

The United Church  
of  
Underhill  
and  
Its Historical Roots

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# The United Church of Underhill and Its Historical Roots (1801-2013)

## ~~The Founding Of The Underhill Congregational Church

The settlement of Underhill in the mountainous, inaccessible backwoods of Chittenden County did not get underway until after the Revolutionary War. Although the town was chartered in 1763 it was not officially organized until 1795, four years after Vermont had relinquished its status as an independent republic and had been accepted as the fourteenth state. A small group of homesteaders had earlier established a hamlet just south of the Cambridge line and in 1787 had built the first log schoolhouse. The Hill Road (now called Poker Hill) was officially surveyed and laid out in 1791 and soon became the commercial route to the north. By 1800 a second hamlet had developed along the hilltop midway along the Hill Road. Many of the original settlers were from Connecticut and Congregational in religious persuasion. In 1801 they established the first church in the new community. The first page in the Underhill Congregational record book reads, "Be it remembered that on ye 29th day of December, in ye year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and one, a number of believers were formed into a church by ye advice and assistance of ye Reverend Ebenezer Kingsbury of ye First Church of Jericho". (The First Congregational Church in Jericho Center had been established in 1791.) Seven men and seven women subscribed to the Covenant and Articles of Faith and Practice, "thus declaring both their obligations to God and their fellowship and charity for each other, and becoming known as the members first joining in covenant and organized a church of Christ in Underhill."

In those days "church" did not refer to a building, but to a congregation of people who shared a common spiritual commitment and covenanted together to uphold their creed. (Each member signed the covenant, after approval of the congregation, and woe to the member who did not live up to expectations. The early records of the churches are rife with excommunications and details of the causal human frailties.) The congregations often met in the homes of members until a meetinghouse could be built. For the first few years the Underhill Congregationalists held worship in the Birge Tavern (now 271 Poker Hill Road) where town meetings were also held. The North Underhill Cemetery on Poker Hill Road, still in use today, was deeded to the town in 1807. In 1805 the first meetinghouse was built, under town auspices, close to the road by the cemetery grounds. It served, as was customary in those days of theocratic governance, for town meetings as well as Congregational worship. The first minister was Reverend James Parker. He was pastor until 1812, when his opposition to the war put him at odds with the congregation. For four years the church was without regular preaching. In 1816 Mr Nathaniel B Dodge began preaching and by the end of the year was ordained as minister. He organized a Church School in 1818 which continued in different forms throughout the years. (In the beginning the emphasis was on memorization of the catechism, Bible verses and hymns. At the first annual meeting 88 scholars were reported. One was said to have recited eighteen hundred and eighty seven verses and hymns! The students attended worship services with their parents; Church School training was under the tutelage of several teachers throughout the community who taught under the supervision of a main teacher.)

## ~~Growing Pains And Church Expansion

In 1820 the Pleasant Valley highway was laid out to the Cambridge border and by 1827 Underhill Center emerged as a village with its own cemetery and meetinghouse, store and saw-mill. Many of the new settlers were from New Hampshire and were not Congregational in persuasion. In 1824 a group established a Methodist Episcopal Church in the Center. Meanwhile a new village was growing on the Jericho border in what became known as "The Flatts", with its own school, stores and even a starch mill. The original settlement on the Hill Road in what was now North Underhill was no longer the population center and sentiment grew to move town meetings and Congregational worship to a more accessible location. In 1827 a small group of worshipers petitioned to be dismissed from the founding church to establish the Second Congregational Church in Underhill Center. For a while they shared a newly-built Union Meetinghouse with members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Shared places of worship were common in those days, enabling small congregations which could not afford a resident pastor, or even to meet every Sabbath, to rotate the use of the meetinghouse among the denominations. The population of Underhill was burgeoning and new families from England and Ireland arrived to establish settlements. In Underhill Center a Freewill Baptist Church was organized in 1836 and a Catholic congregation was growing.

## ~~The First Congregational Society

In 1828 the members of the original Church of Christ in Underhill, now the First Congregational Church, erected another meetinghouse, known as the "Lower Meetinghouse" or the "River Church", on the River Road, hoping to draw back the secessionists from the Center. (The exact location of the meetinghouse is not known, but it was close to the intersection of River Road and the present Sand Hill Road, barely a mile from the Union Meetinghouse in Underhill Center.) In 1829 a constitution was adopted to form officially the First Congregational Society. (Congregational Societies were established to tend to the worldly matters of raising funds to pay the ministers and to build and maintain the meetinghouses. Women were very active members of the churches but did not participate in the work of the societies.) The minutes record the names of the 34 men responsible for the preaching at the "River Church" and its maintenance and the 54 men responsible for the affairs of the "Old Meeting House" on the Hill Road. The members met at the "Old Meeting House" and called Reverend Phineas Kingsley to service, then adjourned to the meetinghouse on the river. For a short time services were alternated between the two meetinghouses, as were the Town Meetings.

## ~~The Second Congregational Society

In 1827 the more level "Creek Road" (now Route 15) had been surveyed and by 1840 it displaced Poker Hill as the County Road. The historic Birge Tavern closed in 1831 and business diverted to the Barney Tavern (417 VT Route 15) which opened in a residence in the Flats along the Creek Road. (It is now a private home across the road from the present fire station.) At the March Meeting in 1832 it was voted to convene all Town meetings at William Barney's Tavern, centrally located between the two meetinghouses. The Tavern continued to be used until the late 1840s. Underhill Flats was growing as a commercial center, especially under the leadership of John H Tower and Henry Oakes whose Tower & Oakes store and other enterprises were prospering. The dispersed Congregationalists, alternating worship between meetinghouses and divided by argument, were often not able to meet the salary of the minister without assistance from the Vermont Domestic Missionary Society. Then in 1837 a windstorm tore the steeple from the thirty-year-old meetinghouse in North Underhill rendering the building



unusable. On December 31, 1838 twenty four men organized to address the church problems. "We the subscribed inhabitants of Underhill and vicinity do hereby agree to form a society by the name of the Second Congregational Society in Underhill for the purpose of building and repairing a meetinghouse, settling and supporting a minister, according to the first section of an act entitled, 'For the Support of the Gospel', past October 26, 1797." That same day Tower and Oakes leased to the Second Congregational Society, of which they were founding members, a parcel of land which became the site of the present church. It was next to their store (now an apartment house): "To have and to hold the said leased lot on farm premises for the use of a Congregational Meetinghouse so long as the said ground shall be used for that purpose, but for no other use, they yielding and paying yearly each and every year on the first day of January if demanded one Ear of Indian Corn. Dated at Underhill this 31st of December 1838." John Tower also created a cemetery on part of his farm (now the Underhill Cemetery) and deeded it to the Second Congregational Society.

A few days later, at a meeting of the Second Congregational Society on January 4, 1839, the discussion concerned the advisability of moving a meetinghouse or rebuilding, but there were no funds even for preaching. Later in the year, however, they did move the Lower Meetinghouse from the River Road to the new location on the leased land in The Flats. The same year a determined group of the founding Congregational members salvaged parts from the wind-damaged original "Old Meetinghouse" and rebuilt it farther up the road, on the corner of what is now Page Road. (Presumably, this meetinghouse was still under the oversight of what was left of The First Congregational Society, but there are no records.) On October 25, 1839 this group requested to be dismissed from the Congregational Church of Christ in Underhill to form a separate church. The petition was at first denied, but then a Council was called to consider the matter. In spite of the concern that the division would further weaken the church, the separation was allowed. The congregation was later referred to as the North Church.)

Then in January 1840 the Second Congregational Society engaged Rev Sherman Kellogg, pastor of Montpelier Free Congregational Church, to conduct a three-week gospel meeting at their rebuilt church in Underhill Flats. All the churches in the vicinity were invited to participate. The revival was a great success and many new members joined the church. It led also to a partial reconciliation between the Congregational factions and the return of at least some members of the Second Congregational Church. There is no mention of the Second Congregational Church after this time. (The Second Congregational Society was not affiliated with The Second Congregational Church which had been established in Underhill Center. The latter seems not to have had a corresponding society, for it shared the Union Meetinghouse with the Methodist Episcopal denomination and never had a regular pastor. There are no records of this church and the only information comes from its correspondence with the parent church.)

### ~~Building Of The Present Church

In June 1843 the Reverend Simeon Parmalee began a vigorous pastorate in the First Congregational Church which lasted through 1856. A fire damaged the relocated meetinghouse in Underhill Flats in 1845. Under the strong leadership of Rev Parmalee funds were raised and by 1847 it was replaced by the present building in the fine location directly on the village green. The Congregational Church was now firmly established in Underhill Flats. For 100 years it played a prominent role in the life of the community. (The North Church continued until 1879 when the few remaining members rejoined the parent church. Some years thereafter the relocated North Meetinghouse was destroyed by fire.)

In 1885, through the efforts of The Second Congregational Society, in co-operation with the Ladies' Dime Society, the parlor and kitchen were added on the back of the building. (This addition is the present reception room). In 1889 the church incorporated and at the same time the name of The Second Congregational Society was changed to The Congregational Society. (In 1916, recognizing that the "purpose, object and business" of the church and the society were intimately connected, a new constitution was written to merge the two organizations.) There seem to be no records of the fund-raising Ladies Dime Society. However, in 1894 a women's group from the church purchased an organ, which still graces the sanctuary. Their fund-raising efforts were documented in a booklet entitled, Experiences of the Would-be Poetesses Connected with the Ladies Industrial Society and a Response from one of the Sufferers. Each lady had to raise a dollar for the organ fund and write a poem about how she earned it. (The first charge was the easier; writing the poems was a challenge - for the ladies and their families.) The organ was dedicated with ceremony and a dinner and the poems were read aloud to the great amusement of all, so much so that they decided to publish the collection. (Such a story it tells about the life of the times and the droll sense of humor for which Vermonters are renowned.)

### ~~Growth Of The Christian Commitment

The population of Underhill had continued to grow until it reached a peak of 1655 in 1870. The Methodist Episcopal Church and the Freewill Baptists, who had organized in 1836, jointly erected a meeting house in Underhill Center in 1851. (In 1950 the building became the Underhill Town Hall.) Methodism had been introduced in the local area back in 1798 by the circuit preacher, Reverend Lorenzo Dow, who proselytized as far north as Canada. He was followed by the Mitchell brothers, preachers who organized a Methodist circuit of 186 members based in Vergennes. In 1799 the circuit was divided, with Underhill constituents part of the northern Essex Circuit. But it wasn't until 1857 that the Methodist Episcopal Church established a permanent building in Underhill Flats, followed in 1859 by the present church in Jericho Corners. Both churches were served by very busy circuit pastors, who also served other areas, such as Bolton. None stayed the course very long and there was constant turnover.

The original St Thomas Catholic church was built in 1855. (It was destroyed by fire and replaced by the present building in 1891.) The Calvary Protestant Episcopal Church was completed in the Riverside area in 1857, but it was not in continuous use until many years later (1928). There were also in Jericho two Congregational Churches, a Baptist Church and a Universalist Church. There was certainly no lack of Christian commitment in the area.

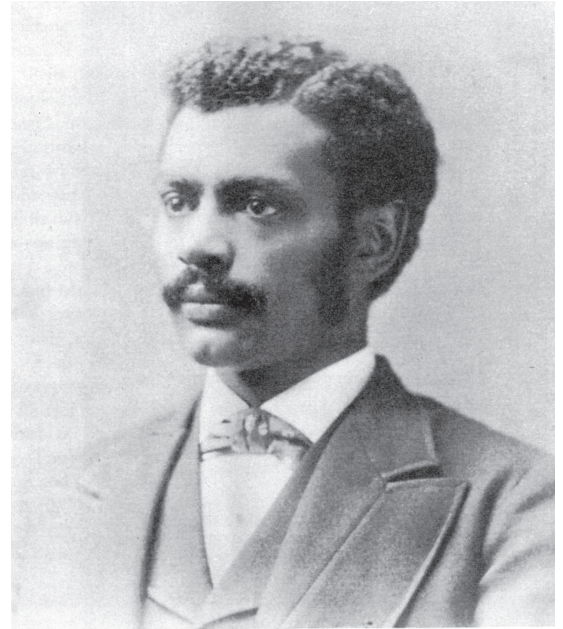


Underhill Flat - 1888

## ~~George Washington Henderson

In mid century three short-lived, but outstanding academic institutions were established in Underhill which not only served local students, but attracted boarding scholars: The Bell Institute, the Underhill Academy in Underhill Flats and Green Mountain Academy in Underhill Center (later used as a Town Hall, 1900-1950). The Congregational church occasionally drew upon the well-educated faculty of the academies for service as interim pastors and preachers.

After the end of the Civil War, the Underhill Academy had among its students a most outstanding young man. George Washington Henderson was born a slave in Virginia in 1850. During the war he escaped to the Grand Army of the Republic and was taken on as a servant by Henry Carpenter, adjutant in the Eighth Vermont Regiment. In 1865, then only fifteen years old, he accompanied Carpenter when he returned to his home in Belvidere, Vermont. While working for the family, the young man was helped to "learn his letters". He must have been an apt student, for the Carpenters made an arrangement for him to study at the Underhill Academy, then under the tutelage of Oscar Atwood. His boarding arrangements are not known, but he must have lived in the area, for on April 5, 1872, George Washington Henderson became a formal member of the Underhill Congregational Church. W. Scott Nay, later to become a beloved doctor and leading citizen in Underhill, was his school companion at the Academy and later remembered him in a letter to the UVM Alumni Weekly in 1936: "It was a most satisfactory privilege for me to protect him from the jibes of some discourteous students who, because of his color, thought themselves to be his superiors. It is needless to say that he outranked them all in scholarship as he excelled them in demeanor. His record has shown him to be a second Booker Washington."



After several years in Underhill, the young man went to Barre, graduating from the Spaulding Academy. He still remained a member of the Underhill church. He went on to study at the University of Vermont, where his career from then on has been quite well documented. At the University he was an outstanding student, graduating at the head of his class in 1877, the first member of his race to be formally elected to the scholastic fraternity, Phi Beta Kappa. He was leader of his class and a member of the Delta Psi fraternity (along with contemporary, John Dewey.) The 1877 commencement at which he received his A.B. degree was held in the College Street Congregational Church. He gave an honorary address at the ceremony, "The Economy of Moral Forces in History". The Burlington Free Press covered the event and commented, "Mr Henderson's effort, in point of interest and ability, as well as of earnestness and excellence of delivery, asked no odds of any other on the programme. When it is considered that its author was born a slave and twelve years ago had not learned to read, its maturity of thought and good taste in presentation must be considered truly marvelous."

In 1875-76, while he was a student at the University, he served as a teacher in the Jericho Academy. In the summers he worked on a farm in Waitsfield. After receiving his degree, he became a teacher and then the Principal of the Craftsbury Academy, along the way earning an M.A. degree from UVM, reading a paper on "Conservation". He went on to Yale Divinity School where in 1883 he received a B.D. degree and a Hooker Fellowship for graduate study in Berlin. He was



accompanied to Berlin with his new wife, the young Preceptress (teacher of drawing, music, elocution and bookkeeping) at the Craftsbury Academy. When they returned to Vermont, they settled in Newport, where Mr Henderson held the position of principal of the elementary school. It was in 1886 that he formally transferred his membership from the Underhill Congregational Church. His time in Newport was short, for tragedy befell, with the untimely death of both his wife and infant. Both are buried in a family grave in Orleans County. At this time, his former mentor at the Underhill Academy, Oscar Atwood (UVM 1864) was president of Straight University (now Dillard) in New Orleans. He may have encouraged the young widower to come South, where he became an ordained Congregational minister in 1888, serving for two years as pastor of the Central Congregational Church. In 1890 he accepted the chair of theology at Straight University and pastorate of the University Church. In 1904, he became Dean of Theology at Fiske University, and in 1909 went on to Wilberforce University in Ohio, where he taught theology and classical languages until his retirement in 1932. Throughout his career he was in demand as a lecturer and editor. He died in 1936 and is buried in Wilberforce, Ohio. He often visited in Vermont with his second wife and kept his relationships with friends in the state. In 1999, he was honored with an historic site marker in Belvidere, as a "Minister, Educator, Champion of his Race".

Also, in 1999, the Vermont Conference of the UCC (United Church of Christ) established a George W. Henderson scholarship at Dillard University in New Orleans. "It honors an extraordinary gentleman whose life impacted so many and left a positive look on our history, and in whose memory we can give others an opportunity to make a difference."

### ~~Spiritual Revival

The opening of the railroad and the location of a depot in Underhill Flats in 1877 had created a thriving commercial center there, while the overall population in Underhill steadily declined following the Civil War, as did the general population of Vermont. In spite of the declining population, however, the many churches thrived and dominated life in the villages of Underhill and Jericho through the end of the century and the turn of the next. The nineteenth century was marked by the spiritual rebirth of the "Second Great Awakening" and fiery revival meetings which resulted in surges of new membership. 34 new members joined the First Congregational Church in 1828, 54 in 1840 (after Rev Kellogg's gospel meeting), 20 in 1855 and 1866, 34 in 1876, 22 in 1883. (There were also a few episodes where "false preachers" caused considerable unrest and temporarily drew off membership.) The Reverend S L Bates, Pastor Emeritus (1863-1871), wrote a discourse for the Centennial celebration of The First Congregational Church in 1901, from which much of the historical information related here has been taken. In his concluding remarks, he paid tribute to the Christian mission, (then and now), "This church like all others, has continually nurtured childhood, molded maturing youth, supported old age, comforted bitter griefs, illumined the darkness of death and carried souls up to a blessed immortality".

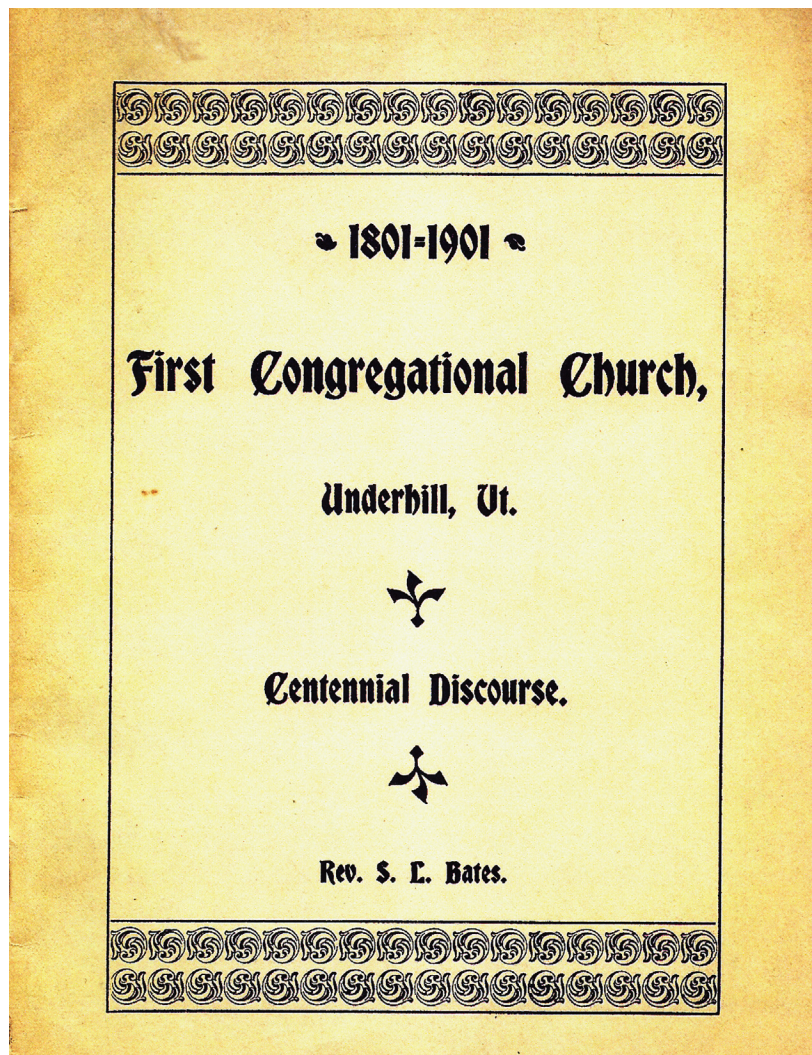
### ~~The Underhill Circuit

The Methodist Episcopal Church which was built on the Jericho side of Underhill Flats in 1857 was called the Underhill church to distinguish it from the Methodist Episcopal Church in Jericho Corners built in 1859. (It was also sometimes described as the Riverside Church.) Both churches had parsonages. The ME Church in Underhill Center did not have a parsonage. The three churches were members of the Underhill Circuit and shared the expenses of a circuit pastor, along with smaller groups of worshipers in North Underhill, Bolton and Lee River. The Histo-

ry of Jericho (1916) relates a description of the distribution of the labors of the pastor in 1869: “ at West Bolton once in two weeks in the morning, Jericho Corners once in two weeks in the afternoon or evening (or five o’clock), the Flats once in two weeks in the afternoon, the Center once in four weeks in the morning, North Underhill, Jericho Center and prayer meeting at the Flats the remaining time.” According to the same History of Jericho, during the period from 1858 and 1916 there were 25 different ministers! Few stayed for more than one or two years. The ministers were supplied to the Circuit by the Presiding Elder of the Methodist Episcopal Church organization in Vermont. They resided in one of the various parsonages.

On August 11, 1906 the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Flats and the drug store of Dr. W. S. Nay beside it were destroyed by a fire which threatened the entire village. At this time Underhill had no fire department, so a message was sent to Burlington, where a fire truck was immediately loaded on a flatcar and brought to Underhill on a special train. However, by the time the train arrived the wind had shifted and a light rain began to fall, preventing further destruction of the village. The following year the present structure, which later became the United Methodist Church of Underhill, was erected (at a cost of \$2750, including furnishings and horse sheds.)

Through the years the Underhill Circuit consolidated to serve the churches in Underhill Center, The Flats, Jericho and Essex.( Some Methodists remember when their minister also preached at the CCC camp in Underhill during the 1930s.)



## ~~A Difficult Time

From 1911 to 1941, during the vicissitudes of the First World War and the Great Depression, The Congregational Church of Underhill was served by Reverend Dr William Cashmore, who was both a doctor of divinity and a doctor of veterinary medicine. He not only served his constituents' spiritual needs, he took care of their cows as well. The railroad had closed in 1938, many families had been displaced by the Federal purchase of land for the Ethan Allen Artillery Range, and by 1941 the Town of Underhill was in serious economic decline. The population was barely 700. In June 1941 at a special meeting where he announced his need for retirement Dr Cashmore spoke eloquently about the serious situation confronting all the Protestant churches. "In this narrow bit of a valley several churches are having a hard time because of the expanding of the Range and people being obliged to move away. Jericho Center Church is in a more serious condition than any others and must cease to exist unless a solution to the problem is found. Officers of the Conference say there are no funds to support it. Six separate churches in this locality are trying to exist." He suggested that the churches consolidate and meet the situation together.

The directors of the Conference suggested that there be two worship centers, one in Underhill and one in Jericho, served by two ministers working together. If such an arrangement could be worked out Dr Cashmore agreed to stay on as interim pastor if an associate pastor could be engaged to help. In October 1941 an agreement was made between the First Congregational Church of Jericho and the First Congregational Church of Underhill to form the Jericho - Underhill Larger Parish. Miss Louise Rodgers from Albany, NY was called as associate pastor to Dr Cashmore. She was not yet ordained, so a special Council of Ordination was called to take care of the problem. After one year she left for Bridport. The Jericho- Underhill Larger Parish was left with one minister and he could no longer carry on. Dr Cashmore suggested that the Congregational and Methodist churches in both communities should join together for united church services. (The Methodist Episcopal denomination had become the United Methodist Church in 1939.) The idea was explored but no agreement could be found and the matter was dropped. In 1942 in the midst of the war there was a shortage of ministers. There were 25 vacancies just in the Vermont Congregational Churches. In desperation the Larger Parish engaged a Harvard divinity student for the summer of 1943. That November Reverend George Beach came to serve the three churches, living in the Jericho Center parsonage. Dr William Cashmore finally became Pastor Emeritus, although he continued as an active member of the Underhill congregation. In January 1946 Dr Beach tendered his resignation. He was worn out and simply needed a rest. He was offered a year's leave of absence, but he reconsidered his resignation, provided that his wife, who was licensed to perform some official church functions, could be engaged as associate pastor.

## ~~ The Mansfield Circuit

In the summer of 1946 the Larger Parish and the Methodist Fellowship agreed to hold union services in July and August in alternate churches in Underhill Flats. Then in March 1947 Dr Beach announced his decision to resign by May first. A meeting was called attended by the Methodist District Superintendent, the Congregational Executive Minister and representatives from area churches of both denominations. There were six churches to be considered, three Congregational churches and three Methodist. The Methodist Churches in Underhill Flats, Jericho and Essex shared a minister as members of the Mansfield Circuit (formerly the Underhill Circuit). It was under the oversight of the Mansfield Parish Council. The Vermont United Methodist churches are members of the Troy Conference, part of the overarching United Methodist Church organization. Individual Methodist churches receive considerable support and backing from the parent organization which throughout the years has helped to carry parishes through vicissitudes. However, the Methodist congregation in Underhill Center had not survived the difficult times.



# The Mansfield Circuit



Underhill Congregational



Underhill Methodist



Jericho Methodist

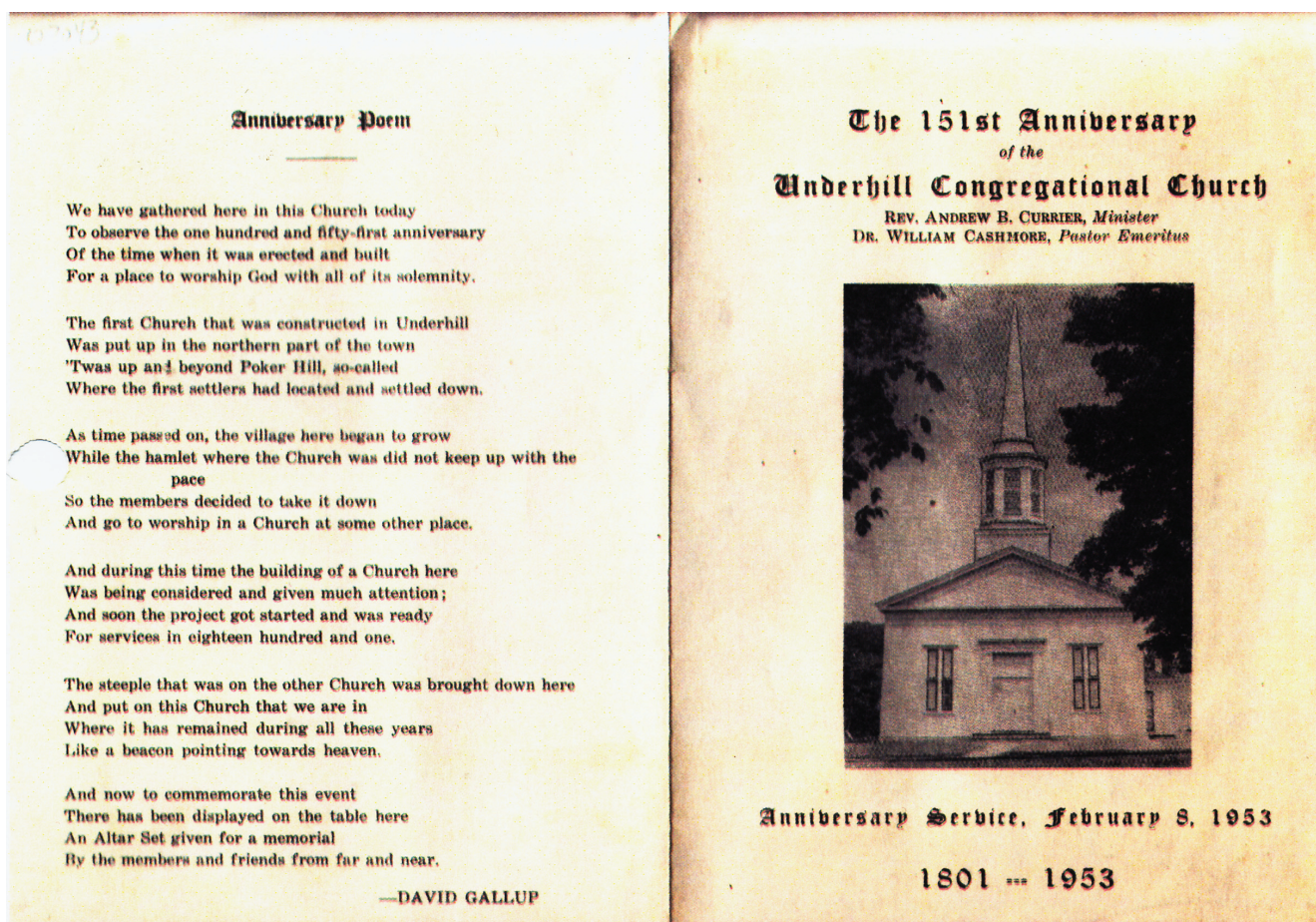


Essex Center Methodist



## ~ The Yoke Agreement

Somehow the First and Second Congregational Churches in Jericho managed to consolidate and went their own direction. By the time Dr Beach left in May, a yoke agreement had been arranged by the Underhill Congregational and Methodist parishes. Under the special relationship the two churches would share the worship services and Sunday School. Each church would be used for six months of the year. The salary of the pastor was to be shared along with the Mansfield Circuit (which then included the Methodist churches in Jericho Corners and Essex). The details of other expenses were worked out. Each church would retain and maintain its own properties and would retain its own cash resources and endowment; each church would continue to pay its own denominational apportionments. New members would join either church, but the union services were to be held under Methodist leadership. Signing for the Congregationals were Eugene Metcalf, Elwood Clark, Edna Pollard, Marion Mead and Lillian Cross; for the Methodists, Charles Thompson, J.E. Foster, P.J.Kinsley, W.A.Wetherbee and H.W. Austin. The original agreement, dated May 1, 1947, was for one year. The trial arrangement lasted almost twenty five years. The First Congregational Church of Underhill became a member of The Mansfield Circuit.



In 1960 Pastor LeFevre served four congregations and was responsible for 700 souls. After preaching for the combined worship in Essex, where he resided in the parsonage, he preached in Jericho Corners and then in Underhill. It was a formidable task to minister effectively to three communities, with separate churches, officers and programs. Pastor LeFevre suggested that the two Underhill churches would be better served by a pastor living in the community, ministering to the two congregations. In 1962 a serious study of the Underhill Church situation was initiated. In 1964 the Mansfield Parish Council decided to dissolve the three point charge within three years. In 1966 the Reverend John Peterson reported, "There is no more important mission for



our church than to present a united witness in the community. The progress the Congregational and Methodist people have made toward reaching a united church is encouraging. The United Church Study Committee has met four times since May and drawn up a tentative constitution. It is searching to find a way to support a resident minister and plans to undertake a canvas of the community to ascertain the Protestant potential.”

#### ~~Underhill-Jericho Joint Worship

In 1967 the Underhill Women’s Guild and the Methodist Women’s Society of Christian Service agreed to form the United Women’s Fellowship, a pillar of the church today. By the late ‘60s the population decline in Chittenden County had been reversed to such an extent that in 1968 the Essex Methodist Church was able to offer a full-time position to Reverend James Clark, who was then serving the entire Mansfield Circuit. The pressure was on for the other churches to find a resident minister of their own. The congregations rose to the challenge and in June 1968 engaged United Methodist minister, Reverend Marcheta Pebbles (later, District Superintendent), to serve the joint congregation in Underhill and the Methodist congregation in Jericho Corners. She took up residence in the Methodist parsonage in Underhill Flats and began a ministry which nurtured the spirit of growth toward a more lasting union.

During the years of joint worship, it came to be customary to use the Congregational Church in the cold months because it had a better furnace. It also had a kitchen, but since there was no basement, the water could not be used in the winter. The Methodist building was used in the summer. When the time came to change churches, the congregation would carry the hymnals from one building to the other, singing together “Blessed Be The Tie That Binds”. (It was a project for some of the men to move the small, but heavy, organ back and forth for the seasons.)

There was a need in the town for a building to serve as a meeting house for the Senior Citizens. The small parish house next to the Methodist Church was available and with the help of some of the tradesmen in the community and the church youth group, the building was modified to include a kitchen, meeting room and toilet facilities, heated to be useful throughout the year. It served as the XYZ Senior Center until a social room was later created in the United Church.

#### ~~The United Church Of Underhill

Formal discussions leading to the formation of the United Church of Underhill began early in 1973 and were held on a weekly schedule to formulate the Articles of Agreement which are the basis of the union. The Rev Donald Brushett, United Methodist District Superintendent and Rev Edward Treat, Executive Minister of the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ, were the denominational representatives in the process. (Nationally, the Congregational Christian Churches had merged with the Evangelical and Reformed Church to form the United Church of Christ (UCC) in 1957.) The United Church committee consisted of Marion Fay, Edwin Moore, Harold Moss, Tom Woodward and Marianne Worden for the Congregationalists; Doug Keith, Leroy Keith, Ken Mitchell, Peter Mitchell, Mable Priest, Harold Sargent and Glenn Towle for the Methodists. The Articles of Agreement were adopted by vote of the congregations on July 25, 1973. They were signed for the Underhill United Methodist Church on September 28, 1973 and for the First Congregational Church of Underhill on December 10, 1973. On September 30, 1973 the Reverend Richard B. Crocker from the United Church of Christ ministry was called to serve the United Church of Underhill and a new era was launched. Reverend Crocker served fifteen and a half years.



Rev. Marcheta Pebbles and Rev. Richard B. Crocker, October Wedding, 1973

### ~~Consolidation Of Properties

At the beginning of the union the church owned two "meetinghouses", two parsonages and the small Senior Center. One of the difficult points of agreement had been the disposition of the properties. While the Congregational Church owned its buildings, the Methodist buildings were actually the property of the United Methodist Church Troy Conference with headquarters in Saratoga Springs, NY. It took much negotiation and much good faith on all parts to persuade the Conference to deed the Methodist buildings to the new United Church. In 1974, in a formal ceremony at the annual Troy conference in Poultney, Vermont, the Methodist property deeds were delivered to Edwin Moore as representative of the United Church of Underhill. It was a momentous occasion.

The church members had decided to use the Congregational church building for the United Church and to sell the Methodist Church and both parsonages. In 1973 David Gallup, who owned the land behind the church with a large house thereon, was in a hospital; his property was for sale. Church members recognized that the house would be a fine parsonage and that the ell could be modified for Sunday School rooms, very much needed. In addition, the extra acreage would provide driveway and parking space and expansion potential. Marion Fay, Leroy Keith and Edwin Moore visited Mr Gallup to discuss the possible purchase of his property by the church. (It was an act of faith, for the Articles of Agreement had not yet been voted on, but the Congregational parsonage was available for immediate sale.) Mr Gallup was pleased to make the arrangement. Shortly thereafter he died. The deed was transferred on June 20, 1974. The former Congregational parsonage was sold in June of that year and the Methodist parsonage in December. The United Methodist Church building was sold to the United Christian Assembly in 1982, fulfilling a hope that the building could be maintained as a place of worship. Leroy Keith handled all the real estate transactions for the church.

## ~~Property Renovations And Improvements

As soon as the church received the deed for the Gallup property, work began to renovate the house to provide a parsonage, conference room and church school classrooms. Church members worked diligently for five months to complete the project and it was ready to receive the Crocker family in early December 1974. On New Year's Day 1975 the open house was attended by more than 100 visitors.

On October 15, 1978 the church membership voted to borrow \$10,000 from the United Church of Christ Board for Homeland Ministries for energy conservation and building improvement. In 1847 the Congregational building had been erected without a foundation and the facilities were primitive. There was no basement under the building; the huge sills were set on stones laid on the ground, which fortunately was well- drained sand. In all the 130 years the wooden structure had maintained its integrity. A hole excavated under the sanctuary held a hot air furnace with one grill for heating the church. The kitchen facility could not be used in the cold weather because the water lines were above ground and the only sanitary facility was a " privy" (truly, in 1979!) off of the front vestibule.

At the annual meeting on January 18, 1979 the members voted to undertake a project to excavate a basement under the church, build a proper foundation, install toilet facilities, create a kitchen and classrooms and to put in a full heating system. Groundbreaking for the project took place after the Easter service. With experts to raise the building and excavate the earth beneath it, the project proceeded. It was a queasy summer with the church perched high on huge timbers. On September 16, 1979 the cornerstone was symbolically dedicated by members of the Masonic Lodge and celebrated by the church membership. The church building now had a fully-weatherized basement with windows, a large kitchen facility, meeting room and classrooms. There were toilet facilities front and back, each with its own septic system, and the entire church was heated with a comfortable hot water system. In addition, new walks, a driveway and parking area were created. In 1988 the steeple was repaired and covered with copper. Later the church roof was replaced, a reception room was created behind the sanctuary, a wheelchair ramp was added. Members helped with painting projects on the buildings. For the first time the church property was surveyed and an onerous dispute regarding the line adjacent to the former Tower and Oaks Store was resolved. It took nearly ten years, with hard work and dedication by all the membership, those who gave of their time and effort and those who helped to raise the necessary funds, but the church properties were ready to serve the challenges to which the United Church was called to respond.



## ~Church Music

Throughout the years music has filled the United Church with a talented Choir, first under the directorship of the outstanding organist, Howard Wilson. Lois Nassau directed the choir and managed the music for the service for over 10 years, with Janet Gallagher as organist. When Lois retired, Janet became music director as well as organist. In 2000 a special vocal choir anthem was commissioned to celebrate the music ministry of the church and the dedication of long-time music director, Janet Gallagher: A Place in the Valley, by Nancy Price and Don Besig. Sandy Niles made a gift of handbells to the church and the resulting Handbell Choir is outstanding. Their performances add special musical contributions and make holiday times particularly festive in the life of the church.

The Mason and Hamlin reed organ, purchased in 1894 by the dedicated ladies of the church who each had earned a dollar toward the cost (and memorialized their efforts in the 'Dollar Poems') languished for many years during the periods of church renovation. Then in 1999, through the generosity of the family of Marylou Herr, the instrument was completely rebuilt and dedicated to her memory. The dedication concert paid tribute to the ladies of the 'Women's Industrial Society' and their book of 'Dollar Poems' was reprinted for all to enjoy.



### 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MUSICAL CONCERT

SPONSORED BY "THE LUNCH BUNCH"

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2010

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF THE

**MASON HAMLIN 107 REED ORGAN**

BUILT & PURCHASED IN 1894

**Reed Organ Solo . . . . . Sharon Damkot**

Oh! Had I Jubal's lyre by George Frideric Handel

Going Home by Antonín Dvořák

**Piano Solo . . . . . Warren Irish**

Playing a medley of three songs

**United Church of Underhill Choir**

Singing two Gospel Spirited Songs

**Clarinet Solo . . . . . Edwin Moore**

Erwin, A Fantasia for clarinet

Accompanied by Sharon Damkot

**Piano Solo . . . . . Hunter Groff**

Playing a medley of his own compositions

**Choral Group . . . . . Men @ First**

Singing medley of five songs

**Reed Organ Solo . . . . . June Packard**

Playing a selection of Beatle songs

A free will offering will be collected to benefit our local Food Shelf

Please join us for refreshments in the Fellowship Room

THE LUNCH BUNCH

Don Balch	Kevin Goldenbogen
Roland Burroughs	Dave Kelley
Don Canedy	Bill Lewis
Bob Earley	Peter Mitchell
Robert Fowler	Tom Niles
Bill Frank	Lou Wilson

## ~~Continuing Progress

In the succeeding years, the United Church of Underhill has become a major influence in the communities of Underhill and Jericho. Like the meetinghouse of yesteryear, the church building has become a center for citizens to meet, both for worship and for other important functions of the community. In addition to Sunday Worship, the Church welcomes people from throughout the community to many events and activities.

Primary among the events is the fall Underhill Harvest Market, traditionally held on the last weekend in September, with crafts, a country store, cider, a soup kitchen run by the United Women's Fellowship, a cookie factory, a book nook, antiques and collectibles in the "clutter barn", a flea market and entertainment all weekend long. Truly a community event, other church and community groups have joined in the Harvest Market with fund-raising sales, dinners and other activities stretching along Route 15 from the firehouse to the lumberyard and down Park Street to the Underhill Cemetery. Indeed, the Harvest Market has become a noteworthy event in the state and it has been estimated that 10,000 people have attended in some years, from near and far.



The United Church has supported both the United Methodist and United Church of Christ denominations in extending their work beyond the Underhill and Jericho communities and has given generously to the One Great Hour of Sharing and other causes. Church members have given of their talents in building houses for the Habitat for Humanity project, given blood in the Red Cross drives sponsored by the Lion's club, and participated in Crop Walk, the Heifer Project, Meals on Wheels, and the area Food Shelf Programs. The United Women's fellowship has been actively involved in service projects for the church and outreach, especially ABC Quilts for Children.



## ~Ecumenical Commitments

From the beginning The United Church has supported ecumenical programs. There has been a commitment to unity in whatever means it has been possible to share in worship or mission. In 1983 an Underhill-Jericho Ecumenical Ministry was founded which includes St Thomas Catholic Church, along with most of the Protestant churches in the two communities. Among other activities, the Ministry sponsors a food shelf and clothing distribution center and cares for local families in need.

## ~~Evolving Directions

Over the years revisions of some of the Articles of Agreement have been made, but, throughout the years the United Church has been guided by a Statement of Purpose which was formally adopted in 1983: "The purpose of the United Church of Underhill is to be a Christian community that offers spiritual growth to all and responds to the needs of people according to the teachings of Christ."

In 1998, the United Church voted to buy the adjacent building, originally built by the Knights of Pythias, later used as a Grange Hall, and finally serving as the Gifford Funeral Home for many years. In 2001, it was made useable for public functions and its first application was to house the Clutter Barn for the Harvest Market. The same year the church office was moved from the parsonage annex to new quarters in the basement of the church. The parsonage annex was renovated and acquired new life as a study for the pastor, who now has regular visiting hours for parishioners in an inviting environment.

In 1998 a Peace Pole was erected in front of the church reading, "May Peace Prevail on Earth" After the devastating tragedy of September 11, 2001, when peace was so drastically threatened, a new addition was made liturgy. The service begins with the lighting of a 'Peace Candle'. There is a silent prayer for peace and the congregation sings the hymn 'Let There Be Peace on Earth'. Rev. Kevin Goldenbogen has been an inspiring pastor since 2008.

## ~~The Future

In 1901 in his dissertation for the centennial celebration of the founding of the first church of Christ in Underhill on December 29, 1801, the Reverend S L Bates challenged the congregation. "As we turn from the past we must face the present and look down through the future. Our backward look today suggests important lessons for you. Remember you are acting in the line of those who have gone before and for the welfare of those who shall come after. You stand in a goodly line. Others have labored and you are entered into their labor. The work committed to you is the Lord's work, and the Lord is your Leader. Dare you, then, in view of your responsibility to him and to generations to come, hesitate for a moment in doubt and discouragement, or expect anything less than success and victory? Your trust is surely a sacred one. It is yours to carry forward towards completion the work the fathers begun, to give greater vigor and efficiency through your lives to the truth upon which they builded, and, in your measure, to hasten the coming of our Lord's kingdom here and throughout the world."



40th Old Fashioned Harvest Market, September 27, 2014

John Moore, Penny Moore, Ed Moore, Betty Moore, Tom Moore, Rick and Linda Presson

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