

THE UNION CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF MAYNARD

Until the year 1852 the village of Assabet had no formal religious services. The residents went to church in either Sudbury or Stow, in both of which towns there had been churches for many years. It was not always convenient to have conveyance to those towns and the people felt the need of services in their own village.

In 1850 a Sunday School had been organized, with Mr. Amory Maynard as Superintendent, the man for whom the town was later named. The Sunday School meetings were held in the railroad station, which was then at the corner of Main and Sudbury Sts., using settees purchased by interested individuals. On September 23, 1852 a church was organized as a Congregational church, with ten members. Their meetings were at first also held in the railroad station. An Evangelical Society had been formed, on the petition of Amory Maynard and sixteen others, to conduct the financial and business affairs of the church, and this organization continued to do so for the next seventy-five years, when the church itself assumed these functions.

It was not long before the need of a church building was felt, and Amory Maynard became Chairman of a committee "to select three spots and see what encouragement they could get towards erecting a Meeting House." A piece of land on the Stow side of the river was offered to them by Knight & Maynard and was accepted; and it was voted to erect a house of worship to be financed by shares of \$25 each. The church was built in 1853 and the settees were moved from the railroad station to the vestry of the new church.

In 1855 a bell was purchased and in 1859 a pipe organ was installed. In 1866 the seating capacity was increased by 20 pews to seat 360 people. In 1883, several years after the town had been incorporated and named for Mr. Amory Maynard, an organ loft was built and Mr. Maynard made a gift of a new Ryder organ to replace the old one. In 1889 the beautiful Dorcas window was placed in the church, and in 1890 Deacon Lorenzo Maynard, a son of Amory, fitted the auditorium with stained glass windows, and the connecting chapel was built. In 1909 a gale blew down the church spire, which was not rebuilt until 1920; and in later years chimes were added during the pastorate of the Rev. Norman MacLean.

In 1927 the church adopted a constitution and by-laws under incorporation, with the name "Union Congregational Church". At this time the financial and business affairs were taken over from the Evangelical Union Society.

In the early days there was a service each Sunday at 10:30 in the morning, Sunday School at 12, a second service at 1:30 in the afternoon, and a prayer service in the evening. The church has had many fine pastors during the years, and a number of

members have done notable work. One of the outstanding former members and a teacher in the Sunday School was Miss Corinne Shattuck, who became a famous missionary in Turkey and carried on her work there for about thirty-six years. Other members well-known in religious work were Alex Sloan and Christopher Collier, both of whom went into the ministry. In more recent years Howard Weaving, now a minister in New York City, was inspired by the training he received in the local church.

In 1877 the 25th anniversary was observed; in 1902, the golden anniversary; and in 1927 the 75th anniversary, at which time a medal was given to William H. Gutteridge who had served the church as Deacon for fifty years. In 1952, during the pastorate of the late Dr. Paul B. Pardy, the 100th anniversary was observed, and a beautiful newly decorated sanctuary was dedicated. This past year, in the pastorate of Rev. O. D. Ullom, the first part of an extensive building program was completed, including a number of rooms for Schurch School classes, and a new fellowship hall was dedicated.

As the church has increased in membership, so the Church School has also grown from its very small beginning in 1850. It is a very important part of the church and has a fine staff of teachers.

A Ladies' Benevolent Society was organized by Mrs. Amory Maynard in October 1851, even before the church itself. This group helped in furnishing the meeting house, with carpets, pew cushions, pulpit, and pulpit furniture. Later they assisted in raising money for the first organ installed; and they helped in purchasing the pews that are in use today. In the smallpox epidemic of 1883 the society did a great deal of work in the community; and through the years they have provided clothing and other necessities for the needy here and abroad through missionaries at work in many parts of the world. They were always ready to lend a helping hand wherever there was need.

Another active organization for many years was the Men's League, started in 1904. Mr. Amory Maynard, grandson of the first Amory Maynard, was Chairman at the organization meeting.

The Philathea Group, first formed as a Sunday School class under the leadership of Mrs. Sumner Rogers, and later the Service Group were both very active, helping both the local church and missions. In 1956 the three women's groups combined into a Women's Fellowship, with all women of the church working together to assist the church and to give continued support to Our Christian World Mission, both here and abroad.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF PROGRESS

The history of any church unfolds like a panorama, bringing to the eye an ever-flowing series of events, not spectacular nor world shaking, but steady and faithful to the traditions and tenets of Christianity. So it is with the record of the Union Congregational Church, compiled in 1927 by the late William H. Gutteridge, amended and augmented by the highlights of the past twenty-five years, and bringing to completion one hundred years of loyal Christian service in the community.

Up to the year 1846 this town was a small farming area in the Assabet River valley. In addition to a few farms, a grist mill was located on Mill Street, and a paper mill at the corner of Parker and Waltham Streets. Both of these mills together employed only a dozen people. The nearest church was in Stow, three miles distant.

In 1846, Amory Maynard, a contractor and builder from Marlboro, came here and purchased the water privileges and much land, built dams for water power and erected a small mill for the manufacture of carpets. A year later he was joined by William H. Knight of Saxonville. The manufacture of carpets proved profitable, and consequently the mill was enlarged from time to time, employing an increasing number of people.

It was inconvenient in those days for the residents to attend the Stow church, and thus arose the necessity of providing church services at home. The first serious consideration to this problem was given at a meeting of interested men, called July 23, 1850, which eight men attended. It was here decided to begin by the organization of a Sunday School, and to meet the initial expense, \$10 was subscribed for paper and supplies. Amory Maynard was chosen as the first Superintendent.

At the next meeting, August 5, other men joined the movement, and such names as the following are recorded: Amory Maynard, William H. Knight, John J. McKay, Haman Smith, Thomas H. Brooks, Artemas Whitney, Benjamin Smith, George Smith, James H. Cheney and Daniel Whitney. Thirty-one settees were purchased at a cost of \$2.76 each and paid for by interested individuals. These were placed in the new railroad station, and everything was ready for the holding of services. Rev. George W. Frost was then engaged for the Sunday preacher.

About the same time the women met and organized the Ladies' Benevolent Society. The first meeting was held on October 2, 1851, in the Smith house on Great Road where Mrs. William F. Litchfield now resides.

By 1852 it was decided that the time had come to organize a church, and this was accomplished September 23, 1852. Four men and five women, namely Amory Maynard, Mr. and Mrs. Haman Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Silas Newton, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Wilder, Sybil Smith and Lydia Stone offered themselves for membership. The church was organized as a "Union Church" under Congregational usage.

The men of the parish united and were incorporated March 31, 1851, under the name of the "Evangelical Union Society" as was the custom in those days, following the time when church and town were

practically identical. This society conducted the financial and business affairs of the church for seventy-five years until August 10, 1927, when the church took over the entire control of the business affairs, adopting a Constitution and by-laws under incorporation, and becoming known as the "Union Congregational Church". This Constitution and by-laws have been amended from time to time and underwent a complete revision in 1951.

At the Parish meeting held March 15, 1852, it was voted "to choose a committee of nine to select three spots, and to see what encouragement they could get towards erecting a Meeting House." Amory Maynard was chairman. On April 12, it was voted that a piece of land on the south side of the road on the Stow side of the river be accepted from Knight and Maynard, that a House of Worship be built, financed by sale of shares of twenty-five dollars each, and that the pews in said House "shall belong to said shareholders until all are sold to recompense them for said House."

On July 12 the committee, having reported the sale of 120 shares at \$25 each, decided on the erection of a church similar to the one in Stow, and proceeded to contract for the building of the church at a cost of \$2,800 above the basement. The House was built, and on March 5, 1853, a committee was directed to appraise the pews and afterwards "set them up for sale, and bid for choice." The settees were moved from the depot to the vestry and the total cost of the new church, including furnishings, was \$3,876.

In 1855 the bell was purchased for \$439. In 1859 a pipe organ was installed in the rear gallery. In 1866 the church was enlarged by adding 20 pews, making the seating capacity 360. In 1883 an organ loft was built and the old organ was replaced by the present Ryder organ, a gift from Amory Maynard because of his son William's interest in music. In 1889 the vestibule was added, and the beautiful Dorcas window installed. In 1890 Deacon Lorenzo Maynard fitted the entire auditorium with stained glass windows, and in 1892-93 built and equipped the connecting chapel. In 1901 the gas lighting system was replaced by electric lighting, and in 1902 the Prudential committee at great effort succeeded in getting all the pew owners to relinquish all rights and title to their pews and turn them over to the church. Then with the help of the Ladies' Society, the old pews were replaced by the present oak pews. Sometime later in 1929, pew rent was abolished, and all pews are now free.

The gale of April 9, 1909 blew down the church spire, and it was not rebuilt until 1920. During Rev. Norman MadLean's pastorate louvres were added to the belfry, and by popular subscription chimes were installed which are a source of pleasure to the whole community.

The parsonage at 30 Brooks Street was built in 1905 at a cost of \$4,157. In 1951, this building was sold, and the property at 43 Brooks Street, being deemed more suitable was bought for \$9,000.

Starting with a membership of nine or ten, additions to the church were received from year to year, notably during the revivals of 1871, when seventy persons were admitted, 1877 when ninety-eight were received into the fold, and 1938 when fifty-two joined the church.

Our oldest member is Gavin Taylor, our senior Deacon, who joined this church in 1888. Mention should be made of those still living whose membership exceeds fifty years. Frank E. Sanderson and Herbert H. Young, 1896, Mrs. Alice Cheney and Mrs. Susie Smith, 1898, and Mrs. Mary Forgie, 1902.

In the early years, morning service was at 10:30, with Sunday School following at 12. Then after a half hour intermission, when the men gathered about the horse sheds, and talked of matters of interest covering many topics, the bell tolled again for afternoon service beginning at 1:30. There was also a prayer service in the evening.

Mention should be made of Miss Corinna Shattuck, "the Heroine of Corfa", a famous missionary in Armenia for about thirty-six years. She was a member of the church 1866-71 and a teacher in the Sunday School, and also of Alex Sloan and Christopher Collier, who became ministers.

In more recent years, Howard M. Weaving, inspired by the early training of the church, studied for the ministry, and now holds a pastorate in the Fort Schuyler Presbyterian Church in New York.

In 1877 the twenty-fifth anniversary was suitably observed, and in 1902, under Rev. Charles Washburn's pastorate the church gave two days to the celebration of its golden anniversary. Again in 1927 the Diamond Jubilee marked the completion of seventy-five years of accomplishment and was duly observed. At this time a medal was given Wm. H. Gutteridge, who had served the church well and faithfully as Deacon for fifty years.

In the period following, sometimes referred to as "the depression years," the church managed to function in a helpful manner. Rev. Matthew A. Vance, pastor from 1930 to 1939, gave unstintingly of his time and strength to minister not only to the needy of the church, but also to the whole community. An emergency fund to assist those in need was instituted under the administration of Thomas F. Parker, Frank E. Sanderson, and Mrs. Charles Wilcox.

During Mr. Vance's ministry, there were many contributions to progress. New hymn books were secured through individual gifts, weekly church calendars were used, choir robes were bought and a suitable closet built for their care, a new stage was built in the chapel through the generosity of Miss-Ruby Hamlin, a loyalty crusade was carried out, fellowship or neighborhood nights were celebrated, a junior choir was started (1935), only the most necessary repair work was effected at church and parsonage. During this period, 187 were received into the fellowship of the church.

From the depression and slow recovery the church went on to new achievement only to be saddened by the dread cloud of war. One hundred and three of the boys from this church were called into service, three of whom gave their lives in defense of home and country. The church members under the direction of a sponsoring committee, Mrs. George Thompson, Mrs. Arthur Jordan, and Mrs. Charles Wilcox, ably abetted by the pastor, Rev. Leonard W. Fowler, organized a plan by which each boy was contacted by members of the congregation. In 1942, Mr. Fowler entered the Navy as a Chaplain and served with valor and distinction until the end of the war. A service flag, donated by Deacon George Wheeler, himself in service, occupied a position of honor in the sanctuary. At the Annual Meeting in 1942, a note for

\$240 which had been held by the Assabet Institution for Savings for a long time was burned in an impressive ceremonial, and the church was free and clear of debt. So it has remained over the past ten years until the present time.

Prior to Mr. Fowler's resignation, he earned the eternal gratitude of the parish by his forward-looking vision, which impelled him to inspire the members to start a fund for building and repairs. This has been drawn upon from time to time.

Mr. and Mrs. Fowler organized a young Homemakers Group, which, though inactive for a time, was probably the nucleus of the present thriving Couples Club.

After a short period of temporary union with the Methodist Church, a new and vigorous minister, Rev. Norman C. MacLean, took over the reins at the Union Congregational Church. Then things began to hum. In addition to the spiritual work of guiding a parish, Mr. MacLean's business acumen and driving energy started a long-range program looking towards the One Hundredth Anniversary of the church in September, 1952. The stained glass windows in the sanctuary were releaded and repaired, the parlors of the Ladies' Benevolent Society and the lower vestry redecorated, a drive for pledges to raise \$12,000 towards the installation of a chancel, and complete renovation of the sanctuary was instituted. Mrs. MacLean banded the young women of the church into a Service Group, which has lived up to its name in every particular.

During the pastorate it was obligatory for the church to investigate, and register its opinion upon the advisability of a merger between the Congregational and Evangelical and Reformed Church. The vote was not in favor; however, at a later date this decision was reversed.

Our next pastor was Rev. Robert E. Burt, a young man who carried on the work so ably planned by his predecessor. The kitchen and dining room have been redone and new equipment installed, additional rest room facilities made available, the old parsonage sold, and a new one purchased. A splendid junior choir trained ably by Mrs. Burt added much to the beauty of the services, as did Mrs. Burt's beautiful voice, so freely used in praise of God.

A new minister, Dr. B. Paul Pardy, came to Maynard in December, 1951. Though so recent an arrival, he has taken up his duties with zeal and diligence and has gone on with the completion of the preparations for the one hundredth anniversary.

And so today we are meeting in a church beautifully appointed, and basically sound. Much of the credit for the five-year program of repairing, rebuilding, and redecorating goes to one man, Harold R. Goodwin, Chairman of the Centennial Building Committee, whose untiring efforts and shrewd business ability have guided and controlled the progress of the renovation with such outstanding success.

It is impossible in a chronicle of this sort to record in any detail the accomplishments of the years, to give credit to all who so richly deserve it, and to cover adequately the splendid work of officers, committees, and members.

We should, however, look for a moment at the organizations

which are the warp and woof of our pattern. The Ladies' Benevolent Society, one year older than the church, the Philathea Group, the Men's League, the Pilgrim Fellowship, the Service Group, the Couples' Club, the Boy Scouts, all working and living in the Christian spirit of service.

Three trust funds have been set up in memory of Mrs. Gavin Taylor, Mrs. William Marshall, and Mr. James H. Mallinson. To these generous memorials should be added the gracious gift of Deacon Wm. H. Gutteridge, who, at his death, had cancelled a note of \$1000 due him from the church.

It is fitting that this history should close with the words used by Deacon Gutteridge in 1927, just as appropriate today. "This briefly, is a history of our Church. It stands today as a memorial to the staunch faith and persistent labors of the past generations who believed in the Evangelical faith, and as an inspiration to the present and coming generations to promote the interests of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by living that Gospel in direct relationship to the Church of the Living God, the Pillar and Ground of the Truth."

Written by Charlotte M. Stockbridge