

THE FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH – NEWTON, NH

(Information from Newton's 250th celebration booklet, pub. 1999)

The residents of that part of Newton known as Carter Village called a meeting in 1809, forming a new parish. A Methodist minister came to Newton and held religious meeting in a schoolhouse located near the home of Thomas Currier.

Shortly after the church was subjected to minor amounts of persecution by the townspeople being accused of apostasy and delusion and was ordered out of the schoolhouse. On November 5, 1832, in the house of Mr. Currier the Christian Church was formed. Then Mr. Currier made his home and barn available to the group. He cleaned the barn on Saturday afternoon, set up benches and then prayed that a minister be sent for the Sunday service. One usually arrived.

Later, in 1835 a church edifice containing 44 pews was built and was dedicated on July 4th of that year - the first of its denomination in New Hampshire.

The church was enlarged in 1849 and twelve more pews added. Also in that year the Ladies Sewing Society was organized. In 1883 the group raised enough money to build the church steeple and remodel the interior of the church. They also started a fund to build Society Hall, which was begun in 1890 and completed in 1891.

The church building itself is the oldest public edifice in town and possesses a charm, quaintness and grace peculiar unto itself by giving this old building a genuine New England air.

IN 1856 Rev. Nathaniel Day was chosen pastor and served the church for twenty-eight years. During his term the vestibule and spire were added, a bell hung in the steeple and a reed organ purchased. Between the years of 1885 - 1889 an addition was built to accommodate a pipe organ. In 1890 the parsonage was built.

Through all these years kerosene lamps had lighted the church. In 1917 it was wired for electricity and in 1921 the metal ceiling was added and the interior redecorated. In 1959 the sanctuary was redecorated with new windows being given as memorials.

In 1965 a service dedicating the organs complete restoration was held. This organ is over 130 years old and is the oldest organ in regular use today.

Union Services are held yearly with the Newton Junction Baptist and the First Christian Churches for Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving.

A number of community and Town groups use the church facilities such as the Rockingham County Co-op Food Group, Girl Scouts, Alcoholics Anonymous, a private Day Care Center, Newton Historical Society, weddings and anniversaries, to name a few.

Dorothy Rowell is the oldest member, at ninety-four, and lives in the Rockingham County Nursing Home.

Emma Ingalls, our church Treasurer, has the most years of church membership, over seventy!

Nancy Field Cheney has been our church organist or pianist for over thirty years.

The highlight of the '90's was the last restoration program. Church officials closed the Christian Education building for several years because of severe deterioration of floors and the foundation. Under the leadership of Pastor Gordon Cheney, a Certified Lay Preacher from the congregation, a Capital Funds ten year bank loan of \$35,000. was secured. Through the faithful stewardship of members and friends the loan was repaid in three years making it available for church programs and a private community day care center.

In 1998 the Church called its first ever woman preacher. The Reverend Lillian J. Buckley started as Interim Pastor on June 7, 1998. She is also a professional Black singer and writes some of her own songs. She will end her one-year ministry on May 1999, to become the Interim at her home church, the Middle Street Baptist Church in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

This year (1999), the Church will be participating in the Town's anniversary celebration by providing a costume Worship Service on Sunday August 15th and by entering a float in the parade depicting the founding of the church when the original building was moved from Massachusetts by oxen in 1752.