

## Chesterfield Church welcomes Rev. Jeffrey Erb

CHESTERFIELD— A coffee hour followed Sunday worship services at the Chesterfield Congregational Church as the community welcomed the church's new pastor, Rev. Jeffrey Erb.

Rev. Erb is now settling into his new quarters in the North Road parsonage and looking forward to focusing his ministry on "the mission of the church in the community and the mission of the wider church."

He said he would like to "establish some growth in the church" and to this end would attempt to "make worship a meaningful experience for people, institute some Bible study groups in the fall, start a Youth Fellowship for the younger members of the congregation and their friends."

open to youngsters from outside the community who might not have such a group in their own towns, and might serve as one of the ways to draw their parents and other adults to the church, he said.

Rev. Erb noted that he has been involved in the youth ministry for a number of years in Vermont and New Hampshire, where he had previously served.

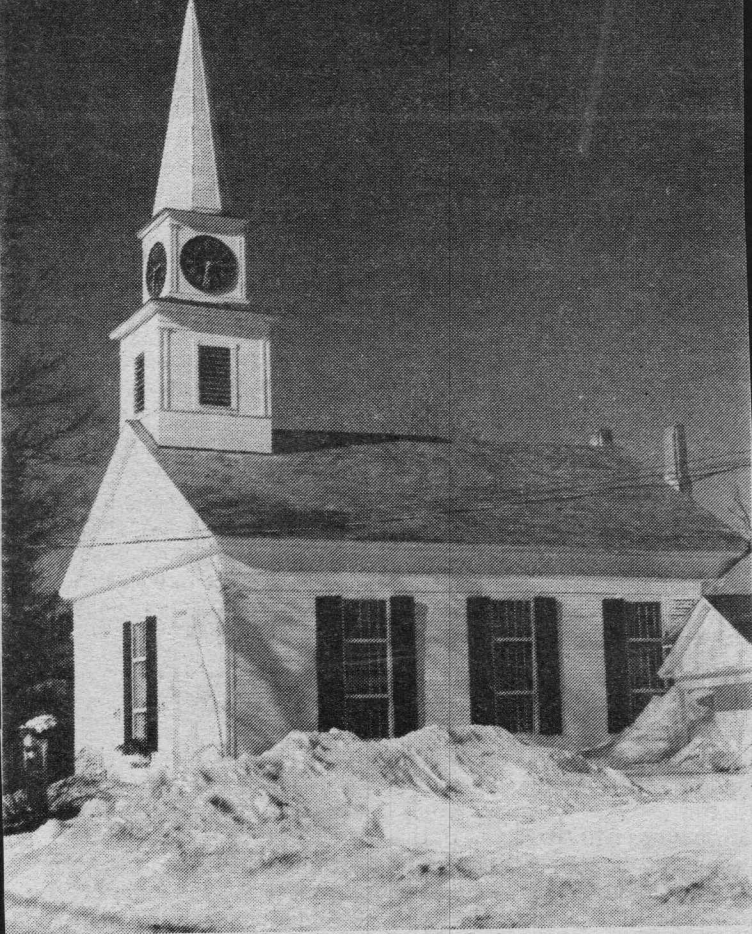
He said he is pleased with the call to Chesterfield, since "I enjoy the more rural areas. I've spent nine years in similar communities in Vermont and New Hampshire. I like the country surroundings — the mountains and hills and woods."

In addition to encouraging local growth in the church, Rev. Erb said he hopes to keep the Chesterfield congregation

wider church, to open the channels of knowledge between the Chesterfield Church and the United Church of Christ in the world at large. We are part of the larger world and will try to meet needs locally and globally."

He said he intends to be active in the Hampshire Association of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ.

After getting acquainted with the town and coming to know some of the organizations that are active locally, Mr. Erb said he expects that he will be doing some work in the community outside of strictly church-related activities, although "my main focus will be the church."



**The Village Church on Main Street in Cummington.**

# new minister assumes pulpit in Chesterfield

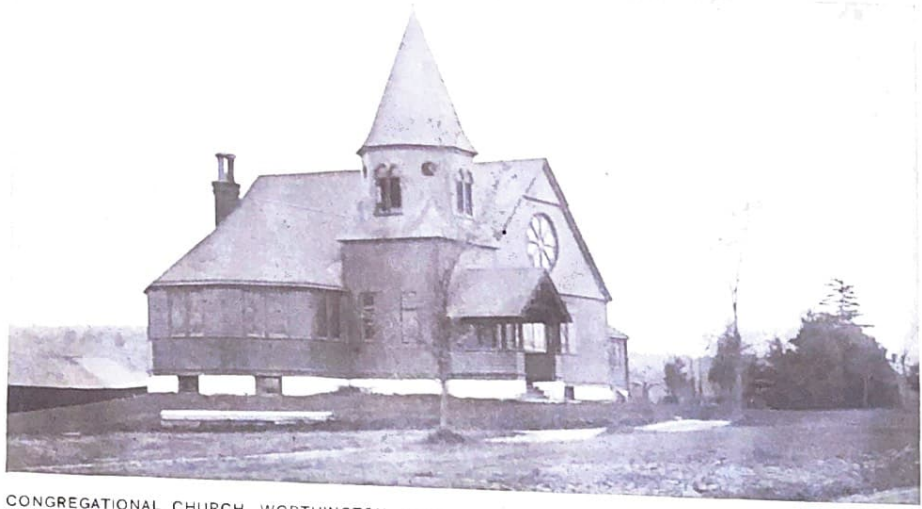
CHESTERFIELD — The Rev. Jeffrey K. Erb, the new minister of the First Congregational Church of Chesterfield, will assume the pulpit at the 9:30 a.m. service Sunday.

Erb, 33, who was selected by the Pulpit Search Committee earlier this year, also has moved into the church's parsonage on North Road.

The new pastor was ordained in 1977 after earning a doctor of divinity degree from the Princeton Theological Seminary.

Formerly the interim pastor of two small churches in North Thetford, Vt., and Post Mills, Vt., Erb was associate pastor of the United Church of Christ at Dartmouth College from 1977 until last September. He also has done clinical pastoral education work at the Wernersville State Hospital in Princeton, N.J.

Erb delivered his first sermon at the Chesterfield church on May 18.



CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH WORTHINGTON, MASS.



Many years ago the Worthington Congregational Church was finished in dark weathered siding as shown in this postcard picture loaned to the *Country Journal* by Helen Magargal of Worthington.

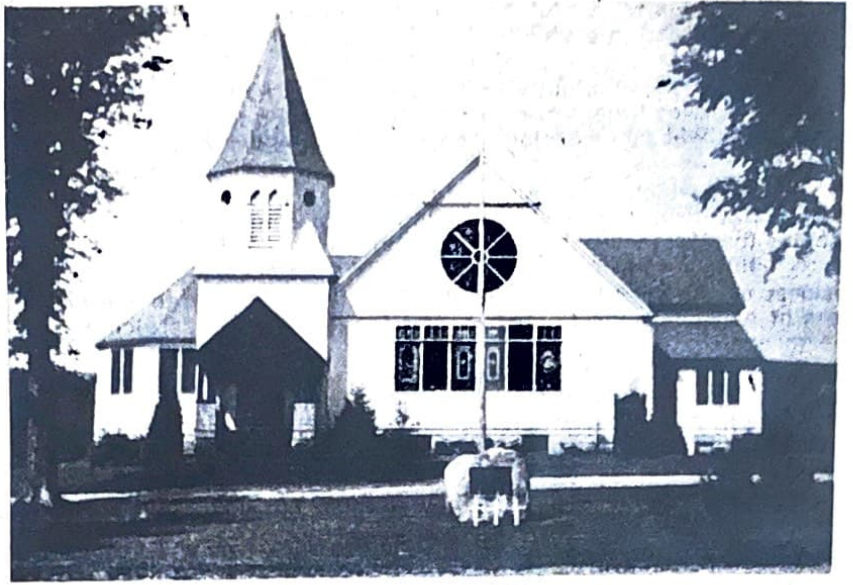








The Rev. and Mrs. J. Herbert Owen *Eagle*



CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH in Worthington was built in 1888.

# Pastor, wife celebrate 50 years of marriage

WORTHINGTON — The Rev. and Mrs. J. Herbert Owen, former residents of this town and Lenox, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary at a party at the Congregational Church here Sunday, 6/30/74.

Mr. Owen was pastor of the local Congregational Church from 1932 to 1942 and of the Church-on-the-Hill in Lenox and Interlaken Congregational Church from 1942 to 1952.

A total of 70 people from 13 towns and cities from Western Massachusetts attended the anniversary party Sunday.

The guests included couples from Pittsfield, Lenox, Lee and Worthington whom Mr. Owen married during his tenure as pastor in the Berkshires.

The party was given by Mr. and Mrs. C. Kenneth Osgood of Worthington and Mrs. Edward Burke of Lenox. They were assisted by Mrs. Carol Brown, Mrs. Raymond Magargel, Mrs. Richard Hathaway, Mrs. Lawrence Mason and Mrs. Harry Mollison, all of Worthington, and Mrs. Melson Pease of Dalton. Also present was Mrs. Charles Cheyne of Pittsfield, a member of the Owen's wedding party.

The couple now live in Melbourne, Fla., where Mr. Owen is pastor emeritus of the United Church of Christ, Congregational. They are spending the summer with Mrs. Rachel Wylie of Pittsfield, 125 Street in Lenox.

# Church in Worthington to mark 100th anniversary

5/16/88 B-7

WORTHINGTON — The First Congregational Church will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone of the present church building in a special service May 22 at 4 p.m. The cornerstone will be opened and a new time capsule added to be opened in the year 2088.

Following the service, the local church will serve a traditional chicken pie supper in the Town Hall under the direction of Florida Anger. This was done 100 years ago and the program will copy much of the earlier one.

The Rev. Luther C. Pierce, pastor of the church, is being assisted by a committee headed by Lois Ashe Brown of the Historical Commission and the diaconate of the church.

When the old colonial church

burned in the winter of 1887, plans were immediately made to rebuild, but from the start, controversy swirled over the design. The will of certain Episcopalian ladies in the congregation prevailed in the choice of the present English-style church patterned after one they had seen in England. Church members took sides and to this day, there are those distressed that the old three-story colonial edifice, with its high steeple that could be seen for many miles around, was not replaced.

In the beginning, the English-style church was painted a dark reddish brown stain in keeping with its style. Sometime after World War II, some members of the church offered to pay for the paint if it could be painted white and the project was accomplished, but not without considerable opposition that has continued to this day. In fact, there are those in the community now who would pay for the paint to have it restored to its original dark color. Others say, "Leave it white."









THE INTERIOR of the Worthington Congregational Church is decorated with white walls, red carpeting and wood trim in unpainted yellow pine.

# Worthington church to hold centennial

## Minister says parishioners still 'community-oriented'

By JOAN LIVINGSTON  
Gazette Staff

WORTHINGTON — For the past century, the Worthington Congregational Church has celebrated the important events in its parishioners' lives.

And this Sunday, the church will host its own celebration when the 100th anniversary of its dedication is marked at a special service at 4 p.m.

After the service, which will feature the liturgy used 100 years ago, a chicken supper will be served by the Grange in the Town Hall. Tickets are available at the Corners Grocery.

The Worthington Congregational Church was not the town's first. A simple building built in 1771 on West Street and later moved to Harvey Road served as the first meetinghouse. The current church was built to replace the white-steepled colonial church that had served parishioners for 52 years until it burned to the ground in 1887.

Apparently the fire began when a custodian started the fires in the church's wood stoves in preparation for a funeral. When the custodian returned, he found the church in flames because one of the wood stoves had fallen apart.

The \$6,000 in fire insurance meant the church, which was modeled after an English parish church, could be rebuilt quickly.

Within the cornerstone, according to Lois Ashe Brown of Elderberry Lane, a "time capsule"

contains copies of area newspapers, rosters of church members and town officials, and some currency. However, she said, no one has been able to determine the location of the capsule without disturbing the church's structure.

Today, the church's interior — with its white walls, red carpeting, peaked ceiling, pews and wood trim in unpainted yellow pine — remains striking. Behind the low pulpit area and choir loft is a piped organ, which was hand-pumped until electricity was installed in 1929.

There are two large rosetta stained-glass windows and long rectangular windows with elaborate designs, lilies and angels dedicated to members of the Pease, Rice, Osgood, Burr and Brewster families.

The church was expanded in 1960 when a Sunday-school addition was built, and two years later, a kitchenette was added.

### 31 ministers

Since its early meetinghouse days, the Congregational Church has had 31 ministers. Two ministers of note were the Rev. John D. Willard, who is credited with starting the town's private water system, and Rev. Frederick Sargent Huntington, who was responsible for planting the grove of maple trees on the Commons near the church and elementary school. The town library, which bears his name, was built from money he



RICHARD CARPENTER/Gazette Photographer

**THE WORTHINGTON CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH will celebrate the 100th anniversary of its dedication Sunday.**

left to the town.

In earlier years, according to Rev. Luther C. Pierce, the minister was probably the only educated person in town.

"You preach to Ph.D.s now," he remarked.

In its earlier days, church meetings were often involved in disci-

plinary actions toward parishioners who did not pay their share of the church's upkeep or did not adhere to the covenant, which guided people's public and private behavior. However, Pierce noted, this practice was dying out by time the new church was constructed.

Pierce noted that the church's community-oriented character has changed very little in the past 100 years. He credits the number of long-established families still active in the church.

"It's part of the social fabric of the town in a most interesting way," he said.





101193  
Parishioners gather at Worthington Congregational Church.

GAZETTE File Photo







CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH WORTHINGTON MASS



First  
Congregational Church  
of Worthington  
Mass.  
(Sunday School)  
10:00 A.M.  
Hours of Service  
10-12:00



## Religion Today

# Choosing new minister

By LYNNE BERTRAND

Three hundred and fifty United Church of Christ ministers are looking for work; two-thirds of them want to live in New England. And the U.S. Northeast is a jackpot of seminaries, six capable of supplying U.C.C. churches with young ministers.

With such a smorgasbord of resumes, and only three U.C.C. churches with vacancies in all of Hampshire county — 34 in Massachusetts — it would seem those three churches could make quick work of filling their pulpits.

Not so.

In the midst of the long search process are three churches: the 500-member Easthampton Congregational Church on 112 Main St. in that town; the 350-member Edwards Church, 297 Main St.; and the 325-member First Church of Christ, Congregational, 129 Main St., both in Northampton.

The Rev. Donald E. Overlock, associate conference minister for Western Massachusetts in the Massachusetts Conference of the U.C.C., coaches churches in their search for a pastor. In a recent interview, he described the complex process of filling a pulpit.

The hiring of ministers is a far cry from head-hunting in big business. In a U.C.C. church, every member can have a say in who gets hired. Saddle a company like IBM with the guidelines proposed in the Mass. U.C.C.'s "A Practical Manual for Pulpit Search Committees," and you'd be handing the vote for a new chief executive officer over to every last IBM salesman and receptionist.

### The interim

On the average, it takes a year to find a minister, Overlock said. Soon after its minister resigns, a church's board of deacons hires an interim minister to keep the congregation in a holding pattern for the duration of the search.

Some ministers are career interims, and Overlock's office keeps their names on file. The deacons may request an "interim supply preacher," who just comes in on Sundays to lead worship, or an "interim maintenance pastor," who preaches, gives some pastoral care, and handles some of the church's programs. The interim minister's salary, according to the pastoral search manual, should be \$50 to \$80 for each 3-hour unit he or she works.

### The pulpit committee

Meanwhile the church appoints a

"pulpit committee" of five to 11 church members whose job it is to present the congregation with a single candidate, the committee's first choice.

In seven-and-a-half years, only one U.C.C. church in the four counties of Western Massachusetts has turned down its pulpit committee's candidate. But by the time candidate meets congregation, the pulpit committee is on the downhill side of the mountain they've been climbing up for about a year.

Meeting weekly, the committee first conducts an intensive study of the church and submits it via Overlock to the U.C.C.'s Pastoral Settlement Committee in Framingham.

### Dealing with a crisis

The study requires some intense soul-searching, especially if a church has recently undergone a crisis.

Such was the case at Easthampton Congregational Church. In April, the congregation received a letter of resignation from its minister, the Rev. Edward F. Dibble, who was arrested on sexual abuse charges in January. The church quickly found an interim, the Rev. Raymond T. Jones, and while Dibble's case is pending in Hampshire Superior Court, the month-old pulpit committee seeks a permanent replacement.

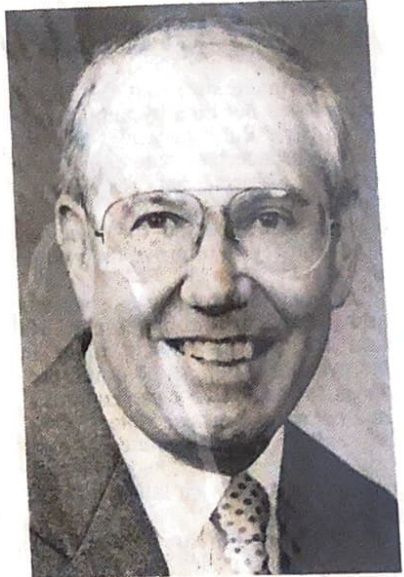
"They're taking one step at a time," said Overlock. "They've lived with conflict, and in some ways they're healthier. Where can (they) go but up?"

### Requirements, salary

Based on a church's situation, the Settlement Committee supplies the pulpit committee with about 10 resumes, called profiles, of pastors and graduating seminary students.

Ordained ministers in the U.C.C. are expected to have both an undergraduate degree and a graduate theological degree (M.Div.), and many have Ph.D.'s or training in certain skills such as counseling. Over half of U.C.C. seminarians are women; the Congregational church, a component of the U.C.C., is the oldest Protestant denomination in America to ordain women.

The base salary for ministers in the U.C.C. denomination is \$16,000. Overlock was quick to note that with a parsonage or housing allowance, plus benefits like annuities, insurance and travel, the total package can be worth \$30,000. A minister with five years of experience is likely to start at \$17,000 plus benefits. Almost all pastors are offered a



THE REV. DONALD OVERLOCK

one-month yearly vacation.

### Finding the right person

What are churches looking for? "There is no such thing as ... the ideal minister," said Overlock. Almost immediately into its search, the pulpit committee finds that each member has a different operating definition of "ideal," colored by their experiences with other ministers, even those from childhood.

In the U.C.C. there are more second-career ministers than ever before, as well as older seminarians. "Entry-level ministers are far more mature than they were 10 years ago," Overlock said. "They've dealt with the God question — Is God real for me? Can I have faith in spite of the silliness of the institutional church?"

Overlock continued, "They're better human beings. What churches don't want are ministers with personal problems. If the minister's not happy, the church isn't happy."

Churches "flip-flop," Overlock said. "They usually want something different than what they (just) had. If they had someone in the 1970s who was concerned with shut-ins, in the '80s they want someone concerned with the youth."

### Interviews, visits

The committee is ready now to interview candidates, and to visit the churches of candidates it chooses. By the end of this process, their final candidate will have gone through two or three interviews and preached at least once to a congregation that included members of the



# takes year's effort

searching church's pulpit committee.

The search manual strongly recommends that a committee make prior arrangements with the candidate for such a visit and "not 'sneak in'.... When members of the committee enter the church, we advise that all not sit together, nor enter and leave in a group. If you are questioned by local members, simply say that you are visiting."

## The call

The last step for the candidate is to preach for the congregation of the searching church.

Then the pulpit committee calls a meeting of all church members, and here the congregation gets to vote.

Although the U.C.C. requires just a majority vote, some ministers will not accept a pulpit call if significant opposition is raised against them, Overlock said.

Finally the church clerk writes up an official call-contract letter.

"Business would call this...a bewildering array of bureaucratic processes," said Overlock. "But it works for the church." Almost every congregation votes unanimously, or at least in a huge majority, to hire the minister their committee presents.

But the process can grind to a halt at any point if there are disagreements over candidates or procedure.

## A hitch in the process

The Rev. William G. Chrystal resigned from the Edwards Church in October to become a Navy chaplain. At the end of December, the church contracted with the Rev. Roger A. Barnett to be their interim minister. About five months into the pulpit committee's search, over a hundred members of the congregation petitioned to hire Barnett as their permanent minister.

"A Practical Manual for Pulpit Search Committees" states that, "Under no circumstances is a church to consider the interim pastor as a candidate." Petitioners voted to override this clause in Barnett's contract, and as a consequence the church's pulpit committee resigned in protest.

Barnett was asked if he would accept a job offer, and he expressed interest.

Overlock said he was disappointed by this situation, but understood it. Before and during the period an interim minister is at a church "everything's at sixes and sevens," Overlock said. "Even those who didn't like the old minister...found

security in him." Without the security, and free from the commitment to their former pastor, churches often become "smitten by their interim."

Churches need to go through the process of self-study, Overlock said, and the interim ministry is no more than a temporary situation while they do so.

## Speeding it up

Occasionally, committees find ingenious ways to speed up the search process. One minister received a call for an interview from a church to which he had not submitted a profile. Investigating, he found that the church's pulpit committee had called a number of committees who had just hired ministers. From a list of those churches' runners-up, this committee picked ministers to call. The U.C.C. allows this sort of autonomous activity in its churches.

Overlock concluded that the reasons for such a lengthy and painstaking process are three-fold: The church has to take a long, hard look at itself; there is always a period of healing after a minister leaves; and the U.C.C. system of interviews and visits supports taking a good block of time to land the minister with all the right stuff.

## The new minister

Overlock noted, too, that although it takes a church a year to find a minister, it takes a minister, who usually has the advantage of already being in a church, three to five years to find a new job.

A pulpit committee takes a while to understand the complexity of ministers' profiles. They look at an average of 50 candidates, Overlock said, and end up interviewing about three.

It takes that year to get the search committee up and running. In most churches, Overlock said, a pulpit committee begins after a while to work as a tight unit, a "congregation within a congregation."

"Something happens, something magical or mystical," Overlock said. "Some people are reluctant to call it the leading of the Holy Spirit," but others are not.

Not surprisingly, it also takes time to for a new minister to get used to his or her new church — about six months, according to Overlock.

He said that for the first few months a minister can "get a lot of mileage" out of being new. Attendance goes up. Everyone contributes new ideas. "Everybody's got a

stake in you."

Overlock continued, "You keep your preaching very biblical, almost safe, because you don't know the needs or the social issues. You get the lay of the land. You tend the garden very hard."

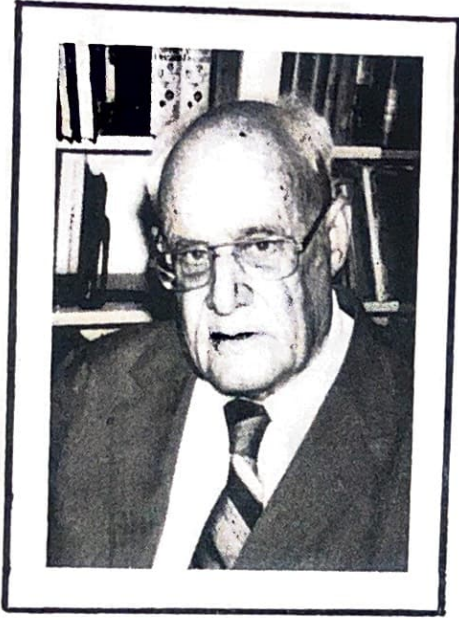
Overlock remembered back to his days as a young minister in order to explain what it's like at the end of those first few months. "The first time the church secretary laughs at some joke you tell; the first time the mother-of-the-bride tells you she's pleased with the wedding; the first time you go to a trustees meeting and let them have it with both barrels and then you have a real dialogue: That's when you realize this is a marriage, not an affair.

"It creeps up on you. One night you come home and you open the door of the parsonage, and you feel like you're at home."

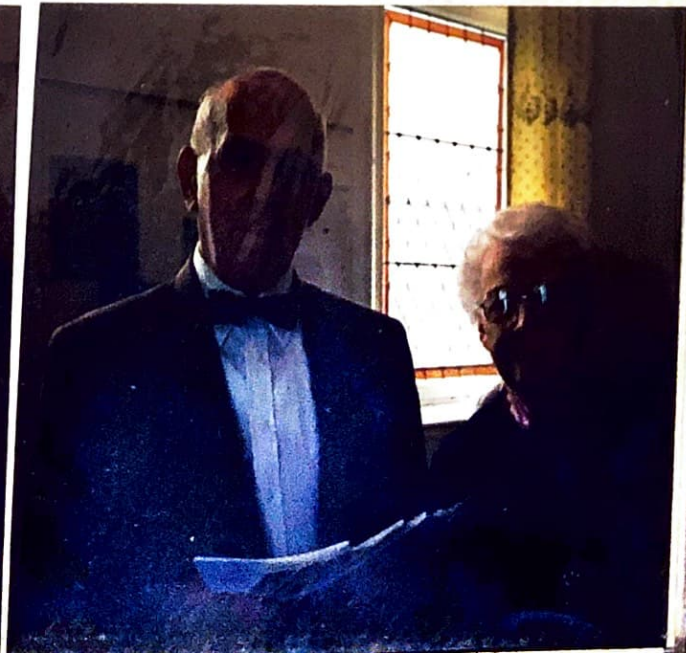
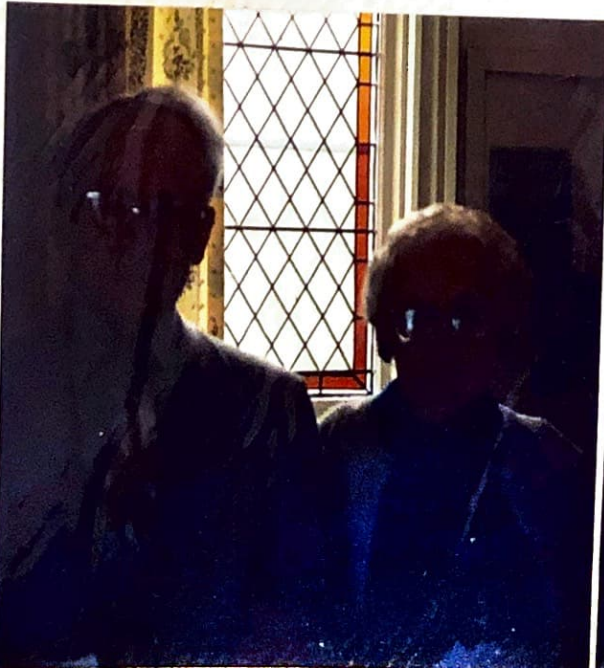




IN MEMORIAM



GIFFORD HOAG TOWLE  
1907 — 1987





# Preaching in the Hilltowns

In Worthington:

**'We consider all people to be ministers. I prepare the ministers.'**

By JOAN LIVINGSTON

WORTHINGTON — The Rev. Luther Pierce, 65, of Cummington, the new pastor of the Worthington Congregational Church, is the kind of man who bakes his own bread because the store-bought version does not meet his standards.

He built his own home, using native timber. He cuts his own wood. And he makes furniture and baskets.

And, although Pierce talks modestly of these accomplishments, it is apparent that he is a man who lives simply, a man who does things for himself and does them well.

Pierce said it was during his extensive travels to missions throughout the world that he became aware that industrial nations such as ours are thriving on the cheap labor and raw materials of the Third World.

"We enjoy luxuries, and only because the Third World is poor," he said.

Pierce also said those travels were an eye-opening experience because of the impressive dedication of practicing Christians who lived and are living under extremely difficult circumstances.

"We who belong to the ministry throughout the world assist people who are hurting," Pierce said. Locally, he explained, this can mean writing letters or visiting a shut-in. But, if this notion of community is to be expanded globally, this ministering also may come in the form of offering money and food to those who need these things.

To accomplish this work, it is possible for politics and religion to work together, but a minister has to be careful not to use the pulpit as a sounding board for his political views — even for worthy causes, Pierce said.

For example, he believes a minister cannot suggest to his congregation that a certain candidate be supported because of the candidate's stand on world hunger. However, a minister can advise the church-goers that it is their Christian responsibility to help the hungry.

## His flock

Pierce spent his youth in Brooklyn, Conn., where his father owned a poultry hatchery.

After serving in the military during World War II, Pierce married Frances Ethridge of Alabama, and over the past 40 years she has worked with him behind the scenes while raising their four sons.

At first, Pierce returned to his father's farm, but he left in the late-1950s because "the poultry business in general began to disappear in New England."

Pierce then moved his family to Florida to seek a career in aviation, but instead he became involved in Christian education.

He noted that people who are involved with church work often speak of receiving "a call from God" and then said, "I felt that call."

Said Pierce, "this is what led me into the field of Christian education."

Pierce said he did everything that was possible for a lay person to do before he was ordained as a Baptist minister. However, Pierce found he did not fit in with the very conservative nature of Southern Baptists so he accepted a pastorate in the United Church of Christ, of which the Congregational Church here is a member.

He served as the pastor of churches in Hallandale, Fla. for seven years and in Monroe, Conn. for 11½ years before he officially retired in September.

The Pierces then settled into their Cummington home, which had taken about 10 years' worth of weekends and summer vacations to construct. Except for the foundation, plumbing and the laying of the wall-to-wall carpeting, Pierce built the house himself.

His wife helped with the decorating, including the wallpapering and the upholstering.

Although semi-retired, Pierce will remain busy, not only tending his vegetable gardens, fruit trees and animals, which provide a "substantial percentage" of the food he and his wife eat, but also working at

three part-time jobs.

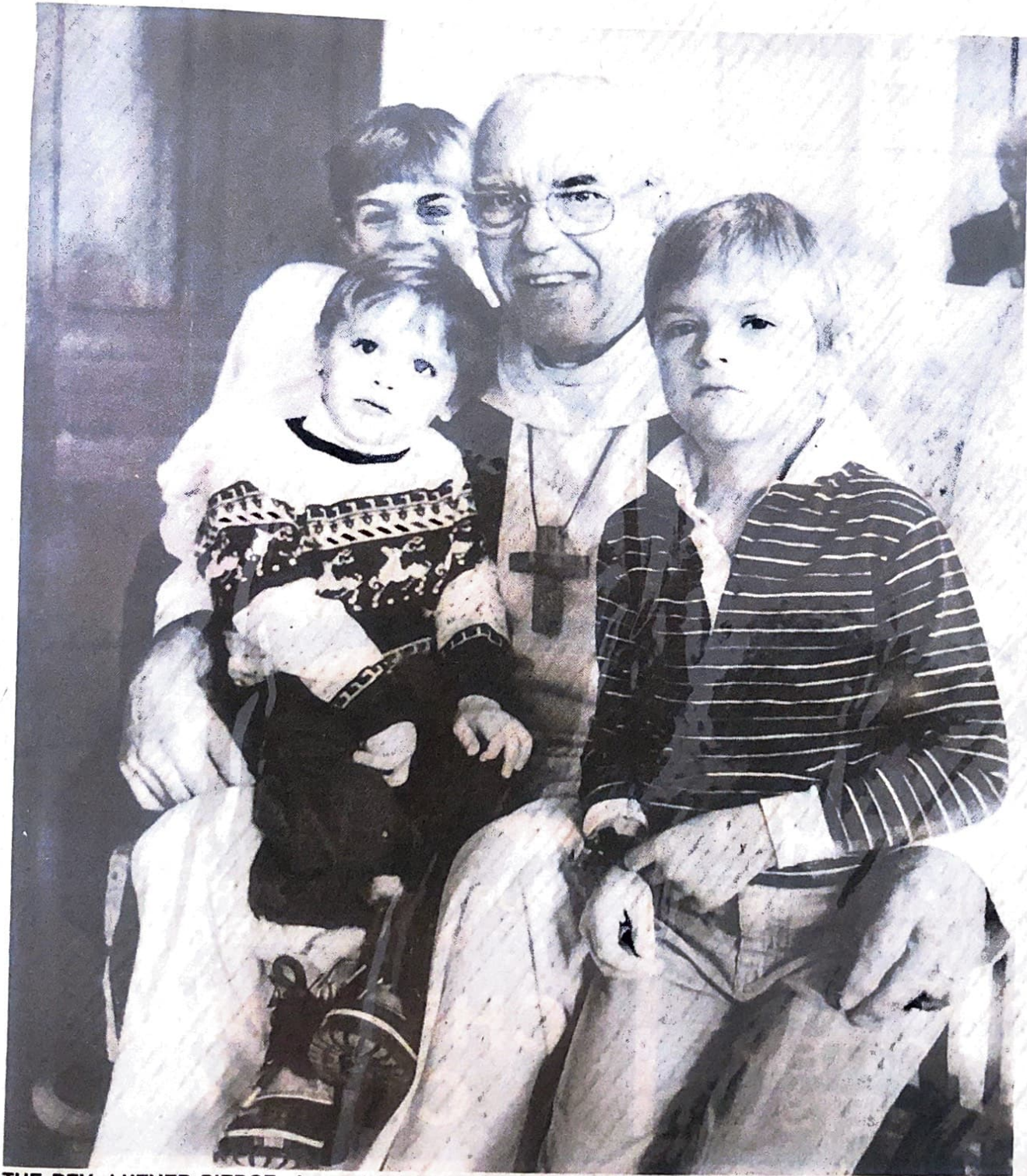
In addition to serving the Congregational churches in Worthington and Peru, Pierce is the New England representative of the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico. The

latter post involves raising money for the seminary, the only one in the world to prepare Spanish-speaking people for the ministry.

As for his work at the Worthington church, Pierce said he would

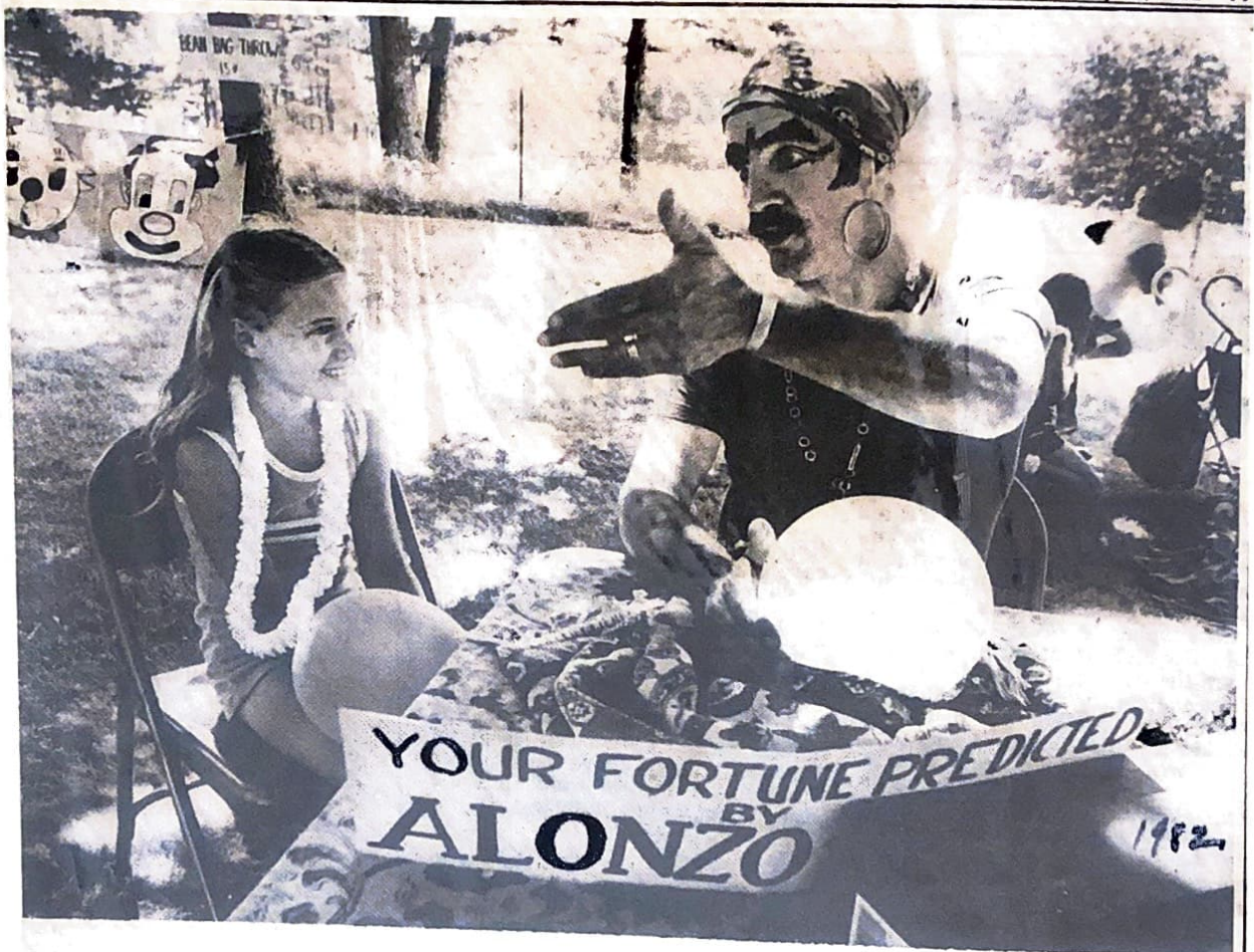
like to strengthen the Christian education program and provide activities for teenagers, but because of the democratic nature of its organization, the direction the church will take will be up to its members.





**THE REV. LUTHER PIERCE** shares his chair with, from left, **Gregory Bartlett, 4**; **Spencer Newell, 7**, (rear); and **Walter Fritz III, 6**. (Photo by George Newton)





**'I predict your picture will be in the newspaper'**

Alonzo the Great (David Carey) made that and other predictions of fun and games for nine-year-old Devon Morris at Saturday's Worthington Congregational Church Fair. The annual fund raiser offered a variety of amusement rides, games, donkey rides and a frog-jumping contest. (Photo by Richard Carpenter)





Set in the deep snow of the winter of 1987, the Worthington Congregational Church will be the

scene, Sunday, of the installation of its new pastor, the Reverend Luther Pierce.

## ***Congregational Church to install Reverend Pierce as 29th pastor***

**WORTHINGTON**— The Ecclesiastical Council of the Hampshire Association of Congregational Churches will meet in the Congregational Church on Sunday at 4 p.m. for the installation of the Reverend Luther C. Pierce as its 29th pastor.

The Rev. Patricia Sommers of Bethany, Conn., Minister of Missions and Stewardship for the

Connecticut Conference under which the Rev. Mr. Pierce previously served, will preach the sermon.

The Rev. Gifford Towle of Pelham, missionary to India (ret.); will give the charge to the pastor and the charge to the congregation will be given by the Rev. Donald Overlock of Ludlow, Associate conference minister for the western area of Massachusetts.

Halden Wentworth, co-chairman of the diaconate, will preside over the liturgy and Melissa Dragon will read the

scripture lessons, representing the youth of the church. Scripture lessons will also be read by Pastor Pierce's brother, the Rev. Richard Pierce of Bloomfield, Conn., and by the Rev. Richard Fournier, pastor of the Village Congregational Church in Cummington.

Lorena Belhumeur of Huntington, moderator of the Hampshire Association will be the installing officer and Spencer Newell will represent the children of the church as acolyte. Both choirs will sing, under direction of organist John Newell.

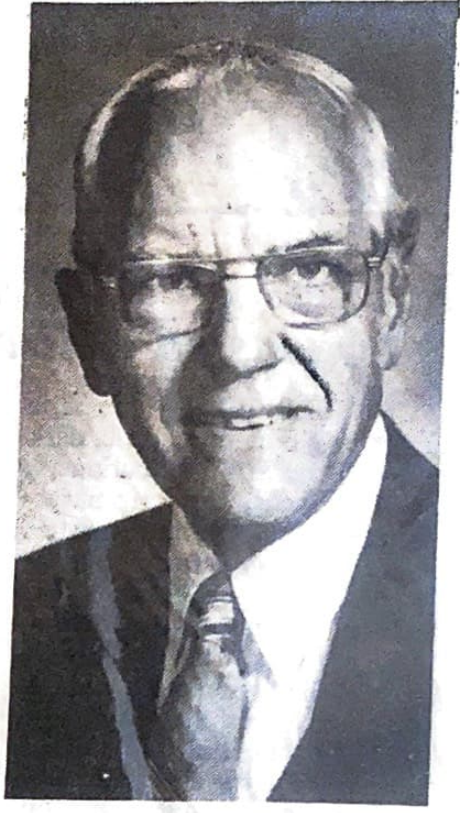
The public is invited to attend the reception, which is being arranged by Dorothy Mason, Judy Spiess and Joan Donovan.



Profile:

11/6/86

The Reverend Luther B. Pierce



Rev. Luther Pierce

By Lois Ashe Brown

WORTHINGTON— The Rev. Luther B. Pierce, formerly of Monroe, Conn. has been appointed pastor of the Worthington and Peru Congregational churches. He has already assumed his duties at both churches and formal installation is being planned for early January.

Mr. Pierce is a native of Plainfield, Conn. and grew up in nearby Brooklyn, Conn. where his father was in the poultry business. He attended schools there and went on to Bucknell University in Pennsylvania to study Engineering.

As a boy, he was fascinated by aircraft of all kinds, and studied to attain an Air Transport Rating. It was after his first year at Bucknell that he enlisted in the Army to serve in World War II.

While he was stationed at Camp Rucker in Alabama, he met and married Frances Ethridge of Dotham, Alabama. After the war, he brought his bride back to his hometown in Connecticut and went into the poultry business with his father. He carried on the work for a time after his father's death in 1954 but soon saw a dim future in raising chicks for a living.

By that time, the Pierces had three sons. When an offer of an appointment as Director of Religious Education came from a small Baptist Church in Florida, it sounded appealing and they decided to move south to seek their fortune.

Then came a chance to work for the Greater Miami Council of Churches and through that organization he became the anchor man for their "Man to Man" television show that aired on prime time Tuesday evenings over the Public Television network. It was a program of religious dialogue including questions called in to a panel of Miami clergymen. During this time, Mrs. Pierce worked along with her husband as a hostess behind-the-scenes.

It was those years with the Miami Council of Churches that inspired this small-town fellow from Connecticut to seek ordination in the United Church of Christ. Following a seven-year pastorate in Hallandale, Florida, he received a call to a church in Monroe, Conn. and the family, including a fourth son by then, moved back to his home state.

The old saw that says "you can take the boy or girl from the farm, but you can't take the farm from either" shows up in the case of Parson Pierce. Soon after he and his family moved north to Monroe, he dreamed of one day retiring to a farm where he could have his own meat and eggs, and grow vegetables and fruit for his own table. About ten years ago, he found ten choice acres on Cummington Hill up against the Worthington town line.

At first, he and his wife put up a small cottage for shelter on weekends until they could at last build a house. Over the years, they have driven up from Conn. at every opportunity to work on their dream house. At last, this year brought the retirement to fulfill their plans and they moved into the house built with their own hands. After more than eleven years in Monroe, they have settled into a lifestyle that promises the best of both worlds.

Through all the years that Mr. Pierce was busy with church work, his wife worked right along with him, while at the same time pursuing her own interests. At first, the demands of her children filled her days, but as soon as they were all in school, she says she took a job as a part-time secretary in her husband's church, and eventually as secretary in the junior high school in Hallandale. She continued working in the school library after the move to Monroe, and eventually took a job as secretary in a travel agency. That led to full time work as travel agent, an interest she hopes to continue here but on a less hectic schedule.

Besides being pastor of two Hilltown churches, Mr. Pierce is also the New England representative to the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico which demands several hours a week. "With these three jobs," commented his wife, "You can hardly say we are retired."

On the same day that Mr. Pierce was accepted as pastor of the Worthington church, he and his wife celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary with an open house at their new home. There in the wooded grove are the sheds and pens for their rabbits, hens, and Bantams that are the beginning of their little farm. Several bee hives are also part of the scene, and the original cottage is being transformed into a workshop for the minister-farmer who early turned from engineering only to apply the principles all through his life.

Their four sons, Roger who is in the Air Force stationed in Omaha, Nebraska, Larry of Hallandale, Fla., James of Davies, Fla., and Alan who lives in Bridgeport, Conn. will find this new home where they have never lived, a happy retreat and a safe harbor for their parents.



# Minister leaving Worthington pulpit

9/27/90

By JOAN LIVINGSTON  
Gazette Staff

WORTHINGTON — The Rev. Luther Pierce will step down from the pulpit of Worthington Congregational Church at the end of this year.

Pierce, who also is the minister for Peru Congregational Church, will retire from both posts Dec. 31 after four years of service.

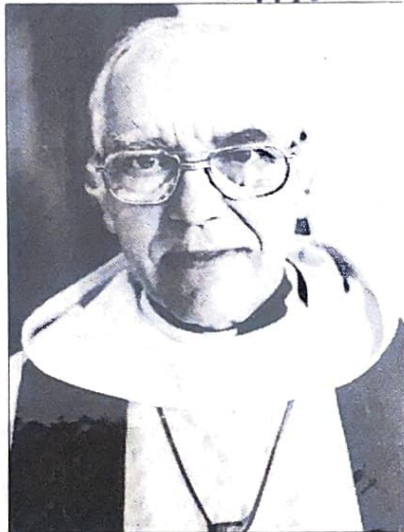
Pierce's announcement this week means that search committees from both churches will form during the next few weeks to determine their congregations' needs, and will work with the area conference minister, the Rev. Virginia Black, to find new ministers.

Pierce, 69, spent his youth in Connecticut, where his father owned a poultry hatchery. After serving in the military during World War II, he worked for his father before moving with his wife, Frances, and their four sons to Florida to seek a career in aviation.

Instead, he became involved in Christian education and, feeling a strong commitment to church work, he eventually was ordained.

Pierce served as pastor of churches in Hallandale, Fla., for seven years and in Monroe, Conn., for 11½ years before coming out of semi-retirement to take on his present ministries. He also was involved for many years in fundraising for the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico, which prepares Spanish-speaking people for the ministry.

Speaking of his latest ministries, Pierce said he has tried to



THE REV.  
LUTHER PIERCE

bring revitalization and organization to the two congregations. "Both churches have shown growth — numerically and spiritually," he said.

In addition, Pierce helped develop the Worthington Congregational Church's mission program, which assists the homeless and the poor.

Upon his retirement, Pierce and his wife plan to enjoy the home they built themselves in Cummington, along with its extensive gardens, fruit trees and animals.

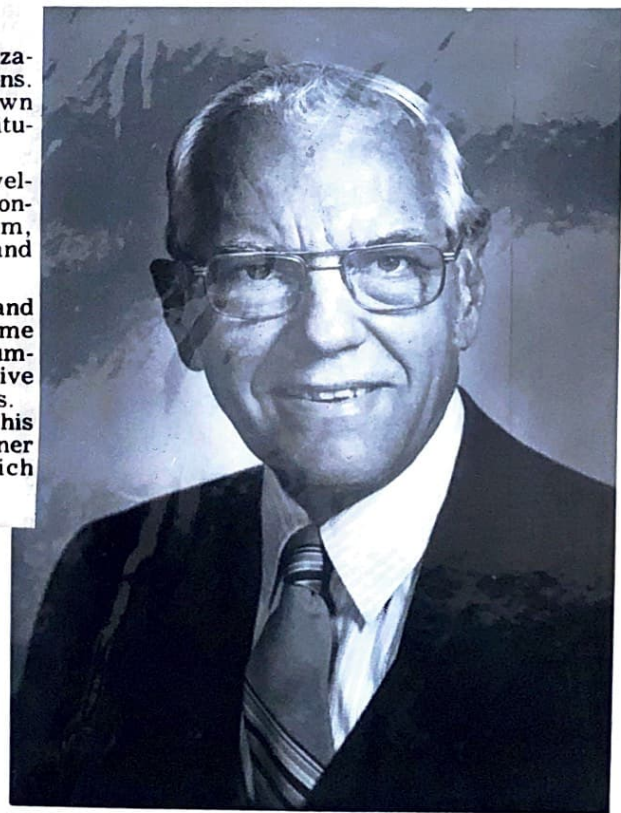
Pierce also plans to continue his volunteer work at the Warner Farm in Cummington, which serves as a religious retreat.



Mr. and Mrs. Luther Pierce.

(Photo by Lois Ashe Brown)

2/26/87





## Florence, Worthington churches

# Husband and wife pastors to leave

By MICHAEL VITO

FLORENCE — After serving as pastor of the Florence Congregational Church since early 1981, the Rev. Robert A. Kitchen will move in July to Minnesota with his wife, the Rev. Mary Ellen Kitchen, who has been pastor of the First Congregational Church in Worthington and the First Congregational Church in Peru for 7½ years.

Kitchen said yesterday that his family decided it was time for a move and after looking over other possibilities decided to move to International Falls, Minn.

Kitchen's last day in Florence will be July 15. He will then become pastor of Faith United Church of Christ in International Falls.

Mary Ellen Kitchen will be "retiring for awhile," according to her husband, and will begin "supply preaching"—filling in at churches in the International Falls area from week to week.

"International Falls is literally the coldest place in the country," Robert Kitchen said, pointing out that the community is located on the Canadian border.



REV. ROBERT KITCHEN

He said that the Florence Congregational Church will form a selection committee to begin searching for his replacement. Kitchen said



REV. MARY ELLEN KITCHEN

that it would probably take at least one year to find a permanent replacement, with an interim minister conducting services.

Robert Kitchen, 38, received a bachelor's degree from Springfield College in 1970 and was ordained in 1971. He said that he also served as a teacher at the college.

Mary Ellen Kitchen, 39, is a native of Northampton. She received a bachelor's degree from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and was ordained in 1974. Both received their theological training at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, Calif.

In 1979 Mary Ellen Kitchen was named pastor of the First Congregational Church in Worthington, with her husband assisting as co-pastor. Both also led services at the First Congregational Church in Peru.

Robert Kitchen was later appointed pastor of the Florence Congregational Church in February 1981. He said that he has visited his future parish and he feels that his family will be very happy there.

The Kitchens currently live at 122 Pine St., in Florence with their 7-month-old daughter, Winifred and their two teenage Vietnamese foster sons, Thanh Vo and his younger brother Sau Vo.



## Worthington's pastor elected to an office

Rev. Mary-ellen Kitchen of Northampton has been elected to represent the Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ on the denomination's Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society.

Her election occurred at a meeting in New York of the Office of Communication's board of directors.

Ms. Kitchen is the minister of the First Congregational Church in Worthington, and the First Congregational Church of Peru.

As a member of the Coordinating Center Committee, she will assist in monitoring the status of women in the denomination and in recommending policies and programs to address women's concerns and to eliminate sexism inside and outside the church.

The United Church of Christ is a 1957 union of the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Churches. Its Office of Communication handles public relations for the denomination, carries out projects to protect the public interest and advance affirmative action in telecommunications as well as providing educational programs in communication.



GEORGE BAYLEY

5/21/82

## Organ rebuilding to be marked Sunday with special concert

WORTHINGTON — The First Congregational Church of Worthington will celebrate the rebuilding of its organ with a recital on Sunday at 5 p.m. at the church on Huntingdon Road.

The program will be performed by George Bayley of Lee who completed the extensive rebuilding of the instrument earlier this year.

The program will include: Prelude (sonata VII for organ) by Josef Rheinberger, Prelude in Classical Style by Gordon Young, The Musical Clocks by Franz Josef Haydn, Was Gott Tut, Dast Ist Wohlgean by Johann Gottfried Walter, Noel with Variations by Claude Louis Balbastre, Voluntary in A by William Selby, Will O' the Wisp by Gordon Balch Nevon, Ricercare on "St. Anne" by Gordon Young, Lied by Louis Vierne, Sketch in D Flat by Robert Schumann, Berceuse by Louis Vierne and Sortie Toccata by Theodore Dubois.

Bayley is a graduate of the New England Conservatory and the University of Michigan. He served as an apprentice in organ building with Rock D. Spencer of Albany, N.Y. In addition to the restoration work in Worthington, Bayley's most recent work has been the rebuilding of the organ at the First Congregational Church of Stockbridge and the construction of a new two manual harpsichord for a customer in Jacksonville, Fla.

Bayley currently serves as music director for the First Congregational Church of Lee and conductor of the Berkshire Concert Choir.

The recital is sponsored by the music committee and refreshments will be available following the program.



Dr. Warren Wright, former guest preacher in Cummington and West Cummington, talks about the rich history of the Worthington Congregational Church during the 200th anniversary commemorative service Sunday. He teaches speech at Hamilton (N.Y.) College.

7/11/71



# Worthington Church Bicentennial



**MANY ATTENDED** Sunday's bicentennial service at Worthington Congregational Church celebrating the 200th anniversary of the church. Here, The Rev. Edward Cowles reads scripture.

## Church Marks 200th Anniversary

WORTHINGTON — A simple, white church on the Main Street here had its 200th anniversary in quiet ceremonies yesterday.

Residents and out-of-town guests packed the wooden pews of the First Congregational Church of Worthington.

Silence fell as the organ prelude filled the church.

A 20-voice chorus directed by Mrs. E. C. Rozwenc of Edwards Church, Northampton, led the congregation in singing.

Dr. Warren Wright, a lay preacher, presented the sermon

"Past Bells". He recalled former history of the church and how it came into existence. Dr. Wright attracted hundreds of New Englanders to his services

when he served as lay preacher and guest speaker at churches in Cummington and West Cummington.

He is a speech professor at Hamilton College in New York.

Former pastors who served the Worthington congregation also attended the Sunday celebration.

The Rev. J. Herbert Owen of Melbourne, Fla. and Lenox

served as pastor of Worthington Congregational Church from 1932 to 1942. He gave the benediction at the services.

The Rev. Edward Cowles of Easthampton presented a scripture reading. He was in Worthington for four years.

The Rev. Jerome Wood, who was pastor until last month when he decided to go into teaching, also participated in the service.

C. Byron Smith of Woronoco, deacon emeritas, led the responsive reading and Mrs. Ernest Robinson of Worthington gave the children's sermon.

Included in the celebration was a dramatic dialogue and picnic on the church lawn.

The weather during the day was warm and cloudy and a light shower fell toward the end of the afternoon.

7/11/71



# Celebration Attracts Worshipers



**FORMER PASTORS** were on hand to greet parishioners during the celebration. Here, The Rev. Edward Cowles (left) pastor from 1958 to 1961, and The Rev. Herbert Owen, 1932—1942, greet a worshiper after the service.



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF WORTHINGTON  
Worthington, Massachusetts



# Worthington Church Nears Anniversary 1971

WORTHINGTON — Worthington First Congregational Church will observe the 200th anniversary of its founding on Sunday.

Starting at 10 a.m. the speaker of the morning will be Dr. Warren E. Wright, whose subject will be "Past Bells".

He will be assisted by several former pastors. The Rev. J. Herbert Owen of Melbourne, Fla., here 1932 - 1942; The Rev. Edward U. Cowles of Easthampton, pastor from 1958 - 1964; The Rev. Jerome H. Wood, 1967 - 1971. Also Deacon Emeritus C. Byron Smith, now of Woronoco, and Mrs. Ernest Robinson of Worthington.

A 20-voice choir will be led by Mrs. E. C. Roswene of Edwards Church, Northampton. Ushers will be Craig Mason, James Pease, Ralph Smith and C. Kenneth Osgood.

After the morning service, those attending will be asked to take a picnic lunch. Dessert and beverage will be served. After lunch, at approximately 12:15 p.m., there will be a "Dramatic Dialogue" with eight participants, directed by Mrs. Carl Joslyn, depicting the life of the early church in town.



THE REV. and Mrs. Wood are shown in front of the church which he has served for four years.

6/27/71

## Pastor Is Honored

WORTHINGTON — Many friends and members of the Worthington First Congregational Church gathered after services Sunday for a coffee hour to bid farewell to their pastor and his family.

The Rev. and Mrs. Jerome H. Wood and their children, Stephen, Thomas, and Ruth, came to Worthington from Northfield four years ago and have become much a part of the community. Besides being pastor, Mr. Wood also served as minister of the Peru church.

He is also a member of the Gateway Regional School

Committee and worked on plans for both the Middle School and the addition to the Russell H. Conwell School. Mrs. Wood has been advisor to the Pilgrim Fellowship and both he and she are well known for their work with young people.

Mr. Wood plans to enter the teaching field and at present they expect to live in Worthington. They were presented a purse from the townspeople.

On Friday the Pilgrim Fellowship entertained Mr. and Mrs. Wood at a farewell dinner at The Whale Inn in Goshen.

## Richmond

Mr. MacConnell made his announcement in letters addressed to members and friends of the Richmond Church.

"I have decided to resign from the pastorate of the Richmond Church without the benefit of a 'call' from another local church," his letter said. "My family and I will be moving to California this summer. Once there, I plan to seek secular employment until I can find a church situation with which to exercise my pastoral abilities and desires."

The minister noted that he had informed Moderator William A. Dickson of his decision. Mr. Dickson is expected to call soon a meeting of the Church Council, which then will organize a pastoral-supply committee as required by the church by-laws.

Mr. MacConnell's letter concluded by observing that the Richmond Church is embarking "on a new period in its history." The parish is now constructing a new church building following a Jan. 26 fire which destroyed the church and severely damaged an addition then under construction. Construction is well along on the new sanctuary.

Mr. MacConnell came to Richmond in 1966 after two years at the First Congregational Church, Worthington. He is a graduate of Marlboro, Vt., College and Hartford Seminary. He is married to the former Betty Mae Adams of San Diego, Calif., and they have two children.

He was recently appointed an associate member of the local Conservation Commission.



The Rev. Douglas K. MacConnell

## Pastor Resigns At United Church

RICHMOND — The Rev. Douglas K. MacConnell, has announced that he is resigning the pastorate of the Richmond United Church of Christ, effective July 15. He has been pastor at the church for nearly 3½ years.

5/21/72



# Worthington Church Approves 9 Bylaws

5/29/70

WORTHINGTON — A special church meeting was held on Wednesday night to vote on adopting the new and amended bylaws of the church. The first article regarding the name of the church was thoroughly discussed, both from personal and legal standpoints and the article was voted down, thus leaving the original name "The First Congregational Church of Worthington" with the addition of "member of United Church of Christ."

The clerk of the church was authorized to act in financial matters in the absence of the treasurer. The other eight lengthy articles were adopted. There was some discussion, but only changes in wording to clarify parts. These new bylaws

Two summer programs for Gateway School have received tentative approval under Title I for a five week period beginning July 6. The first is a remedial program for current grades 4-7 to be held at Gateway Regional School. The second part will provide an enrichment program for grades 1-3. Parents are encouraged to send in application forms even though late, to insure a well planned program and help in planning transportation.

Robert Cudworth is a patient at Hillcrest Hospital in Pittsfield.

will take effect June 1, 1970. These bylaws have been studied and worked on by the committee for two years to be sure they would stand all tests and the committee did an outstanding job. The committee was Miss Marion Bartlett, Merton Cottrell, C. Kenneth Osgood, Beverly Smith and the Rev. Jerome Wood. Miss Bartlett died last summer, but many of her good ideas were used in the work.

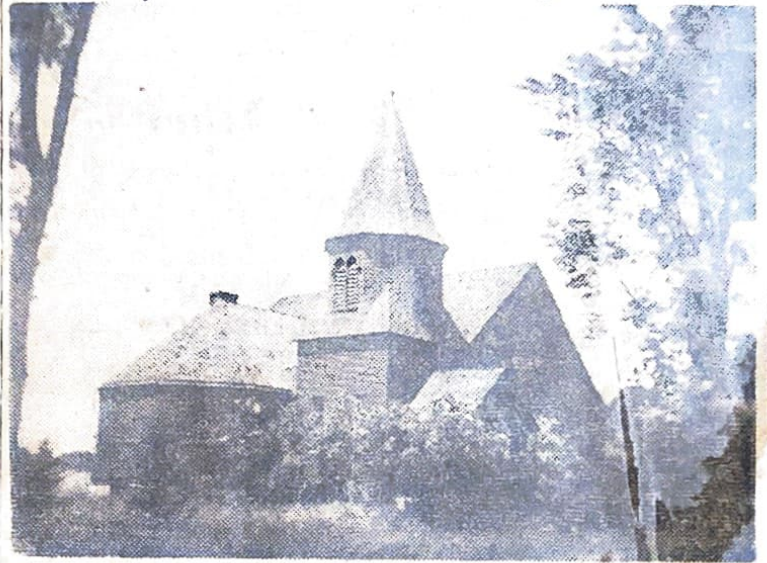
On Sunday our high school and college graduates will be honored at the church service.

Worthington Grange met Tuesday evening at the Town Hall. It was voted to give \$10 to the Cancer Drive and \$5 toward Grange Youth work. The program was in charge of the young people of the Grange.

Mrs. Kenneth Beach is a surgical patient at Cooley Dickinson Hospital.

The Rev. and Mrs. Jerome Wood, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Smith and Mr. and Mrs. C. Kenneth Osgood attended the meeting of the Hampshire Association of Churches in Southampton on Sunday. They also plan to attend the state conference to be held at the University of Massachusetts on June 5 and 6.

# Church in Worthington Has 50th Anniversary



The Congregational Church in Worthington, which will observe its 50th anniversary tomorrow is shown above. Below is its pastor, Rev. J. Herbert Owen.

1938

WORTHINGTON, July 9.—Plans are complete for the 50th Anniversary of the dedication of the present church building of the Worthington Congregational Church to be held Sunday. Rev. George A. Tuttle, field secretary of the Massachusetts Congregational Conference will speak at the morning service at 11 on the subject "Steeple in the Hills."

Nathan Gottschalk, violinist and Miss Selma Medinkoff, pianist, both of the Playhouse-in-the-Hills, Cummington, will play at the morning service and the church choir will sing "The Gloria" from Mozart's Twelfth Mass. After a basket lunch on the lawn of the church, a pilgrimage will be made to the graves of the first minister Rev. Johnathan Huntington (1771-1780) and his wife, and Rev. Fredrick Sargent Huntington, pastor of the church when this building was dedicated.

wreaths will be placed on the graves by deacons and friends. At the 2.30 o'clock, Walter of Northampton will give a service of reminiscence. Scriptures will be read and a hymn written for the Rev. F. S. Hunt-





## Birthday Today

# At Four Score Years, 'Parson' Cowles Active

**BY DOROTHY HOWLAND**  
**SOUTHAMPTON** — With 10 more good years to his credit than the Biblical three score and 10 Dr. Edward U. Cowles ("Parson") observes his 80th birthday today, and these added years have served as dividends for the benefit of many people confined to nursing and rest homes in the Westfield area as well as to his wide circle of friends.

Serving as part-time visiting pastor, this retired minister has made friends with about 265 patients in three nursing homes, Mountain View Nursing home in Montgomery and Valley View and Westfield Nursing homes, both in Westfield, and with the residents of the Barnard Rest home and the Home for the Blind in Westfield.

His visits include folks of all faiths and the leaflets he distributes include material for members of the Catholic, Jewish and Protestant faiths along with his particular brand of collected humorous anecdotes.

In addition to distributing two leaflets each month to his friends in the homes, he has given out nearly 300 "Bedside prayer cards" and many copies of Robert Burdette's, "Two Golden Days."

The leaflets are composed by "Parson" Cowles and printed voluntarily by Mrs. Donald Newton of Russellville Road. Included are poems and articles of general interest contributed by members of his nursing home congregation.

### Salary "Nominal"

Because Dr. Cowles' salary under the sponsorship of the Western Hampden Council of Churches is nominal, and due to the expenses of many materials which he distributes, the Friendly Visitors of Westfield and the Russell Community Church have surprised him with generous checks during the present year.

The Friendly Visitors is a volunteer organization of about 25 residents of the Westfield area who work with Parson Cowles. The group was formed 10 years ago and "adopted" the Western Hampden Council of Churches as sponsors. Mrs. Esther Coye is chairman of the Visitors, and Mrs. Maida Bartlett is treasurer.

Officers of the Western Hampden Council of Churches include Mrs. Shirley Jackson, president; Mrs. Gertrude Judd, secretary; and Robert Anderson, treasurer.

Under the direction of Mrs. Polly Murphy, pianist, the Golden Agers, "Parson" Cowles, sing once a month on Sunday afternoons at the Valley View Nursing home, the Home for the Blind, and the Barnard Rest home.

Dr. Cowles reports that the large number of Bibles given to him by the defunct Pioneer Valley Council of Week-Day religious Education led by Miss Dorothy Swain, have been deeply appreciated by the folks in the homes where he visits.

Among those who have assisted "Parson" are the Bell Ringers of the Southampton Congregational Church, directed by Miriam Howland, and the "Eczema Quartet" from the church. The quartet was so named because it was "liable to break out at any time."

The "Parson's" duties at the Home for the Blind include reading to the residents, and his recommendation for the best method of exercising social action is to "do it in a personal way."

The Friendly Visitors of Westfield are planning to hold a training class session for those who are now members and for others who may be interested in joining this "labor of love," as Mrs. Esther Coye calls it. These classes will be led by Chaplain Robert Holcomb of Western Massachusetts Hospital and sessions will be held from 3 to



**DR. EDWARD U. COWLES**

4:30 p.m. on Nov. 12 and 19 at the Methodist Church in Westfield.

### Was Interim Minister

Dr. Cowles was interim minister of First Congregational Church a few years ago for 14 months and entered actively into the life of the church in all its dimensions. He is a member of the church and a faithful member of the senior choir.

His active pastorates excluded six years in Spencer, more than 28 years at the First Church in Westfield from September of 1929 through December of 1957, six years in Worthington, two years as assistant minister of the Easthampton Congregational Church, and five years in his present position. Dr. Cowles and his Alabama-born wife, the former Nina Lyman, moved from Easthampton in 1971 to their Southwick Road address in Westfield, but the keep in touch with friends in Southampton through the church.

"Parson" Cowles' work in the nursing homes brings him into contact with patients who have no relatives and few friends.

"There are many lonely people in institutions," he said, "who have need of and appreciation for visits from friends who care about them." This need is one he is happy to fulfill, and his birthday comes at a time when he is actively engaged in this worthwhile work.



# Hilltown church calls pastors

4/29/79

By LUCIE MOLLISON

WORTHINGTON — The Revs. Robert and Mary Ellen Kitchen, a husband and wife team, of Northampton, were called last night to serve as pastors of the First Congregational Church here.

Mrs. Kitchen will serve as pastor and her husband as co-pastor. They are residents of Northampton and are now house-hunting in the Worthington area. They will also lead services at the Chester United Church and the Peru Congregational Church.

Mrs. Kitchen is a native of Northampton, received a bachelor's degree from the University of Massachusetts in 1970 and was ordained in 1974. She is especially interested in Christian education.

Mr. Kitchen received a bachelor's degree from Springfield College in 1970 and was ordained in 1971. He is a member of the department of religion at Springfield College. Both Mr. and Mrs. Kitchen received their theological training at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, Calif.

Other business taken up at last night's annual meeting was approval of the budget for the coming year of \$15,148. This increases the minister's salary by \$500 to \$5,800. It also raises the amount for music, the organist and the choir director to \$1,800.

The nominating committee offered the following slate of officers which were voted into office: moderator, Walter Markert; clerk, Madeline Smith; treasurer, John Payne; benevolence treasurer, Doris Smith; deacons, Ralph Smith and Gary Chamberlin; deaconesses, Judy Speiss and Jane Bartlett; trustees, George Bartlett and Douglas Small; Christian education committee, Judy Fisk; Christian enlistment committee, Brenda Mason and Susan Beach; missionary committee, Doris Smith; music, Gary Chamberlin; nominating, Bert Nugent, Eldeen Nugent and Susan Beach; conference delegates, Mr. and Mrs. John Payne; association delegates, Harriet Osgood and June Dodge.



THE WORTHINGTON Congregational Church called the Revs. Mary Ellen and Robert Kitchen, as pastors at last night's annual meeting. The couple will also lead services at the Chester United Church and the Peru Congregational Church. (Photo by David Dimock)

## Rev. Kitchen appointed to Florence pastorate

2/28/81

FLORENCE — Rev. Robert A. Kitchen of Northampton has been named the minister of the Florence Congregational Church.

Mr. Kitchen will preach his first sermon at the church Sunday at 10:30 a.m.

For 10 months last year, Mr. Kitchen served as the interim minister at the Williamsburg Congregational Church. From 1976 until 1979, he taught religion courses at Springfield College in Springfield.

The new minister also has assisted his wife, Rev. Mary-Ellen Kitchen, with her duties as the pastor of the Worthington and Peru Congregational churches.

Before coming to this area, Mr. Kitchen was an associate pastor of a Methodist church in Baltimore. He also served as the pastor of four small Methodist churches in western Maryland.

Mr. Kitchen, a graduate of Springfield College, received a master of divinity degree in 1973 from the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, Calif. He also earned a master's degree in Semitic languages from Catholic University.

Mr. Kitchen will preach at "Scout Sunday," a service of recognition for all of

the scouting organizations sponsored by the Florence church.

The pastor and his wife will live in the church's parsonage on Pine Street.

## World Day of Prayer

Next Friday, women from 150 countries will celebrate the "World Day of Prayer."

The St. Mary of the Assumption Church, 163 Main St., Haydenville, will host this year's service.

Sr. Eileen Witkop, S.S.J., of the Center for Reflective Action at Mont Marie in Holyoke, will be the guest speaker. The theme will be "The Earth is the Lord's...." will offer an opportunity to focus concern and prayer on the need for ecological awareness and action.

This year's international service was written by American Indian women of the Church Women United organization. They represent six tribes — Cherokee, Choctaw, Hopi, Seneca, Sioux and Winnebago. They brought to the task a sensitivity to nature, the earth and its creatures and the spiritual heritage of American Indians.







*St. Mireille Ella Jackman 1959 Betty Shepherd*





# Worthington

01 132 171

## WORTHINGTON

**CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**  
(U.C.C.) — Rev. David Powers, interim Pastor will be in charge of the 11 a.m. service. Child care is provided. At the close of the service there will be a meeting of members to hear and act on the report of the Pastoral Supply Committee. At 6:30 p.m. the Senior High Pilgrim Fellowship will meet at the home of Rev. and Mrs. Jerome H. Wood.



Beth Hooley 1966 Beverly Smith Robin Hammaray

### John Payne scholarships awarded

6/20/86

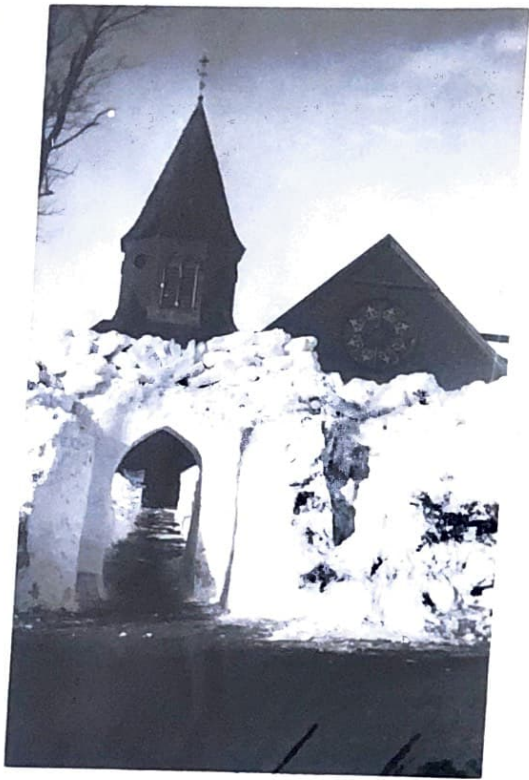
WORTHINGTON— The John Payne scholarships were awarded June 22. Those receiving the scholarships and the schools they plan to attend are Ann Sharron, UMass; Cathy Sharron, Berkshire Community College; David Harvey, UMass; Sally Knapp, North Adams State College; Tracy Higgins, Childbirth Education Program; Lisa Broderick, Westfield State College; Shari Fisk, Bay Path; Brad Fisk, AIC; Judy Mason, AIC; Ruth Wood, Culinary Institute of America; Nancy Weyman, Berkshire Community College; Missy Dragon, AIC; and Jennifer Reagan, Bridgewater State.





CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH - WORTHINGTON, MASS.













*Mrs. Helen...*



*Jane C. Tuttle*



*Mabel Knudsen - Helen C. Mc Conn*





Mabel Tower Mother of Esther Kerley

Mabel Tower 1959







Hert Rida

1959





Edith Kelley / Sep 12 1900  
Margaret Jones  
William Carter

Frances Bates Hamblet

1969





1959





1959

Donna Thompson





Charlotte Home

1953





Beatrice Kiska

1959

Emma Towner





*Rob  
Bentley*

*Ralph Smith*

*Ken Osgood*

*men hired by H. Snyder*

*Harold Brown*

*1959*





Marie Stone

Hilberta Stone

Edna Justyn

1959

THIS SIDE UP





Ed. Johnson  
Harold Rowan  
C. Ken Osgood

Ralph Smith

Dr. Harold Stone

C. Ken Osgood











# Fire Kindles Great Flame in Lyndonville Church Society

By HARRIET FISHER

Many years ago the Rev. Perin B. Fisk wrote a discourse for the dedication of the First Congregational Church in Lyndonville. In referring to the good feeling when the church building was finished and the Fisk family soon to move into a parsonage, he prayed that the prosperity would have the best effect upon the Congregational people. He said, "We are in the same danger as others, that a little fire may kindle a great flame, and all our joy be forgotten in sorrow and shame." Literal flames on August 27, 1967 destroyed the church edifice which those people worked so hard to build almost 100 years ago.

While a fire is a destructive force to material things, it cannot destroy the church society or its immortal spirit, faith and determination. Fire can serve to revitalize a group of people and bring them closer together in an effort to overcome the results of a common tragedy. Members of this burned house of worship began meeting right away to set up a building fund and decide on construction of a new church.

After many meetings and consultations it was definitely decided to erect a traditional white New England church. The new one will be built on the same foundation which remains firm and true, perhaps indicating that "The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord" and that the "foundation" may be "her charter of salvation, one Lord, one faith, one birth."

## Few Articles Saved

Some of the articles saved from the devastated building were the pulpit Bible, the baptismal font, also the gold crosses and candlesticks which grace the altar each Sunday morning at the Lyndonville Graded School auditorium. A church in Danville loaned the altar and a lectern, and music is provided by Conn electric organ, a gift. However, the losses were great — some of them include hymnals, junior and senior choir robes, the pipe organ, furniture, furnishings and many records. Rev. Clyde Campbell said that when he and his secretary, Patricia Amlund, were salvaging what they could from the office, one of the papers which they wrung out was the insurance policy inventory.

Rev. Robert Mayhew, a former pastor here, offered some collection plates saying they would probably need them. He also gave some books for Sunday School. The morning of the fire, the St. Elizabeth Catholic Church voted \$100 to help the Congregational people to rebuild. An offer was made of a gift of a spinet piano for the new church. Other gifts includ-

ed a communion service, baptismal bowl and three altar vases. Rev. Campbell has been handed innumerable donations earmarked for the new building. Even a stranger — a woman from Rhode Island who stopped to visit the church when passing through Lyndonville, hearing of the fire, sent \$100 toward rebuilding because she had been impressed with the traditional white church.

Since the fire, the music committee has purchased new hymnals and the junior and senior choirs have new maroon robes with white collars. The junior choir members are paying for their own with food sales and other money raising activities.

It is interesting to note that some of the early services were held in the Lyndonville school house, although not the same building where they occur now. The school house, a wooden one, was built in 1868 and later replaced with the brick structure now used. After the Mathewson Block (the Devereaux block) was completed services took place there in a third floor hall.

## Dedication in 1872

In his dedication paper of 1872, Rev. Fisk mentioned that he first saw Lyndonville in June 1867. He was on his way to East Burke to the County Conference of Churches. He said he saw the new village "from the Lyndon Centre side as there was no road to Burke on the other side (of the Passumpsic River) then." On his return two days later, however, he was able to cross the bridge (near the now numbered junction of Rt. 5 and 114). He said men and ox teams were plowing and scraping the street from the bridge to a point opposite the Round House (at the Railroad Shops). The lots on Main Street were mostly vacant, or with piles of lumber or cellars partly completed. Rev. Fisk who was then pastor at Peacham, remarked to his wife, "I wonder what denomination will be enterprising enough to take up work in this village soon?" She replied, "Why don't you do it?" Then they jokingly selected a site which turned out to be not far from where the church was built in 1872.

Sometime later he came to Lyndon Corner on an exchange with Rev. Wells and that evening he attended services in Lyndonville — "The school-room was crowded," he said. It was proposed that a meeting should be held soon with a minister from the Conference to organize a permanent society. He filled the appointment himself and thus his first sermon to these people was preached in the school house.

The Conference agreed to let their pastors go a Sunday a piece to Lyndonville and hold services. Previously some resi-



The Lyndonville Congregational Church (above) was destroyed by fire on Aug. 27, 1967, and a new building is in the planning stages to replace this structure.

dents of this village — if they had some sort of conveyance — went to Lyndon Corner, others went to the Baptist Church at Lyndon Center. Occasionally Rev. Wells from the Corner conducted services in Lyndonville on Sunday afternoons.

## Permanent Pastor

Early in 1870 Rev. S. F. Drew of Cabot preached a sermon in Mathewson Hall. He found the elements of Congregationalism were very strong and urged that steps be taken to secure a permanent pastor. He also urged Rev. Fisk to start a Sunday School. The Congregational Sunday School at Peacham gave them their old library. Attendance rapidly increased in the succeeding weeks. Also a good subscription was raised to support regular services which were held mainly by Congregational ministers. Not long after this the ladies organized the Sewing Circle.

In August 1870 the Rev. Fisk became the permanent pastor. When he tendered his resignation from the church at Peacham so he could accept the challenge at Lyndonville, his request was denied. He asked for a Council which decided that he should go to the new village. An elderly minister in St. Johnsbury Center who reported, "I had no love for the new village told Rev. Fisk that he regarded a dismissal from Peacham as equivalent to being silenced from the ministry." At first Rev. Fisk could not bring his family for there was no place for them, but later they settled in the ell part of Dr. Copeland's house on Main Street until a parsonage was provided for them on Church Street.

## Form Church

The Congregational Society had organized on March 15, 1870 and the following December 41 joined in covenant to form the Church. When the Council convened on Dec. 6, 1870 seventeen area churches were represented. The rules, creed and covenant report was adopt-

ed and that evening exercises were held which included choir music, a sermon by Rev. J. Torrey, propounding of confession, ordinance of Baptism, assenting to covenant, ordination of deacons, and an address by Rev. L. O. Brastow.

During these times, the Vermont Union kept track of the doings of the new religious society. The paper noted that there were many conversions. "Several have broken their pipes," it was reported, "Profaneness was common in the village is now rare." "The Church has been zealously engaged in building a house of worship." Not all went so well however. Not long after the church was dedicated, a temperance meeting was held in the vestry and the paper reported that "the attendance was poor."

It was first thought that the Congregational Society would build in about five years, but it was a hardship for the elderly and infirm to climb to the third floor Mathewson Hall. Desiring a floor "nearer the earth" and with the situation timely, it was suggested from the pulpit early in 1871 that people pay small installments for a church building — as much as they might pay, for instance, for tobacco — perhaps 25 cents a week from each family.

## Lay Cornerstone

The building committee, after much investigation, reported that if the Railroad Company would donate a lot and transport lumber and materials free of charge, the Gothic style church chosen could be built for about \$7,500 if the people would raise \$5,000 before construction was begun. This goal was reached in July 1871, a site was chosen on a convenient corner lot of a new street, and ground was broken to begin building. The foundation was put in August 11, 1871. The cornerstone laid in September with proper ceremonies. The completed church including present cost \$8,367.67 leaving a debt u-

\$2,026.5, the subscriptions having reached a total of \$6,340.72.

Rev. Fisk describes Lyndonville when the dedication of the church took place on Oct. 25, 1872: "... we behold now a collection of seventy-seven dwelling houses, nine in process of construction, making eighty-six, containing forty-four extra tenements, and the num-

ber of families is now one hundred and twenty-six with more to come in a very few days." The Church was crowded for the dedication service which several ministers to part, with music furnished by Mr. Mack's choir. Rev. Fisk pointed out that 50 more people had joined the church since the original 41.

The first service in the new church had already taken place on Oct. 4th and Rev. Fisk had chosen for his text, "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is Jesus Christ," the knowing that almost two years later, another church would have to be erected on the same foundation which seems to have the same permanence of the foundation of Christian faith.

A model of the proposed building by Architect Ralph A. Brown of Burlington, may be seen in the store window of Paul Aubin, also a drawing of the proposed sanctuary which is to have a vaulted Gothic ceiling. Plans call for a choir balcony and organ at the rear of the sanctuary. There are plans for a choir room and church offices. The basement will be finished and will contain the dining room, kitchen, classrooms and furnace room.

As a memento of the first building, the bell which weighed about 1000 pounds, and dated 1871, may be set up on the church lawn in some type of display case. The bell became cracked when the burning started. The bell was pulled down, but seems impractical to purchase another bell when a public address system giving forth music on Sunday mornings would be of greater enjoyment. A recording of a church bell could be played if desired, and there have been innumerable comments by people of all denominations telling how much they enjoyed the Sunday morning Christmas music which came from the steeple of the First Congregational Church in Lyndonville.

2/16/68