



**The Original Congregational Church**  
Wrentham, Massachusetts

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**275th Anniversary**  
1692-1967



# THE ORIGINAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

WRENTHAM, MASSACHUSETTS

WILLIAM B. PERRY  
Pastor

ROBERT T. CARLSON  
Student Assistant Pastor

LIONEL A. WHISTON  
Pastor Emeritus

J. ARTHUR GOGGIN  
Organist  
and Choir Director

DORIS C. DULEY  
Anniversary Committee  
Chairman

Dear Friend:

Every birthday or anniversary marks a milestone along life's way, giving us the opportunity to pause and take stock: to look back over the years and see how far we have come — to assess our present position — and, in the light of our responsibilities and opportunities, to clear our sights, sharpen our vision, and press on toward the goal of our high calling with renewed vigor and determination.

Traditionally, the first Congregational church came into being at Norwich, England, 385 years ago — and it was only 110 years later that our Church was formally established. We have a goodly heritage and a proud history of service to God and man both in this community and to the ends of the world in the 275 years which have elapsed since that time.

How very different our Church is in 1967 from what it was in 1692 — its membership of 650 men, women and children compared to the 10 men who signed the original covenant . . . its stately meeting house with Bullfinch steeple compared to the first one room log house and watch tower! Yet, lest we should be tempted to boast that whatever has been accomplished is the work of human hands alone, it is most fitting and proper that we set aside this special time to give thanks to God for His goodness, guidance and protection in the past, and to here dedicate ourselves anew to the unfinished work of Christ's kingdom.

Faithfully,

*William B. Perry*

**HOME-COMING SERVICE**  
**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1967 - 11:00 A.M.**

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**SILENT MEDITATION AND PRAYER**

(Let the people on entering God's house sit in quietness or kneel reverently, asking God's blessing upon themselves and all others who have come to this house to worship.)

**ORGAN PRELUDE** Largo Handel

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Pastor: This is the day that the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

People: Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name.

Pastor: The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him.

People: Surely the Lord is in this place: this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

\*HYMN 251 ..... "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty"

**\*UNISON PRAYER OF INVOCATION**

O Thou who makest Thyself known in the stillness, let us feel Thy presence in this sacred place. Make us to be of that company of saints who have worshipped here in spirit and in truth; through the voices of men and the the instruments of praise give us to lift our hearts to Thee; and so, O Lord, purify our lives that when we go forth into the world from our worship of Thee we may go forth in Thy strength and Thy love. This we ask through Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, who taught us to pray together, saying . . . .

**\*THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**\*THE GLORIA PATRI**

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**CHILDREN'S STORY**

\*HYMN 485 ..... "This Is My Father's World"

(During the singing of this hymn, the teachers and pupils of the Church School, through grade four, will leave the sanctuary for their classes.)

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**THE SCRIPTURE LESSON**

Psalm 23

**ANTHEM** Brother James' Air

Jacob

**CALL TO PRAYER**

Pastor: The Lord be with thee.

People: And with thy spirit.

Pastor: Let us pray. O Lord, show Thy mercy upon us.

People: And grant us Thy salvation.

Pastor: O God, make clean our hearts within us.

People: And take not Thy Holy Spirit from us.

PASTORAL PRAYER AND CHORAL RESPONSE

\*HYMN 79 ..... "The King of Love My Shepherd Is"

SERMON

THE GREAT PURSUIT

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life...."

Psalms 23:6a

PRESENTATION OF CITATIONS

To the Rev. Lionel Whiston on the 50th Anniversary of his ordination to the Christian ministry.

To Miss Katherine Mix on the completion of 35 years as a nurse at our mission in Marathi, India.

RECOGNITION OF FIFTY YEAR MEMBERS

OFFERTORY

Berceuse

Delbruck

\*DOXOLOGY AND PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

\*HYMN 300 ..... "Rise Up, O Men of God!"

BENEDICTION AND CHORAL AMEN

CHIMES

ORGAN POSTLUDE

March Postlude in C

Stults

\*(Congregation Standing)

\*\*\* (Seating by the Ushers)



In gratitude to God for their lives of devoted Christian service, we wish to recognize the following persons who have been members of the Original Congregational Church of Wrentham for fifty or more years:

Joining in 1895	Helen C. Cooper	1915	Agnes Power Mary M. Winter
1899	Walter A. Hatch		Lillian Q. Jamieson
1901	Josephine F. McEwen Fannie G. Winter		Florence W. Holden Gertrude H. Goodroe Ethel W. Williams
1907	Charles C. Winter Lizzie E. Hedding	1916	Ina B. Manchester Leroy B. Willard
1911	Louise B. Young Bertha E. White	1917	Sara E. Peck Grace W. Capron Albert W. Jamieson Gladys A. Grant Cora M. Cook
1912	Bertha M. Jenness		
1913	Mabel L. Raymond		

**ANNIVERSARY SERVICE OF REDEDICATION**  
**SUNDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 8, 1967      -      7:30 O'CLOCK**

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**SILENT MEDITATION AND PRAYER**

**ORGAN PRELUDE**

*Largo*

Chopin

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

- Pastor: Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name.  
People: O Lord, my God, Thou art very great; Thou art clothed with honor and majesty.  
Pastor: I will lift up my voice in the sanctuary. I will praise Him with songs of gladness who is the Rock of my Salvation.  
People: I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.  
Pastor: O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.  
People: For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.

\*HYMN 20 ..... "Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above"

**\*UNISON PRAYER**

Almighty and most gracious God, through whose strength our fathers were guided and saved, and by whose mercy we are brought to this blessed day of remembrance; look with compassion, we beseech Thee, on us Thy children gathered in the peace of this Thy house. Receive us now, we entreat Thee, as we offer to Thee the love of our hearts and the service of our lives; and grant that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts may be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

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Greetings from the Attleboro Area Council of Churches  
The Rev. Robert Ryder, Executive Secretary

Greetings from the Middlesex-Mendon Association and the  
Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ  
The Rev. Donald Simpson, Area Conference Minister

**ANTHEM**

*I Will Magnify Thee*

Veil

**THE SCRIPTURE LESSON**

Psalm 84

\*HYMN 260 ..... "The Church's One Foundation"

**SERMON**

*"Not Taking the Church for Granted"*

The Rev. Dr. Albert Penner, Minister and President,  
Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ

## \*THE ACT OF REDEDICATION

Pastor: Desiring to recognize our indebtedness to God, whose beneficent grace and providence have guided this church and its people through two hundred and seventy-five years of service, we do stand to rededicate ourselves to the glory of God, to the service of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the honor of the Holy Spirit.

People: For two hundred and seventy-five years of the ministry of Thy Word, for wise and earnest preaching of Thy precepts and the way that leads to eternal life; and for faithful ministers who have served as our pastors;

Pastor: For two hundred and seventy-five years of fellowship and brotherly love - and the favor of God in the growth and service of this church, and for God's blessing upon the means of grace here faithfully administered;

People: For two hundred and seventy-five years of Thy help in promoting the work of Christian missions at home and abroad, and for assistance and encouragement in Christian education and evangelism;

Pastor: For two hundred and seventy-five years of proclaiming the sanctity of the home and family, for the instruction of Thy people in high and holy things, for the building of Christian character and the teaching of honor, reverence, and self-control;

People: In humble gratitude to all who have loved and served this church and have gone from us to join the Church Triumphant; we render unto Thee, the God of our Fathers, our deep and heart-felt thanksgiving.

All: Now, therefore, we the members and friends of this congregation, in the presence of almighty God, conscious that we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, grateful for our rich inheritance, and sensible of the sacrifices of our fathers, do humbly rededicate ourselves, this church and all its appointments, and all the powers within us, to the glory of God, to the honor of the Holy Spirit, and to the service of Him who is the Head of the Church, even Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

## PRAYER OF REDEDICATION AND CHORAL RESPONSE

\*HYMN 365 ..... "Faith of Our Fathers, Living Still"

## BENEDICTION AND CHORAL AMEN

## CHIMES

ORGAN POSTLUDE

Slumber Song

Schumann

\* (Congregation Standing)

\*\*\* (Seating by the Ushers)

Following this evening's service you are cordially invited to the church vestry for the cutting of the 275th Anniversary Cake and refreshments.

## HISTORY OF THE ORIGINAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

The Original Congregational Church of Wrentham in 1967 celebrates the 275th anniversary of its organization in 1692. It was then that it became an autonomous church, with the right to ordain its own ministers and to manage its own affairs.

The lapse of nearly 30 years since the time the first settlers came to the plantation then known as Wollomonopoag was due originally to dependence on the Dedham church, from which they came, and later to a four-year break during King Philip's War, when they were forced to retreat to Dedham for refuge. Wrentham was directly in the path of the Indian warriors, and was almost completely destroyed. On their return in 1679 the settlers had to start again from the beginning.

A church in Wrentham had been authorized in 1669 under rules drawn up in Dedham, providing, first, for payment by each proprietor of land, on the basis of "cow common right" as well as improved land, for a minister; second, liberty to call a minister, "with the allowance and consent" of Dedham church authorities; third, "a convenient Meeting House shall be built to which end 2 shillings per cow common shall be paid."

In December of 1669 a letter was sent with 39 signatures inviting Samuel Mann to be their minister, as approved by the Dedham advisors. In 1671 he came to live in Wrentham, where he served until his death in 1719. His son was the first schoolmaster in the town, and his great-grandson was the famous educator Horace Mann.

It was not until 1682 that the first Meeting House was built with assistance from Dedham, across the street from the present building where its doorstep now stands as a monument to mark the site. It was 36 by 26 feet, and 16 feet high, with a raised watchtower. It served also as storage for ammunition and a ladder to fight fires in the town, as well as the starting point for patrols by town watchmen, and for town meetings. It was replaced in 1721 by a larger building with two galleries in which men and women sat separately on either side. In 1766 a third Meeting House was constructed on the present location, which was much more elaborate. Besides galleries it provided enclosed family pews, which were assigned on the basis of property valuation - a cause for much ill-feeling and the so-called "pouting seats". Finally in 1834 the main part of the present building was dedicated, the cost being partly defrayed by "Meeting House Stock". In 1878 a chapel was added, which was replaced in the 1950's by the present Parish House. A complete renovation and redecoration of the sanctuary and narthex was completed in 1958, and a Memorial Chapel was furnished and dedicated in 1962.

In the early days primitive "noon houses" near the church provided shelter for eating and visiting between compulsory attendance at the morning and afternoon services. These might be said to be the prototypes of the present provisions in the Parish House, the vestry, and the Whiston House. A "parsonage" for Samuel Mann was built ten years before the first Meeting House, which was adjacent. The present parsonage was built in 1893.

The young Wrentham church was notable in having four of its pastors spend their entire active ministry in this town - a total of little less than two-thirds of its history. A monument in the Wrentham cemetery commemorates their graves. Below is the roll of its pastors.

Samuel Mann .....	1671-1719
Henry Messinger .....	1719-1750
Joseph Bean .....	1750-1784
David Avery .....	1786-1794
Elisha Fiske .....	1799-1851
Horace James (assistant 8 years) .....	1843-1853
William L. Ropes .....	1853-1862
Charles L. Mills .....	1863-1865
William R. Tompkins .....	1866-1891
Edward C. Hood .....	1892-1895
William J. Minchin .....	1899-1903
Frederic N. Rutan .....	1903-1907
Dempster D. Gorton .....	1908-1914
Melville A. Shafer .....	1914-1946
Lionel A. Whiston .....	1947-1961*
William B. Perry .....	1961-

\* now Pastor Emeritus

The years from 1786 to 1799 were unhappy for the church. They included the ministry of David Avery, which caused great dissension because of his personality and divergent beliefs, and resulted in his withdrawal with many church members to establish a church in Norfolk, leaving only 10 members in Wrentham. For five years, during which they were reported to have asked 48 candidates, the church was without a minister. Meanwhile they obtained permission from the General Court in 1799 to eliminate the control of the town over church affairs, at the cost of losing tax support.

Much happier had been the separations in 1738, when 24 members were released to form a church in Franklin, and in 1779, when 18 of its members formed a new congregation in Foxborough, thus justifying the title of "Original", adopted in 1799.

During the 50 years ministry of Elisha Fiske, which began in 1799, the church recovered so completely that, with more than 200 new members, it could build a new Meeting House in 1834.

Other new developments were the organization of a Sabbath School in 1827. A small group of women braiding straw in 1808 to raise funds for charitable purposes has expanded into support for missions today. In 1868 women were given an equal right to vote on church affairs. In 1888 a Christian Endeavor Society was organized for the special religious interests of youth. A Sewing Circle, started in 1889, has become the present "Women's Society."

Modification to the austerity of the original Wrentham church generally parallel the history of the Congregational Way in New England. During the Great Awakening in the 1840's two revivals were held, bringing into the church some who had not previously belonged. But as late as the 1860's a "Standing Committee" was to discipline members for non-attendance, and excommunications were issued for more serious offenses. In 1776 Hymns, in addition to the Psalms, were first permitted to be sung, and an organ was provided through the sale of fancy straw bonnets made by the women. A quarter century before Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation the Wrentham church had adopted a resolution condemning slavery - "bound by our regard for truth, justice, humanity and religion to have no fellowship with slaveholding ministers and members and churches, and come out from among them and be separate and touch not the unclean thing."

In 1820 they voted to invite visiting church members to partake in the Communion service, and in 1896 individual communion cups replaced the old-style tankards.

In 1961 the Wrentham church voted to merge with the United Church of Christ on the State and National level. While it still retains its Congregational way of worship, broader fields of service and mission have been opened. The culmination of the ecumenical spirit was reached on Thanksgiving Day in 1966 when, in the Wrentham church as in many other places, the representatives of all local churches, including a Catholic priest, participated in the service. It is a long way from the monolithic church-town of 1692 to the broad brotherhood of today.

Note: A "History of the Original Congregational Church of Wrentham", giving much greater detail, was compiled by Minnie D. Bennett in 1959 for the 125th anniversary of the present church building. Copies of this are still available.