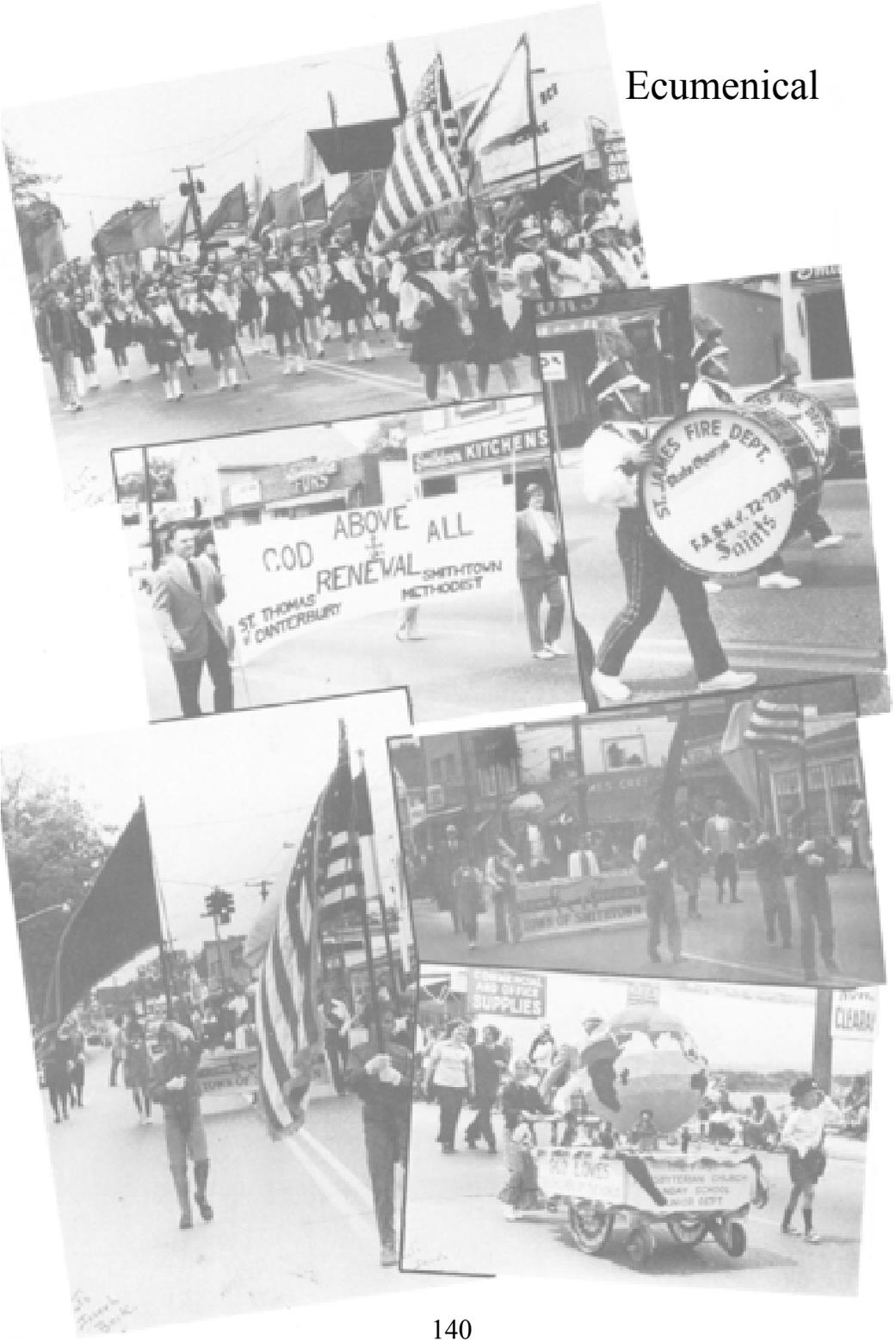
This celebration is one of deep pride for you as well as for all Americans. Our Nation is built upon a belief in a Creator who has endowed all men with inalienable rights, and faith in that Creator touches our lives in every way. Your dedication to these ideals strengthens the spiritual fiber of America, and I trust this heritage will continue to be a source of strength as you carry on with your important work.

The warmest of congratulations to you and may God bless you in the years ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gerald R. Ford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "G" and "F".

White House Congratulations

Ecumenical



Parade



In celebration of the Tercentenary, a parade took place on Sunday, June 8, 1975. Organizations from within the Township that joined with the First Presbyterian Church of Smithtown were: Catholic Church of the Resurrection, Good Shepard Presbyterian Church, Kings Park Jewish Center; St. James Fire Department, St. James United Methodist Church, St. Patricks R C Church, Sts. Philip and James R C Church, St. Thomas of Canterbury Episcopal Church, Town Officials.

Commemorative

CELEBRATING THE FOUNDING OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SMITHTOWN THE SERVICE OF 1675

River Road & Moriches Road
May 11, 1975

Village of Nissequoque
10:00 A.M.

We celebrate today the founding of the First Presbyterian Church of Smithtown, N.Y. by early settlers on Long Island three centuries ago. This morning, we have returned to the site where the meeting house stood from 1675 to 1750. In this vicinity were the houses of the Patentee, Richard Smith and his family and other early residents. It is still a sheltered area, accessible to the River and the Sound, with a supply of fresh water: in 1675 these were crucial factors in the development of any new settlement. And so church and community grew together, beginning in this place.

The central part of our worship this morning is an adapted service from the 1600's. The adaptation is primarily to make it briefer; the original service lasted from 2 to 4 hours. Psalms were sung as church music of the day, and since books were scarce, the song leader "lined out" the words and music for the congregation. Many congregations had both a Teacher and Pastor; the Teacher read and expounded the scripture and the Pastor preached.

In the Puritan worship of the 1600's that was typical in Smithtown and other parts of Long Island and New England, the aspiring and devotional elements of prayer and singing took a second place to the reading and preaching of the Word. Horton Davies tells us, "This emphasis cannot be understood unless it is realized that for those who stood in the Puritan tradition the record of God's revelation was authoritative not only for doctrine and ethics, but also for politics, ecclesiastical polity, worship and even sartorial guidance!

"In selecting chapters for the reading of the lessons, they were protesting against the Anglican (custom) which they described contemptuously as 'pistling and gospelling,' (i.e. reading short portions of the Epistles and Gospels).

"One of the distinctive liturgical contributions of the Reformation was the restoration to the common people of their right to sing the praises of God which had been taken from them by specialized singers, the choristers, and by the use of complicated musical compositions. Lutheran worship was enriched by hymnody, and Calvinist worship by psalmody. It is wholly appropriate that the first book to be published in America was "The Bay Psalm Book" of 1640." The psalms that we are using this morning are taken from that collection.

Service

ORDER OF WORSHIP COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

(Every Lord's day, they come together. ..about nine of the clock or before. The Pastor begins with solemn prayer continuing about a quarter of an hour).

READING OF A CHAPTER Romans 15

(The Teacher then readeth and expoundeth a Chapter;)

EXPOSITION OF THE SCRIPTURE

PSALM #100

(Then a Psalm is sung, which ever one of the ruling Elders dictates)

SERMON "Receive ye, one another" by Cotton Mather (1663-1728)

(After that the Pastor preacheth a sermon, and some times ex tempore exhorts)

PSALM #23

COLLECTION

(When this was ended, the deacon. ..put the congregation in mind of their duty of contribution. ..)

CONCLUDING PRAYER

(Then the Teacher concludes with prayer, and a blessing)

Commemorative Service







The Past is Prologue ...

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JRM

Church and Community, The Next Chapter Prelude to The Fourth 100 Years

Contents:

- I** Chronicle of Events, 1976 to 2000

- II** Changing Church in a Changing World
First Presbyterian Church of Smithtown 1975-2000
By: The Reverend W. H. Edwards III, Pastor Emeritus

- III** Ministers, First Presbyterian Church, Smithtown, NY 1675-

- IV** Notes From the Editor

"The church with its illustrious past is our heritage; a heritage not alone of timber and stone, but of love and devotion to God. Its future is in the hands of the inheritors and heirs- you and yours".

J. Richard Mehalick, 1925-2000, Historian
First Presbyterian Church, Smithtown, N.Y.

The re-issue of "Church and Community 1675-1975" with additional material, is dedicated to Dorothy Mehalick, 2010.

CHURCH and COMMUNITY***The Next Chapter, Prelude to The Fourth 100 Years******Chronicle of Events******1976 to 2000***

1976 The Charlotte Anderson Memorial Library was established.

The nation celebrates its bicentennial.

1977 The Ministers' Plaque was given in memory of Fred Bach. It lists the ministers who served the church from 1675 through 2000. Later ministers will also be listed.

The Restoration Fund Campaign raised \$30,000 for painting and refurbishing the Sanctuary.

The old historic manse on East Main Street was sold. A new manse was purchased in St. James.

The church was listed on the "National Register of Historic Places" by the U. S. Department of Interior.

1979 15,000 people protest at the Shoreham Nuclear Power Plant.

Early to mid 1980s

First Presbyterian Church partnered with other local churches to establish The Catherine O'Neill Inn to provide temporary housing for families in need.

"Naming the Sacred" was a discussion group open to men and women interested in examining the roles of women in today's society.

Fresh flowers are a part of our Sunday worship. Prior to

1980 the flowers likely came from home gardens and arrangements were made by the gardeners. Early in the '80s the Flower Guild, as we know it, was established. Flowers now come from commercial sources. A committee of women work the arrangements.

1981 The Church became a Covenant Church with Bread for the World.

The Nhotsoubanhs, a Loation family of seven, were sponsored by the Church. They came to our country during the Vietnam War and became citizens.

1982 The Narthex was changed from a library/meeting room to an all purpose parlor/meeting space. A while later the Adult Library was moved to the room east of the Narthex.

1984 The Smithtown Emergency Food Pantry was established. We are one of seven churches which founded the Pantry. We continue to feed those in need.

1985 Hurricane Gloria hits Long Island. 4000 homes were left with no electricity.

1986 The Kerygma Study Group evolved from the Thursday morning bible study class. Bill Edwards and Will Causey shared the teaching with classes on Thursday mornings and evenings.

"Alice in Blunderland" was a musical production with an outstanding cast. This program was given to awaken every one to the dangers of nuclear war.

1988 The Church became associated with Habitat for Humanity of Suffolk County. Several church members worked to build the first Habitat house in Suffolk.

The Restoration and Renovation campaign raised \$140,000 for painting the church, replacing the roofs of all buildings and redoing the parking lot.

1989 New hymnals were introduced.

1992 The Charlotte Anderson Memorial Library was re-dedicated as the Children's Library. An Eagle Scout Project, the library was paneled and spruced up.

"Preparing the Presence" became an annual intergenerational event to prepare the advent season blending mission, fellowship, outreach and worship.

Grumman Aircraft leaves Long Island.

The Good Shepherd Church of Commack closes its doors. Many of Their members became active in The First Presbyterian Church.

1994 William Edwards celebrates his twentieth anniversary serving our church.

1995 The Presbyterian Church USA presented a Peacemaking Jubilee celebrated by many of our members and more than 1200 attendees from around the world.

Wild fires across the Pine Barrens brought 2000 volunteers to fight the blaze.

1996 Walter Jung, on behalf of Habitat for Humanity, accepts a proclamation stating the Town of Smithtown's support for Habitat's goals.

Our church joined with several other Presbyterian Churches in a partnership to help to support six jungle communities in El Salvador.

The Highlander River Picnic celebrated its tenth year at Beth and Lyman Watts' home on the Nissequogue River.

A Pan Am jet explodes off Smith's Point, killing 230 people aboard.

"Adopt an Angel", an outreach program which provides Christmas gifts for children who would otherwise not receive gifts.

1999 Bill Edwards and Habitat for Humanity each celebrated their Silver Anniversary. On June 6th Reverend William H. Edwards III delivered his last sermon as Pastor of this old church. On June 13th a celebration honoring The Reverend W. H. Edwards III, Pastor Emeritus, was held at the Water Mill in Smithtown.

2000 The First Presbyterian Church, Smithtown celebrates its 325th anniversary.

**Chronicle of Events 1976 to 2000 was compiled by
Elizabeth Ewing and Virginia Newcomb, 2008**

Changing Church in a Changing World

First Presbyterian Church of Smithtown 1975 – 2000

“Churches are not supposed to change.” More than one person has said words to that effect over the years. People want the church to be a steady anchor in the storm, a safe place in an all too dangerous world. However, the task of ministering to people living in a changing world means that the church will change too, even as it holds to its core beliefs.

The last quarter of the 20th century certainly brought changes in the world - and in the church as well. That included main-line churches in general, and the Presbyterian Church in Smithtown, Long Island in particular. This is an account of the way those changes were lived out by that congregation over the 25 year period from 1975 to 2000.

I

Every generation must think it is going through the most dramatic changes in history. And the last quarter of the 20th century brought changes that continue to surprise us. We had just gotten used to electric typewriters when "word processing" with computers came in. Standard phones gave way to cordless phones and now cell phones. In 1975 Grumman Aerospace was the largest employer on Long Island - 30,000 plus employees. Now it may be the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rockville Center, if you count the staff at all the schools and hospitals. And Roman Catholics are the largest religious group, with some 20 other religions represented in the increasingly diverse population of Long Island. The population continues to grow with greater ethnic diversity, but the Island is also "grayer" than it was in 1975. The traffic seems worse and the new houses seem larger and are squeezed onto every available unused parcel of land. Anyone who comes back to visit Long Island after 25 years would still find the three S's: the seashore, sunsets and sumps, but in so many ways Long Island would seem forever changed.

II

It's become a truism that "the church is not a building; it is people." However, that is valid only to a point; the building a congregation uses

for worship tells a lot about its beliefs and traditions and practices. In that sense it bears witness to the larger community about the faith of the people who gather there.

That is certainly true of the First Presbyterian Church of Smithtown. The wood frame sanctuary from 1827, located at a main intersection of the village, reminds us of its long heritage. The high central pulpit testifies to the importance of the Word read and preached. The clear glass windows suggest that the hour of worship is not separated from the world outside. The box pews in a room where it is relatively easy to hear suggest a community gathered around pulpit and table for instruction and fellowship, and inspiration for service in the world.

The congregation became accustomed to saying aloud particular Joys and Concerns related to individuals and the world at large so that they could be included in the Intercessions. They also greeted one another with the words "Peace be with you." It had already become the custom to have a layperson share worship leadership with the pastor by reading scripture and the opening prayer. Music by the voice choirs and the bell choirs was very important. On many Sundays there was a Talk with Children at the early service.

The standard service was not a rigid pattern but a guideline. Special occasions inspired creative variations. This allowed the inclusion of Handbell Choirs and a Sacred Dance Choir and other special musical events, such as the presentation of Benjamin Britten's *Ceremony of Carols* by the joint choirs from Setauket and Smithtown Presbyterian churches. Many of the bells in the two-octave set were memorial gifts, dedicated in 1981.

Changes in worship do not come easily, so the controversy over a new hymnal was no surprise. Part of the problem was that the new Presbyterian Hymnal of 1989 did not include some familiar hymns like *Battle Hymn of the Republic* and changed the language to be more inclusive in some familiar hymns. On the other hand it included some hymns that had been omitted in the 1970 hymnal like *Blessed Assurance*, as well as some new hymns. The Worship Committee suggested to the Session a compromise: place both hymnals in the pews so that both could be used in worship.

This conflict was part of a larger controversy over inclusive language in worship. Using more inclusive language for human beings in prayers, creeds and scripture became the standard during these years. Inclusive language for God was more difficult, but the rich custom of scripture showed the way, offering not only "King" and "Father" and "Lord" as names for God, but also "Rock" and "Wind" and "Mother". Once again the solution seemed to be not "either/or" but "both/and".

The Christmas Eve Services became more increasingly popular over the years, and eventually three services were offered. There was an early service at 7 p.m. for families with small children, followed by two later candlelight services at 9 and 11 p.m. with special music by the choir. The church also experimented with televising the service into the Narthex for the overflow congregation there.

The church music staff remained the same for much of these twenty-five years: Bob Lawton was Music Director and led the adult and children's choirs, as well as the bell choirs. Linda Lingenfelter was the organist - together, a dedicated and talented team. In 1991 Bob Lawton retired after 32 years, and Patricia Cook was called as Music Director. When she moved in 1997, John Kenneth took her place. Linda Lingenfelter retired as organist in 1996, and Susan Laurence, a graduate student in music at SUNY Stony Brook, served as organist for a year. Linda Lingenfelter returned on a half-time basis, Sharing the organist position with Judy Lee until 2000.

The historic sanctuary and the attached buildings have been treasured by parishioners in every generation. On December 23, 1977 - the 150th anniversary of its dedication - the "white church on the corner" was included on the National Register of Historic Sites. In that same year and again in 1988 the congregation undertook the painting and refurbishing of the sanctuary inside and out. The first campaign was called the Church Restoration Fund (CRF) and, under the chairmanship of Roy Teichert, set a goal of \$30,000. The 1988 campaign was called the Church Restoration and Renovation Fund and was co-chaired by Harold Carson and A. Brewster Lawrence, Jr. The goal was \$140,000 and the project included not only painting the church, but also putting on a new roof for all the buildings and completely redoing the parking lot. The last item proved to be the most expensive.

When it comes to historic space like the church sanctuary, it is rare that anything gets changed. However, after the renovation in 1988 the curtain that had hung behind the cross was never replaced. It had been removed for the painting of the church, and before it was hung again the Sunday morning congregation saw for the first time the area behind the pulpit without the curtain - and liked it. No formal vote was taken but when the decision came to the Session, it was only to confirm what most people had come to appreciate: the open space with the palladium window letting in the natural light without a curtain.

In addition to these major projects, in 1982 the room just outside the sanctuary (which came to be called the Narthex) was changed from a library/meeting room to a multipurpose parlor and meeting space. The walls were papered, the floor carpeted, and new furniture was purchased. Anna Sammis chaired the committee that planned, funded and completed this work.

In 1977 the congregation decided to sell the manse on Main Street that had served as the minister's house since 1835. That sale was complicated by the original deed from the Blydenburgh family. It stipulated that should the house ever be used for a purpose other than the minister's residence, ownership would revert to the Blydenburgh heirs. Fortunately for the church there were only four such persons, and they eventually agreed to the sale of the property. The court stipulated that, in keeping with the original deed, the proceeds from the sale could be used only to provide housing for the church's pastor. A new manse was then purchased at 3 Oakfield Road in St. James.

III

There are so many activities that are part of a congregation's life: education and fellowship, outreach and service. But at the center is worship. In the last part of the 20th century the order of the service gradually came to reflect the Service for the Lord's Day recommended by the national Presbyterian Church. Through that quarter century the congregation continued to offer worship services at both 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.

IV

For many years the education program of the congregation had been

one of its strengths, and this continued through these years. Volunteers staffed the Sunday Church School for children to grade 6 and the Westminster Program for grades 7-8-9. A number of Senior Highs were involved as assistants in the children's program. As the last quarter of the century began, there were two sessions of church school on Sunday mornings, corresponding to the two services of worship. However, the church was at the end of the "wave" of children and youth that had overwhelmed the church school in the late 1960s. What had been more than 500 students in nursery through grade 6 became less than 100 by the 1980s. Confirmation classes of more than 30 in the mid-1970s became classes of 15 to 20 in the early 1980s. The decline in the church school reflected what was happening in the public schools, where schools were closed and two high schools in Smithtown were merged into one.

Even though there were fewer students, the quality of the program continued high, thanks to outstanding lay leadership. After a drop in enrollment things began to turn around. Registration for church school began to increase and more than doubled from its low point. A number of parents revived the Vacation Bible School, which had been dormant for several years, and the first week in August became a busy time around the church. The education program was often the point of contact for parents seeking a church connection, and both Sunday Church School and Vacation Bible School brought new members into the congregation. The Village Presbyterian Pre-school was begun in the 1960s by parents in the church and continued as a church-sponsored educational opportunity opened to the community.

One of the continuing problems during these years was organizing and sustaining a continuing high school group. A complicating factor was the fact that often 5 or 6 different high schools in different communities were represented in this age group. Youth did not know each other from school, which meant that they were often strangers to one another at church. Occasionally creative adult and youth leadership developed special programs on human sexuality and AIDS as well as service projects. In the late 1990s new efforts to organize a fellowship program for grades 7-8-9 were successful in developing both youth and adult leadership.

Over the years a variety of adult educational opportunities were offered. Some programs were ongoing. A Thursday morning Bible study class dating back to the 60s became the core group for the Kerygma pro-

gram in 1986. Kerygma classes met for both morning and evening sessions, and most often used the materials produced under that name. The Pastor, William Edwards, and the Assistant to the Pastor, William Causey, shared the teaching, and included adults from both First Presbyterian, Smithtown and Grace Presbyterian in Selden where Mr. Causey was pastor. The first year 75 people enrolled and 60 completed the thirty-week course. Over the next 13 years between 30 and 40 adults attended each year, some of whom were continuing members.

There were other special programs, such as the annual Lenten series. In the early 1980s these programs included programs for children, supper and worship for all and two other on a church in the world theme such as peacemaking or faith at work or promoting racial and religious understanding. There were also short-term forums on specific topics such as, "Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?" and "How Can Parents Live Through Junior High?" and "What About Ordination of Homosexuals as Church Officers and Ministers?"

V

There is a line in the New Testament about the early church that says, "And they held all things in common." Few congregations today live that kind of communal life, but diverse people bound together by common faith and practice is still close to the heart of congregational life. And so opportunities to "fellowship" with one another are important.

The Fellowship Hour on Sunday between the two worship services has been the most accessible way for long-time members and newcomers to meet one another. Even so, it is not without its problems. It is too easy for old friends to talk with one another, and for new arrivals to feel left out. So it takes an effort on the part of both to reach out and make new friends.

Session's Membership Committee led by Velma Teichert coordinated the production of a Church Pictorial Directory every four or five years. This provided a photograph of most church families, as well as their addresses and phone numbers. The directory was an important resource for helping members recognize and get to know each other.

In 1992 Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church in Commack, which

had been formed as a "house church" in the 1960s decided to close its doors, donate its resources to a mission fund with the presbytery, and disperse its members to nearby congregations. A number of these folk joined the Smithtown church, became active members and assumed leadership positions.

Friendship groups have also been strong over the last quarter century. The Presbyterian Women, as a group as well as in their circles, provided for women of all ages an opportunity to meet, study and serve through projects both local and worldwide. The circles used part of their meeting time to engage in the study suggested by the national Presbyterian Women's organization. The Blanket Sunday project was so successful that the group received national recognition from Church World Service.

The Highlanders offered another fellowship and service opportunity for adults, single and married. Among the regular events sponsored by this group was the biannual observance of Scottish poet Robert Burns' birthday in late January.

And then there was the church softball team, whose activities were reported weekly during the season in the Sunday church bulletin - perhaps the only church bulletin in the area with a "sports page". The team had its ups and downs over the years, but more often played well enough to qualify for the playoffs, even winning a few championships.

VI

Through the last 25 years the Church and Community Committee of the Session gave active leadership to the congregation in its outreach into the world beyond to walls of the church. Food and housing were two themes that were always on the agenda. The Smithtown Emergency Food Pantry was supported by a number of congregations in the Smithtown/St. James area and provided a three-day supply of food for those in need. The Presbyterian Church collected non-perishable food items for the Food Pantry on the first Sunday of each month when Communion was celebrated.

In response to hunger in the wider world, the congregation became a Covenant Church with Bread for the World, a Christian citizen's move-

ment advocating on behalf of poor and hungry people in the United States and around the world. The focus of this work was the annual Offering of Letters when members wrote to Congress encouraging the passage of hunger-related legislation.

In the area of housing the Catherine O'Neill INN project provided shelter for a local family in transition, along with social services to enable them to become self-sufficient once again. This ecumenical project, which continued for about a decade in the late 80s and 90s, involved an interfaith coalition with the guidance of the Interfaith Nutritional Network.

At the same time the congregation was involved with Habitat for Humanity of Suffolk from its inception in the mid-1980s. Members and friends of the congregation took part in the annual walk for Habitat in early May, and volunteered for the work crews helping with the houses under construction.

The congregation took on special projects such as the sponsorship in the early 1980s of the Nhotsoubanh family from Laos. In a short time, with help and encouragement from members of the congregation, the family became self-supporting and was able to purchase its own home.

The concern for peace in a world threatened by nuclear arms was picked up in an unusual way when the musical *Alice in Blunderland* (with credit to Lewis Carroll) was presented in the spring of 1986. The congregation also participated in special offerings that reached out to the world, such as the One Great Hour of Sharing in Lent and the Peacemaking Offering on World Communion Sunday in October. The Thursday before Thanksgiving we were invited to "Fast for a World Harvest" and contribute to Oxfam America's development projects such as the "One-ox Plow" program in Africa. And there were other special programs such as Candidate Forums at Election time, a series on living in a multi-cultural world and a meeting on gun violence following the Long Island Railroad shootings in 1993.

In the mid-1990s, under the sponsorship of Session's Outreach Committee, the congregation undertook an annual Christmas giving project called "Adopt-An-Angel". Area social service agencies provided the first name and age of children who needed someone to brighten their

Christmas. Members and friends of the congregation "adopted" one or more of these children and bought and wrapped one of the gifts suggested by the agency. This project grew in popularity until several hundred children were served, and other congregations asked to take part.

VII

Undergirding these many activities was the general organizational structure that is shared by all Presbyterian Churches. The Smithtown congregation followed the tradition of having three boards or groups of officers, divided into three classes each elected for a three-year term. The 18-member Session, the governing body of the church, is composed of Elders elected by the congregation moderated by the pastor. An Elder serves as Clerk of Session and keeps the minutes of the Session meetings and the roll books of the congregation. In the last quarter of the 20th century the Clerks included Anna Sammis, who retired from the post on her 80th birthday after serving for 19 years. She was followed by Marie Treubert, Walter Jung, Ruth Bosch and Paul Teichert

The Session worked out a system so that it was represented regularly by elder commissioners at meetings of the Presbytery of Long Island. Over time a number of elders and others from Smithtown served the larger church as members of presbytery committees. In addition, Ruth Bosch and Shirley Russell served presbytery as Stated Clerk, Marie Zupka-Ludder as educational consultant, and the Revs. William Edwards (1982) and William Causey (1993) as moderator of presbytery.

There is also a 12-member Board of Deacons responsible for preparations related to worship, concern for members of the congregation in need, outreach to the community, and proposing the Benevolence (Mission) Budget to the Session and congregation each year. There is also a 9-member Board of Trustees responsible for maintenance of the church buildings and the manse as well as the investment of the church's trust funds.

Also an important part of the church staff is the church secretary/administrative assistant. Upon his arrival in 1974 Mr. Edwards was advised by his predecessor to "sell the manse, but keep the secretary." Both of those counsels proved wise. That secretary, who served the church for almost 20 years, was Mary Hackett. She continued in the posi-

tion until her death in 1984. She was followed by Diane Bergaglio until 1992 and then briefly by Leah Mills. Bette Adams took the position in late 1992 and continued into the 21st century.

The pastor during the period 1975-2000 except for one year was the Rev. William H. Edwards III, who retired in 1999 and was elected Pastor Emeritus. From 1973 to 1975 John Underwood, a recent seminary graduate and approved by the presbytery as "licensed to preach", was invited by the Session to provide staff support for Christian education. Assistant to the Pastor beginning in 1985 and continuing until his retirement in 2001 was the Rev. William S. Causey. In 1985-86 Jeanne Wilson Baum served as a seminary assistant. After Mr. Edwards' retirement, the Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Wood was named Interim Pastor and served from September 1999 until Easter, 2002. As of July 1, 2002 the congregation called the Rev. James W. Hulsey as the 33rd installed pastor in the church's long history.

VIII

“The past is prologue,” our historian, J. Richard Mehalick, wrote in the 300th anniversary history of this congregation. And that is still true. With all the glorious history of this 325 year-old congregation and its 175 year-old building, this people of God gathers to be shaped by Word and Sacrament as it listens for the divine call into God's future. *Herein is love: not that we first loved God, but that God first loved us and sent Jesus Christ to make that love known. (I John 4:10) And what does God require of us? To do justice and love kindness and walk humbly with our God. (Micah 6:8) Indeed, “the past is prologue.”*

**MINISTERS, THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
SMITHTOWN, NEW YORK**

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Nathaniel Brewster 1675 - 1697 | Henry Fuller 1815 - 1821 | Raymond H. Case 1938 - 1962 |
| George Phillips 1697 - 1712 | Ebenezer Platt 1822 | R. Gary Angleberger 1958-1960 Student Assistant |
| Daniel Taylor 1712 - 17(?) | Richard F. Nicoll 1822 - 1827 | Robert L. Seaman 1960 - 1962 |
| Abner Reeve 1735 - 17(?) | Ithamar Pillsury 1827 - 1833 | William E. Brown, Jr. 1962 - 1973 |
| Napthali Daggett 1751 - 1755 | James C. Edwards 1835 - 1852 | Donald R. Knight 1966 - 1972 Associate |
| Thomas Lewis 1763 - 1769 | Rutgers Van Brundt 1852 - 1856 | Harry Buchanan- Barrow 1973 - 1974 Interim |
| David Avery 1771 - 17(?) | Ezra F. Mundy 1856 - 1861 | John F. Underwood 1973 - 1975 Licentiate |
| Joshua Hartt 1774 - 1787 | Samuel H. McMullin 1861 - 1864 | William H. Edwards III 1974 - 1999 |
| Frederick Halsey 1793 - 1795 | James Sinclair 1865 - 1883 | William S. Causey 1984 - 2001 Assistant to the Minister |
| John D. Perkins 1795 - 1798 | Henry A. Porter 1883 - 1889 | Jeffrey Wood 2000 - 2002 Interim |
| Luther Gleason 1798 - 1806 | Henry A. Lewis 1889 - 1892 | James W. Hulsey 2002 - |
| Richard S. Storrs 1809 | I.V. W. Schenck 1892 - 1894 | |
| Nathaniel S. Prime 1810 | Charles O. Gray 1894 - 1903 | |
| Bradford Marcy 1811 - 1844 | Edward W. Abbey 1903 - 1937 | |

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR
Sue Nunziata, Historian

This year 2010 is the year of the cell phone that sends emails, searches the Internet, records music, sends text messages and also takes photographs. All of these tasks are enclosed in a plastic and glass wireless case the size of a playing card. This magical object can be used for almost every aspect of a person's daily life without that person ever having to utter a word to another human being. As wonderful as all of this is, you must know that within a year another spectacular instrument will be developed making our present cell phone obsolete.

What does this have to do with our book of history? The Presbyterian Church of Smithtown sits on historic ground; River Road, taken to its end, brings you to the first settlement by the Smith family along the Nissequogue River. We make history every day of our lives. In 1675 the history plodded on from year to year at a leisurely pace. During this wireless era, history is being made minute to minute. History anchors us to how it was and makes us realize how far we've come.

Prior to the end of the twentieth century, Richard Mehalick, Church Historian, was asked if his book, "**Church and Community, 1675-1975**", could be reprinted. With the help of Tony Scarlatos, a gifted computer technician, the book was computer scanned, ready for reprint. Unfortunately, Dick Mehalick passed away in 2000. Our history committee, a group of church members who had worked with Dick through the years, met and decided that it would be appropriate to bring the history up through the year 2000. The Reverend William H. Edwards III, Pastor Emeritus, kindly agreed to write this additional history, "**Church and Community, The Next Chapter, Prelude to The Fourth 100 Years**".

I want to thank Bill Edwards for his historical perspective for the years 1976 to 2000. I would also like to thank Tony Scarlatos for his dedication to preserving the original book for our present use. Thank you to Elizabeth Ewing and Virginia Newcomb for compiling "**Chronicle of Events 1976 to 2000**". Thank you to Carolyn Gehlbach who is an advisor for marketing the reprinted book and thank you to Reverend Jimmy Hulsey who appreciates the history of our church and community.



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Cover photo by Tony Scarlatos