

A History of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, United Church of Christ

According to the very thorough “A History of Hatfield , Massachusetts, in Three Parts,” published in 1910 by Daniel White Wells and Reuben Field Wells, a 250th anniversary sermon delivered on May 9, 1920 by Rev. Albert P. Watson, Hatfield pastor, that appears to draw upon this publication, and the 300th anniversary book “Hatfield, Massachusetts 1670-1970” published by the Town of Hatfield, the story of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, United Church of Christ, began in the early 17th century in Cambridge, Massachusetts, originally known as New Towne.

Rev. Thomas Hooker became a powerful and popular preacher in England, attracting a large following. He served first in a small village church just outside London and later in the large market town of Chelmsford. A neighboring vicar denounced him to William Laud, the Anglican Bishop of London, an ardent opponent of Puritanism and a confidant of the king. Hooker fled eventually to Holland where there was already a large community of Puritan exiles. In 1633, he decided to immigrate to America. On July 10th, he and his family sailed for Boston with a large group of Puritans, including John Cotton and Rev. Samuel Stone, other prominent Puritan ministers.

In 1633, John Winthrop, Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, recorded in his journal the arrival of the ship “Griffin.” Hooker went immediately on to New Towne, where some of his English congregation had gone ahead a year earlier. Hooker became the first pastor to this transplanted group of believers.

It was not very long, however, before Rev. Hooker was in conflict with the civil and religious leadership of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He disagreed with Gov. Winthrop over who could take part in the civil government. Winthrop held that only admitted members of the Puritan church could vote and hold office. Hooker maintained that any adult male property owner could vote and participate in the government, regardless of church membership. This issue proved intractable for the open-minded pastor.

Rev. Thomas Hooker, described as “a man liberal and democratic in his tastes,” therefore, decided to separate from the more conservative Boston leadership of Gov. Winthrop and also Rev. John Cotton. Cotton had been forced into hiding in England for his Puritan views and then fled secretly to New England. He was welcomed among Boston’s Puritans and was soon named the second pastor of the Boston church. Rev. Cotton was considered the preeminent minister and theologian of the Massachusetts Bay Colony at the time.



Rev. John Cotton

Rev. Cotton was involved in the banishment of Roger Williams from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Rev. Williams was a strong advocate of religious freedom, and the separation of church and state. With his banishment, Williams founded the Providence Plantations, which became the colony of Rhode Island.

Rev. Hooker, likewise, ran afoul of Cotton’s “aristocratic and autocratic” tendencies. In 1635, one year prior to Williams expulsion from the Massachusetts Bay Colony and the establishment of the Providence Plantations as a place offering “liberty of conscience,” Hooker received permission from Governor William Bradford of the Plymouth Colony for “removal from the Colony.” Rev. Hooker, Governor John Haynes (Haines) of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and members of Hooker’s congregation decided to move westward.

Why Governor Bradford? In 1620, Pilgrims arrived in Plymouth. Pilgrims were separatists who had withdrawn from the Church of England. In 1630, Puritans settled in Boston. Puritans wished only to purify the Church of England, not separate from it. Meanwhile, the Dutch had founded New Amsterdam (located at present day New York City) in 1624. Their claims eventually extended up the Connecticut River to include what is now Connecticut. As such, in 1633 they built a fort and trading post called New Hope at what is now Hartford. A group of Plymouth Pilgrims sailed up the Connecticut River, drove off the Dutch and took control of the fort, counting the Connecticut area as part of their land grant. This is why it was the Plymouth Governor who gave formal permission for Hooker's move.

The Puritans, however, were taking note of this success. They began sending settlers to the area. At the time, borders had not been fully explored and therefore could not be fully defined.¹ The border between Connecticut and Massachusetts was in dispute and remained so until 1804! In October 1635, Massachusetts Bay Colony Governor Winthrop's son John, then twenty-nine years of age, arrived at Boston from England. With him came Hugh Peters, his senior by six years, and Henry Vane, only twenty-four years of age, who were joint commissioners with him. John Winthrop the Younger bore a commission as governor of the Saybrook settlements from the proprietors of the soil, Lord Say and Sele and Lord Brook. In honor of the proprietors, John Winthrop the Younger built Fort Saybrook at the mouth of the Connecticut River in 1636. Other measures were taken to secure the possession of the territory and peace of the colony.

Governor Bradford of the Plymouth Colony had denounced as "an unrighteous and injurious intrusion," the settling of Massachusetts Bay Colony people upon the lands on the Connecticut which the Plymouth people had purchased from the Native Americans. "Might makes right," was the stern rule at the time and the cannon at the mouth of the river at Fort Saybrook gave a warrant for the emigration of the English to the Connecticut Valley as opposed to the Dutch. The dispute with the Plymouth people was amicably settled when Hooker received permission to settle in the area by Gov. Bradford.



Rev. Thomas Hooker

They transported most of their household goods up the Connecticut River, while taking some supplies and livestock by land. Some of Hooker's people had left earlier, and others followed the next year, but the main body went that Spring of 1636. Gov. Winthrop's Journal, dated October 5, 1635, states: "About sixty men, women and little children, went by land toward Connecticut with their cows, horses and swine, and after a tedious and difficult journey arrived safe there." Rev. Hooker's wife was too ill to walk and so was carried on

¹ The southern border of the Massachusetts Bay Colony was to be the line of latitude either 3 miles south of Massachusetts Bay or 3 miles south of the southernmost bend of the Charles River, whichever was farther south. In 1629 the rivers had not yet been fully explored and the actual borders of the colony were uncertain. It turned out that the southernmost bend of the Charles is south of the southern curve of Massachusetts Bay. The line of latitude three miles south of the river's southernmost bend, approximately 42°2' north, forms the basis of the southern border of Massachusetts to the present day.

a horse-drawn litter. Hooker's party trudged through the wilderness on the Native American trail known later as the Old Connecticut Path. Their progress was slow, requiring at minimum ten to twelve days. And so began the new settlement at Suckiaug (Hartford).²

Under the progressive influence of Rev. Hooker, the settlers passed the "Fundamental Orders of Connecticut." This document laid out the fundamental governing principles of the colony. Parenthetically, on May 30, 1662, King Charles II gave the colony of Connecticut an official charter. He granted the colony rule under the very constitution that it had approved and that was based on the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut, which again was drafted by Rev. Hooker.

Religious disagreements emerged once again. Rev. Hooker was the pastor in Hartford and Rev. John Russell was the pastor in Wethersfield. Both favored a strongly Congregational polity. In 1647, Rev. Hooker died. His successor, Rev. Samuel Stone, was not as reform minded as Rev. Hooker had been. A minority of the Hartford congregation decided to "withdraw." Rev. Russell, with almost his entire congregation, sympathized with them and agreed to "withdraw" as well.



Rev. John Russell

Some background on the withdrawers: On May 15, 1636, William Pynchon led a settlement expedition to be administered by the Connecticut Colony. Dutch and Plymouth Colonists had been leapfrogging their way up the Connecticut River as far north as Windsor, Connecticut, attempting to establish its northernmost village to gain the greatest access to the region's raw materials. Pynchon founded the Agawam Plantation, now Springfield, in 1636. It was the northernmost settlement of the Connecticut Colony.

² An exhaustive study of land records from Cambridge to Hartford, noting the references to an ancient Indian trail (now known as the Old Connecticut Path), gives us the likely description of their journey:

Cambridge to Watertown, Weston, Wayland, Framingham, passing north of Cochituate Pond.

Through South Framingham, Ashland, Hopkinton, Westborough, Grafton.

Through Millbury, north of Singleton Pond to Oxford.

Turning west at the Centre; going through Charlton, whose ancient name was "Quabaug Path."

Probably their first Sabbath at Sturbridge, on the western slope of Fisk Hill, where tradition locates a camping place.

Down that slope westward, crossing the brook, they passed the foot of Cemetery Hill, and "Old Tantiusque Fordway," up the valley through Fiskdale.

The path went north of Little Alum Pond to "Little Rest."

North of Sherman Pond and north of Steerage Rock.

Descending the slope to the Connecticut Valley at Agawam, now Springfield, Massachusetts.

Moving south on the east bank of the Connecticut River, through "Longmeadow Gate" – so named because the shoulder of the hill and the river narrow the space at that point to something like a gateway.

From there in a general line (still marked by highways), to what later was known as the "John Bissell ferry" at Windsor.

Crossing the river, they ended their journey on the western bank of the Connecticut River at Suckiaug.

There's a Google site called the "Old Connecticut Path: Rediscovering the Old Connecticut Path" which is produced by Jason Newton who has done a lot of research on the path. Please consult this site for the best information about the old path. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1heUu2r8rM&feature=youtu.be>)

In 1640 a serious dispute took place involving on the one hand Wethersfield, Hartford and Windsor, and on the other the Agawam Plantation. This led the Agawam Plantation settlement to *withdraw* from Connecticut and join the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Looking to capitalize on Springfield's defection, the Massachusetts Bay Colony decided to reassert its jurisdiction over land bordering the Connecticut River.

Now let us return to our own "withdrawers." Northampton had been settled in 1654 by colonists from down the Connecticut River. Withdrawers from Hartford and Wethersfield petitioned the General Court of Massachusetts requesting a land grant to come under "your pious and godly government." On May 25, 1658, the petition was granted. Preparations were begun for another migration by the group that had moved from Cambridge to Hartford/Wethersfield. In October, 1658 the Northampton settlers voted to give the withdrawers land to their north as long as they agreed to settle on both the east and west sides of the Connecticut River at a place known as Norwottuck or Nonotuck, which mean "in the midst of the river."

The land grant, however, was made conditional upon an orderly hearing of the differences between the "Withdrawers" and the church in Hartford, this, after all, being their second migration. Reconciliation was achieved and the Withdrawers prepared to move north. On April 18, 1659, an agreement was signed among those who chose to withdraw from Connecticut and move to the Massachusetts Bay Colony. By November of that year, the rudimentary settlement of Hadley had begun.

By March 25, 1661, 25 families had engaged to settle on the west side of the Connecticut River, but only 16 families actually settled in that area. The journey north from Hartford/Wethersfield was to say the least difficult. "Cart roads" had not yet been built and streams needed to be forded. The Withdrawers traveled north up the valley to Woronoke (Westfield), then to Springfield, then to Northampton and finally to Hadley. This was about a ten-day journey.

Six years later, on May 3, 1667, the first of many petitions was submitted by westside residents to the Massachusetts General Court seeking separation from Hadley proper on the eastside of the Connecticut River. Rev. John Russell was one of the Hadley residents who represented the opposition to this petition in court. The General Court sided with Hadley agreeing that the town was not sufficiently large enough to divide.

By 1668, there were about 100 people living on the westside of Hadley. Richard Fellows may have been the first settler to build a house on the westside of the river. On November 6, 1668, a committee was appointed without the consent of the colonial government or their fellow citizens on the eastside of the river. The committee's purpose was to find a suitable boarding place for a minister during the winter months when crossing the river was difficult and dangerous, and to "make arrangements for his comfortable support."

At the same meeting, again without consent from Boston or the east-siders, the committee was charged to draw up a list of all the timber needed to build a 30' square Meeting House, and to assign work to each man to fell and prepare the necessary timber. The residents of the westside knew that a town could not be incorporated until a minister was procured and a meeting house erected. By taking action in advance of the General Court's decision, the westside residents countered any argument offered by Hadley citizens on the eastside of the river that separation was impractical and implausible.

These efforts proved unnecessary, however, because on November 7th the General Court in Boston agreed that the residents on the westside would be allowed to procure a minister, that they would provide for his services and that they would subsequently be freed from supporting the minister on the eastside of the river.

Consequently, on November 21st, a "side meeting" (the westside residents of Hadley) empowered a committee to procure a minister. A meeting on December 22nd was held for all the residents of Hadley, east and west-siders. It was at this meeting that the citizens of Hadley agreed mutually to a separation.

The following year, 1669, burial grounds were established on the westside of the river. This site is now known as the Hill Cemetery.

Hope Atherton of Dorchester graduated from Harvard in 1665. It appears that Mr. Atherton was already serving in Hatfield during the fall of 1668. On May 17, 1669 a call was extended inviting him formally to take up the work of ministry among the west-siders. The call was accepted. He received a house lot, a

house and payment of £60 per year, two thirds in wheat and one third in pork, but if the crops were to fail in any given year then they would “pay him in the next best we have.”

Rev. Atherton was ordained on May 10, 1670. In the introductory paragraph to his 1920 pamphlet, Rev. Watson writes: “The exact date on which this church was organized cannot be ascertained from any available record. We do know, however, that the first minister, Rev. Hope Atherton, was ordained here on the 10th of May in the year 1670. And since the ordination of a minister presupposes some sort of ecclesiastical organization, we fix upon that date as marking the beginning of the church’s organized life.”

With the procuring of a minister and the erection of the first Meeting House, the residents of the westside of Hadley met the requirements necessary to incorporate as a town within the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Accordingly, on May 31, 1670, the General Court granted the incorporation of the Town of “Hattfeilds.” The first Town Meeting of “Hatfield” was conducted on August 8, 1670.³

The First Congregational Church of Hatfield is the fourth oldest church in the Connecticut River Valley: Springfield (1637); Hadley (1659); Northampton (1661); and Hatfield (1670).

The Bloody Brook Massacre occurred in Deerfield on September 18, 1675. The Native Americans ambushed the colonists who were escorting a train of wagons carrying the harvest from Deerfield to Hadley. At least 40 militia men and 17 teamsters out of a company that included 79 militia were killed in this battle. The majority of the colonist's party was an armed escort led by Captain Thomas Laythrop who died in the battle. One of the survivors was the chaplain of Captain Lathrop's company, Rev. Hope Atherton.

Later in 1675, Native Americans attacked and burned the Deerfield settlement. The colonists abandoned the settlement at that point, thus making Hadley and Hatfield the northernmost English settlements in western Massachusetts.

On May 18, 1676 reports were received of an ill-prepared Indian encampment at what is now known as Turners Falls. Capt. Turner led 141 men from Hatfield north to attack the Native Americans. They traveled north through the night. At dawn on May 19, 1676, Captain William Turner led an army of settlers in a surprise retaliatory attack on Peskeompskut, in present-day Montague, then a traditional native gathering place. Turner and his men killed 200 natives, mostly women and children. When the men of the tribe returned, they routed Turner's forces. Turner died of a mortal wound at Green River. The colonists’ retreat was disorderly. In this chaos, Rev. Atherton, again serving as a chaplain, became lost in the woods and did not return until the 22nd.

On Sunday, May 28th, Rev. Atherton followed his sermon with the report of his escape as a tale of miraculous salvation. He had tried to surrender to his foes, but they backed away and avoided him, possibly because they saw “the little man in the black coat” as the white man’s god. Another possibility shared is that while he was lost the Native Americans refused to take him prisoner because he was hallucinating. Either way, it is reported that his account was not believed by his neighbors. Rev. Atherton never recovered from this experience and died on June 4, 1677.

³ “To become a legal citizen of the Massachusetts Bay Colony every man over twenty years of age and six months a householder was required to take the freeman’s oath, the original draft of which, made by John Winthrop, is in the Boston Public Library. It is interesting to note that the first work of the first printing press set up in the English speaking colonies of America was to print this oath, in 1638. It read as follows: - ‘I, _____, being by God’s providence, an Inhabitant and Freeman, within the Jurisdiction of this Commonwealth; do freely acknowledge my self to be subject to the Government thereof; And therefore do here swear by the great and dreadful Name of the Everlasting God that I will be true and faithful to the same, and will accordingly yield assistance and support thereunto, with my person and estate, as in equity I am bound; and will also truly endeavor to maintain and preserve all the liberties and privileges thereof, submitting my self to the wholesome Lawes and Orders made and established by the same. And further, that I will not plot or practice any evil against it, or consent to any that shall do so; but will timely discover and reveal the same to lawfull Authority now here established, for the speedy presenting thereof. Moreover, I doe solemnly bind my self in the sight of God, when I shall be called to give my voyce touching any such matter of this State, in which Free-men are to deal, I will give my vote and suffrage as I shall judge in mine own conscience may but conduce and tend to the publike weal of the body, without respect of persons, or favour of any man. So help me God in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Upon the death of Rev. Atherton, attempts were made to call Rev. John Wise of Ipswich. He served the Hatfield congregation in 1678, but declined the offer of the pastorate. The pulpit was supplied by John Younglove and Warham Mather in the absence of Rev. Wise. Younglove was a teacher at Hopkins Grammar School in Hadley and Warham Mather was the son of Rev. Eleazar Mather of Northampton.

On November 10, 1679, the town voted to invite **Rev. Nathaniel Chauncey** to preach among them for a year or less in the process of determining a call to settlement. A call was extended to Rev. Chauncey on February 24, 1680. Nathaniel Chauncey, the son of Rev. Charles Chauncey, President of Harvard College, graduated from Harvard in 1661. He had preached in Hatfield apparently from December 12, 1679 – March 12, 1681. He then left for a time, returning in 1682, and then was called as Hatfield's pastor in 1683. He served in this capacity until his death on November 4, 1685.

The third pastor of the Hatfield Congregational Church was **Rev. William Williams** who served from December 6, 1686 until his death on August 29, 1741. Williams graduated from Harvard in 1683 in a class of three students, one being his cousin John who would serve as the pastor in Deerfield. Rev. Williams' son Elisha became the President of Yale in 1726. A grandson named William, the son of Solomon Williams, a pastor in Lebanon, Connecticut, signed the Declaration of Independence.

On November 13, 1699, a town meeting voted to build a second Meeting House 45' square. It was placed in the same location as the first meeting house which was 30' square. The first meeting house was sold to several families, presumably for materials. Seating was ordered on October 28, 1701.

The Great Awakening swept through the Colonies in the 1730's and 1740's. A leader of this movement was Rev. Jonathan Edwards who was the pastor in Northampton. The Great Awakening preached salvation that transcended denominational boundaries. It utilized revival meetings and claimed outpourings of the Holy Spirit. Individuals sought the deeply personal ecstatic experience of an awakening deemed necessary for salvation. Conversion was not only an intellectual assent, but an ecstatic rebirth. This movement led to divisions in existing churches between those who supported the revivals and those who were opposed to them on the grounds that they fostered disorder and fanaticism by enabling uneducated preachers to sway believers.

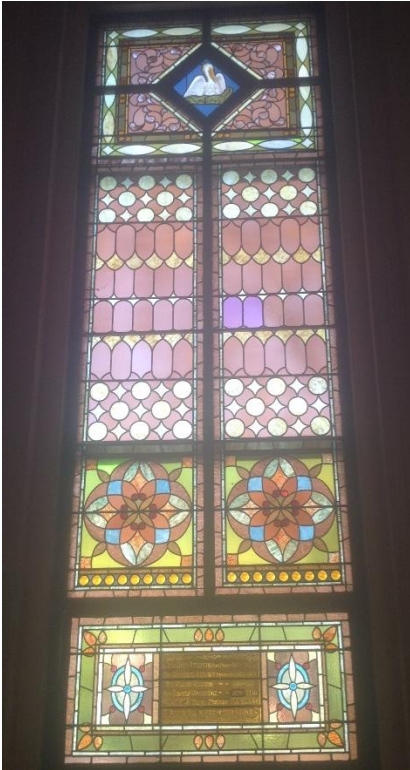
The elderly Rev. Williams was one of the movement's opponents, and he was able to keep its excesses at bay in Hatfield. Even so, Rev. Jonathan Edwards preached Rev. Williams' eulogy out of respect for the man and his ministry.

The fourth pastor of the Hatfield Congregational Church was the **Rev. Timothy Woodbridge**. On November 14, 1739, this Yale graduate was installed as a colleague of the elderly Rev. Williams. He became the pastor of the congregation on the day after Rev. Williams' death, and he served in this capacity until his own death on June 3, 1771 (Many of the church's records list his date of death at 1770.).⁴

During his tenure, the third Meeting House was constructed in 1750. The 45' square second Meeting House was enlarged to 56' long by 45' wide.

⁴The tablet that marks his grave reads: "In memory of the Rev'd Timothy Woodbridge for 30 years Pastor of the Church of Christ in the Town of Hatfield. This Man of God who called on the Lord out of a pure heart followed after Righteousness, Godliness, Faith, Love, Patience, Meekness, Apt to teach, charitable and gentle unto all men, departed his life on the 3 day of June A. Domi: 1771 in ye 58 year of his age."

The north memorial window of the Hatfield Congregational Church is dedicated to Revs. Atherton, Chauncey, Williams and Woodbridge, all of whom served as pastors until their deaths.



As Hatfield separated from Hadley for logistical reasons, so did Whately and Williamsburg separate from Hatfield in 1771 to form their own towns and congregations.

The fifth pastor of the congregation was **Rev. Joseph Lyman**. He served the Hatfield church from 1772 until his death on March 27, 1828. Rev. Lyman graduated from Yale College in 1767 and received his doctorate in 1801 from Williams College. Rev. Lyman served as a trustee of Amherst College and was one of the founders of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

Prior to his arrival in Hatfield, the town was controlled firmly by Tories opposed to the Revolution. In the pulpit, however, Lyman preached the doctrine of resistance to the tyranny of the king and his ministers with burning words, and in town meeting he raised his voice in favor of the cause of liberty. Within two years, he was able to sway the citizens of Hatfield, a majority of whom now supported the movement toward liberty.

After the completion of the Revolutionary War, in August 1786, representatives from 50 towns met at the church and drew up 25 grievances against the government. Rev. Lyman was a staunch supporter of Shay's Rebellion, which challenged the authority of the government.

On November 11, 1819, in Northampton, Rev. Lyman preached the funeral sermon for the Honorable Caleb Strong, the sixth and tenth Governor of Massachusetts. Rev. Lyman was also one of the first presidents of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1823-1826). On January 10, 1827, **Jared Waterbury** was installed as a colleague of Rev. Lyman's. Due to his 56 years of service to the congregation and

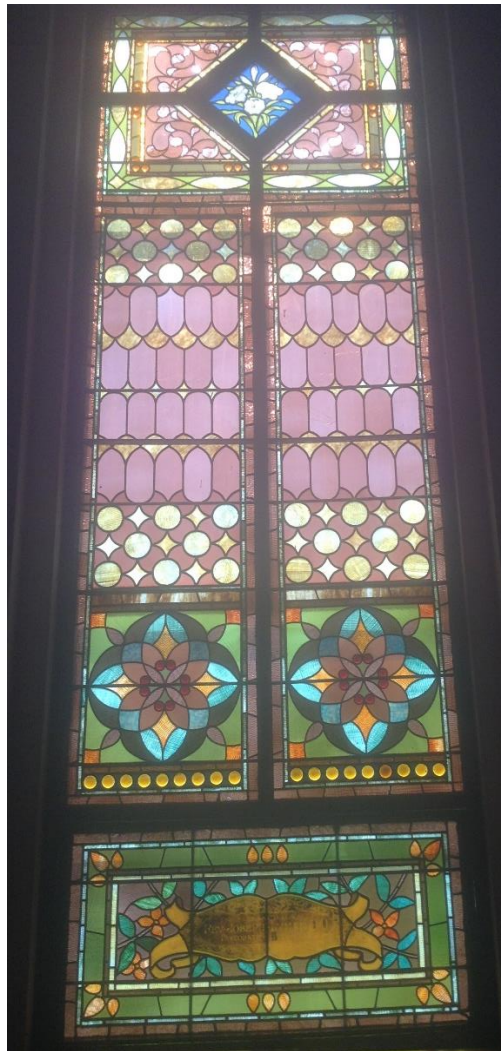
⁵ In medieval Europe, the pelican was thought to be particularly attentive to her young, to the point of providing her own blood by wounding her own breast when no other food was available. As a result, the pelican became a symbol of the Passion of Jesus who gave His blood, His life, for us. What fitting iconography for the window dedicated to "These pastors died in the service of this church"

his prominent role in the politics and religion of his day, the south memorial window is dedicated to Rev. Lyman. Rev. Lyman is also the fifth pastor who served the Hatfield church until his very death.



Rev. and Mrs. Joseph Lyman, portraits hang in the vestibule of the Hatfield Church





6



Lyman burial monument in the Hill Cemetery, Hatfield, Massachusetts

⁶ The lily, Jesus' favorite flower, fills churches at Easter and has become a symbol of resurrection. The open buds representing those blessed with eternal life and the unopened buds symbolizing our earthly hope for eternal life. The pastorate of Rev. Lyman, the longest serving pastor in Hatfield, did much to mold church and nation, thus building the kingdom on earth and earning his rightful place in the heavenly realm.

Rev. Jared B. Waterbury transitioned from Rev. Lyman's colleague to pastor on the day following Rev. Lyman's death and he served until February 24, 1829 when he was "dismissed." Also, in 1829, the town and the church of Hatfield became separate entities. From its founding as a Pilgrim/Puritan colony, the Congregational Church was the established church in Massachusetts. As mentioned above, a town could not be incorporated until it had procured a minister and built a meeting house. In 1829 this union was "disestablished" and the civic and religious identity of the town were separated.

Rev. Levi Pratt was ordained on June 23, 1830 and served the Hatfield church until May 9, 1835 when he was "dismissed." Rev. Pratt was the first pastor hired by the church and parish rather than the town of Hatfield. Also, in 1830 the Sunday School was organized, and the earliest record concerning music in the church is dated to 1834 when \$80 was paid to the choir director.

A period of years followed with no settled pastor. On April 16, 1840, **Rev. Henry Neill** was ordained. He served in Hatfield until April 15, 1846 when he was "dismissed."

The fourth Meeting House was constructed in 1849 in a period with no settled pastor. This structure remains in service as the sanctuary of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, United Church of Christ to the present. Rev. Watson shared a history of the church at the 75th anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone celebration. The sermon was preached on May 25, 1924. He reports that the cornerstone was laid in May 1849. Capt. Damon from Northampton led the men in an "old fashioned 'raising.'" The church was dedicated officially on January 17, 1850. Rev. Samuel Harris of the Conway Congregational Church preached the sermon that day. A copy of the sermon is in the files of the church – it was 22 pages long!

The bell from the third Meeting House was re-hung in the belfry of the fourth. It did crack one Fourth of July and had to be repaired, but the same bell hangs in the steeple of the church to the present. Rev. Watson writes: "On the 20th of April, 1775, when the swift riding couriers, like Paul Revere, carried to every village and town the news of the attack of the British, the ringing of this bell warned the people that something unusual had happened, and they quickly gathered at the meeting house to learn the facts and to determine their course of action. This was about noon, and before the afternoon was half spent Capt. Israel Chapin and his minute men set forth on their march to Boston, pastor Lyman with fervent prayers bidding them God-speed. Thus, we have in our bell a treasured link connecting the present with the heroic past."⁷

In 1868 a tracker organ was installed in the church. This organ served the church for over a century. In 1973 the church voted to purchase a new organ, which was installed in 1975.

The parlor was added on to the church structure in 1891 and a kitchen was built in 1922. In 1990 the side entrance was remodeled, adding two new bathrooms and a foyer/coat room.

The plain glass windows of the church were removed and replaced with cathedral style windows in 1893. The window honoring Rev. Woods was added in 1909.

⁷ *75th Anniversary Service of the Laying of the Cornerstone*, May 25, 1924, p. 6. In the records of the Hatfield Congregational Church.



First Congregational Church of Hatfield, United Church of Christ



Church sanctuary and pipe organ

Rev. Jared O. Knapp was installed as pastor on December 11, 1850 and served until April 10, 1855 when he was “dismissed.” Rev. Knapp was the first pastor to live in the church’s parsonage.

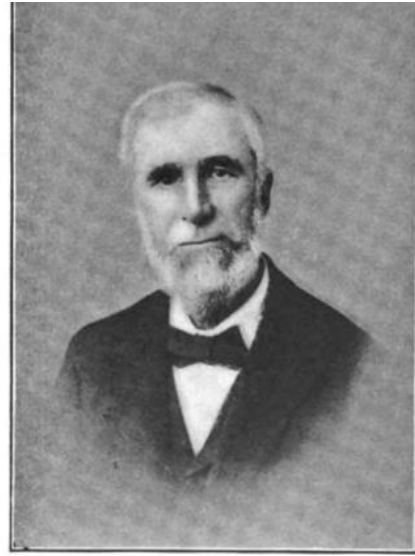
Rev. John Morton Greene was ordained on October 20, 1857. He was a staunch supporter of the Union leading up to and throughout the Civil War. He was “dismissed” on February 17, 1868.

Rev. Greene is probably most famous for his role as an advisor and confidant to Sophia Smith, the benefactress of Smith College in Northampton.⁸ With his encouragement, Smith decided to endow a woman’s college. Upon her death on June 12, 1870, her fortune of \$387,468 was willed to endow Smith College, which was chartered in 1871 and opened its doors in 1875 with 14 students. Rev. Greene was a Trustee of Smith College.

⁸ Thus earning himself the honor of John M. Greene hall at Smith College.



Sophia Smith



Rev. John M. Greene

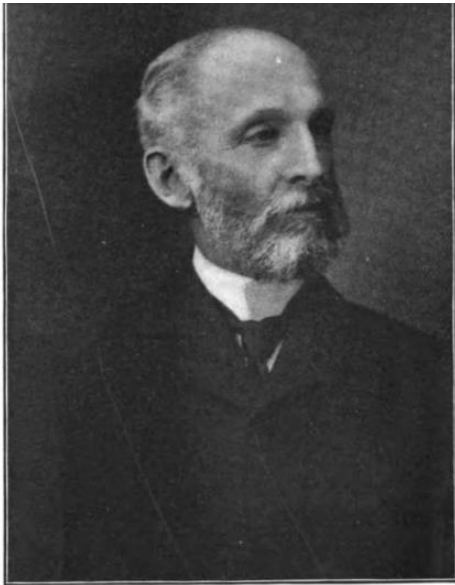
Rev. William L. Bray was installed as pastor on January 12, 1869, serving until “dismissed” on November 22, 1869. During this time, the Real Folk Women’s Society was organized.



Rev. John P. Skeele followed. He was installed on May 4, 1870 and served until “dismissed” on April 29, 1873. **Rev. William Greenwood** served the congregation from 1874 until 1876.

⁹ In 1894, the Real Folks donated an E. Howard Gallery Clock to the church. It was professionally restored by The British Clock Maker in Newfane, Vermont, Ray and Richard Bates, in 2019 in preparation for the church’s 350th anniversary.

Robert M. Woods was ordained on November 21, 1877 and served the Hatfield church until his death on June 19, 1909. During his tenure, the town clock was placed in the belfry in 1898. It was said of Rev. Woods that even though town and church had become separate entities in 1829 that he looked upon all the citizens of Hatfield as members of his congregation. It is reported that toward the end of his life his health was failing and he was residing with his sister in Enfield, Connecticut. He insisted on returning to Hatfield to preach the Children's Day sermon. After the exertion of this effort, his health further deteriorated, and he remained bed ridden until his death shortly afterward. The Woods Memorial Window of "Jesus Knocking at the Door" was installed in 1909 on the east side of the church facing Main Street. Thus, all the pastors who served until their death are memorialized in the windows of the Hatfield church.



Rev. Robert M. Woods



Woods Memorial Window – Jesus Knocking at the Door

Rev. Irving A. Flint served as Stated Supply beginning on February 1, 1910, arriving from serving the Free and North Deering Congregational Churches in Portland, Maine. Subsequently, he was installed on February 23, 1911¹⁰ and served until the end of September 1918. **Rev. Albert P. Watson** followed, serving from March 1, 1919 through May 15, 1929. In 1929 the church sold its silver Communion service for \$11,000. The church Sunday worship Service had to be cancelled on November 6, 1927 due to flooding.



11

¹⁰ This explains the two different dates associated with his pastorate in church records.

¹¹ "The cups are the original communion service used in the church in early years. As a means to raise funds, the service was sold in 1920 to a Mr. Francis Garvan of New York for the sum of \$11,000 ... These are on display at the Yale University Art Museum." (Picture and description are located in the church vestibule.)

Rev. Orlo B. Barnard was pastor from September 16, 1930 through June 1938. For a second time, flood waters entered the church building and covered floors in the vestry and parlor in 1936. **Rev. William J. Morgan** then took over the pastorate from 1938 through November 1941. From his tenure forward the ministers of the Hatfield church were part-time positions, excepting the tenure of Rev. Gary Morrison.

Student Glynn Rosser served the needs of the church during the war years from November 30, 1941 until July 1, 1943. He was followed by **Rev. J. Ross Bunce, Jr.**¹² from 1944 through July 1, 1946. Rev. Dr. Paul Kuntz served the church from December 29, 1946 through the end of August 1948, leaving to teach at Grinnel College in Iowa.

Rev. Dr. Paul Williams served from November 29, 1948 through 1954. Before coming to Hatfield, he was a professor at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley. Similarly, **Rev. Arthur McGill** served a short tenure from September 1954 until January 30, 1955, leaving to pursue his studies at Yale University and later becoming a professor.

Rev. David Crownfield was the pastor from September 1955 until October 1, 1956.

Dr. William E. Dudley followed from March 10, 1957 until May 19, 1963. In 1961, Rev. Dudley officially installed the first Deaconesses in the congregation.

In 1931, Congregational Churches voted to merge with Christian Churches to form the Congregational Christian Churches denomination. Subsequently, on June 25, 1957, the United Church of Christ was born when the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the General Council of the Congregational Christian Churches united. In our congregation's archives are bylaws that were revised on June 29, 1960. There are hand-written additions included, which may very well reflect the congregation's decision to join the United Church of Christ on this date. Thus, 2020 is the congregation's 350th anniversary of organization and also the 60th anniversary of being a part of the United Church of Christ denomination!

Rev. David S. King had a short tenure from September 8, 1963 through November 6, 1964. He did have a strong interest in ecumenical ministries and served as a college chaplain at Amherst College and Smith College. **Rev. William T. Knapp** arrived on October 1, 1964 and left on November 1, 1967 for retirement in Connecticut.

Alan C. Copithorne was ordained at Hatfield Congregational Church in 1968 after graduating from Hartford Seminary and served here until taking another church in Hillsboro, New Hampshire in 1972. During this time, in 1970, Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church used our sanctuary for worship while their new church was being built.

Rev. Roderick Hurburt served as an Interim Minister here from September 1972 until June 1973. **Rev. Gary W. Morrison** arrived on July 1, 1973 and left that same date in 1976 in order to serve the church in Elyria, Ohio. **Rev. Thomas C. (Tim) Carlton** arrived on New Year's Day 1977 and then left in November 1979 to pursue a ministry at the Western Massachusetts Hospital in Westfield, Massachusetts.

During the time in which **Rev. Margaret Frerichs** served as the Interim Minister (November 1979 - June 1980), and as the first woman to serve the Hatfield church, one of Hatfield's own, Brenda Pelc-Faszczka became the first woman ordained from and at Hatfield on June 1, 1980. Rev. Brenda is the pastor currently at the First Congregational Church, Canton Center, Connecticut. Trained as a transitional minister, to guide churches through interim periods and search processes, she previously served extensively in that capacity with many UCC churches in Connecticut, as well as having served as a settled pastor in Suffield, Connecticut and as a chaplain at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts in the early years of her career. She has been a lecturer at Yale Divinity School since 2011. Rev. Brenda, a native of Western Massachusetts, is a graduate of Smith College, Yale Divinity School (M. Div.) and Chicago Theological Seminary (D. Min.).

¹² Also listed as H. Ross Bunce, Jr.

Rev. Albert Seely was the pastor in Hatfield from August 1, 1980 through June 14, 1984. Prior to coming to Hatfield, Rev. Seely served 18 years as the Assistant Executive Director of the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, and for the 8 years before that he was the Protestant Chaplain at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. We note, as well, that women Deacons began serving Communion in 1981. It was also in 1981 that the third Meeting House was moved to a location behind the current church, and sadly, it collapsed in a windstorm before it could be secured to its new foundation. On a brighter note, literally, the church participated in the Town of Hatfield's first Luminarium celebration that same year.

Rev. Charles W. Kirkpatrick served as the Interim from 1984 until November 1985. In 1984, Judy Strong became the only person in our congregation to date to become an Olympic athlete and won a Bronze Medal on the U.S. Field Hockey Team.

Rev. Worth Noyes had a long and fruitful ministry in Hatfield. A Call was extended on September 29, 1985 and Rev. Noyes' first Sunday Service was held on November 17th. He served for 24 years until moving on to the Congregational Church in Williamsburg in 2009. Rev. Noyes also served on the volunteer Fire Department in Hatfield.

Rev. Robert Kyte was an Interim Minister at this church from 2009 – 2010.

He was followed by the first woman minister who served the Hatfield church as a pastor. **Rev. Julie Olmstead's** pastorate began in 2010 and her Installation Service was on June 5, 2011.

Rev. Dr. Peter Kakos came to Hatfield on September 1, 2012 from his previous pastorate at Edwards Church in Northampton. During his time, the congregation voted to become an Open and Affirming Congregation. Open and Affirming is the United Church of Christ's designation for congregations, campus ministries, and other bodies in the UCC that make a public covenant of welcome into their full life and ministry to persons of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. His last Service was on November 5, 2017 before moving on to a very active "retirement" striving for the destruction of nuclear weapons in our world.

Rev. Randolph Calvo led his first Sunday worship Service on November 12, 2017. On August 18, 2019, Rev. Dr. Peter Kakos joined us for worship and spoke about the resolution that he had presented at the 32nd General Synod of the United Church of Christ that was held in Milwaukee from June 21 – 25, 2019. The five principles of the "Back from the Brink: The Call to Prevent Nuclear War" campaign are: renouncing the option of using nuclear weapons first; ending any U.S. President's ability to authorize a first strike nuclear attack; taking U.S. nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert; canceling the plan to replace the nation's arsenal with new, enhanced weapons; and actively pursuing a verifiable agreement among nuclear states to eliminate their arsenals. On November 10th, Dr. Ira Helfand of the Nuclear Weapons Abolition Committee and of Physicians for Social Responsibility's (PSR) Nuclear Weapons Abolition Committee and of PSR's global federation, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), addressed our congregation, bringing with him the organization's Nobel Peace Prize. With the information presented in the resolution and after Dr. Helfand's informative address to the congregation, it was decided to put the Resolution on the agenda of our Annual Meeting, which was held on January 19, 2020 after our morning Service. The Annual Meeting voted unanimously to support the resolution.

May 10, 2020 marks the 350th anniversary of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, United Church of Christ. We will not be able to celebrate this momentous occasion as we had planned. We will not be able to join with the other people of Hatfield as the town's celebration of Incorporation Day on May 31st must be curtailed. We are living in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. People around the globe are asked to practice safe-distancing and stay at home regulations are in place. Our last Service in the church was held on March 8th. Since that day we have gathered for worship, Bible study, Sunday School, Youth Group, Board meetings and even "Bring your own coffee coffee hours" via live-stream on computer screens. The pastor and deacons are

calling all of our members on a recurring basis to stay in touch in a time when we cannot touch. We are learning again that church is not the building, but the people, the people called together by Christ. We continue to serve our members and our community. We continue to worship and learn. We continue to be here for each other. In other words, just as the generations of believers before and after us, we continue to be the church. For this we are grateful as we continue to praise God.

“Happy are those whom you choose and bring near to live in your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, your holy temple.” (Psalm 65:4)

Compiled by Rev. Randolph Calvo

Sunday, May 10, 2020 – the 350th anniversary of the founding of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC.

The story continues with each and every comment or recollection added by the people in this on-going observance of our 350th anniversary.