

A History of  
Winthrop Street Baptist Church  
1945-1999

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The Winthrop Street Baptist Church with its original steeple.  
The steeple was taken down in 1994.

A HISTORY OF THE  
WINTHROP STREET BAPTIST  
CHURCH

TAUNTON, MASSACHUSETTS

MAY 1945 - MAY 1999

BY EVERETT A LEONARD  
AND DONNA B SMITH



OLD COLONY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
66 CHURCH GREEN  
TAUNTON, MA 02780

## *Dedication*

*“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done ”*

*This history is dedicated to the members of the  
Winthrop Street Baptist Church, who have worked  
lovingly and diligently to carry out the work of our  
Lord in this community and abroad.*

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*Special Thanks to the members of the Church  
History Committee L. Allen Freeman, Martha  
Wordell, Hilda Osenkowski, and George Bunn.*

*We are also grateful for the photographs provided  
by Merrill Vieira, Lori King and Peter Weiler*

## Chapter 1

### *Incorporation*



**T**his second volume of the history of the Winthrop Street Baptist Church begins where the first volume ended, at the conclusion of Rev. W. Douglas Swaffield's ministry in November of 1945

Our church was in the midst of some important transitions during this period. The former Winthrop Street Baptist Society was being dissolved in favor of becoming incorporated and more democratic. To this end, a seven-member Board of Deacons was established, and a set of by-laws written. Annual reports were to be submitted and read at each annual meeting.

These changes were not easy for the church. The last year of Rev. Swaffield's ministry saw considerable dissension between those who supported the Society and those who wanted to incorporate. The Society at the time consisted of a dozen men who controlled the finances and the property of the church. The deed to the building was in the Society's name. Members outside the Society had no voting voice; the Society elected itself and approved any new members.

#### **The Decision to Incorporate**

The turning point occurred during the May 14, 1945 annual meeting, at which time a committee was formed to investigate the advisability of having of a Board of Deacons. Those appointed were

Mr. Herman Decker, Mr. William R. Park, Mr. George Lorning White, Miss Augusta Stuart, and Mrs. Chester Godfrey.

At the same time, the church voted to adopt the following resolution.

*“Whereas:* The First Baptist Church was organized in order that the members might have the opportunity to worship in a church organized on a basis of democratic principles as well as to live in a country dedicated to the democratic ideal, and

*Whereas:* A portion of the administration of our church is vested in a society which admits to membership only upon invitation of the society and upon two dollars admission fee, and

*Whereas:* The unnecessary duplication of organization into church and society is undesirable because of the division of authority and responsibility, and

*Whereas:* This type of organization is contrary to the basic principles of democracy; Be It Resolved that it is the opinion of this meeting that,

1. The Winthrop Street Baptist Church should follow the lead of the great majority of Baptist churches and incorporate.

2. The Winthrop Street Baptist Society should consider carefully the desirability of acting upon its own dissolution when and if the Winthrop Street Baptist Church should complete its incorporation.

3. A copy of this resolution shall be read at the next meeting of the Winthrop Street Baptist Church for action and that a report of the action of the society be made at the covenant meeting in October 1945.

4. Publicity concerning the October 1945 covenant meeting be given from the pulpit, in the press, in the chronicle and upon the church bulletin board.

Rev. Swaffield gave his resignation that same evening. His parting words were, "May God's blessing rest upon the church in the choice of a new pastor whose leadership will be in accord with your desires and with whom you can fully cooperate." Reverend Swaffield was named Pastor Emeritus by a church vote on August 2, 1945

The Winthrop Street Baptist Church Society voted on July 10, 1945, that if the Church at any official meeting voted to incorporate, the Society would dissolve after incorporation.

On November 1, 1945, the church voted unanimously to proceed with incorporation. At this same meeting on November 1, a committee of three was appointed to write a set of by-laws. The committee included Mr. Harold Cole, Chairman, Mr. Raymond MacCraw, and Miss Hattie Piper.

### **Establishing the Board of Deacons**

Also at the November 1 meeting a report was read from the committee appointed to decide the advisability of a Board of Deacons. The committee endorsed the idea and offered these guidelines:

- 1 The Board should consist of seven members. For the first Board, three members should be elected for a three-year term, 2 members for a 2-year term, and 2 members for a one-year term.
2. After selection of the original Board, the established term of office should be three years.
- 3 No member of the Board shall be eligible for reelection until he has been off the Board for at least one year.
4. The Cabinet should be empowered to appoint a committee of not more than five to nominate the deacons.

In January 1946 the Church issued letters and ballot forms to all members. Each member chose seven men to be considered for the post of deacon. The twelve men receiving the most votes were included on a final ballot, which was voted on at a Communion



Service on Sunday, March 3, 1946. Results of the vote were given during worship service the following Sunday.

The three men receiving the most votes were: Mr. Herman Decker, Mr. John Vieira, and Mr. William Park. These three were appointed to the Board of Deacons for three years. Mr. Raymond Estabrook and Mr. Charles Kingsbury were appointed for two years, and Mr. Arthur Pinkham and Mr. George Hammond were appointed to a one-year term.

The new Board of Deacons was dedicated on Sunday morning, April 7, 1946 by Rev. Charles H. Williams, interim pastor.

### **Finding a New Pastor**

On August 30, 1945, the church appointed a committee of five to act as pulpit supply and conduct Sunday services until a new pastor was found. This same committee was charged with finding an appropriate candidate to become our 15th pastor.

The appointed committee members were: Mr. Herman Decker, Mr. Charles Kingsbury, Mrs. Harry Lambert, Mr. William Park, and Mrs. Arthur Pinkham. Rev. Charles Williams was voted interim pastor until the month of November or longer if necessary.

On March 10, 1946, the church received a letter from Rev. David W. Buzzell accepting the call to be our pastor. His duties began on April 28, 1946, the Sunday after Easter. His annual salary was \$3,500 plus the parsonage and one month vacation.

A reception for Rev. and Mrs. Buzzell was held on Friday, May 17, 1946, organized by Mrs. Charles Kingsbury. Former pastors sent telegrams and notes of welcome. The reception was attended by local ministers as well as our own church membership. Music was provided by Deacon William Park and his orchestra.

## First Officers Elected

On July 11, 1946 the by-laws were adopted and officers were elected to positions established in the by-laws. Upon obtaining the charter of incorporation for Winthrop Street Baptist Church, the following people assumed these positions:

Moderator .....	Pastor
Church Clerk .....	Mr. Carl Crawford
Auditor .....	Mrs. Mabel Schwamback
Treasurer .....	Mr. Raymond MacCraw
Sunday School Supt. ....	Mr. Herman Decker
Prudential Committee .....	Mr. Lawrence Goff, Mr. Ormand Leonard, Mr. Curtis Kingsbury, Mr. Sheldon Hodges, Mr. Charles Kingsbury
Advisory Committee .....	Miss Hattie Piper, Mrs. L.Allen Freeman, Mrs. Henry Hirschy
Missionary Committee .....	Miss May Hayes, Miss Mildred Hopkins, Miss Pearl Piper, Mrs. Albert White, Mr. L.Allen Freeman
Music Committee .....	Mrs. David Buzzell, Mrs. David Snow, Mrs. Arthur Pinkham
Christian Education .....	Mrs. Addison Stiles, Miss Phyllis Chace, Mrs. Curtis Kingsbury

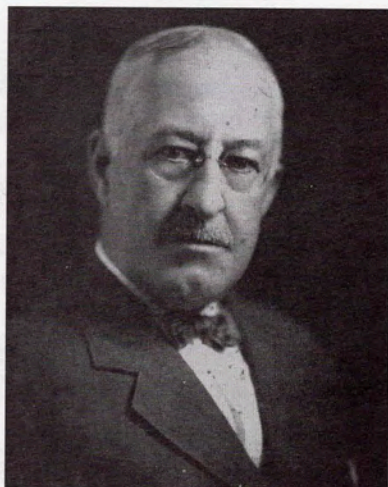
Also on July 11, 1946, Attorney Harold E. Cole was appointed to arrange for the church's incorporation. Mr. William Park, Mr. Herman Decker, and Mrs. Pearl Godfrey signed the certificate of incorporation as required by law. The Charter of Incorporation was granted to the church by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on July 17, 1946 and the certificate issued on September 10, 1946, acting on an application submitted by Attorney Cole.

Throughout the incorporation process, Rev. Charles H. Williams, interim pastor, was a tremendous help and advisor. He visited with Raymond MacCraw to help with the formation of the by-laws. On May 9, 1946, the church presented Rev. Williams with an aluminum scroll in appreciation his leadership during the critical year in which he served.

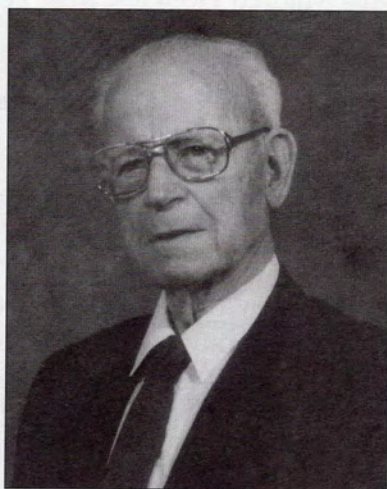
### Members of the First Board of Deacons



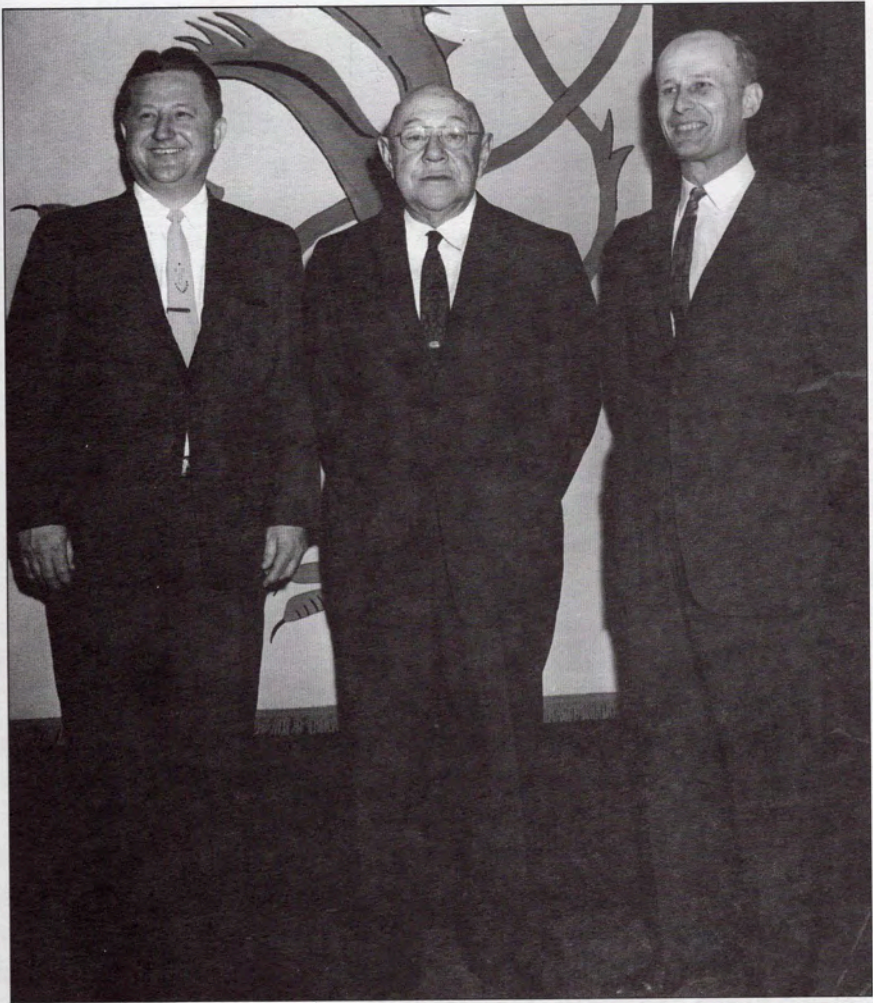
Herman Decker



William Park



John Vieira



*"Get thee behind me Satan"* When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the desert, He always answered with Scripture. How fortunate we have been to have this same Scripture preached from our pulpit throughout our church history.

Left to right: Rev. David Buzzell, Rev. W. Douglas Swaffield, and Rev. Walter Swensen.

## Chapter 2

### *Ministers*



#### Reverend David W. Buzzell

On March 10, 1946 Rev. David Buzzell became our 15<sup>th</sup> pastor, following Rev. W. Douglas Swaffield, who retired after nearly 20 years in our pastorate on November 12, 1945. During the interim the church was served by Rev. Charles Williams, D.D. from New Hampshire.

Rev. Buzzell was a native of Danvers, Massachusetts. He was educated in the public schools in Saco, Maine and at Thornton Academy. He graduated from Gordon College with a bachelor's degree in theology and from the Gordon Divinity School.

He and his wife, the former Margaret A. Read, had three sons: David, Robert, and Paul. Prior to accepting his position at Winthrop Street, Rev. Buzzell held pastorates in the Maplewood Baptist Church of Malden, Massachusetts from 1941-1946, and at the Market Street Baptist Church of Amesbury, Massachusetts from 1935-1941. On April 28, 1946, he preached his first sermon as our pastor, entitled "Striking the Right Keynote."

That was probably an appropriate theme, because Rev. Buzzell began his pastorate with a debt-free budget, a new Board of Deacons, and a newly adopted set of by-laws. He was warmly welcomed as a leader who could put into practice all of the new measures. This he did, becoming our only pastor to serve as Moderator at business meetings.

Membership was to increase significantly during Rev. Buzzell's ministry. New members numbered 488; 364 of these were by baptism.

Throughout his ministry, the pastor took an active interest in civic affairs. He was clerk for the Bristol County Mental Health Clinics Inc., and he attended or sent delegates to many church-based conferences. These included the Taunton Baptist Church Association, the Council of Churches (on which he served as president), Old Colony meetings, as well as state and national Baptist conventions, missionary conferences, and youth conferences.

Youth organizations were Rev. Buzzell's keenest interest. He was a member of the faculty of the Northfield Christian Endeavor Conference and the Royal Ambassadors Boys' Camp in Ocean Park, Maine.

Early in his pastorate our church youth organization became affiliated with Christian Endeavor (previously it had been the BYPU, or Baptist Young People's Union.) During the summer months the youth group attended Northfield Christian Endeavor Conference, where Rev. Buzzell served on the Board of Directors.

At one time he was asked to be a "Crusader" for the Milford, NH Baptist Church. The Milford church wanted Rev. Buzzell to preside over their services for two Sundays, during which time they covered the expense of filling our pulpit.

Rev. Buzzell also tried to increase summer attendance at Winthrop Street by providing two morning services during July and August. The first was held at 9:00 am and the second at 11:00 am. It was hoped that those who had plans for the day would be able to attend the early service. Evening services continued also.

Rev. Buzzell conducted all services during July, and the Deacons were responsible for filling the pulpit during August. The pastor was given an extra week of vacation for his efforts.



1959 The Pastor and the church youth group attend Northfield Christian Endeavor Conference. Back row left to right: Robert Buzzell, Richard Travers, Stewart Crapo, Rev. David Buzzell, Carlton Kay, Donald Hirschy, Burton Cole. Front row: Virginia Hodgson, Cheryl Davis, Marsha Davis, Marilyn Hodgson, Barbara Bettencourt, Jane Bassett, Carolyn Dixon.

One of Rev. Buzzell's lasting accomplishments was the founding of the Couple's Club with his wife Margaret in 1954. In October of that year, the pastor sent notices to all young married couples of the church for the purpose of organizing a Couple's Club. Seven couples responded, and the number grew steadily thereafter.

The club was not intended to be a social group only, but one to help carry out the work of the church. Some examples of their achievements included helping needy families at Christmas with money, food, and toys; helping families in times of illness or bereavement; organizing Easter plays; buying toys for the church nursery, and greeting at morning services.

The Couple's Club is still active in our church today. Presently there are more than 30 couples enrolled.

During the final months of his ministry, Rev. Buzzell's voice became strained. This may have prompted his resignation in July 1959. In his letter, he wished that the church would find a new "voice" in finding a new pastor. He wrote, "A new program under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, cannot help but lead you to new progress and happiness so dear to us all. I assure you of my earnest prayers to this end."

Rev. Buzzell resigned on July 26, 1959 to become associate pastor of the First Baptist Church of Malden. His farewell testimonial was held at the Elks Hall on High Street with over 300 in attendance. Rev. Buzzell passed away on October 18, 1985

### **Rev. Walter F. Swensen**

The Pulpit Committee appointed to replace Rev. Buzzell met for the first time on August 13, 1959. Names of candidates were received from the Massachusetts Baptist Convention, Gordon College, and personal recommendations. The committee considered 32 names and traveled throughout New England to hear nine different candidates preach.

After much prayer and consideration, the committee recommended Rev. Walter F. Swensen to the church. Rev. Swensen preached his first sermon at Winthrop Street on June 15, 1960.

A native of North Dakota, Rev. Swensen received his bachelor's degree from Gordon College and his divinity degree from Gordon Seminary. He also received a master's degree in sociology from the University of New Hampshire.

His first pastorate was the First Baptist Church in Merrimac, Massachusetts from 1942-1949. He then spent six years at the First Baptist Church in Revere, Massachusetts, from 1949- 1955. Rev. Swensen's third church was the First Baptist Church in Hingham, Mass., where he served until joining Winthrop Street Baptist



Church in 1960. He also served for one year as a U.S. Army chaplain.

Rev. Swensen married the former Nathalie Tobey of Falmouth, Mass. They had seven children. David and Margaret (twins), Mary, Daniel, Stephen, Ruth, and Johnathan.

Walter Swensen established the Board of Deaconesses in 1961 and increased the number of Deacons from seven to nine. During his pastorate, the church built an addition to the back of the church, adding Sunday School rooms, rest-rooms, and the pastor's study area. The addition was completed in 1961, and the mortgage was paid completely by 1966. The church also celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the church edifice in 1965 with a commemorative service. In 1968, the pastor and his family were the first to reside in the new parsonage at 58 Winthrop Street.



Rev. Walter F. Swensen

Rev. Swensen was careful to review the church's donations to the American Baptist Convention's missions fund. He found that he did not approve of some allocations of the funds. From that point on, our contributions to ABC were designated for specific missionaries that the church selected. This is a practice that continues today.

Local evangelical efforts included the sponsoring of several Billy Graham crusades. Winthrop Street Baptist also helped arrange for the showing of several Billy Graham movies at local theaters. The church added 259 new members during Walter Swensen's pastorate.

Desiring to do something special for the Swensens, the church arranged for them to take a long-awaited trip to the Holy Land. Raymond Reynolds organized a committee to plan the trip, and the church raised the money to send the Swensens there for a month in June 1965

In November 1971, after 11 years in our pastorate, Rev. Swensen decided to accept a call to the United Baptist Church in Caribou, Maine. Part of his letter of resignation read, "Leaving is painful to me. You will be in my heart and in my prayer as long as I live. He who is our Savior and Lord will be with us all, and some day, in His time and place, we shall know reunion. May we be faithful then, to Him."

In 1985, upon Rev. Swensen's retirement from the ministry, Winthrop St. Baptist sent a gift of \$5,000 as a contribution toward his retirement home in New Hampshire. In his thank you letter he wrote the following: "Winthrop Street Baptist Church has been an unusually generous and thoughtful church in the years that we have known it. Not only did we spend our longest pastorate there, but we enjoyed our work the most, and the friends and members we worked with. You will always be a very important part of our lives."

The following poem, written by Peter Nicol, was read at the send-off party given for the Swensens before they traveled to the Holy Land in 1965

Bon Voyage  
Dear Pastor, Dear Sister,  
Within God's house we stand,  
To wish you Bon Voyage  
To the sacred Holy Land.  
Borne on the wings of fervent prayer,  
We invoke the living God,  
We ask, He will be with you there,  
In the land his feet have trod.  
We pray as you walk each narrow street,  
And view each sacred plain  
May you be conscious that His blessed feet  
Are walking there again.

May He reveal Himself to you  
As He did, that Emmaus night  
Oh may your eyes behold the view,  
From Olivet's sacred height.  
You will see the Jordan's waters roll,  
Where Elisha bid the proud man go,  
Naaman the leper was made whole  
Seven times immersed beneath its flow.  
There from that stream, John recognized  
One from that motley crowd  
And with reluctant hands baptized  
The precious Lamb of God.

Walk softly in dark Gethsamane  
There engulfed in the whelming flood,  
Praying alone in His agony,  
He sweat great drops of blood.  
For Him, in that garden, no fragrance of roses,  
No refreshing dew drops, no perfume sweet,  
Only the cross, the sin burden imposes,  
Only His blood, divine judgement meet.  
You will walk the narrow street called Strait,  
That will lead you to Calvary.  
There by his death opened wide the gate  
To a new and living way.

In retrospect, see the darkening sky,  
As all Heaven turned away  
Forsaken was His plaintive cry,  
As He died alone that day.  
You will see the borrowed sepulcher,  
Wherein his body lay,  
You will see the stone, that sealed His tomb,  
Which the angels rolled away.  
You will see the old Jerusalem,  
Much as it was that day,  
Now He builds a new Jerusalem  
That will not pass away.

Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, if you but only knew  
Why you are loved so much, revered abroad,  
Oh Jerusalem, how much the Lord loves you  
It was on your streets, He walked the living God.

And when, from that sacred land you depart  
That land where our Savior trod,  
May you come home with a burning heart,  
Like the two who walked on Emmaus road.

Dear Pastor, Dear Sister,  
God bless you, we wish you  
A happy Bon Voyage.



1960 - Pulpit Committee welcomes Rev. Walter Swensen. From left: Ethel Gillette, Marjorie Dill, John Vieira, Rev. Swensen, Lawrence Davis, Sheldon Hodges.

### Reverend Cleaves W. Henderson

The name of Rev. Cleaves W. Henderson was presented to the church after extensive research by the Pulpit Committee. The committee considered 34 candidates. They called 26 official meetings and traveled to six churches to evaluate possible successors to Rev. Swensen. The church voted to accept the committee's recommendation of Rev. Henderson as our 17<sup>th</sup> pastor during a business meeting on September 18, 1972.

Rev. Henderson was a native of Brooklin, Maine. He attended schools there, as well as the Providence Bible Institute of Rhode Island, Gordon College of Theology and Missions in Boston, and the Farmington State Teacher's College in Maine. He was ordained in the ministry on June 27, 1949 in Georgetown, Maine.

Rev. Henderson began his ministry as a missionary for the American Sunday School Union in the state of Maine. He served there for three years, before assuming his first pastorate in Mt. Vernon, Maine.

In a period of 27 years, Rev. Henderson served in five different churches. He and his wife Marjorie (Little) came to our church from the Littlefield Memorial Baptist Church of Rockland, Maine, where he had been pastor for 12 years. The Hendersons had one son, David, and one daughter, Janet.



Rev. Cleaves W. Henderson

Rev. Henderson preached his first sermon as pastor of Winthrop Street Baptist on November 12, 1972. He emphasized teamwork

and the importance of having stronger committees to carry out the various ministries of the church.

During his tenure the missionary committee was changed to the Board of Missions, authorizing the board to designate the recipients of missionary monies. The missionary financial secretary's office was given to the Church financial secretary, who was responsible for receiving, recording, and depositing all money given to missions. The financial secretary reported on missions allocations during the annual business meeting and at other times as necessary.

Rev. Henderson was among the first to suggest a church library to enable members to share Christian literature. The library was established in 1981 and continues to this day.

Mrs. Marjorie Henderson opened her home on Wednesday mornings for Women's Bible Study, a group that has continued in our church ever since, led by a number of dedicated Christian women.

Pastor Henderson demonstrated his concern for some of the church's neediest members by providing communion service to shut-ins and residents of Marian Manor and Wedgemere Nursing Homes. He was assisted in this ministry by the deacons, and it proved to be a meaningful source of comfort and renewal for the sick and elderly of the church.

In early 1975 Pastor Henderson suffered a heart attack. He underwent heart surgery in April 1975. Following a long illness, he passed away on October 15, 1975.

He proclaimed the Gospel faithfully and sincerely, offering Christian counsel and Biblical guidance to those who sought him. During his brief pastorate, 42 new members joined the church, 32 by baptism.

## Reverend David K. Swensen

Well-known for his eloquence in the pulpit, his unwavering faithfulness to Scripture, and his godly example, Rev. David Swensen has served in the pastorate of Winthrop Street Baptist Church longer than any other minister. He began his ministry here in 1976, and presently has completed 23 years pastoring this congregation.

David is the church's 18<sup>th</sup> pastor, the son of Rev. Walter Swensen, who served as our 16<sup>th</sup> pastor from 1960-1971. He graduated from Taunton High School in 1961, then went on to Gordon College, where he received his bachelor's degree in 1965. In 1968 he received his Master of Divinity degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

He married the former Constance Thurber of Panton, Vermont, whom he met while a student at Gordon. Connie was the college roommate of David's twin sister, Margaret. She graduated with a degree in elementary education and taught first and third grade after she and David were married.

David and Connie have three children, Kristina, Scott, and Andrew. Before joining Winthrop Street, David spent 7 1/2 years at his first church, the First Baptist Church of Waldoboro, Maine.

David was one of several ministers considered to succeed Rev. Cleaves Henderson. His lively preaching and teaching had impressed the church at the summer retreat in 1975, when he served as guest speaker.

On February 26, 1976, the Swensens met with the church prior to a business meeting. David spoke of his priorities as a pastor: preaching, teaching, caring, and upholding the Word of God. He focused on Zechariah 4:6, which says, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

Later that evening, it was voted to accept the recommendation of the pulpit committee and appoint David as the church's next pastor. The vote to accept was 98 to 4. David preached his first sermon as our pastor on April 25, 1976.

The importance of caring and Christian compassion has been expressed in many ways throughout David's ministry. He has used the Deacon's fund often to help needy individuals. Money has been allocated to pay for food, medicine, rent, heat, and other necessities. Over the years, people have learned to come to the church during times of extreme need.

During his ministry the food closet and clothes closet were established. In addition, David has spent countless hours counseling people and visiting the sick and shut-in of the church. He has been a board member of the Samaritan House Homeless Shelter in Taunton since 1994, and has served as president of the Board of Directors since 1995

David also is a founding member of the Greater Taunton Community Services group, which was organized in 1997. This is a non-profit group of community leaders, whose goal is to establish one central location in the city for community services related to meeting the needs of the poor.

David has personally participated in many of the church's small groups, each designed to encourage caring and discipleship. Some of these include the Promise Keepers, shepherd support groups, cell groups, and the caring and keeping committee. All of these groups were established during David's pastorate, often due to his initiative.

Cell groups in particular became a focal point for David during the 1990's. New people were coming to morning worship service, but often did not become involved in other areas of the church. This was a concern because real fellowship can only be experienced outside of the formal morning worship service. Without fellowship



and friendship, new people stop coming, undermining their spiritual growth and robbing the church of vitality.

To solve this problem, David initiated cell groups, small groups of 8 to 20 members who meet regularly in homes. Most groups divide their time between fellowship, prayer, and Bible study, but the primary purpose is to establish relationships and build Christian friendships. Often commitment to the church grows as a result of commitments to each other. Cell-group members are revived in their faith as they become involved in caring for and praying for each other.

Because much of David's pastorate was spent without a full-time assistant pastor, he encouraged the Board of Deacons to be involved in ministry whenever possible. Deacons began assisting David in the pulpit in 1983, leading the first part of the service by reading Scripture, praying, and making announcements.

Connie Swensen has demonstrated her commitment to caring for the church people in many ways. She has been actively involved in the church nursery, Sunday School, choir, and women's Bible studies. She has been a willing counselor and guide to many, as well as a busy mother and grandmother - in addition to her full-time job as a director at a corporate childcare center. David and Connie have always approached their work at Winthrop Street as a partnership.

The Swensens are greatly loved by their congregation, an esteem that has been demonstrated by a number of special tributes. To commemorate their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary at Winthrop Street, a special scholarship fund was established for their children.

On his 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary as our pastor, David was granted a 3-month sabbatical, accompanied by a love gift of \$13,000, so the sabbatical could be enjoyed without financial restrictions. David chose June, July, and August of 1992 for his sabbatical period. The pulpit was

filled by Assistant Pastor Timothy Mitton, along with a number of guest speakers.

On May 22, 1993, the church held a reception to celebrate the 25th anniversary of David's ordination. There was a slide show featuring the Swensen family and their years as part of our church family. They were given an anniversary book full of photographs and best wishes. For David's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary as our pastor in 1996, the church sent the Swensens on a 3-week trip to the Holy Land.

No description of David Swensen's ministry and personal faith would be complete without an emphasis on prayer. Some of his most fervent sermons have been preached on the subject. Over and over he has taught that spiritual growth cannot occur apart from the discipline of prayer.

David's own commitment to personal devotions and prayer is absolute. He reserves the early morning hours for prayer and Bible study without fail, and he has been faithful to this discipline throughout his ministry.

Winthrop Street Baptist Church has been blessed during his pastorate, and presently 393 new members have joined by baptism, letter, or experience while David has been our minister.



Rev. David and Connie Swensen

## Assistant Pastors

By the end of the 1970's attendance at morning worship services was consistently over 250. It was clear that the time had come to consider hiring an assistant pastor. The church believed this was necessary to enhance our outreach in the community.

A motion to form a study committee to consider an assistant pastor was passed at a business meeting on Feb. 1, 1979. The committee consisted of the chairmen of the following groups: the Deacons, Deaconesses, Prudential Committee, Board of Christian Education and the previous two pulpit committees. It also included the church treasurer and the pastor.

On May 21, 1979, the committee presented a slide program of the church and its current ministries. Pastor David explained that hiring an assistant is part of a vision and a goal. He said that hiring the right person could double the outreach at Winthrop Street, and enhance our ministry not just quantitatively, but qualitatively.

To determine whether the church could afford to add a new staff position, pledge cards were distributed and members were asked to commit a specific weekly amount to support an assistant pastor, if they were agreeable to hiring one.

The procedure for hiring was as follows: a candidate was to be brought before the committee, and if the committee approved his candidacy, he was to appear before the church body. The pastor would have the right to veto any candidate.

The church was to be given two weeks notice of the vote for the assistant pastor. The meeting agenda was to be posted and announced from the pulpit for two consecutive Sundays. After the candidate appeared before the church body, a vote to hire him would be taken. Seventy-five percent approval vote was necessary to proceed with the hiring.

In March 1981 it was announced that the Study committee had approved a candidate, John Davis of Middleboro. He was a graduate of Barrington College, where he majored in Youth Ministries. He had worked full time at Grace Baptist Church of Bristol, Connecticut and the Evangelical Baptist Church of Norwood, Massachusetts. He was married to the former Debbie Demers, a graduate of Gordon College.

John Davis was accepted as our first assistant pastor in a vote taken on April 9, 1981. He began his work at the church on April 13, 1981. His job description was as follows: to function under the direction of the pastor, spending 50% of his time working with the youth and 50% of his time fulfilling pastoral duties. He would meet regularly with the Board of Christian Education and the Board of Deacons.

John worked at Winthrop Street Baptist for two years, receiving his license to preach in June 1983. He resigned in December 1983.



John Davis

Shortly after John's resignation, the church was forced to undertake serious steeple repairs, which created the largest debt the church had ever incurred. Pastor David was reluctant to hire another assistant pastor and add to the church's financial burden. For the next eight years he was the sole pastor of the church.

### **Timothy Mitton**

Timothy Mitton began his ministry at Winthrop Street as a part-time youth minister in 1985. He was in charge of all youth ministries, planning activities, Bible studies, and youth retreats. He also recruited volunteer youth workers as needed.

In addition, Tim was a licensed electrician, and he gave many hours of labor to the church, replacing old wiring, installing new lighting, and other similar tasks. He even installed lights in the steeple windows that lit automatically every evening.

Tim was a 1974 graduate of Bristol-Plymouth Vocational School in Taunton. From 1974 - 1985 he worked at the Foxboro Company in Foxboro, Mass. It was there that a friend led him to Christ in 1979. Eventually Tim felt called to full-time Christian ministry, and he entered Eastern Nazarene College in 1985, graduating in 1989 with a degree in Pastoral Counseling.



Timothy Mitton

In 1990, he entered Eastern Nazarene Graduate School and began to work on his master's degree. Once Tim had obtained his bachelor's degree, Pastor David felt that he was qualified to fill the position of assistant pastor. David was very much in favor of hiring Tim because they had worked together for years and David held him in very high regard.

Tim's name was presented to the church on May 15, 1989 and accepted by a vote of the church body. Timothy Mitton became the second full-time assistant pastor of Winthrop Street Baptist Church. His duties included all youth ministries, visitation of the sick and shut-in, counseling, occasional preaching, participating in the caring and keeping ministry, family retreats, and community outreach. He received his license to preach in November 1989.

Tim is married to the former Paula Andrews. They have two sons, Andrew and Joshua Paul. Tim resigned his position as assistant pastor on April 17, 1994, because he wanted to spend more time with his family. He stayed on at Winthrop Street as a part-time youth pastor for another year or so. He still volunteers his time on occasion for various youth events.

### David Mantz

David Mantz began his ministry at Winthrop Street in February 1996. He accepted the position of part-time Assistant Pastor while continuing his studies as a seminary student at Gordon-Conwell.

David is active in many of the church's ministries. He established the young adult fellowship, leads a cell group and preaches when Pastor Swensen is absent. He also participates in youth activities and in the Sunday School.

However, David is best known for his passion for missions. Through his influence the church sponsored several short-term missions trips, and young people of the church learned what it was like to serve the Lord in foreign countries, including Mexico and Guatemala. The youth also experienced missions work closer to home, working in soup kitchens and homeless shelters in Taunton and Providence.

David acquired missions experience as a layman, where he planned similar excursions for the churches he attended as a young adult. He was active in youth ministries in those churches as well.



David Mantz

Winthrop Street was the first church he served as a pastor. Before he began his studies at Gordon-Conwell in 1996, David was employed by an insurance company as a corporate communications executive. He is a graduate of the State University of New York and holds an MBA in finance.

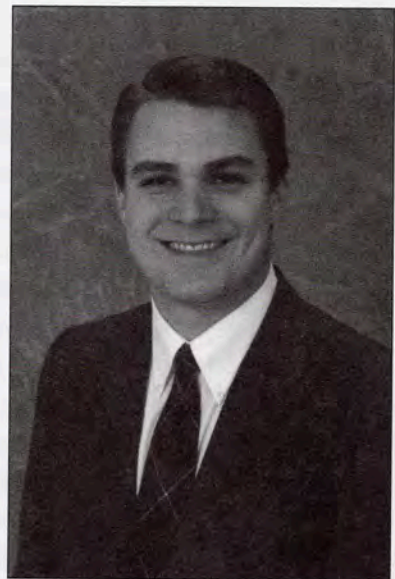
David is married to Rev. Sandra Biassey Mantz, and they have one daughter, Emily Marie. Sandy is pastor of the United Methodist Church of Wappingers Falls, NY. The couple hopes someday to serve a church as co-pastors.

### Jason Freeman

Jason Freeman became part-time Assistant Pastor of Winthrop Street in June 1999. Like David Mantz, he is completing his seminary work at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary while serving the church for 20 - 25 hours per week. He will work with the Sunday School, cell group ministries and outreach programs, and will also fill the pulpit in David Swensen's absence.

Jason graduated from Baylor University in Waco, Texas with a bachelor's degree in religion and speech communications. While at Baylor, Jason was involved in a number of ministries both on and off campus. One of these ministries allowed him the opportunity to help create a new church and develop the church's inner-city outreach program.

During the summer of 1995, Jason joined a Campus Crusade missions trip to Estonia and Russia. This experience confirmed his belief



Jason Freeman

that the Lord was calling him to full-time ministry. He returned to the United States and accepted a position as Assistant Pastor and Youth Minister for the Olive Branch Baptist Church in Texas, where he worked until moving to Massachusetts to attend Gordon-Conwell.

Jason met his wife, Melissa, while attending Baylor University. She holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and philosophy. They were married in 1998 at the Gordon-Conwell Seminary chapel. Melissa is also active at Winthrop Street, as a Sunday School teacher and a cell-group member. She works as the office manager for the First Presbyterian Church of Ipswich, Mass.

### **Interim Pastors**

Rev. Charles Williams, from November 12, 1945 to April 21, 1945 between the pastorates of Rev. Swaffield and Rev. Buzzell.

Rev. Percy W. Back, from October 1, 1959 - June 12 1960 between the pastorates of Rev. Buzzell and Rev. Walter Swensen.

Rev. Edward Bullock, from January - September 1972, between the pastorates of Rev. Walter Swensen and Rev. Henderson.

Rev. Phillip Chamberlain from October 30, 1975 to March 18, 1976. Between the pastorates of Rev. Henderson and Rev. David Swensen.



## Pastors from Our Membership

Winthrop Street Baptist Church is proud to be the home church of several young men who have gone on to become full-time Christian ministers.

Doyal Thornton attended Winthrop Street as a young adult, then moved with his family to Georgia. He was ordained in 1974, after attending Antioch Bible College in Georgia and the Baptist Bible Institute in Florida. He pastored the Winters Chapel Baptist Church in Doraville, Georgia for six years.

Rev. Karl Washburn is the son of Maynard and Dorothy Washburn. He received his undergraduate and graduate degrees from Gordon College and Gordon Theological Seminary. He received his license to preach in 1974 and was ordained in 1976. Rev. Washburn has pastored a number of churches in Maine and Pennsylvania.

Rev. Neil Pineo is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Pineo. He is married to the former Joyce Leonard, also of Winthrop Street Baptist Church. Neil holds a degree in Biblical Studies from Barrington College and a Master of Divinity Degree from Bethany Theological Seminary in Dothan, Alabama. He was ordained in November 1985. He is pastor of the Agape Chapel in Raynham, a non-denominational, Christ-centered congregation.

Rev. Robert Burton began attending Winthrop Street Baptist Church as a young adult. He serves as a volunteer chaplain at the Bridgewater Correctional Institute. He holds degrees in theology and Christian counseling from Bethany Bible College in Dothan, Alabama. He received his license to preach in June 1988.

Rev. Paul Tweedy is the son of Lawrence Tweedy. He received his bachelor's degree from Barrington College. After being ordained in the ministry, he became pastor of a church in Kentucky.

## Chapter 3

### *Church Property*



“Upon this rock will I build my Church.”  
Matthew 16:18

Indeed our church is built upon a rock in more ways than one, because the structure sits on a granite ledge under the middle of the building. The present church building is the second one built on this site. The first church building, also erected by this congregation, was in place from 1832 to 1865. Prior to 1832, the church's founders worshiped at a meeting house located at 154 High Street. At that time the church was called the Second Baptist Church of Taunton.

The present structure was built during the Civil War, from 1862-1865, at a cost of about \$50,000. The first service ever held was a memorial service for Abraham Lincoln on the day of his funeral, April 19, 1865. The service was observed in the vestry because the sanctuary was not yet finished.

The first history of the church describes the construction and early improvements to our church building in much greater detail.

#### **The First Prudential Committee**

The Prudential Committee was established according to the newly adopted church by-laws in 1946. The first members were Lawrence

Goff, Ormond Leonard, Curtis Kingsbury, Sheldon Holdges, and Charles Kingsbury.

The Prudential Committee was organized as it is today, with members divided into two sub-committees, church property and finance. The property committee oversees the church edifice and land, as well as the parsonage and land, along with the facilities therein. This includes heating, electrical, water supply, furniture and fixtures.

The finance committee receives written requests for repairs and replacements of buildings, land and facilities, and other requests requiring the disbursement of funds. The committee then makes a written report to the entire prudential committee upon completion of its study.

### **Gifts to the Church**

It is a little known fact that many of the items that enhance our church building today were given by individual church members. Sometimes the gifts were made anonymously. Sometimes the donors simply identified a need and provided for it. Many times generous gifts have been made in memory of past members because of their love for this church.

In 1949, an 8 x 10-foot projector screen was installed in the vestry, a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Brown. This enabled the church to use its newly acquired movie projector.

In 1958, the brass candelabras still in use today were given by Florence A. Pratt in memory of her grandparents, Lennder and Harriet Gifford. In that same year the brass communion cross was also given as a memorial gift, by Pastor Emeritus Rev. Swaffield, in memory of his beloved wife Helen.

Also in 1958, carillonic recording equipment was given in memory of Merle Taft Barker and in honor of Helen Godfrey Barker. The

equipment was donated by friends of the church who remembered the Barkers' dedication to the Knights of the Round Table and Queens of Avalon, clubs for Christian young people that began in 1911.

These recordings of sacred music chimed at the beginning and end of our worship services for many years. However, after more than 30 years, the records began to wear out. In 1991, new chimes were installed in the belfry and could be set to play automatically. Today the downtown Taunton area is graced by sacred chimes every day at noon, not just on Sundays.

The new carillonic chimes were given by an anonymous donor, in loving memory of Carl E. Crawford. Carl Crawford was our first church clerk, and served the church as a financial advisor for many years. The names of the Barkers and Mr. Crawford can be found on a dedicatory plaque at the bottom of the stairs leading to the sanctuary.

In 1959, the Repository and Roll of Remembrance Book was given in loving memory of Deacon George Loring White by his wife, Blanche.

The painting of Christ, still displayed in the vestibule, was given in memory of Luella Nemec Kay and Charles Nemec by Mr. Joseph Kay and family in 1959

In 1963, the three walnut pulpit chairs still in use today were donated to the church by an anonymous giver. Also in 1963, a new, illuminated mahogany guest register was placed in the vestibule in memory of Joseph Smith Eaton and his wife Martha Ellen Eaton by their children.

Pearl Piper gave the electric organ that stands in the left front corner of the vestry. She also paid for the iron railing in front of the church and donated \$1,000 to the organ fund. These donations were made in memory of loved ones.

In 1969, Lillian Hodgson presented the white ceramic Christmas creche, which she made herself. It has been on display in the sanctuary during the Advent season ever since.

In 1974, arch lights at the front doorway of the church were given by Mabel Briggs. These remained in place until 1995. The ceiling fans in the sanctuary were added in 1983, the gift of an anonymous donor. Assistant Pastor Tim Mitton did the electrical installation.

The padded folding chairs currently used in the Ladies' Parlour were a gift of Lawrence Davis.

### **The Eloise True Estate**

Mrs. Eloise True died in 1972, leaving jewelry, cash, and a parcel of land to the church. The jewelry was sold, and the proceeds given to the church.

However, the church voted to keep the land as an investment. It is a 5 acre, 100 rod parcel located off Winthrop Street in the vicinity of North Walker Street. The church has a right of way to the land near Frank's Flower and Craft store on the north side of Winthrop Street.

The land was officially deeded to the church in 1977, listed in the Taunton Registry of Deeds Book 1770, page 287

### **Care of Church Property**

All buildings need care and maintenance, and our church building is no small example. The southern roof, damaged in Hurricane Carol in 1954, has been replaced three times in the past 50 years - in 1954, 1962, and 1992.

In 1992 the six small skylight windows were replaced for the first time. The wooden sills which were removed were as fragile as paper.

Fiberglass shingles were used in the most recent roofing work, which was done by the Skyline Construction Company of Taunton.

Hurricane Carol also damaged the belfry. Repairs were made in 1954 by L.M. Witherall and Son of Taunton. As a note, the belfry is supported by the columns positioned on either side of the choir loft. Each one is comprised of 4 iron columns, coated with plaster to coordinate with the architecture of the sanctuary. Each column is 54 feet high and weighs 4 tons.

### **General Improvements**

More work was done to the vestry in the early 1950's in preparation for the Church's 135th anniversary in 1954. The vestry ceiling, originally smooth and painted, was replaced with acoustical ceiling squares. Echoes from people walking on the floor had been a frequent disturbance during services.

However, the new tiles worked too well. Sound was deadened so much that the tiles had to be painted over in order to fill the indentations in the tile that absorbed the sound. Vestry improvements at this time also included new lighting and a refinished floor.

In 1962 the church bought metal chairs and plastic dishes to serve 250 people. In times past the church had fed more than 400 people without tables, chairs, or a kitchen. Planning church suppers at that time was a challenging task.

In 1962 the church also acquired red carpeting in the vestibule and up both stairways. The same area was re-carpeted in 1982, this time in green. The green carpet was in use until 1998, when it was replaced with a patterned carpet of dark green and ivory.

Also in 1962 the church inherited parlor chairs - wicker chairs with padding. These chairs proved unsatisfactory, however - too many pairs of silk stockings were ruined because of them. A group of

three church women selected vinyl-covered chairs from Plank and Hansen Furniture across the street.

In 1966 the Sunday school office was built by Al Brown, Lawrence Goff, and Everett Leonard. In 1968 a snow fence was installed on the north roof of the church after a volunteer worker had a close call. After exiting the building, he turned to go back inside. At that moment a half-ton of melting snow and ice fell on the spot he had just left, and what might have been a serious accident was avoided.

Some reconstructive work was done to the steeple in 1976 by Brown Brothers. This firm would not guarantee their work because of the steeple's bad condition. They did spot work on the steeple, but suggested that much more extensive work was necessary. This led to the major reconstruction of the steeple in 1985-1986.

Storm windows were installed on the first floor to reduce heating expenses in 1978 at a cost of \$1,344. At the same time a new metal door was put in at the outside entrance to the vestry.

Also in 1978, the church installed the chair lift leading up the west-side stairs to the sanctuary. It is a shame that the lift was not there in the 1960's, when a man in our fellowship carried his son upstairs every Sunday. Little did the young boy know that some day he would fill our pulpit during summer months. Karl Washburn, son of Maynard and Dorothy Washburn, now has his own church.

Lawrence Goff, Bill Hall and Al Brown built a new choir director's platform in 1978. This created more room in the choir loft for choir members, and for the growing supply of electronic equipment. This stairway platform is still in use today. In 1978 and 1979, the church replaced the old wooden and iron fences in the back lot with chain link fence.

In 1979, the state's Lead Poison Control program required the church to remove all lead paint in the nursery and primary rooms,

which were also used for the Noah's Ark Nursery School. It was required that the paint be removed up to a height of four feet.

One year later, the state decided to increase the height requirement to five feet. The church spent a total of \$7,000 in this process - about \$3,500 for the first phase of paint removal, and another \$3,500 to remove the additional foot. The church has a letter stating that the church will be grandfathered from complying with any further lead paint removal requirements.

In 1981 new pew cushions were installed in the sanctuary at a cost of \$9,000. The church provided \$6,500 of this sum, the balance was provided by an anonymous donor. The work was done by Bob McAlister of Highland Street, Taunton.

In 1986, the rubber runners in the vestry were replaced with runners made of carpet - these are more attractive and easier to clean.

In 1991, twelve large circular tables were purchased for church functions. These have been put to use many times for large church suppers and gatherings.

In 1995, all downstairs windows were painted, and the windows in the pastors' office and the nursery were replaced. Also at this time, the church hired Boss Renovation of New Bedford to caulk and paint the sanctuary windows. This same company waterproofed the Providence side of the church as well. The church also added the metal door at the back entry in 1995, reducing cold drafts considerably.

### **About the Baptismal Tank**

In November 1945 it was voted to install glazed tile over a copper seal in our baptismal tank. The white tiles were scrubbed and washed before every baptism by members of the Board of Deacons. When it is filled for a baptism, the weight of the water alone is four



etons. For this reason heavier timbers and steel girders were installed in 1969 to support the baptismal.

The water is kept at a temperature of 85 degrees for baptisms. There is a small gas furnace in the cellar that is used solely for heating the baptismal water. Filling the tank, while obtaining the correct water level and water temperature, is a process that takes about four hours.

This is a great improvement over the original system, which used a steam-powered heat exchanger. This method required a day and a half to fill and heat the baptismal tank. The drain for emptying the tank is also located in the main cellar of the church.

### **History of the Organ**

A record of the purchase of our organ can be found in the Broadway Church History, which was located at the Roche Organ Company on West Water Street in Taunton. It says that the Winthrop Street Baptist Church purchased an Elias and George Greenleaf Hooke Organ in 1853 for \$2,200.

The E.G.G. Hooke Co., makers of over 600 organs in America, had a reputation for making the best. All Hooke organs built prior to 1872 were truly originals. In 1872 the company became Hooke and Hastings.

The organ was installed originally in the wooden church building that preceded our present building. It must have been moved with the rest of the church contents to the back lot while the new building was being constructed from 1862 - 1865. In July 1865, after the organ was placed in the new choir loft, a complete walnut malice was built to coordinate with the pews and pulpit, for a price of \$3,850.

In 1891 our organ was completely rebuilt with Hooke parts. Even today, with all of the repairs that have been made, the organ is still

80% Hooke. This information was obtained from Mr. Hans Schmidt of Attleboro, who has recently maintained the organ. He was trained at Skinner Organ Co. in Boston. It was Mr. Skinner who remembered pumping the organ at Winthrop Street as a small boy, when our organist was Mr. Edward French. Mr. French served at Winthrop Street around the turn of the century.

In 1929, an electric blower was added to the organ (before this time, it had to be hand-pumped) The blower is located just under the spot where the greeters stand on Sunday mornings. A ladder leads into a room that is 8 feet square by 6 1/2 feet high. As the key is turned to start the organ, a generator automatically starts a fan that blows air up a galvanized pipe to the wind chest of the organ. The generator must be greased and maintained every 12 months.

In 1950 the organ was renovated and electrified by Mr. James Winter of Mansfield. Prior to being electrified, the organ was a tracker type organ, meaning that it operated mechanically rather than electrically.

In the process of electrifying and tuning the organ, Mr. Francis Butler sat at different spots in the sanctuary to check the pitches and tones in each section of the room. This Mr. Butler was the father of our longtime organist, Mrs. Patricia Park.

The weather is the largest factor that depreciates the organ. The care of the organ is overseen by the church Music Committee, and the Organ Fund is an important source of money when repairs are needed. Recent repairs and upkeep include the addition of 483 speaking pipes in 1966. Two stops, a trumpet pipe and a new mixer on the great organ were also added at this time.

In 1989, the reservoir was releathered, reinstalled and the springs were set to the correct pressure. The trumpet pipe was removed and revoiced, then reinstalled and tuned to the rest of the organ pipes. Other pipes were restored to working condition at this time also.

Hans Schmidt did the work at a cost of \$2,200. The money was taken from the Organ Fund.

## Electronics

The church spent money on electronics for the first time in 1960, when Rev. Buzzell's voice impediment made it necessary to install an amplifying system in the sanctuary and vestry. No more was done until 1974. Ever since that time, there has been an ongoing effort to enhance the church's audio-visual capabilities through electronics.

In 1974 Garth Perry ran wires from under the front platform to the choir loft to improve the public address system. In 1978 Nelson Sherman, Garth Perry and Louis Southern attended a music conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan to learn how to establish a quality sound system. They recommended the purchase of a six channel mixing board, 6 microphones, two speakers and a tape recorder.

This equipment was used often, particularly for cantatas and family retreats. This was also the beginning of the tape ministry at Winthrop Street. The equipment allowed us to make quality tapes of sermons and special music for distribution to shut-ins, or for sharing with friends.

Beginning in 1987, Curt Swensen and David Gilbert initiated many more improvements in the church's electronic system. A new choir mixer was installed in 1987. New microphone and speaker wires were installed throughout the sanctuary and vestry for use with a new sound system. This work was completed in 1990. By 1994 speaker wires ran into the nursery and classrooms in the church also.

In 1993, video wire was run from the choir loft to the vestry, enabling services in the sanctuary to be viewed on a large screen in

the ladies' parlor. This room had been used as a secluded place to hear the sermon for many years. Now video equipment added the visual element as well.

### **Redecorating the Sanctuary**

In 1947 the Prudential Committee began to plan the redecoration of the sanctuary and its approaches. Lawrence Davis donated his services as architect, providing drawings and specifications. During this time the Prudential Committee included Ernest Brown, Daniel MacDougall, Charles Brown, Charles Kingsbury, John Vieira, Lawrence Davis, Raymond MacCraw, Curtis Young, and Kenneth Kelley.

Funding efforts were organized by the Improvement Fund Committee, which consisted of Charles Brown, E. Grace Hodges, Amy Cousins, Mrs. Frederick Eldridge, Mabel Schwambach, Charles Kingsbury, and Ruth Van Campen Tracey. Winthrop Robinson took on the task of preparing the sanctuary for the redecorating work.

In March of 1950 the painting contract was awarded to Ralph M. Handren for \$5,700. The scaffolding erected in the sanctuary was so extensive that services were held in the vestry while the work was done. The colors chosen were two-tone gray on the ceiling and a rose color on the walls.

In June 1950, \$4,500 was appropriated for new pew cushions. B. J. Borgatti of Wellesley was awarded the contract for this work. He soon realized that he had underbid, however, because the price of cushioning material rose sharply due to the Korean War. He said that he was absorbing a 60% loss. The church membership generously voted to cover half of the loss.

In May 1950, the church voted to spend \$4,000 on floor coverings. This work was done by Fain's Inc. of Providence, Rhode Island.

Workers installed carpet in the aisles and laid asphalt tile in the pew areas.

During this time, Alverdo Rugg upholstered the pulpit and communion furniture in dark green velvet. Edward Labonte had the offering plates refinished by Poole Silver Company. The Royal Daughters class provided a new communion table scarf and pulpit Bible bookmark, and a new organ clock was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Brown.

An elaborate dedication service marked the completion of the work in the sanctuary. It was held on Sunday, October 15, 1950. There was great pride and solemnity associated with the care of church property at that time, and the completion of such a large project was cause for genuine celebration.

In 1976 the time came to redecorate the sanctuary once again. The windows were getting weak and drafty. The glass settings were in lead, making repair work difficult and expensive. Also, there had been some problems with vandalism at the time.

The church decided to replace the old windows with fiberglass windows, which would be likely to withstand the force of an object hitting the panes. They were installed by Callwall Corporation of New Hampshire at a cost of \$16,637. Some windows were dedicated to loved ones, which helped to defray the cost. Brass plaques were installed at the base of each window so dedicated.

The sanctuary was repainted in 1978 in shades of green with gold trim. The ceiling was painted white. Richard Davidson was the painting contractor - his price was \$18,130. Sunday services were held in the sanctuary as usual during this time.

The church interior received a much-needed makeover that took place in stages in the early 1990's. Annette Tweedy, a church member and interior decorator, spent many hours supervising the selection of new carpeting, paint, window treatments and accessories

for all of the teaching rooms of the church, as well as the pastor's study. Some of these improvements were paid for by the church, but a good many were paid for by anonymous donors. The result was a transformation indeed, as many of the Sunday School areas had been unchanged for decades.

### The Heating System

In 1947, a new heating system was installed by the Russell B. Myers Heating Company, consisting of a 16-section H.B. Smith oil-fired steam boiler. The hot air was distributed throughout the church through several different duct systems. In the Primary Room, Junior Room and third floor, the steam went to an air handler in the cellar and a fan forced the heat up a galvanized duct through registers in the floors or walls. There were also steam radiators in these rooms. The air supply for this part of the church was drawn down from the large canopy on the third floor flat roof. This canopy was discarded in 1993 when a new roof was built.

In the vestry and sanctuary, heat was provided by steam that traveled all the way from the furnace to the front cellar ("Jonah's Place") by way of a 5-inch insulated pipe. This led to an air handler that triggered a large fan, sending hot air through the floor registers in the vestry and sanctuary. The air supply for this system is located outside the church near the vestry entrance.

When the new addition was built in 1961, a hot water system was added on to the side of the boiler. This overtaxed the furnace and a larger fire box was required to increase the fire power. The granite ledge under the church proved to be a problem, and many drills were broken before the workers successfully enlarged the fire box. In 1965 a draft inducer was added to the draft pipe, and a valve system was installed to distribute the heat more evenly. These improvements allowed for much greater comfort and distribution of the heat.

However, the system was still terribly inefficient, and it was costing the church \$10,000 per year for oil in the mid-1960's and 1970's. At that time oil was about \$1.00 per gallon. The church began to take measures to conserve fuel, scheduling as many committee meetings and gatherings as possible on the same evening of the week.

During a business meeting in 1980, Lin Johnson made a motion to spend \$6,000 to begin replacing the old heating system. This would be a gas-fired, forced hot water heating system. The motion was carried by the church body.

By 1983, all parts for the first stage of this project were in place in the basement. Units for the second and third stages were to be purchased at cost from Lin Johnson.

The first stage included two gas-fired hot water boilers in the back cellar. One small one heated the rest rooms, pastor's office, secretary's office and primary room with baseboard registers. A larger boiler heated the rest of the first and second floor in the rear section of the church. The baptismal continues to be heated by its own boiler, which is used only once or twice per year.

The second and third stage consisted of installing three gas-fired boilers in the front cellar. These three boilers heat the ladies' parlor, kindergarten room, vestry and sanctuary. The vestry and sanctuary are still heated by hot air vented through the floor registers. The hot water from the boilers goes into a large radiator that triggers a fan, sending the hot air into the vestry and sanctuary through a duct system.

Lin Johnson and Russell Bennett did most of this work. They also used their own employees, as well as volunteers from our membership. The total cost for installing the new heating system was \$20,000, and our annual fuel bill was cut in half. The cost of our heat at one time was 10 percent of our budget. Now it is about 4 percent.

## New Addition in 1961

It was voted in May of 1961 to build an addition to the church. The addition was to be two stories high on the north side of the church. Today the addition houses classrooms in the junior department, the upstairs infant nursery, the rear portion of the nursery downstairs, the restrooms and the pastor's and secretary's offices. The accepted bid was from Gustafson Brothers of Cranston, Rhode Island for \$45,630.

The architect was Frederick J. Rigney of Pawtucket. His fee was 6% of the cost of the work, which was considered low. Mr. Rigney was chairman of the Prudential Committee in the First Baptist Church of Pawtucket. He crawled into every corner of our church to make an appraisal of its property value - his figure was \$750,000 for building and contents.

A question arose during the construction of the addition - would we dovetail the new bricks with the old, or build flush to the old structure? A member of the prudential committee asked several contractors and found that building flush was the answer, or the bricks might become unstable when the new foundation settled.

The new addition was to be financed with pledges from the membership. The final cost of the addition, including architect's fees, was \$49,433. Over three years \$30,912 was received against pledges of \$32,246. The church continued the building fund envelopes, and over the next three years another \$17,264 was received. By December 1966, the \$25,000 mortgage was paid in full.

At this time the Progress fund was established for people to contribute to future projects.

During the excavation for the new addition, it was voted to bring in an underground electrical supply line. This line runs to the right side of the sidewalk bordering the church parking lot. It makes a



left turn at the church office, and then into the cellar. This cost \$1,000 to install.

### **Renovation of the Kitchen**

In 1954 an Economy gas range was purchased for the church. It had two large ovens with six burners above each oven. The two ovens and twelve burners greatly enhanced the church's ability to host large suppers.

In 1971, our kitchen was renovated following a Board of Health inspection. At the time the state passed a law that all soapstone sinks had to be discarded, and stainless steel sinks installed. Rather than remodel completely at a cost of \$8,000, it was voted to remodel only enough to comply with the Board of Health. This meant new sinks, new floor, new countertops and a new garbage disposal. The cost was \$4,400.

The old radiator was taken out and the gas heater above the north window was donated by Lin Johnson. The church's own architect, Larry Davis, drew up the plans for the renovation, as he did for so many projects that were undertaken in the church.

### **The Mill River Parkway**

In the latter part of Walter Swensen's pastorate and through most of Cleaves Henderson's, the church was threatened with the prospect of highway construction. The Mill River Parkway was supposed to go right through the church property. It was to be a new section of Route 140, which would connect directly with the recently built portion of Route 140 on the other side of Route 24 in East Taunton.

The church was told by the office of Urban Redevelopment that the idea could be in the planning stages for 8 or 9 years. All of this uncertainty caused our members to hesitate when approvals were needed for upkeep of church property. This became so much of a

problem that at one business meeting Rev. Walter Swensen asked, "Do I understand that you are not interested in keeping our house in order?" During that meeting the business at hand was approved unanimously.

Another result was that a committee was formed to search for property on which to build a new church. A sum of \$23,000 was raised for this purpose. It all ended happily after Route 495 was completed and became an express route to the Cape and Route 24. A new Route 140 was forgotten, and the period of uncertainty was ended.

### **The Parking Problem**

It is probably unfair to call parking a problem, because after all, it's a good thing that so many people are coming to church that it's necessary to make room for their cars.

However, given the downtown location, parking has always been in short supply. The first step the church took was to clear out the brush and pave the backyard area for parking. After that, the church offered to buy the houses on the south side of the church at market value plus \$5,000. However, the offer was declined.

The Hazelton Inn, located directly behind the church on Cohannet Street, was considered for purchase long before it burned down in December 1993. After the fire, the church moved quickly to purchase the property for a sum of \$48,000. After the lot was cleared, it was paved with blacktop and sectioned into 22 new parking spaces. A gate was installed, and parking is not permitted there other than on Sunday mornings.

Another logical spot to purchase for parking was the Carroll property, which adjoined our property on the north. Our first offer was \$5,000, a figure suggested by an appraiser. The owners wanted \$20,000. Years later the church offered \$50,000, which was

accepted, only to be declined shortly thereafter. The property was eventually sold to Dermody Cleaners. The church rents the property from Dermody for use on Sundays only, at a rate of about \$25 per week. Deacon Winsor Smith built the stairway that leads from Dermody's parking area to the church lot.

Three other area businesses allow us to park in their lots on Sundays without charge. These businesses are Baron Brothers Furniture, Alan Walker Insurance, and the Bank of Boston.

### **Maintaining the Parsonage**

The church parsonage was located at 44 Winthrop Street from 1835 - 1969. In 1873, the original house was sold and moved to 62 Barnum Street. In that year the church built a new house on the original site at a cost of \$8,500. The first pastor to live there, Rev. J. Colver Wightman, moved in on February 1, 1874.

In more recent times, much of the renovation to the parsonage was done between pastorates. In 1946, before Rev. Buzzell moved in, the parsonage was redecorated throughout, with hardwood floors installed upstairs and in the parlor downstairs.

Prior to Rev. Walter Swensen's arrival in 1959, extensive renovation was required, so much so that the congregation considered selling the parsonage at that time. The selling price would have been \$12,000, and a new house was estimated to cost \$30,000. At that time the church decided to proceed with the repairs.

In 1968, toward the end of Rev. Walter Swensen's pastorate, the parsonage was sold for \$15,500. The present parsonage, located at 58 Winthrop Street, was purchased for \$30,000. It had previously served as the parsonage for the church across the street, then known as the Winslow Church (later renamed the Church of All Nations.)

The new parsonage was paid for in part by the proceeds from the sale of the former parsonage. In addition, \$21,000 was received in

a bequest to the church from the estates of Miss Mabel Leonard, Mrs. Cora Chase, and Mrs. Elvada Willey. Carl Crawford, Al Brown, and Lawrence Goff faithfully served on the parsonage committee during this time.

The new parsonage was completely cleaned, papered and painted, and the floors refinished. In 1968, Rev. Walter Swensen and family were the first to reside there.

In 1972 reconditioning work was done in anticipation of Rev. Cleaves Henderson's arrival. A new Lennox Furnace with a Beckett Burner was installed. In 1976, prior to the arrival of Rev. David Swensen and family, the back roof was shingled and a new refrigerator, washer and dryer were purchased. Over the years the Prudential Committee has overseen many other repairs and improvements to the parsonage.

### **A Tribute to Volunteers**

Many volunteers, for the love of doing something for the church, have saved Winthrop Street (this is a rough guess) about \$300,000, or 10 percent of our budget for the past 50 years. It is surely not possible to mention even a small portion of the people who have sacrificially given their time to the church over the years.

However, there are a few individuals who have worked for decades to improve the church building, often with little recognition.

John Vieira served on nearly every board and committee in the church. One of his favorites was the Committee on Evangelism. If not for his perseverance sending out cards every week, this writer would not be writing the church history today.

Charles Brown, Ernest Brown, and Albert Brown (none of them related) all volunteered many hours, beginning in the 1940's. Larry Goff, Bill Hall, Larry Vieira, David Pineo, and Donald Densmore have all been mainstays in maintaining the church

property. They have saved us money that has been better spent ministering to the needy and supporting missionaries.

During a Sunday morning service in 1985, Herman Gardner was presented with a plaque honoring him for many years of faithful service to the church. He served as Financial Secretary and performed many other services for the church as well.

The church has been blessed over the years with hundreds of dedicated people with many abilities, which they have used generously to carry out the Lord's work. Many thanks to all of them.

The parsonages of  
Winthrop St. Baptist  
Church.

Right: 44 Winthrop  
Street, site of the  
parsonage from  
1835-1969.



Below: 58 Winthrop  
Street, the pastor's  
residence since 1969.



Next page: This  
portrait of the 1927  
Primary Department  
also shows the ivy  
that covered the  
church's exterior. Its  
removal in 1957  
proved to be a major  
factor in the  
deterioration of the  
brick and of the  
steeple.







The Sanctuary of Winthrop Street Baptist Church. Facing page: Flowers adorn the pulpit on Easter Sunday.

Above: a full-view of the sanctuary on Easter Sunday. Note the illuminated cross set above the pulpit and the illustration of the cross that is revealed by removing the center panel of the black walnut screen. These decorative details are reserved for Easter Sunday.

Right: the organ and choir loft at the rear of the sanctuary.





## Chapter 4

### *The Steeple*



Its 160-foot spire and unique octagonal brick construction distinguished the steeple of the Winthrop Street Baptist Church for 130 years. The familiar silhouette marked the highest point in the city from the time it was built in 1864 until it was taken down in September 1994. But unfortunately its unique height and construction also made it nearly impossible to maintain.

The steeple had an inner tower of rough cement and brick. This soft mortar of the 19<sup>th</sup> century typically began to crumble after about thirty years. The crumbling mortar left crevices in the steeple that allowed water to seep in and freeze in the winter. Over the years, the expansion of the ice created the bulges in the sides of the steeple. The south side of the steeple did not show any bulges because greater exposure to the sun prevented the mortar from freezing.

The steeple's builders attempted to protect it from the elements, but paint was the only waterproofing material available in the early part of the church's history. The steeple and the entire church were covered with three coats of red paint in 1872. The steeple was repointed and repainted in 1905, 1928, and 1948.

Eventually all that paint had to be removed, along with the ivy that covered most of the church building. This was accomplished by sandblasting in 1957. For a cost of \$10,000, the steeple and church were sandblasted and repointed, and a new waterproofing material was applied. The work also included painting and recaulking all of

the windows. The contractor for this project was Adam Zuba of Central Falls, R.I.

Unfortunately, the sandblasting process removed more than the paint. It also removed the natural glaze on the bricks, which occurs in the final process of brickmaking. This would accelerate the erosion of the bricks in the years to come.

The sandblasting revealed other structural problems that had been concealed for decades by the thick covering of ivy. On the north side near the church's side entrance, a 2-inch wide crack was discovered that ran 30 feet, from over the windows in the kindergarten room, over the vestry entrance, up to the first window of the vestry. It is surmised that this was caused by a shifting of the steeple, perhaps following the hurricane of 1954 or 1938.

In 1964 the inside of the steeple was coated with parging cement, a strong hard cement used inside smokestacks and chimneys. This prevented further crumbling of the mortar on the inside of the tower. In 1976, the steeple was repointed again, but the workmanship was considered to be of very poor quality.

Just three years later, it was possible to find gaps under the windows of the steeple that enabled inspectors to reach from the inside of the steeple straight through to the outside. At that time, Ed Victurine replaced all the wooden ladders in the steeple with aluminum ones. From 1979 until 1985, it was necessary for two volunteers to bale out the water that came through the steeple and settled on the third floor of the tower, just above the organ. This chore had to be done after every rainstorm.

### **Major Renovation in 1985**

The problems associated with maintaining the structural integrity of the steeple escalated in the decade between 1984 and 1994. In 1985, the church undertook its most extensive steeple repair project ever. The initial assessment of the cost was \$78,400, but then two

lower corners of the spire had to be rebuilt at a cost of \$2,800, and a corroded structural steel member had to be replaced for \$7,800. The final cost of the project, which included the addition of 700 new bricks, gutters, and leaders, as well as repointing and waterproofing of the entire church building, was \$116,484. The contractor was Joseph Gnazzo of Connecticut.

The engineer who worked on the steeple at this time said he thought the steeple had moved once. He observed the carrying timbers under the roof rafters that connect the steeple tower to the main church building. Once imbedded 8 inches deep into the steeple tower, one timber had come out completely. (The timbers were repaired and reinforced with steel plates during the reconstruction of the tower in 1994.) A former pastor's son who witnessed the hurricane of 1938 remembered that the steeple had been a frightening sight during the storm, swaying back and forth in the face of the wind.

The church adopted a unique program to finance this single largest expenditure in the church's history. Deacon Maynard Washburn was in charge of the fundraising effort. He instituted the idea of buying "shares" in the church to pay off the \$80,000 debt. The two-year plan was called the 500/80 plan, each year 500 shares worth \$80 each had to be "sold" to church members in order to erase the debt. In the first two years, \$82,219.50 was received, and the plan was a success.

Despite all of the church's best efforts, the problems still were not corrected. In fact, they seemed to be getting worse. In 1990, another repair project was undertaken, this time by the Burgess Steeple Co. They repointed and waterproofed the steeple at a cost of \$22,000. In 1992 the same company performed an inspection of the steeple and recommended more repairs at a cost of \$14,675. The offer was not accepted.

## Time for a Decision

The possibility of potential danger with regard to the steeple's condition was first noticed by Skyline Roofing, the company that installed a new roof on the church in 1992.

In response, the church retained an architectural firm, Shevalier & Associates. The firm assembled an investigative team that included an architect, an engineer, and a specialist in restoration and preservation of masonry. In July 1994 they presented their findings to the Prudential committee.

The team found that the structure was very unstable. They recommended taking immediate measures to prevent an overhead hazard at a cost of \$22,000. Their estimated cost to repair the steeple was \$322,449. The cost of taking the steeple down and capping it would be \$350,000.

The Prudential committee agreed unanimously to recommend that the steeple be dismantled at the August 4 business meeting. At that meeting, after much discussion, the church members present voted to remove the steeple according to the Prudential Committee's recommendation.

However, the abruptness of the decision took many people by surprise. Most church members had no idea that an issue as important as dismantling the steeple was to be decided at the August 4 business meeting. There was some concern that the decision had been made too quickly, and without the participation of the majority of the members.

The rest of community became involved as well. On August 12, the decision to remove the steeple was featured on the front page of the *Taunton Daily Gazette*. A number of citizens opposed the action, and said so in the press. One member of the Historic District Commission said, "It's like cutting off your arm when you have skin cancer on your wrist."

Another citizen wrote the following in a letter to the editor: "It has been given to us by generations past and it is our duty to see that this historical and architectural heritage of our city is preserved and handed on to future generations. We have no right to mutilate or destroy it."

There were offers by a number of community organizations, including the Taunton Redevelopment Authority, to help pay for the repairs. However, the offers generally were in the range of \$1000, which would do little to offset a \$350,000 debt.

There was never any question that the decision belonged solely to the members of the Winthrop Street Baptist Church. In order to appease members who felt the decision had been made too quickly, the church decided to hold a reconsideration vote on August 22.

In the meantime, Heart of Taunton, Inc. offered to hire a preservation consultant, Dr. Judith Selwyn, to assess the steeple damage. Her inspection revealed that three sides of the steeple required immediate attention, and the other five sides possibly needed work in a few more years. The cost to take care of the immediate repairs would be approximately \$275,000, and this could be multiplied several times over if the other sides deteriorated.

Dr. Selwyn's inspection was videotaped and played for the membership at the August 22 meeting, which was very well attended. After much discussion another vote was taken, and again, the decision to dismantle the steeple was carried. This time there could be no question that the majority of church members agreed with the action.

The contract with A.P. Whitaker and Sons to remove the steeple was signed on August 24, 1994. Work began on September 9. The new steeple, designed by Shevalier & Associates, was begun on September 19 and was completed in early October. The original 16-foot weathervane was reconditioned and returned to its place.

To finance this enormous expense, the Bristol County Savings Bank approved a loan for \$180,000. A letter was sent to members and friends of the church asking for an initial donation and a pledge over the next four years. In addition, some money was borrowed from the Hodges Memorial Fund, Memorial Deacon's Fund, and the Parking Fund. This money, totaling about \$30,000, was to be repaid as soon as possible.

The final cost for removal and reconstruction was as follows:

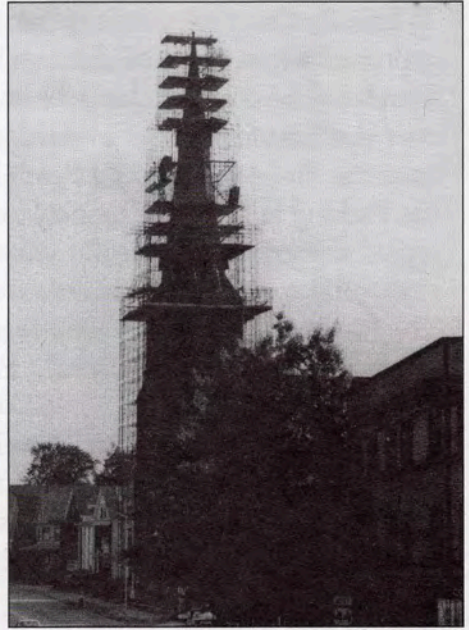
Shevalier & Associates	\$ 7,083
A.P. Whitaker & Sons	\$231,386 (removal)
	\$ 37,586 (reconstruction)

By April 30, 1995, only \$109,852 of the debt remained. More than half had been paid off in the first six months. The debt was paid entirely as of September 1999

Donald Densmore was a member of the Prudential Committee during this period. He shouldered most of the responsibility for overseeing the dismantling and reconstruction of the steeple. He negotiated with contractors, architects, banks, and insurance companies. He answered questions from church members and served as the contact person for the newspaper and other community organizations.

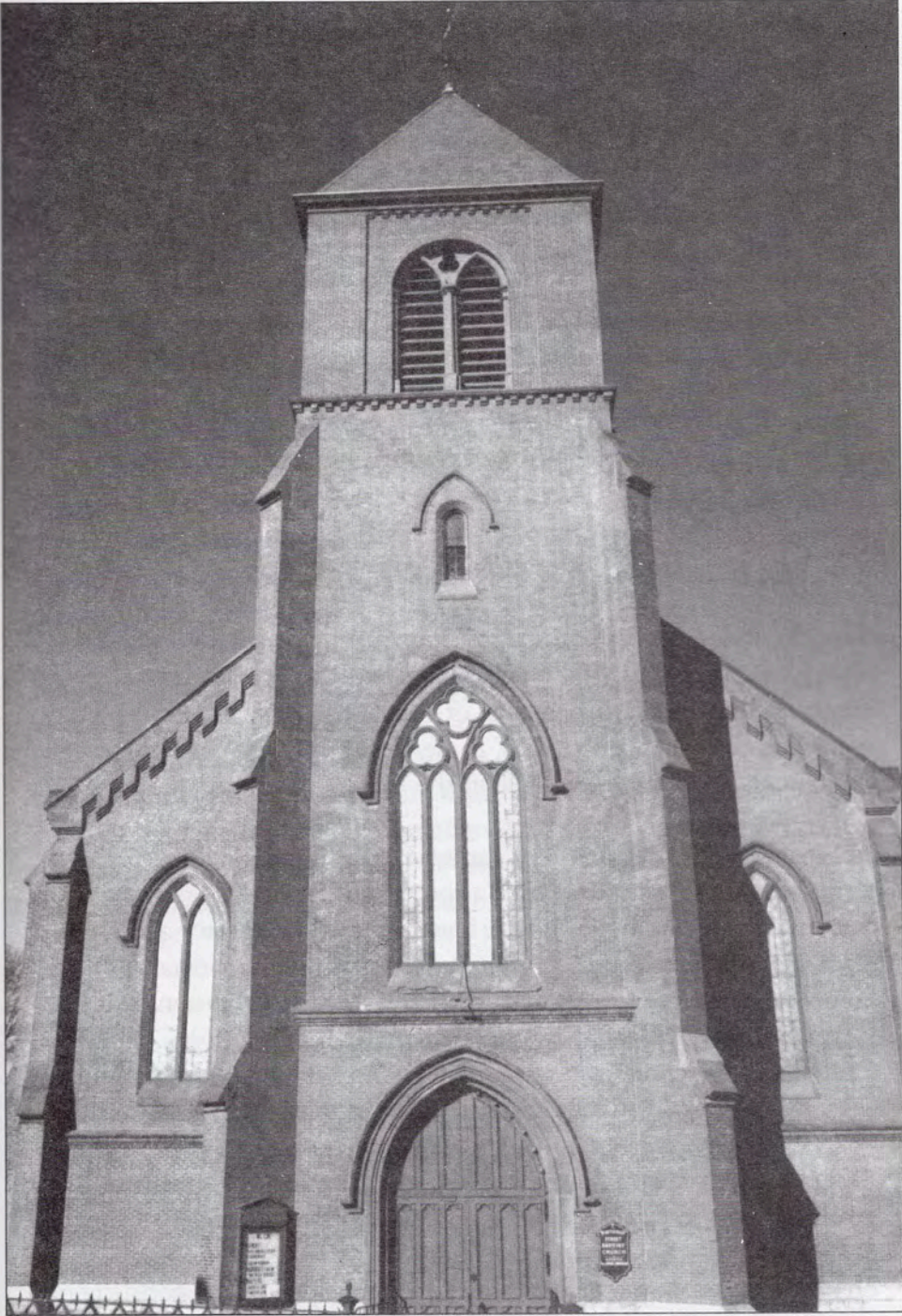
Donald also wrote a letter to the editor of the *Taunton Daily Gazette*, explaining the church's point of view on the controversial subject: "The steeple is admired by the people of our church, too. We have spent a large amount of money in the past eight years on it. Our first consideration is to our missions and charities that we support. That was why we decided that enough was enough."

Merrill Vieira, a deacon and long-time member of Winthrop Street, also published a letter in the *Gazette*. He wrote, "Our happiness at Winthrop Street Baptist Church is not dependent upon our steeple, our building, or public opinion. Yes, we care about these but if we lose them all we will survive, for it is our faith in Jesus Christ alone that will save us."



Three views of the steeple as it is dismantled. The scaffolding alone cost \$90,000 to erect.  
Facing page: The steeple as it appears today.







## Chapter 5

### Events



There are many occasions to celebrate in the life of a church. Described in this chapter are some of Winthrop Street's most memorable events of the past half century, but certainly there have been many more.

#### Services of Dedication

Services of dedication were more common in past generations. They were a meaningful way for a congregation to pay tribute to the accomplishments of its members, or to mark the significance of a special anniversary. Either way, these services were a celebration of the church and its special place in the lives of its people.

As mentioned previously in Chapter 3, our church dedicated the newly decorated sanctuary with a special service at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 15, 1950. Rev. David Buzzell was pastor at this time. He was joined in the pulpit by Rev. Isaac Higinbotham, General Secretary of the Massachusetts Baptist Convention, and by Rev. Lewis Fred Hall, Executive Secretary of the Taunton Council of Churches. The congregation participated in the service by reading responsively a special dedicatory passage for the occasion.

Only a few years later, June 20, 1954 was set aside as a special day of celebration in recognition of the church's 135<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The program for the event referred to June 16, 1819 as the original charter date for our congregation. On that date, sixteen constituent members organized as the Second Baptist Church of Taunton.

Part of the anniversary service on June 20, 1954 included recognition of every member who had belonged to the church for fifty years or more. Their names were printed in the program and each one received a rose. At that time Mrs. George H. Brown had been a member the longest - she first joined the church in 1879

Rev. Buzzell gave a special anniversary sermon entitled "The Ancient of Days." A special litany of commemoration was read by the congregation, and two hymns were sung which had been written especially for our church. The first hymn was written in 1865 by Rev. S.F. Smith for the dedication of the present church building. The second also was written in 1865 by Bezer L. White, Superintendent of the Sabbath School.

Later that day, the church held a vesper service at 4:00 p.m. This service was attended by the Mayor of Taunton, Joseph C. Chamberlain, and other local and state dignitaries. Five former pastors or their wives also attended as guests of honor.

The program for this occasion included "Highlights of our History" Among some of the more notable facts: The church's name became the Taunton Green Baptist Church in 1845. It was changed again to Winthrop Street Baptist Church in 1864. In May 1929 our Church School enrolled 839 members (the highest number ever) In 1947, 101 new members joined, of which 78 were by baptism. The greatest number of members to join by baptism in any one year was 93 in 1858.

### **Carillonic Recordings a Tribute to the Barkers**

Another dedicatory service was held during morning worship on December 14, 1958. The Carillonic Recordings equipment was donated in loving memory of Merle Taft Barker and in honor of Helen Godfrey Barker. This cherished couple had touched the lives of many of the church's young people through the ministry of the Knights of King Arthur and the Queens of Avalon.

The program printed for this service included excerpts from letters written by former participants in these programs. One wrote that "as the years go by we appreciate more and more the personal sacrifices they made to give so much of their time to young boys and girls." Many in the church had similar recollections, and agreed that the new church chimes were "a fitting memorial to a great man."

### **100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Church Edifice**

On October 10, 1965, the church held a special Sunday morning worship service commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dedication of the church edifice. The first service ever held in our present church building was a memorial service for President Abraham Lincoln, on the day of his funeral, April 19, 1865. However, the sanctuary was not complete at this time, and Lincoln's service was held in the vestry.

The building was completed later that year and was dedicated on October 10, 1865. Exactly one hundred years later the congregation remembered this special anniversary with special music, messages, a fellowship hour, and a buffet supper.

Pastor Walter Swensen gave a morning sermon was entitled, "A House of Pleasure." Rev. and Mrs. David Buzzell also attended and participated in the evening service. Fifty-year members were honored as in previous anniversary services. A historical exhibit, arranged by Mrs. Raymond Curtis, was also on display in the vestry.

### **Rev. David Swensen's Ordination**

On May 25, 1969, the church held a very special service of ordination. This was the ordination of Rev. David K. Swensen, son of the church's pastor, Rev. Walter Swensen. David would become pastor himself in 1976, and would go on to serve the longest tenure of any pastor in the history of our church.

His ordination service was officiated by his father, and by his grandfather, Rev. B. Norman Swensen. Others who participated included Rev. John Sheibley, Regional Minister of the Old Colony Baptist Association, Rev. Henry Santos, pastor of the First Portuguese Baptist Church of Taunton, and Rev. Walter Haggstrom, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Raynham.

### **Explo '72**

A few years later, our church participated in a national evangelical event, Explo '72. This was a week-long training convention held in Dallas, Texas. The purpose was to bring thousands of Christians together to teach them how to share their faith.

On the final night of the event, 80,000 delegates from around the world congregated in the Cotton Bowl, hearing messages by Bill Bright (founder of Campus Crusade for Christ) and by Rev. Billy Graham. Our church sent the following delegates: Ray and Louise Reynolds, Nancy Johnson, Nancy Pineo, Richalee Clare, and Lee Wiggs. Upon returning to their communities, delegates began witnessing and distributing evangelical literature, fulfilling their commitment to spread the gospel message.

### **Spring Fling & From the Heart**

Beginning in the late 1970's, the women of the church were treated to an annual "Spring Fling," organized by Nancy Johnson, Connie Swensen, Nancy Bordeau and Ginny Farrar. One Saturday in the spring was dedicated to the event, which attracted over 200 women each year.

The idea was two-fold. to give the ladies of the church a chance to "get away from it all" for a day of fun and fellowship, and also to be an outreach to other women in the community. The Spring Fling was a perfect way to introduce a friend to church fellowship.

The morning usually began with a presentation of some kind. a fashion show, tips for home decorating, or even chocolate-making.

Lunch was provided at the church, and a craft-making session followed.

The afternoon culminated with a message given by a professional Christian speaker. The message pertained to the issues most critical to women. meeting the demands of family, church and community by relying on the Lord. Sue Trafton delivered the message on several occasions, and a number of other gifted women were featured in other years.



Nancy Johnson leads a craft demonstration during the annual *Spring Fling*.

After more than 10 consecutive years, the Spring Fling committee took some time off. However, shortly after that tradition ended, a new one began.

"From the Heart" was organized chiefly by Nirma Raffi, Jacki Leal, Terri DaPonte, and Norma Pineo. It is similar to Spring Fling in that it is a day set aside for women to nurture friendships and enjoy themselves. From the Heart is held on a Saturday just prior to the Christmas season and features a Victorian theme. The church is transformed into a holiday festival featuring 19th century furnishings, decorations, food, and music.

Women attending From the Heart also enjoy making a craft and are treated to lunch at the church. A speaker closes the afternoon with a message intended to refocus busy lives on knowing and serving Jesus. It is indeed a fitting way to begin the Christmas season.

Both Spring Fling and From the Heart have reached hundreds of women in the community. Reaching that many people requires many workers. In both cases, dozens of church women have served on the various committees necessary to organize such events, planning for food, decorating, publicity, and many other tasks.

### **The Church Retreats**

The summer of 1974 marked the beginning of a tradition that is enjoyed to this day. The annual Winthrop St. Baptist Family Retreat has been a highlight of our church fellowship from the start.

The first retreat was held from Wednesday through Sunday, July 24-28, 1974. Dr. John Burgess, a professor at Gordon College, was the guest speaker. Special music was led by "Milk and Honey", a vocal group from Gordon College.

The site for the retreat was Camp Tispaquin in Middleboro, a spot that had been enjoyed by the church for youth retreats since the mid-1960's. Camp Tispaquin offered a lake for swimming, fishing and boating, cabins for overnight stays, a fully equipped kitchen, and a chapel. There were also basketball and tennis courts, and a softball field. Trailer sites and shower facilities were also available.

The family retreat was so popular that Tispaquin became a favorite place for many families in the church. Some even chose to spend their summers there, staying in trailers or cabins. The culmination of the summer was always the family retreat.

In 1975, the retreat was scheduled for Labor Day weekend, as it has been ever since. The 1975 retreat has a special place in our church history because the guest speaker was a young pastor from Waldeboro, Maine named David Swensen. It was largely because of David's ministry at the 1975 retreat that he was asked to become our full-time pastor only a year later.

Baptismal services were held at the family retreat for the first time in 1976. Lake Tispaquin provided a very special setting for those who were baptized into our church membership between 1976 and 1981

At one time, the church considered purchasing Camp Tispaquin. After many meetings, it was decided to give up the plan because of cost, upkeep, and the vandalism that occurred during the winter months. Tispaquin was purchased by someone else, and after 1981 the church was unable to rent it for the annual retreat.

The retreat was held at Camp Welch in Berkley, Massachusetts in 1982, which was the last year baptismal services were held during the retreat. The church continued to use Camp Welch until 1989, when it too became unavailable.

From 1989 until the present time we have used Camp Ramsbottom in Rehoboth. Camp Ramsbottom has basketball courts and a baseball field, miniature golf and an enormous swimming pool. For these reasons, it has become a favorite spot for a whole new generation of church children.

A theme is selected for each retreat, and the Bible studies and music center around that idea. Some past themes were: "You are Loved", "God's Faithfulness", "Thy Word Have I Hid in My Heart", "Caring and Sharing", and "Trusting God in the Tough Times"

A list of guest speakers over the years is as follows:

1974, 1977, 1978 .....	Dr. John Burgess
1975 .....	Rev. David Swensen
1976 .....	Dr. Raymond Herskind
1980 .....	Dr. Harold Van Brockhoven
1981 .....	Phil deVries
1982 .....	Rev. Don Emmanuel
1983, 1984 .....	Rev. Richard Ainsworth
1985 .....	Pontius Pilate (David Swensen)
1986 .....	Alan Hoffsommer
1987 - 1990 .....	Rev. Paul Knight
1991 - 1992 .....	Pastor David Swensen

Over the years highlights of the retreat have included hot air balloon rides, softball, swimming, chicken barbeques, spaghetti dinners, skits, petting zoos, pony rides, campfires, annual concerts, chalk talks and silent communion services. We have been blessed with some wonderful speakers and musicians.

Many, many people have worked faithfully to organize the family retreats. The retreat committee starts planning the next retreat almost as soon as the previous one is over. A few people have been at the center of this ministry from the very beginning. They include Lin and Nancy Johnson, Norma Pineo, Nancy Bordeau, Marjorie Dill, Everett and Florence Leonard, and Harold Phillips.

### **Taunton's 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Parade**

The City of Taunton celebrated its 350th anniversary in 1989 (Taunton was established as a town in 1639) All organizations in the city were invited to participate in the parade, whose route led right past the church. The Prudential Committee granted \$300 to build a suitable parade float from one of Lin Johnson's flatbed trailers.

Volunteers met at Lin's backyard to begin the construction. They built a framework, then covered the frame with paper. They painted bricks on the paper to resemble the church walls. The placard on the side of the float read, "Winthrop Street Baptist Church - A Friendly Church." They also made a replica of a stained glass window near the front of float with the words, "To God Be the Glory." The sign on the back read, "Upholding the Word of God."

The church choir traveled in the float, dressed in choir robes and singing hymns led by choir director Nelson Sherman. At one point they were joined in singing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" by spectators on the street. Doug Cummings was in charge of electronics that day, and Everett Pacheco drove the truck.



The parade was held on a Sunday afternoon, and many church members stayed at church and watched the parade from the sidewalk. Winthrop Street Baptist succeeded in presenting itself as an enthusiastic, evangelistic presence in our city.



Choir members make a joyful noise as they proceed down Winthrop Street in the church float, made especially for Tauton's 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Parade.

Below: Youth leaders and helpers at Tispaquin during an early family Retreat. Back row from left: Norma Pineo, Majorie Dill, Harold Phillips, Dan Long, Florence Leonard, Everett Leonard, Front row from left: Marjorie Parker, Jeanne Major, Connie Long, Hazel Chappel, Doris Vieira.





Top Leaving the chapel at Tispaquin during a youth retreat.

Bottom Members of the choir perform a cantata during a family retreat.





### *Retreat Memories*

Above: Sunset at Lake Tispaquin. Below left: Hot air balloon rides at Tispaquin. Below right: Tony Daponte, Paul Rebello, and Ray White take part in a Bible Study, part of every family. retreat.



## Chapter 6

### *Organizations*



#### **Board of Deacons**

The Board of Deacons was established by the by-laws adopted at the church's incorporation in 1945. The number of deacons was originally seven, it was increased to nine members by Rev. Walter Swensen. Each member is elected to a 3-year term.

The duties of the Deacons are described in the by-laws as follows. "They shall arrange and provide for the communion service and designate those who shall officiate thereat. They shall have charge of baptismal services, and arrange for the proper conduct thereof, and appoint from the Deaconesses for aid in preparation for the Lord's Supper, and on baptismal and on other occasions. The Deacons shall have charge of the temporary supply of the pulpit in absence of the Pastor. They shall assist the Pastor in the shepherding of the parish and disbursing of the Deacons' fund. They shall help coordinate the planning of the Church program.

"The Board of Deacons shall examine all applications for admission and dismissal of members. They shall interview all candidates for baptism. The Board of Deacons shall have charge of all matters of discipline and may report thereon such recommendations as they deem advisable. They shall consider proposed changes in the leading features of the general meetings of the Church, and all questions of special public appeals for money."

In short, the Deacons are expected to be the spiritual leadership of the church, working with the pastor to accomplish God's will for the congregation. Their mission may be best stated by the portion of Scripture read by Rev. David Swensen at each Deacons' meeting:

*"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit's fire."* I Thessalonians 5:11-19

### **Board of Deaconesses**

The Board of Deaconesses was established by Rev. Walter Swensen. The deaconesses form a board of nine members who support the church in a variety of ways.

They prepare the bread and juice for communion service, assist female candidates for baptism during baptism services, obtain greeters for Sunday mornings, and make the arrangements for flowers on the pulpit on Sunday mornings.

The flowers are usually donated by church members in memory of loved ones, but the deaconesses are in charge of contacting the donors and seeing that their memorial is included in the church bulletin. The Deaconesses also oversee the elaborate floral decorations in the sanctuary during the Christmas and Easter season.

In addition to these duties, deaconesses make weekly visits to the hospital to see members who are sick. They also drop in on nursing homes and shut-ins. Before the Deaconesses were established, these

duties were accomplished by the Fellowship Committee, which was headed by Mrs. Harry Lambert for 31 consecutive years.

### The Caring and Keeping Committee

The caring and keeping committee is another group of church members whose mission is to maintain contact with brothers and sisters in need. The needs are varied, and may involve sickness, bereavement, financial troubles, or loneliness, to name a few. Through visits, phone calls, or notes of concern, the committee learns of needs and then attempts to minister in some tangible way. This committee was organized in 1988 by Rev. Swensen, following a church study on the subject. Dwight and Alice Perry volunteered to coordinate the group's efforts, and they have served in this role ever since.

### The Couple's Club

The Couple's Club was the inspiration of Rev. David Buzzell, who started the group in October 1954. He sent notices to all young married couples in the church and invited them to join the club - seven couples responded. The first officers of the Couple's Club were as follows: President - Mr. and Mrs. Manuel Travers, Vice President - Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Malone, Secretary - Mr. and Mrs. George Cap, Treasurer - Mr. and Mrs. Louis Mezzera, Program - Mr. and Mrs. Albert Kay, Membership - Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Vieira, and Hospitality, Mr. and Mrs. Alex Chalko.

A 1999 Couple's Club outing at the home of Ken and Wilma Turner.

Pictured left to Right: Donald Densmore, Shirley Higgins, Everett Leonard, and Florence Leonard.



The club was not merely a social group, but a service organization to help with the ministries of the church. Some of the projects they have accomplished include helping needy families at Christmas with food, clothes, and toys; visiting the elderly; purchasing toys for the nursery; hosting church suppers; organizing Easter plays; and participating in other church organizations, such as the Sunday School and youth groups. The Couple's Club is still active in the church today, with about 30 couples enrolled.

### Church Music

From the beginning the ministry of music at Winthrop Street has centered around the church choir and its director. This was especially true in the first half of this century, when the position of music director was held by one man for over 50 years. Deacon William R. Park began leading the church choir in 1894, and he retired from that position in 1944. Music was his heart and soul. he directed the choir, the Sunday school music, quartets, and even his own orchestra.

Mr. Park's legacy was a hard one to follow, and the church employed 3 different choir directors in the 10 years after his departure. They were William Stahl, Lois Snow, and Robert Oldmixon. Mrs. Amy Kelly was the church organist during this period - she served in that role for over 25 years, having begun her tenure as organist in 1932.

In 1957, Kenneth Morse joined Winthrop Street in the dual role of church organist and choir director. In order to see his choir and play the organ at the same time, Mr. Morse asked if the organ console could be moved to the front of choir loft. This was done, and it has remained there ever since. In fact, the old E.G. Hooke console was in such poor repair that the church replaced it with a new one at that time.

Mr. Morse directed for 16 years, until 1973. At that time, our present organist, Mrs. Patricia Park, became organist and choir

director. Two years later Nelson Sherman volunteered to be our choir director, and he still holds that position today.

Nelson has directed many cantatas for special occasions over the years - for Christmas and Easter, and sometimes for family retreats also. He formed a men's quartet which has become very popular in our church and in other community churches. The men in the quartet are all long-time members of the church choir as well. They are Nelson Sherman, Robert Malone, Henry Descoteaux, and Frank Gomes. (Deacon David Stevens is a former member of the quartet.)

Mrs. Park has continued to serve as our church organist. She presented an organ recital in 1987, which also marked the completion of an extensive restoration to the church organ.

When Nelson is not able to direct, Mrs. Florence Leonard will direct the choir in his absence. Florence has been a church choir member for more than 60 years. Mrs. Alice Dill was another long-time choir member, and in her memory the church purchased green and gold choir robes which are worn proudly each Sunday.

Throughout the four pastorates that are covered in this history, our church has been blessed with the vocal talents of "The Trio": Marjorie Dill, Norma Pineo, and Nancy (Pineo) Bourdeau. In addition to singing as a small group, these dedicated church women have sung in the church choir for many years, and have been active in every aspect of our church's ministry.

The Music Committee also plays an important role in the church's music ministry. This committee oversees the maintenance of the organ and pianos, and allocates the funds budgeted for music. In addition, they obtain special music for summer worship services and special evening service concerts.



## **The Board of Christian Education**

The Board of Christian Education is a group of six members who oversee the teaching programs at the church. This board works closely with the Sunday School Superintendent and the Director of Christian Education to introduce new opportunities for Christian education. Each member of the board assumes an area of responsibility - at the first meeting of new year, the board elects the following officers: chairman, secretary, chairman of adult work, chairman of youth work, chairman of children's work, and chairman of leadership training.

The board participates in determining teachers and curricula for the Sunday School, Junior Church, and youth groups. It also provides training opportunities for teachers and other lay leaders in the church, sometimes bringing in speakers for an in-church seminar, and sometimes sending church teachers to regional seminars and conventions.

## **The Noah's Ark Nursery School**

Begun in the early 1970's as a state-run school, Noah's Ark provided its students with a Christian learning environment. Agnes Gustafson was the first director. In 1975, the church decided to take over the school, and a board of directors was formed to oversee its administration. This allowed for greater emphasis on Christian principles and teachings.

In 1980, Mrs. Gustafson resigned and Candace Maguire was named director. Mrs. Maguire had been a teacher at the school since 1973. She remained the director of the nursery school until it closed in 1991.

Approved and commended by the state for its overall fine quality, the school enrolled students from the greater Taunton community. The largest yearly enrollment was 54 students, with four teachers and two aides. The school was forced to close due to increased

financial burdens, stemming mainly from insurance and compliance to new state regulations regarding lead paint removal.

### **The Transportation Committee**

The Transportation Committee, or Bus Committee, as it was once called, was disbanded in 1996, because the church sold its buses at that time.

For more than 25 years, the church owned and operated one to three buses, for the purpose of transporting church members (especially youth groups) to various activities. The blue and white buses, emblazoned with the church name, were a familiar sight around Taunton for an entire generation.

It was Everett Parker, serving on the Board of Christian Education in 1969, who first made the proposal of purchasing a bus. He wanted to use them to transport Sunday School students back and forth to church on Sunday mornings. The church had been hiring buses to do this since 1963, and it was thought that owning the buses might be more practical.

This request was approved by the Deacons and Prudential Committee and presented to the church for final approval in 1969. The vote was 37 in favor and 5 against. Sunday School Superintendent Dwight Perry, Lin Johnson and Frank Schuttauf were appointed to purchase a bus. A used one was selected, and Frank Schuttauf made all the necessary repairs at cost. The Winthrop Street Baptist bus was first used to pick up Sunday School children in December 1969.

Frank Schuttauf and Lin Johnson became fixtures on the Transportation Committee from that time on. Their efforts in maintaining and driving the buses during their own free time made many special events for the church possible.

## Serve New England

Serve New England is a non-profit organization that distributes food each month at a fraction of the usual cost. It is available to anyone who volunteers at least two hours of community service per month. For a cost of \$14 plus two hours of service, participants receive a monthly food package, which consists of at least 15 items, including generous portions of meat and produce.

Winthrop Street Baptist has served as Serve's host organization for the Taunton area since 1994. Carol Rebello, an active member of the church, has served as the area coordinator since that time.

## Youth Organizations

In 1946, shortly after beginning his pastorate, Rev. David Buzzell organized the Christian Endeavor group for young people at Winthrop Street. This was a group he ardently supported, and he served on the organization's Board of Directors. Rev. Buzzell also encouraged attendance at the group's summer camp and served there himself during July and August.

The aim of Christian Endeavor was to lead young people to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour, to bring them into the life of the church, and to train them for Christian service. Often the young people conducted the meetings themselves. The meetings were well-attended and supervised by excellent church volunteers.

## The End of an Era

"What harmeth body, defileth tongue, or doeth ill to mind, cometh not into our conclave."

This was the motto of one of the earliest youth organizations at Winthrop Street - the Knights of King Arthur. This group, along with its sister organization, the Queens of Avalon, began at our

church in 1911, thus becoming part of the National Order of Knights of King Arthur.

Mr. and Mrs. Merle Barker were the first leaders of the Winthrop Chapter, beginning in 1911 and serving for more than forty years. Merle and Helen Barker both loved young people and proved to be understanding friends and counselors. They were gifted with an ability to mold their "knights and ladies" into true Christian men and women. Many of the leaders of our church during the past fifty years were Knights or Queens as teenagers.

More than 500 boys passed through the degrees of the Knights of King Arthur at Winthrop Castle, and likewise more than 500 girls became queens in Winthrop Court.

The focus of the Knights of King Arthur was to instill Christian virtue by passing through degrees. For the boys age 12 - 13, the virtues were honor, loyalty, and obedience. Youths age 14 - 15 aspired to self-control, courtesy, and courage. Young men 16 and over were to attain reverence, fidelity, and service. The young women had similar goals in order to become Queens: first loyalty, then purity, and finally sacrifice and service.

One of the highlights of the history of this order was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1961. Much to the sorrow of the members, Mr. Barker passed away in 1956, but Mrs. Barker was able to join the celebration. It must have been a joy for her to see so many adult members return to join the festivities.

After the Barkers retired from the order, many older members of both orders tried to keep it alive, but interest gradually dwindled. Chivalry seemed to be outmoded.

The era came to an end in 1966, but it was clear that the virtues recited in Castle Hall had been remembered - even on the battlefields of Europe and Asia, as reported by our soldiers when they returned home from war.



1940 - A meeting of Merle Barker's Bible class, which included many leaders of the Knights of King Arthur, Standing left to right: Merle Barker, Ben Hirschy, Ormand Leonard, Ralph Handren, Myrlinn Moss, John Vieira, Sheldon Hodges, Charles Kingsbury, Warren Hill, Carl Crawford, Howard Burt, Walter Randlett, Albert Brown Sr., Raymond McCraw. Front row: John Clare Sr., John Clare Jr., Russell Wordell, Larry Vieira.

Listed below are the names of the Kings of Winthrop Castle from 1945 - 1965. The names of the Kings from 1911 - 1944 are given in the first history of our church.

- |                          |                         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1945 Lawrence K. Vieira  | 1955 Dean Davis         |
| 1946 Robert G. Northwood | 1956 Robert Whitmarsh   |
| 1947 Alan W. Davidson    | 1957 David Trahan       |
| 1948 Edward I. Phinney   | 1958 Donald Isaacson    |
| 1949 Neil Peterson       | 1959 Richard Travers    |
| 1950 Donald Park         | 1960 Richard Travers    |
| 1951 Arthur Lewry        | 1961 Brayton Willis Jr. |
| 1952 Burton Cole         | 1962 Douglas Freeman    |
| 1953 Burton Cole         | 1963 David Demoura      |
| 1954 Peter Hodges        | 1964 William LeMaire    |

## **The Winthrop Chapter**

There is one aspect of Winthrop Court that survives to this day. The Winthrop Chapter began in 1936, as a means for adult members of the Queens of Avalon to continue their fellowship. Marguerite Crawford was elected the first leader, or Queen, of this chapter. Over the years they have done many charitable works for the church and the community. To this day they meet monthly to mail correspondence to church members who are shut-in.

## **Pioneer Girls and Boys Brigade**

In 1967 a chapter of Pioneer Girls was established at Winthrop Street. This was a national organization similar to the Girl Scouts, complete with uniforms, badges, songs, and awards ceremonies. The group focused on building Christian faith, nurturing Christian friendships, and learning new ways to serve others. Many of the girls who attended the weekly meetings at the church also went to summer camp at Camp Cherith in Maine.

The Pioneer Girls enjoyed the volunteer leadership of many dedicated church women, especially Jean Sherman, Marjorie Dill, Norma Pineo, Dot Brown, Charlene Cogswell, and Margaret Swensen.

The Boy's Brigade, affiliated with the Pioneer Girls organization, began at Winthrop Street in 1971. Merrill Vieira organized the chapter at the request of Rev. Walter Swensen. Its advisory board included John Chappell, Lawrence Davis, and Everett Leonard. The adult leaders were Frank Schuttauf, Dennis Maguire, Dwight Perry, and Dan Long. The boys had weekly meetings, many outside activities, and attended summer camp at their own camp in Maine. A group for older boys, called Battalion, was led by Charles Bezanson and directed by Kenneth Turner.

Interest in Pioneer Girls and Boys Brigade began to wane in the mid-1970's. It was difficult to find enough adult leadership, and

activities outside the church were demanding of children and families alike. The Pioneer Girls and Boys Brigade served the youth of Winthrop Street for 11 years.

### **Youth Directors**

It became evident to church leaders that a thriving youth organization could no longer be run by volunteers alone. The demands of working and raising families simply did not leave enough time for our lay people to organize and lead youth ministries.

On September 15, 1975, the church hired Ed Kenerson, our first full-time youth director. He was a graduate of Gordon College, married with two young children. His duties were to coordinate all youth ministries (Junior High, High School, and the College/Career group) He was to be a pastor to the youth, and a consultant and resource person for Christian education. Additionally, he was to assist the pastor wherever possible. His salary was \$8,600 per year. Ed stayed with Winthrop Street for one year; he resigned in September 1976.

In October 1976, the church hired Brian Wheeler as a part-time youth director. He had attended Van Nuys Christian College in California. He was to conduct a Saturday night teen program, a Sunday School class for the high school group, and Sunday evening Bible study for teens. His wife Joanna also helped in this ministry. He was paid \$40 per week. Brian also resigned after one year of service.

After Brian's resignation, a committee was formed to find a new youth minister. This committee included the Board of Christian Education, three Deacons and the Pastor. They recommended James Adams to be the new part-time youth minister, under the direction of the pastor. His salary was \$60 per week plus \$10 for car expenses. A full-time student at Barrington College in Barrington, R.I., he and his wife Charlotte served at Winthrop Street in this

capacity for three years. In 1981, Jim graduated from Barrington and moved out of state in order to attend seminary. Rev. David Swensen spoke at his ordination service in 1983.

After Jim Adams left in early 1981, the church hired its first full-time assistant pastor, John Davis, in April 1981. John headed the youth groups as part of his duties. When John left his position in December 1983, the youth ministry fell to two part-time youth leaders who had worked closely with him, Joe Linton and Sue Carpenter. They resigned in January 1985.

On October 3, 1985, the church hired Timothy Mitton as our new youth director. His salary was \$100 per week. A full-time student at Eastern Nazarene College, he and his wife Paula had two young sons. According to Tim's job description, his duties were as follows. teaching Bible lessons at youth group meetings; planning, organizing, and attending youth activities and retreats; leading the church youth in community service; leadership development; counseling the youth as needed, and recruiting volunteer assistants.

Tim served successfully as our youth director for four years, before becoming the church's assistant pastor in 1989. Because his duties as assistant pastor included youth ministries, Tim continued to direct the youth at Winthrop Street until 1995.

Joseph Hooper worked with Tim Mitton as an assistant youth leader, beginning in 1988. He helped start a senior high youth Bible study, which he led until he left Winthrop Street in 1993. At that time Joe accepted a position with another area church to organize its youth program. After three years there, Joe volunteered for a short-term position as an assistant youth pastor at a church in Easton, Mass.

In 1997, he was invited to serve as youth director at Winthrop Street, and he continues in that position today. His responsibilities include leading and organizing weekly youth group meetings and



directing youth projects and retreats, working with the junior high, the senior high and the young adults.

One of Joe's goals is to incorporate the youth more fully into the life of the church, and not to isolate them from the rest of the body. He and his young people have done many things to accomplish this goal, taking leadership roles in Vacation Bible School, and starting a puppet ministry for the younger children.

### **New Position Established**

In 1995, the church created a new staff position, the Director of Christian Education. Norma Pineo was asked to fill this position, and the church voted to accept her appointment. Norma is a long-time church member and over the years has been involved in many ministries, including youth groups, the Sunday School, Junior Church, the annual retreats, Vacation Bible School, the church choir and the worship team.

She is also well-known for her "chalk-talks", which she has given since the 1960's. Norma uses colored pastels to create an inspirational picture while her audience watches. It takes about 30 minutes for her to complete the poster-sized drawing. Then she steps back from the easel and begins to adjust the lights that are set on top. In a darkened room the colored lights have a dramatic effect, and a hidden image is revealed at that time. Norma prepares the hidden image ahead of time, but it is invisible to the audience until the "black lights" are applied. Norma's chalk-talks have been the highlight of many church gatherings, and have been featured at nearly every summer retreat.

Norma's task as Director of Christian Education is to provide leadership for all the educational ministries of our church. The job description includes the coordination of children's ministries, women's ministries, and family programs. It also includes leadership training and the recruitment of Sunday School teachers and other volunteers as necessary.

The Director of Christian Education reports to the pastor and works closely with the Board of Christian Education and the Sunday School Superintendent. Another important aspect of the position is to develop new areas of ministry in order to better meet the needs of the congregation as a whole.

### *Youth Groups Past and Present:*



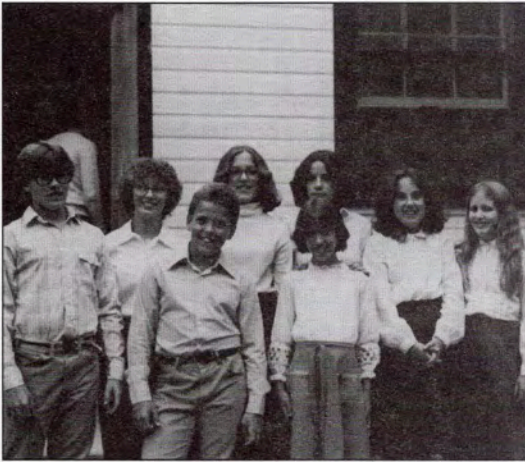
1999 - The Senior High Youth Group hosts a church supper. From left: Shaun Jones, Nick LaForest, Andy Redmond, Youth Director Joe Hooper, Ian Macomber, and Amanda Fuller.



1960 - the Young Adults gather at the home of Interim Pastor Rev. Percy Back. From left: Ken & Wilma Turner, Mrs. Back, Nancy Pineo, Mary Lou & Richard Allan, Harold Phillips, Norma Pineo, Rev. Back.



Above: 1984 - Andy and Scott Swensen at a Junior High youth group meeting.



Left: 1980 - Members of the junior high youth group at Tispaquin. Back row from left: Danny Sullivan, Lisa Ortel, Rachel Ortel, Lori Vieira, Kristina Swensen, Jennifer Rodrigues. Front row: Dennis Botelho and Tina Ortel.

Below: 1993 - Youth Director Tim Mitton (front row, far left) and the high school youth group arrive at a winter retreat.



## Chapter 7

### Missions



Originally the Board of Missions had five members and was known as the Missions Committee. The chief responsibility of this committee was to determine which missionaries under the jurisdiction of the American Baptist Conference would be supported by our church.

Rev. Walter Swensen was the first to insist that Winthrop Street specifically designate the recipients of its missionary contributions. He noticed that some of the ministries supported by the American Baptist Conference did not reflect the values of this congregation. In response, he and the members of the Missions Committee wrote the following letter to the director of Foreign Missions at the American Baptist Conference, dated October 2, 1969.

*Dear Mr Jump:*

*Like so many of our fellow Baptists we are deeply disturbed over the direction our Convention seems to be taking. Specifically, we are not happy with our denomination's evangelical concepts and programs. We are not happy with the theological controversy that seems weighted against conservatives. We are not happy with the way more and more of our mission funds are being kept at home.*

*In order to protest these, and other regrettable conditions and also in order to assure ourselves a voice in the way this congregation's funds are spent, we are requesting a list of evangelical, biblically sound missionaries to whom we can designate our funds. We would like this list as soon as possible. Until it is received, we are withholding all missions funds*

*Sincerely in Christ,  
Rev. Walter Swensen  
Norma Pineo, Ruth Beauvais Phillip Hutchinson,  
Dorothy Brown, Ruth Schuttauf, and Ronald Waterman*

This action was approved by the church on October 2, 1969. On January 27, 1970, Norma Pineo brought a recommendation from the Missionary Committee suggesting that we send \$500 to ten specific ABC missionaries, after checking their profiles. Previously the church sent a \$5,000 lump sum to the ABC Foreign Missions Society. This action also was accepted by the church, and the church's missions funds continue to be allocated in this way.

At that time Winthrop Street Baptist gave 80% of its missionary contributions to American Baptist missionaries and 20% to what was called the Benevolence Fund, which allowed the church to support various local ministries as well. The Missionary Committee selected the recipients of all missions money, and then presented the names to the church for approval at regular business meetings.

In 1974 Rev. Cleaves Henderson suggested that the Missions Committee become the Board of Missions. This gave the members of the Board authority to make final decisions on the disbursement of funds, instead of waiting for a business meeting to obtain approval for all of their recommendations. The Board was responsible for maintaining a budget and submitting a complete financial report to the church at the annual business meeting.

In November 1988 the church voted to change the ratio of missions giving from 80/20 to 65/35. This meant that 65% of total missions contributions would be allocated to American Baptist Conference missionaries, and 35% would be disbursed to ministries unaffiliated with the ABC.

The ABC had continued to fall out of favor with church leadership. Like Walter Swensen, David Swensen felt that the Conference was becoming too liberal in its policies and in the types of ministries it supported. On May 17, 1993 the church voted to become affiliated with the Baptist General Conference in addition to its association with the American Baptist Conference.

Rev. Ronald Larson of the Baptist General Conference spoke to the Board of Missions one evening. He explained that the Conference encouraged a 50/50 disbursement of missionary funds. It was voted to change the ratio of missionary money distribution once more to 50/50. Now American Baptist Conference missionaries receive 50% of the church's missionary contributions, and unaffiliated ministries receive 50% as well.

In 1998 the total amount allocated to missions at Winthrop Street Baptist was \$69,000. Many people designate a portion of their weekly offering for missions using the church offering envelopes. In addition, the Board of Missions is given 15% of the loose offering received each Sunday, and 10% of the Sunday School offering.

Some of the organizations that received this money include: Teen Challenge, Vision New England, World Vision, Bibles for China, Monadnock Bible conference, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and the Gideons organization.

### **Youth Group Missions Work**

In recent years the church has enjoyed a renewed interest in missions, due largely to the efforts of Assistant Pastor David Mantz, who joined Winthrop Street in 1996. He organized a number of short-term missions trips that included some members of our church. In 1997 they traveled to Guatemala and Haiti, and for one week helped to build new church schools in these countries. These trips are coordinated by outside missions organizations.

Some members of the youth also became involved in local missions work, helping to build a homeless shelter in Providence, under the direction of our missionaries there, Rev. and Mrs. John Slaiger.

Two of our own youth group members, Rachel Price and Jim Bassett, decided to extend their missionary work for a longer period. Both spent nearly a year as missionary interns with the New Tribes Missions organization. Rachel and Jim both served in Papua New Guinea.

A third member of the youth group, Josh DiIntinosanto, decided to pursue a degree in Biblical Studies at Gordon College, in part because of his exposure to missions work while a member of the youth group.

### **The Women's Missionary Society**

The Women's Missionary Society was organized at Winthrop Street Baptist in October 1926 at the suggestion of Rev. Douglas Swaffield. In the early years about forty women attended the meetings. They were held twice a month, alternating a regular meeting with an all-day sewing meeting.

Today the group meets on the first Tuesday of the month from October to June. Each meeting features a speaker, who informs the group of various missionary efforts, both locally and abroad. Harriett Wall has served as president for a number of years.

The Women's Missionary Society sponsors a Christmas project each year. Recently they organized an effort in the church to provide the Samaritan House Homeless Shelter with household items and non-perishable food. The group also sent over 1,000 Campbell's soup labels to the Cordova Community Baptist Church in Cordova, Alaska. The labels can be redeemed for educational supplies. The Women's Missionary Society also participates in White Cross efforts. They still devote one or two mornings per year to sewing for charitable purposes.

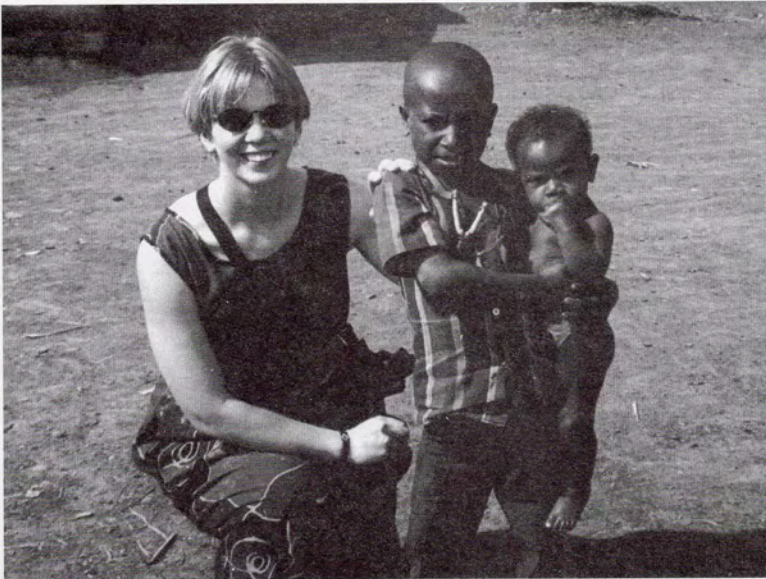
In 1998 and 1997 they cut 1000 quilt pieces and sent them to the Convention of Phillipine Baptist Churches, along with four large spools of thread. In 1997 they knit 13 hat and scarf sets for the Christmas at Sea program of the Seaman's Church Institute in New York and New Jersey. They also sent used clothing, games and sewing supplies to Rev. John Copeland of the Geary Indian Baptist Church in Geary, Oklahoma. The Women's Missionary Society also sends gifts of money to various missionary efforts in India, Africa, and Latin America.



Two of our youth leaders spent nearly a year in Papua New Guinea as missionary Interns.

Left: Jim Bassett

Below: Rachel Price





## Chapter 8

### *Finances*



In 1944 the annual church budget was \$12,000, and in 1998 it was \$188,000. Consider that the annual expenses were about \$4,000 in the mid-1860's. That means the current expense budget increased threefold in the 80 years prior to 1945, and more than 15 times in the 50 years after 1945. Current expenses include salaries, Christian education, utilities and all operations expenses. It does not include missions or the payment of outstanding loans.

Although the church's chief source of income is derived from weekly offerings, there are a number of permanent funds that also help to meet financial obligations.

The Roll of Remembrance Fund is the church's oldest permanent fund. It was established in 1936, and presently is valued at \$99,000. (Nearly \$50,000 of this amount is in the form of AT & T stock, which was willed to the church in the mid-1960's.)

There are a number of stipulations regarding the use of the assets in the Roll of Remembrance. First, the principal amount cannot be used for any reason. Only the interest is available to meet current expenses. Twenty percent of the annual income is given for missions, \$100 is put into the Scholarship fund, and the balance may be allocated at the discretion of the Prudential Committee. Interest from the Roll of Remembrance totaled \$5,021 in 1998.

A member's name may be added to the roll of remembrance book for a contribution of \$50. Fifty dollars will be taken automatically from any bequest left to the church and added to the roll of

remembrance fund, unless the bequest is specifically designated for some other purpose. Following the contribution to the Roll of Remembrance, 10 percent of undesignated bequests to the church are given to missions, and the balance is added to current expenses.

The church has a number of permanent funds in addition to the Roll of Remembrance. "Permanent" in this case means that principal balance of the fund is not allocated, and only the interest can be used to meet the church's expenses. These include the Scholarship Fund, the Barker Bequest Fund, and the Hodges Memorial Fund.

Many other funds have been established over the years to meet specific financial needs of the church. These include the Progress Fund (to finance improvements to church property), the Organ Memorial Fund, the Piano Upkeep and Replacement Fund, the Steeple Repair Fund, the Parking Fund, the Retreat Fund, the Transportation Fund, and the Deacon's Fellowship Fund (to be used entirely to assist needy people in the community) All of these may be contributed to by designating the name of the fund on an offering envelope.

The Scholarship Fund was started in 1951 with a bequest from the estate of Martha Wood. The fund is to be used by church members who are called to prepare for full-time Christian ministry. The scholarship fund has contributed to the education of a number of our members, including Karl Washburn, Timothy Mitton, and Bob Burton.

The church also owns several pieces of real estate, valued as follows in 1998:

39 Winthrop Street (Church building and lot)	
.....	\$1,687,000
58 Winthrop Street (Parsonage) .....	\$125,000
72 Cohannet Street (rear parking area) .....	\$45,000
Winthrop Street/Glebe Street (parcel) .....	\$10,000
Billings Street, Rehoboth (parcel) .....	\$22,000

## Chapter 9

### *Membership*



Reverend Buzzell inherited a church membership of 895, of which 702 were resident members. The year 1947 saw an increase of over 10 percent, when 102 members joined the church, 78 by baptism. The number of members stayed at about 1,000 throughout Rev. Buzzell's pastorate. His morning worship services were attended by an average of nearly 400 people.

Rev. Walter Swensen appointed a membership committee in 1966 to bring the membership rolls up to date. After a great deal of research, the committee recommended that 235 members be removed from the rolls. Some of these had joined other churches, some were deceased, some requested that their names be removed. After review by the Deacons and Deaconesses, the committee's recommendation was accepted, and the total membership was reduced to 721, with a resident membership of 655

When Cleaves Henderson became pastor in 1971, there were 688 members on our rolls, 589 in residence. Rev. David Swensen began his pastorate in 1976 with a total church membership of 655 and residents numbering 543. In 1979, more research was completed, and the rolls were again adjusted. In 1979 the count was 580 members and 494 residents.

This number has increased in recent years, and in 1998 the total membership was 646, with 519 in residence. David's morning worship services are attended by an average of 243 people, with

Easter Sundays approaching 400. It is said that a church that can average 45 - 50% of its resident membership at weekly worship services will succeed. Winthrop Street's weekly attendance currently represents 47% of its total resident membership.

Sunday School attendance rivaled morning worship attendance in the 1950's and 1960's. At that time, morning worship came first, from 9:45-10:45, and the Sunday School hour followed. The order was reversed in 1972, and Sunday School has preceded worship service ever since.

In the middle 1950's the average Sunday School attendance exceeded 300 students per week. (In the early 1930's the average was over 400.) Fifty teachers were in service in the 1950's, and every inch of space in the church was used for classes (including the basement and all of the rooms on the third floor) Much of the space now used for Sunday School did not exist until the addition was completed in 1961

The Sunday School Superintendent during this time was Dwight Perry, who served in that position from 1953-1962, and from 1969-1974. There were many devoted Sunday School teachers during that time, as there are today, and it would be impossible to list them all. However, it seems right to give special mention to Mrs. Mildred Chappell, who supervised the Junior Department of the Sunday School for 35 years, from 1941-1976.

The 1960's saw some important firsts. The nursery program began in 1962, so that young families could attend morning worship. In 1963 the church began busing children in to Sunday School from nearby neighborhoods, using hired buses at a cost of \$1,000 per year. In 1961 we began the tradition of giving a Bible to our high school graduates. Youth retreats at Camp Tispaquin were offered for junior and senior high Sunday School students beginning in 1966. Winthrop Street held its first Vacation Bible School program in 1968.

“The church began using its own buses in 1969, and established a bus ministry in the process. Drivers and teachers would knock on doors in nearby neighborhoods, inviting parents to send their children to church. Eventually the church purchased a second bus in order to accommodate the children using the bus. In the early 1970's, the number of students on the Sunday School buses reached 77 Attendance increased from 240 to 310.

In 1974, Junior Church was established by Georgia Hamlin, Candace Maguire and Virginia Bunn. This was a “mini-service” for children ages 4-8, held in the Primary Room during morning worship service.

After a decline in Sunday School attendance in the 1970's (attendance was down to 140 in 1973), the numbers began to improve again, and by 1979 the Sunday School attendance reached 187 The fellowship coffee time began in the late 1970's, inviting people to come to church between 9:00-9:30 for refreshments and fellowship.

The church library opened in 1981, offering all types of Christian books for members to take home and read. Most books were donated from the personal libraries of our own members. This effort was organized by Georgia Hamlin and Dwight Perry. Today the library contains over 2,200 books.

In the 1980's adult Sunday School classes began to develop in new directions. The pastor was able to stop giving a weekly adult Sunday School class, and adult volunteers began teaching topical, 12-week Sunday classes. Some topics of interest included parenting, Christian marriage, Old Testament survey, a study of spiritual gifts, and many more.

At the same time, some of the older Sunday School classes at Winthrop Street disbanded after many years. In the early part of the century, Winthrop Street's Sunday School was very large - the average attendance in 1933 and 1934 was 456! As a result,

individual classes were organized to meet the individual needs of the members, and some of these classes lasted for decades.

The Helena P. Chace Bible class started in 1888 and continued until 1959, at which time Mrs. Elvada Willey had completed 65 years as a Sunday School Teacher. The Altrurian class continued until 1990, after 74 years of activity. The Hodges class, begun in 1918 by Mrs. Herman Hodges, ended in 1994 after 76 years.

The Royal Daughters were organized in 1900 as a class for 8 girls. The class grew and so did the girls, and they stayed together throughout adulthood, celebrating each other's marriages and children. The Royal Daughters were taught by Carrie Mager from the group's beginning in 1900 until her retirement in 1938. The group disbanded in 1992.

### Sunday School Superintendents, 1944-1999

Herman Decker .....	1944-1952
Dwight Perry .....	1953-1962
James Mattos .....	1963-1965
Everett Parker .....	1966-1968
Dwight Perry .....	1969-1974
Everett Leonard/Erving Wall .....	1975
Joyce Hodgson .....	1976-1979
Nancy Carr .....	1980
Dwight Perry .....	1981
Beth Bassett/Debra Davis .....	1982-1983
Beth Bassett/Cheryl Rodrique .....	1984-1986
Cheryl Rodrique/Donna Westcoat .....	1987
Tim Mitton .....	1988
Donna Westcoat/Debra Davis .....	1989-1990
Debra Davis/Donna Smith .....	1991
Debra Davis/Marjorie Demers .....	1992
Beth Bassett .....	1993
Beth Bassett/Linda Gilbert .....	1994-1995
Linda Gilbert/Christine Laforest .....	1996-1997
Christine Laforest/Doreen Black .....	1998
Barbara DaRosa/Terri DaPonte .....	1999

## Church Officers 1944-1999

### Church Clerks

Mr. Raymond S. Estabrook .....	1945-1946
Mr. Carl E. Crawford .....	1946-1948
Mrs. Raymond Curtis .....	1948-1955
Mrs. Arthur Pinkham .....	1955-1956
Miss Margaret Lemaire .....	1957-1965
Mrs. Marguerite Crawford .....	1964-1972
Mrs. Dorothy Washburn .....	1972-1975
Mrs. Louise Hinckley .....	1975-1995
Miss Norma Pineo .....	1995 - present

### Church Treasurers

Mr. Raymond MacCraw .....	1944-1952
Mrs. Francis Hackett .....	1953-1955
Mr. Herbert Malone .....	1956-1964
Miss Marjorie Dill .....	1965-1974
Mr. Peter Woodward .....	1975-1981
Miss Marjorie Dill .....	1982-1995
Mr. Thomas Keogh .....	1996 - present

### Church Secretaries

Mrs. Arthur Pinkham .....	1954-1957
Mrs. Louise Reynolds .....	1957-1973
Mrs. Dorothy Washburn .....	1973-1988
Miss Marjorie Dill .....	1988 - present
Mrs. Irma Dean, Sunday School Secretary .....	1955-1997

## Moderators

The person elected to the role of moderator is responsible for leading all official business meetings of the church. His job is to maintain order and conduct business in accordance with regular parliamentary rules and usages.

The position was created when the church was incorporated in 1946. Rev. Buzzell filled the role of moderator himself throughout his pastorate.

However, when Rev. Walter Swensen joined the church, he chose to make the moderator an elected position from the church membership, and the by-laws were amended to reflect this change. The by-laws state that the moderator must be a full member of the church and may not serve more than two consecutive years.

In July 1960, Jack White became the first moderator during Walter Swensen's pastorate, but he was able to serve only a few months. Lawrence Davis completed his term. At the annual business meeting in 1961, Sheldon Hodges was elected for the new fiscal year, and he became the church's first full-term moderator.

Since then, the position has been held most often by Maynard Washburn, who served for 11 terms. Dr. Paul Kingsbury also accepted the position several times. Presently the church moderator is Erving Wall.



## 50-year Members

Name	Year of Baptism
Mrs. Hilda Eames .....	1909
Mrs. Elsie Ruddock .....	1918
Mr. L. Allen Freeman .....	1919
Mr. Frank Vieira .....	1921
Mrs. Doris Leonard .....	1923
Mrs. Evelyn Reed .....	1923
Mr. Sheldon Hodges .....	1923
Mrs. Beatrice Burt .....	1924
Mrs. Marion Child Clare .....	1924
Mrs. Marion Hutchinson Clare .....	1924
Mrs. Gwendolyn Myers .....	1924
Mr. Lawrence Davis .....	1924
Mrs. Marguerite Crawford .....	1924
Mrs. Jessie Hodges .....	1925
Mrs. Ethelyn Menard .....	1925
Mr. John Chappell .....	1926
Mr. Carleton Packard .....	1926
Mrs. Dorothy Freeman .....	1928
Mrs. Martha Wordell .....	1928
Mrs. Stella Haskell .....	1928
Mrs. Mildred Chappell .....	1929
Mr. Paul Wagner .....	1929
Mr. Burns MacDonald .....	1929
Mr. Ernest Hirschy .....	1929
Mr. Wilbur Reese .....	1930
Mr. Harvard Wilbur .....	1931
Mr. Everett Leonard .....	1931
Miss Mildred Leonard .....	1931
Mrs. Gilda LaFrance .....	1932
Mrs. Agnes Gagne .....	1932
Mrs. Mary Travers .....	1933
Mrs. Madolyn Lassell .....	1934

Mr. William Lambert .....	1934
Mrs. Florence Leonard .....	1934
Mrs. Rachel Crapo .....	1934
Mrs. Kathleen Tetlow .....	1934
Mrs. Hilda Osenkowski .....	1935
Mrs. Alice Nickols .....	1935
Miss Bernice Barnes .....	1935
Mrs. Marion Keogh .....	1935
Mr. Stuart Frazer .....	1935
Mrs. Frances Baker .....	1935
Mrs. Natalie Lund .....	1936
Mr. Richard Phillips .....	1936
Mrs. Pricilla Farley Smith .....	1936
Mrs. Rebecca Hopkins Freiwald .....	1936
Mrs. Marlin Graham .....	1937
Miss Dorothy Perry .....	1937
Mr. Dwight Perry .....	1937
Mr. Wallace Lambert .....	1938
Mr. Alpha Gibbs .....	1938
Mrs. Lorraine Weston .....	1939
Mrs. Elda Riley .....	1940
Mrs. Doris Storey .....	1940
Mr. Lawrence Vieira .....	1941
Mr. Harold Phillips .....	1942
Miss Gloria Woodward .....	1943
Mrs. Gladys Wood .....	1943
Mrs. Lorraine Sherman .....	1943
Mr. Sheldon Estabrook .....	1944
Mrs. Doreen Vieira .....	1944
Mr. Lawrence Goff .....	1945
Mrs. Beatrice Goff .....	1945
Mrs. Mildred Gibbs .....	1945
Mrs. Evelyn Lounsbury .....	1945
Mr. Francis Park .....	1946
Mr. Donald Park .....	1946
Mr. Merrill Vieira .....	1946
Mrs. Beverly Pineo .....	1946

Dr. Paul Kingsbury .....	1946
Mrs. Jean Sherman .....	1946
Mrs. Barbara Higgins .....	1946
Mr. Lawrence George .....	1946
Mr. Linwood Cornell .....	1946
Mr. Ronald Rankin .....	1946
Mrs. Barbara Smith .....	1946
Miss Louise Smith .....	1947
Mr. Louis Mezzera .....	1947
Mrs. Phyllis Mezzera .....	1947
Mrs. Alice Fleming .....	1947
Mrs. Ethel Cote .....	1947
Mrs. Alice Perry .....	1947
Mrs. Elaine Corr .....	1947
Mrs. Marilyn Martin .....	1947
Mr. Richard Burt .....	1947
Mrs. Corrine Grath .....	1948
Mr. William Grenier .....	1948
Mr. David Pineo .....	1948
Mr. Ray Grenier .....	1948
Mrs. Wilma Turner .....	1948
Mrs. Lillian Hodgson .....	1948
Mr. Gordon Chappell .....	1948
Miss Cora Reed .....	1948
Mr. Manuel Gouveia .....	1948
Mrs. Imogene Clough .....	1948
Mr. Richard Davidson .....	1948
Mr. Howard Graham .....	1948
Mr. Kendall Higgins .....	1948
Mrs. Irma Dean .....	1949
Mrs. Barbara Densmore .....	1949
Miss Marjorie Dill .....	1949
Mrs. Harold Hayes .....	1949
Mr. David Higgins .....	1949
Miss Dolly Rugg .....	1949

*Each of these three parishioners has been a member of Winthrop Street Baptist church for more than 80 years.*



Left: Hilda Eames, member since 1909.

Middle: Elsie Ruddock, member since 1918

Below: L. Allen Freeman with his wife Dorothy. Allen became a member in 1919.





