

The Avon Congregational Church

Time Line and History

by Nora O. Howard

ACC Church Historian, Feb.

8. 2022



Names of ACC

The United Religious Association of Farmington *
Incorporated October 1818 by an Act of the General Assembly.
(its name to become a separate church, after being organized on March 17, 1819)

The Third Church in Farmington*
Name adopted March 17, 1819

The Second Church of Christ in Avon*
Name adopted 1838

The Congregational Church in Avon*
Name adopted 1841

The East Avon Congregational Church of Avon
As per new bylaws, adopted May 2, 1905

The Avon Congregational Church
Adopted May 17, 1921, Annual Report for 1921

The Avon Congregational Church in Avon, Connecticut,
As per 1943 bylaws

the Avon Congregational Church
(small t in 'the'
As per 1953 bylaws

The Avon Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)
As per bylaws of 1969, 1970, 1984, 1992, 2008, 2019

(* Source of the first 4 names, ACC Manual 1915, p. 17)

Time Line of ACC History

(Details selected from a variety of sources; see bibliography at end of this document)

October 1746

People of Farmington who lived in today's Avon area were granted "winter privileges" by the CT General Assembly to worship in their own homes during the winter (December-March), and not have to travel to the Farmington meetinghouse.

1749

31 men signed a petition to the Connecticut General Assembly, requesting that Nod be a separate ecclesiastical society, the Farmington Second Society.

May 1750

CT General Assembly granted the request of 1749. Known as the Second Church in Farmington.

1751

Today's Avon became a separate parish, the "Northington Parish, Second Church in Farmington." Hired first minister, Rev. Ebenezer Booge (Yale 1748). About 31 families. Booge moved with his wife to Northington by May 1751.

November 20, 1751: The church was established in a ceremony by Rev. Booge, with area pastors; 24 members of the Northington Parish adopted a confession of faith and entered into the church covenant. Rev. Booge was ordained one week later. [*Catch'd on Fire Supplement*, p. 87]

1754

First meetinghouse built, at end of today's Reverknolls Road.

August 25, 1754: First worship service in the meetinghouse.

Location of original meetinghouse, 1754: GPS coordinates 41 degrees 47 minutes and 29 seconds N; 72 degrees 49 minutes and 48 seconds W. This is near the foot of the driveway to 191 Reverknolls, and on the east end of the front yard of 205 Reverknolls. The land was owned in 1958 by Mr. and Mrs. G. Harry Davis of Waterville Road. "They have kindly given permission for the marker to be erected, and will be present for its dedication." [*Hartford Courant*, October 2, 1958, p. 10,D, online.]

1769

Rev. Rufus Hawley (Yale 1769) begins his pastorate, which lasted almost 50 years.

1774

April 29, 1774 - birth of ACC architect David Hoadley (d. 1839), born in Waterbury and architect of Ct. meetinghouses and houses. A door he designed for the Judge William Bristol House on the New Haven Green is at the Metropolitan of Art.

1798

Oldest item in ACC's archives (in green scrapbook): a deed of April 9, 1798 for Eldad Woodruff's land.

1799-1800

Religious awakenings in Farmington Valley and Hartford areas.

February 29, 1808

By 1808, the small meetinghouse had become dilapidated. About this time, agitation began about where to build a new meetinghouse. About twenty different times, Society members voted in subsequent years about a location. [*Catch'd on Fire*, 134-135] On Feb. 29, 1808, members voted to abandon the meetinghouse (nicknamed the Lord's Barn) and applied to the county court to appoint a committee to select a new site. The court's choice (Country Club Road near Stony Corners) was unacceptable; dissatisfaction continued. [MacKie, 51]

December 5, 1809

Fundraising began to build in one of three places: near the present site of ACC (6 West Main St.), near Rev. Hawley's house (281 Old Farms Road), and on the northeast corner of Burnham and Country Club Roads (today's West Avon Congregational Church meetinghouse was moved in the 1960s across Burnham Road). Dissatisfaction continued, and some members left the church.

1810

Five delegates from Ct. and Massachusetts met at Rev. Noah Porter's home in Farmington and founded the first foreign missionary society in the United States: The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (known today as Global Ministries). The global interest in missions that took place in Farmington has implications, perhaps, for the symbolic meaning of the globe-shaped medallion decorating ACC's steeple. [Catch'd on Fire, 124.]

1815

Northington Society applied to the Connecticut General Assembly for assistance in deciding where to build a new meetinghouse - West Avon or the center of Avon. [The state established Ecclesiastical Societies, and defined their boundaries.]

1815-1816

38 members withdrew. [MacKie, 52]

1817

February 17, 1817, before the 1754 meetinghouse burned down ten months later.

(From a document in the ACC archives) "The subscribers do hereby promise & agree to procure the quantity of timber that we shall set to our names for the purpose of building a Meeting house near the Turnpike road a little east of the dwelling house of Mr. Amos Wheeler: said timber to be hewed & delivered at or near the place where said Meeting house is to be built by the last day of April next. And also said timber to be of the length & size mentioned in the Bill or list of timber procured by the Building Committee. [Contributing timber that is described by size and quantity, includes from Amos Wheeler, Gideon B. Hart, Silas Goff, Oris Woodford, Selah and Francis Woodford, Elijah Miller, Obatiah Gillet.....*see original document for more.*]

May 1817: General Assembly selected another site, and in May 1817 the members were invited to "set a stake" on the site of the proposed new meetinghouse, at the top of the hill, a quarter mile away from the original Stony Corners area site. (This is about where the Avon Country Club is today.) [MacKie, 53]

December 11, 1817: Rev. Rufus Hawley agreed in writing to relinquish "all further demands on the society." His pastorate was finished.

December 18-31, 1817: exact date unknown. The meetinghouse burned down, by arson. The 1817 fire concluded at least a decade of discord between the congregation about where to build a new meetinghouse. For months previous to the fire, those wanting a new meetinghouse in the northeast of Avon (today's ACC) had been planning to build a new meetinghouse beside well-travelled roads. [*Onward*, 1982, p. 3; *Catch'd on Fire.*]

1818

On March 2, 1818: The Northington Ecclesiastical Society, with about 100 families in the Parish, voted 44-37 to build the new meetinghouse of the Second Church in Farmington on the west side of the Farmington River and near the Center School House. This took advantage of the increasing population in that section. The majority of members of the original church went there (today, the West Avon Congregational Church) The WACC therefore traces its roots to 1751. [Catch'd on Fire, 135]

The minority of the voters considered this decision on March 2 as “an act of tyranny” and separated themselves from the Northington Society. They went ahead with plans to erect a meetinghouse where ACC is today. [MacKie, 54]

Avon Congregational Church Designed by David Hoadley (April 4, 1774 - July 7, 1839). The church archives has a document asking that the the workmanship of the meetinghouse be “not inferior to the workmanship of the Norfolk Meeting House.” The Norfolk meetinghouse was built about 1814, and looks very similar to ACC on the exterior - and in parts of the interior. The steeple is almost identical. There is a round medallion on the steeple too. It was common for church building committees to ask for a design similar to a nearby meetinghouse that they had admired.

Asher Benjamin, a Massachusetts builder, first published his Country Builders Assistant in 1797, giving carpenters a book published in the colonies (rather than English pattern books.) From this they took ideas still largely based on English designs, and tried to meet local preferences. What mattered was that they serve both as religious spaces and as centers of community - a literal meeting house for Sunday worship and town meetings. They were expected to be well-built and centrally located, without unneeded ornament. David Hoadley had engineering knowledge which allowed him to built graceful spaces. [Temples of Grace, pp. 21, 84-85]. J. Frederick Kelly called Hoadley and Ithiel Town “the only designers of early Connecticut Church edifices who are quaffed to receive the title ‘architect.’” [Temples of Grace, pp. 21, 84-85.]

While church architectural historian Frederick Kelly thought that architect David Hoadley designed ACC’s meetinghouse, Peter Mallary (New England Churches and Meetinghouses, 1985) believed Hoadley may have been a skilled master builder of the meetinghouse, and not the designer/architect.

The steeple and exterior/interior of the Warren, CT. church (constructed between 1818-1820) also seems almost identical to ACC. The window behind the Warren pulpit and the high pulpit give an idea of what ACC’s might have looked like.

Sometime in 1818 (notice there was a design plan, since lost)

An undated 1/2 page section of a document in the ACC archives:

“Memorandum of an Agreement between D. Hadley & Wheeler & Wheeler & Woodford” is written on the reverse of the document, in the same handwriting.

On the other side: “for the framing & raising of a Meeting house Timber all found rough hewn. also covering & finishing outside and inside. together with painting outside and inside all the materials to be furnished. The state of workmanship of sd house to be agreeable to a plan of said House now before us & not inferior to the workmanship of Norfolk Meeting House. also lathing & plastering is included for the sum of \$2150

*Spindle and vane not included
Fan lights for after consideration”*

October 5, 1818

Petition dated Oct. 5, 1818 to the Connecticut General Assembly, from the new religious group in Northington, for incorporation of the **United Religious Association of Farmington (also called the United Society of Farmington - ACC's name until 1845.**

Joel Wheeler and Isaiah North (the first Deacon) took the lead in establishing this new Congregational society. Joined by 39 men and 2 women of the Northington society, they petitioned the General Assembly in October 1818 for an act of incorporation. They had already worshiped together, meeting in the Nod or Cider Brook schoolhouses, had gathered funds for a meetinghouse, and subscribed more than \$5,000 as a permanent ministerial fund, the interest to be used for "preaching of the Gospel." [MacKie, 54]

October 8, 1818 (the 2nd Thursday in October 1818 - only three days after the petition was dated): The Meetinghouse had been "erected" but was not finished. The General Assembly met on the 2nd Thursday of October to consider this Petition. The petition was granted and this is the reply in the ACC archives: .

"Joel Wheeler and others...have by subscription erected "a building for Divine worship, on the north side of the Turnpike Road... "and that "when finished will cost about Five thousand dollars...."

Resolved by this assembly that the said Joel Wheeler and others their associates and successors shall be and are hereby made constituted and created a corporation and body politic by the name and style of the United Religious Association of Farmington." This document authorized the Association to raise up to \$12,000, the interest of which to annually be applied to the "support of the Gospel Ministry.... " The Association was authorized on the 1st Monday in December or at a convenient time to appoint a treasurer and other officers.

October 1818. A paper was circulated among residents of northeast Farmington.

"The Subscription for the Fund.

Whereas it is proposed to build a meeting house near the Turnpike road a little east of the house of Mr. Amos Wheeler, we, therefore, whose names are hereunto subscribed, do promise to pay and agree to pay the sums annexed to our names for the purpose of forming a permanent fund to support the preaching of the Gospel at said house. Provided that unless a meetinghouse is built in that place, and unless the sum of Five Thousand Dollars be subscribed for the purpose aforesaid this subscription shall be void." Fifty-four people subscribe to the fund and \$5,183.34 was raised. Individual subscriptions ran as high as \$500. [From 1915 Manual, p. 11-12)

December 7, 1818: First meeting of the new society, The United Religious Association of Farmington, held at the house of Mr. Preserved Marshall. Moderator was Thomas F. Bishop. Officers elected for coming year.

December 14, 1818: Held a meeting and voted to put the "Fund" into operation on January 1, 1819, and the Prudential Committee was directed to procure a deed of the land on which the meeting house was in the process of construction. Building Committee was Amos Wheeler Thomas Bishop, and Francis Woodford. Cost \$2,150. The building committee asked that the new meetinghouse be of equal beauty to the one at Norfolk, Ct. At this time, several meetings of the association were held at "Nod" and "South" schoolhouses and at homes.)

Joel Wheeler was born in Cheshire, CT around 1754. He married Patience Humason about 1801. (Patience, born in New Haven, died Oct. 21, 1821.) Their children were Amos Wheeler (born about 1785-

died March 1, 1822 - buried in East Avon cemetery, lot 149/150); Aby Wheeler; Betsy Wheeler (married Sidney Woodford); Lucy Wheeler; and Chauncy Wheeler. Joel Wheeler died Feb. 1, 1829. His will, dated August 25, 1823, gave \$500 to the Foreign Missionary Society, to be at the disposal of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions. He gave his nephew Miles Wheeler 100 pounds, for the support of his father Simeon Wheeler and his wife. He gave his daughter Betsy \$500 dollars. He gave daughter Lucy \$500, plus "the use of all my remaining property real and personal (excepting the household furniture) at at her decease it shall be paid over to the treasurer of the American Education Society." He gave his household furniture to his daughters Aby, Lucy and Betsy, to be divided equally. [Information from genealogy pages in ACC's file on People - "W - Joel Wheeler." Land donation in 1915 Manual, p. 12.]

December 7, 1818: First meeting of the Society held, at the house of Mr. Preserved Marshall. Moderator Mr. Thomas F. Bishop. Fifty-four people had pledged \$5,183.34 for the fund for preaching (see above paragraph too). The Marshall Tavern stood at the southwest corner of Rt. 10 and Rt. 44, at the bottom of Avon Mountain.

December 14, 1818: At an meeting on this date, it was "voted to put the "Fund" into operation on January 1, 1819, and the Prudential Committee was directed to procure a deed of the land on which the meetinghouse then stood. The meeting house was, therefore, in process of construction, but evidently was not ready for occupancy. Records show that several meetings of the association were held at "Nod" and "South" school houses and at homes until April 8, 1819, at which time it was voted to accept and approve of the report of the committee appointed to build the meeting house." [Manual 1915, p. 12]

March 17, 1819: ACC constituted as a church by the North Consociation of Hartford County. [More information in 1819 section.]

Architecture of ACC

ACC is one of 7 churches in Connecticut designed in the Asher Benjamin style, adapted from the Country Builder's Assistant book's designs for carpenters and craftsmen. This style had 3 front doors and 3 windows above; the square base of the tower set farther back on the roof; the steeple more elaborate than a simple cuppola; a square base with octagonal belfry over this, with a narrowed octagonal member, and on the top an ornamental finial and vane.

Others meetinghouses in this style nearby are in Canton Center (1814) and Rocky Hill (1808). Meetinghouses with some resemblance to the Asher Benjamin style are: East Canaan (1822), Killingworth (1819); New Preston (1824); Putnam Heights (1818), and Woodstock (1822).

Article in The Connecticut Antiquarian, the bulletin of the Antiquarian & Landmarks Society., Nov. 1954, vol. VI, No. 2. , p. 15. [At AFPL History Room, file box on ACC]

1819-1820 ACC Activities and Members

These people are listed in Connecticut Church Abstracts for the Avon Congregational church - an alphabetical list of members from 1798-1921. (Online)
These are typed records by the Ct. State Library in the early 1900s. I have not been able to find the original copy by the Ct. State Library.

Listings for a person with just the year (no day or month) is taken from the 1915 Church Manual. Sometimes the records do not agree, but I put all the information available in here. Mistakes must have been made in original transcription years ago.

I have listed them according to when they joined the new ACC, then called the Third Church in Farmington.

* dismissed from the 2nd Church in Farmington (West Avon Congregational Church) to join the 3rd Church in Farmington (ACC) and give a letter of transfer from West Avon.

Admitted by letter means their former church gave them a letter of transfer.

Admitted by profession means the person professed his or her faith in Jesus Christ.

Darius C. Deming January 22, 1819. *Admitted on profession.*

*Thomas F. Bishop March 17, 1819, *admitted by letter.*
*Joseph Brockway March 17, 1819, *admitted by letter.*
*Obadia Gillett March 17, 1819
*Silas Goff, Jr. March 17, 1819, *admitted by letter*
*David Goodhue March 17, 1819, *admitted by letter*
*Hosea Hart March 17, 1819, *admitted by letter*
*Elijah Miller March 17, 1819, *admitted by letter*
*Isaiah North March 17, 1819
*Josiah North March 17, 1819, *admitted by letter*
*Asa Thompson March 17, 1819, *admitted by letter*
*Joel Wheeler March 17, 1819
*Josiah Wilcox March 17, 1819
*Elijah Woodford March 17, 1819
*Joseph Woodford March 17, 1819
*William Woodford March 17 1819

*Lucy Foote Bishop (Mrs. Thomas) April 4, 1819, *admitted by letter.*
Susanna Dickenson April 4, 1819, *admitted by letter.*
*Rosanna Gillett (Mrs. Obadiah) April 4, 1819, *admitted by letter.*
*Thankful Goff April 4, 1819, *admitted by letter*
*Elizabeth Hart April 4, 1819, *admitted by letter*
*Joanna Hart April 4, 1819
*Damaris C. Marshall (Mrs. Preserved) April 4, 1819, *admitted by letter*
*Pantha North April 4, 1819
*Louisa Thompson (probably Mrs. Asa) April 4, 1819, *admitted by letter*
*Rosanna Wilcox April 4, 1819
*Esther Woodford April 4, 1819
*Olive Woodford April 4, 1819
*Sarah Woodford April 4, 1819

*Lucy Brockway April 14, 1819, *admitted by letter*

*Martha Miller May 16, 1819, *admitted by letter*

*Minerva Thompson August 1, 1819

Rev. Bela Kellogg Installed as pastor, November 3, 1819

Minerva Woodford	Married Dec. 14, 1819 to Samuel Bishop (no record of her joining the church)
Pantha North Beecher (Mrs. John)	1819, <i>admitted by letter</i>
Damaris C. Deming (Mrs. Daniel)	1819, <i>Profession of faith</i>

1820

Laura Hart married Jeremiah Morse.	January 1, 1820
*Harriet Buckley (Mrs. Joshua)	January 2, 1820, admitted by profession.
*Lucy Case (Mrs. Nathan)	January 2, 1820.
Deacon Nathan Case	Jan. 2, 1820. <i>Admitted by letter fm.Simsbury</i>
Esther Webster	Jan. 2, 1820. <i>Admitted by letter from Farmington</i>
Joshua Bulkley	May 30, 1820. Admitted by profession. Baptized 1821.
Dorcas Talbot	Widow. Died March 1820.
Statira Thompson	March 5, 1820. Admitted by profession.
*Mary Woodford	April 4, 1819.
Abigail Thompson	Baptized May 21, 1820. Daughter of Levi.
Cornelia Thompson	Baptized May 21, 1820. Daughter of Levi.
Julius Augustus Thompson	Baptized May 21, 1820. Son of Levi.
Levi Elsworth Thompson	Baptized May 21, 1820. Son of Levi.
William Buck Thompson	Baptized May 21, 1820. Son of Levi.
Capt. Silas Goff	June 2, 1820. Admitted by profession.
Theodore Humphrey	Died July 6, 1820.
Walter Simmons	Died July 6, 1820
Almira Woodford, wife of Amasa	November 5, 1820. Admitted by profession.
Dan Deming	November 5, 1820. Admitted by profession.
Jeremiah Moses	November 5, 1820. <i>Admitted by letter.</i>
Elizabeth Allen	November 6, 1820. Admitted by profession.
Milly Woodford Hart (Mrs. Baldwin)	November 6, 1820. Admitted by profession.
*Mrs. Uriel Thompson	November 6, 1820.
Ashbel Webster	November 6, 1820. Admitted by profession.
Lucy Woodford. Daughter of Orris	November 6, 1820. Admitted by profession.
Almira Woodford	Baptized Nov. 26, 1820. Daughter of Amasa
Mercy Woodford	Baptized Nov. 26, 1820. Daughter of Amasa

John Beach Woodford	Baptized Nov. 26, 1820. Son of Amasa
Amasa Dudley Woodford	Baptized Nov. 26, 1820. Son of Amasa.
Calvin Allen	1820, Profession of faith
Elizabeth Allen (Mrs. Calvin)	1820, Profession of faith
Romeo Andrews	1820, Profession of faith
Nancy Chidsey Baldwin (Mrs. Isaac)	1820, Profession of faith
Daniel Deming	1820, Profession of faith
Lydia Kellogg (Rev. Bela)	<i>1820, admitted by letter</i>

Members listed in the 1915 Church Manual, for 1819-1820

P-united with the church by profession of faith

L-united with the church by letter

Calvin Allen	1820 - P
Romeo Andrews	1820 - P
Elizabeth Allen (Calvin)	1820 - P
Pantha North (John) Beecher	1819 - L
Thomas F. Bishop	1819 - L
Lucy Foote Bishop (Thomas F.)	1819 - L
Joseph Brockway	1819 - L
Lucy Brockway	1819-L
Joshua Bulkley	1820 - P
Harriet (Joshua) Bulkley	1820 - P
Nancy Chidsey Baldwin (Isaac)	1820 - P
Nathan Case	1820-L
Lucy Case (Nathan)	1820-L
Daniel Deming	1820-P
Damaris C. Deming(Daniel)	1819-P
Susanna Dickinson	1819-L
Rosanna Gillett (Obadiah)	1819-L
David Goodhue	1819-L
Silas Goff, Jr.	1819-L
Thankful Goff	1819-L
Hosea Hart	1819-L
Elizabeth Hart	1819-L
Milly Woodford Hart (Baldwin)	1820-P
Lydia Kellogg (Rev. Bela)	1820-L
Damaris C. Marshall (Preserved)	1819-L
Elijah Miller	1819-L
Martha Miller	1819-L
Jeremiah Moses	1820-L
Josiah North	1819-L
Asa Thompson	1819-L
Lovica (Asa) Thompson	1819-L
Harriet Thompson (Levi)	1820-P
Abigail Thompson (Uril)	1820-L
Statia Thompson	1820-P
Sarah Woodford (Selah)	1819-L

Almira Woodford (Amasa)	1820-P
Lucy Woodford (Orris)	1820-P
Esther Webster (Ashbel)	1820-L
Charles Whittlesey	1820-L
Ashbel Webster	1820-P
Anna Webster (Ashbel)	1820-L
Joel Wheeler	1819-L
Josiah Wilcox	1819-L
Rosanna Wilcox	1819-L
Minerva Thompson Wilcox (Josiah A.)	1819-P
Mary Woodford (Elijah)	1819-L
William Woodford	1819-L
Esther Woodford (William)	1819-L
Joseph Woodford	1819-L

1819 Membership in the Avon Congregational Church

Known then as the 3rd Church of Farmington,
also called the United Religious Association of Farmington

Lucy Bishop, Samuel Bishop, Thomas F. Bishop, Johnson Booth, Lucy Brockway, Joshua Bulkley, Nathan Case, Thomas Clark, Damaris C. Deming, Dan Deming, Bartholomew Chidsey, Samuel Dickinson, Susannah Dickinson, David Fowler, Isaac Gillet, Rosanna Gillet, Eli Gillit, Obadiah Gillet, Lester Gillit, Silas Goff, Silas Goff, Jr., Thankful Goff, David Goodhue, Abner Hart, Elizabeth Hart, Hosea Hart, Joanna Hart, Damaris C. Marshall, Preserved Marshall, Elijah Miller, Martha Miller, Nathan Lewis, Isaiah North, Joseph North, Pantha North, George Norton, Ichabod Norton, Darrin Sperry, Gamahel Sperry, Joel Sperry, Jr., Dorcas Talbot, Asa Thomson, Ashbel Thomson, Minerva Thompson, Lovisa Thompson, Uriel Thomson, Ashbel Webster, Jr., Amos Wheeler, Joel Wheeler, Jeremiah Willcox, Josiah Wilcox, Rosanna Wilcox, Elijah Woodford, Ester Woodford, Francis Woodford, George B. Woodford, Mary Woodford, Olive Woodford, Orvis Woodford, Romanta Woodford, Sarah Woodford, Selah Woodford, William Woodford, Francis Woodruff. (Illegible: Ebenezer Ha....; Nathan Con....; Silas....; Luther W. Ha....;Woodford)

1819

Contract for building and painting the church inside and out (total \$2,150) is in green scrapbook.

March: Now called the Northington Parish (“the Third Church of Farmington” was its formal name). 14 members stood apart from their fellow members and became charter members, with 15 more members joining them in April. [MacKie 56] [“the Second Church in Farmington” had burned down in 1817, and a new meetinghouse built in West Avon.]

March 17, 1819: is the date given as its organization as listed in the Minutes of the General Association of Connecticut, June 1856, p. 74 online.

By April 1, 1819: Subscribers to the Fund agreed that timber would be delivered by this date - at or near the place where the Meeting House was to be built.

In April 1819, the church "accepted the report of the Building Committee." This may refer to a final financial report for building the meetinghouse. It may be, therefore, that the meetinghouse was largely finished in April 1819.

April 8, 1819: Voted to accept and approve the report of the committee appointed to build the meetinghouse. The Building Committee was Amos Wheeler, Thomas Bishop and Francis Woodford. Cost \$2,150.

May 26, 1819: Communion Flagon purchased from Ward and Bartholomew in Hartford, and donated to ACC by Thomas F. Bishop. It is on display in rear of Meetinghouse. There were also four cups that are lost (sent out during the Civil War for repair and never returned).

Sept. 7, 1819: Call given to Rev. Bela Kellogg to settle as first pastor. This meeting was the first recorded meeting held in the meeting house. says that the structure was probably completed prior to March 31, 1819, because the Society voted on March 31, 1819, "to accept and approve the report of the building Committee for their personal services." [Frederick Kelly. Early Connecticut Meetinghouses, p. 10]

Tuesday **September 7, 1819** **REV. BELLA KELLOGG (1819-1830) 1st Pastor**

First recorded meeting held in the meeting house, designed by architect David Hoadley. The Rev. Bela Kellogg called on that date to settle as pastor (served until 1830).

Soon after, presumably, the following was recorded, complimenting the choir and music, and especially the choir's performance during the Installation of Rev. Kellogg: *Voted that the thanks of this Association be presented to George Norton , Esq., [an original ACC member, 1819] and others, for their attention and execution in instructing the art of music, and to the choir of singers belonging to this Association for their unwearied and unexampled exertions in acquiring the [Science?] of music, for their regular performances on the Sabbath and other religious occasions; and especially for their excellent and almost unrivalled performance at the dedication of the meeting house and at the Installation of the Rev. Mr. Kellogg. Voted that the Clerk of this Association be directed to furnish a copy of the forgoing vote, that it may be read in some public singing meeting.* [From the September 3, 1876 Memorial Sermon preached at ACC by Rev. Nathaniel Eggleston. ACC archives copy p. 38.] ["unexampled" means having no precedent or parallel; George Norton (1783-1833) choir member; buried in East Avon Cemetery]

ACC's first Parsonage on West Main Street, was occupied by the Kellogg family. An article in the Hartford Times in 1952 noted that the house would be demolished for the new highway (Rt. 440, which would "go right through the place where the old Kellogg house now stands." This was to eliminate dangerous curves in the road. In 1952 the house was owned by Ensign-Bickford Company. From the photographs in the Hartford Times, it seems that the house was located on the south side of Rt. 44, somewhat opposite of the location of the Police Station in 2018.

October - Dec. 14, 1819: \$5,183.34 (amount varies slightly) raised from 54 persons who promised to establish a permanent fund to support the preaching of the Gospel. His salary was \$500 and ten cords of hard wood, sled length, to be delivered at his residence.

[The 1915 Manual, p. 13, states that “Nothing further of special interest seems to have transpired until 1838” - which regarded the name change.

November 3, 1819: REV. BELA KELLOGG

Rev. Bela Kellogg was called as pastor on Sept. 7, 1819. He was installed November 3, 1819, and served until September 2, 1829.

Six ministers took part in the installation ceremony: Rev. Hallock of Canton (introductory prayer), Rev. Porter of Farmington (sermon), Rev. Dr. Perkins of West Hartford (installation prayer), Rev. Stebbins of West Haven (the charge, and evening sermon), Rev. Robbins of East Windsor (the right hand of fellowship), and Rev. Fairchild of East Hartford (concluding prayer). Rev. Robbins wrote in his diary that Rev. Kellogg “appeared very well on examination. This small people have exerted themselves very much. We had an agreeable installation. The day pleasant and the collection of people great.” The church records called the day “fine” and said a “large concourse of people were assembled on the occasion.” *Robbins diary, in Avon Free Public Library History Room; Records of the Third Church in Northington, ACC Archives; Ct. Church Abstracts/ACC, pp. 22-23).*

Dec. 9, 1819: Payment of work for framing and raising the meetinghouse for \$2,150. This did not include the spindle and vane. The foundation was also a separate payment.

From the original document of December 9, 1818 (ACC has typed transcription, not original):

Received Farmington December 9, 1819 of Amos Wheeler, Thomas F. Bishop, and Francis Woodford (Building Committee of the United Religious Association of Farmington, twenty one hundred & fifty dollars which being in full for building and finishing a meeting house for said Association, on a contract made with David Hoadly, on the one part and the above named committee on the other. [Signed] Fred Atwater

Historian J. Frederick Kelly (Early Ct. Meetinghouses, p.12) said “The projecting front entrance bay is remarkable for the beauty of its proportions and the perfection of its delicate scale.”

1819: The American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (ABCFM) was formed in 1810. In 1812, it sent its first missionaries to India; in 1819, it sent its first missionaries to Near East, Turkey, Palestine, Sandwich Islands. There may be a connection to the global symbolism of our steeple medallion (designed by David Hoadley) and this missionary movement.

1819: Original windows from 1819 remain: the fanlights over the Rt. 44 doorways, and the two lower windows facing Rt. 44 (one window in each of the stairwells as you climb the staircase to the balconies). [Kelly]

There were square pews on the perimeter of the first floor, slip pews in the center area; and square pews in the balconies. Pews annually rented to highest bidder until c. 1896-1900, when Rev. Fankhauser began the system of donating money in weekly envelopes.

December 20, 1819: Voted “That this Association will receive any person as a member thereof that does subscribe his name on their ‘Book of Records,’ and pay his equal proportion of the expenses of the association according to his list...” [1915 Manual, p. 13]

1820

Steeple bell hung. Cast in Albany, NY. Rung until 1954, for services, meetings, funerals, celebrations (except for 1865-1869 when broken).

Decorative Woodwork at 20 West Main Street [Dom’s Coffee in 2020]

Could the beautiful molding at Dom’s be related to the molding inside the meetinghouse?

The house belonged to Amos Wheeler, a member of the original ACC Building Committee of in 1819. He contributed timber to the construction. His father Joel Wheeler donated the land for the meetinghouse, and was one of two men who led the initial effort to establish ACC. Both men were founding members of ACC. The date of Amos Wheeler's house, c. 1820, matches up nicely with the date of the meetinghouse construction period between 1818-1819. The house’s molding seemed to be around the exterior door facing West Main Street. [Nora Howard observation; used for “Meetinghouses Moment in Sunday Bulletin, August 25, 2019.]

1821

ACC was trying to raise money to buy a clock for the steeple. They did not raise enough, and in 1822 the money went toward on Society expenses. Was the “medallion” used as a placeholder for the future clock? The United Church in New Haven (1815) has what looks to be in photographs an identical medallion. Both meetinghouses were designed by David Hoadley, and the interiors have some similar features. [Raising money, in March 1821 ACC Minutes.]

1824

Mission Work: Associations were forming in Connecticut and Massachusetts under the auspices of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, for the purpose of supporting Christians in the missionary cause.

There were “Gentlemen’s Associations” and “Ladies’ Associations.” In the third parish of Avon, Rev. Bela Kellogg was the president of the Gentleman’s Association. Other members were Nathan Case, vice president; Charles Whittlesey, Secretary; Obadiah Gillet, Treasurer, and three other unnamed “Collectors.” In the Ladies’s Association of the Third Parish, Mrs. Bela Kellogg was president; Mrs. Amos Phelps vice president; Mrs. Dan Deming, Secretary; Mrs. Goff, Treasurer, and three unnamed “Collectors.”

West Avon residents were equally active in separate Associations in that part of town. Rufus F. Hawley (son of Rev. Rufus) was secretary of the Gentlemen’s Association. In the Ladies’s Association, Mrs. Rufus Hawley (Rev. Rufus’ wife) was president, and Mrs. Rufus F. Hawley was treasurer. The church in Farmington was also active. Rev. Noah Porter was president of the association in his parish, and his wife was vice-president of the Ladies’s Association.

From *The Missionary Herald, for the Year 1824, v. XX. (online).*Published by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: Boston. Page 26.

1826

First stove installed. Rev. Bela Kellogg was on the Directory Committee of the CT Bible Society.[*The Courant*, May 22, 1826, p. 3., online.]

1827-1828

Dec. 3, 1827, the church asked Mrs. Wheeler and family if they objected to ACC building horse sheds on the green west of the meetinghouse. Sheds were built and sold to highest bidder each year, until 1873 when they were blown down. [Kelly, 12]

1828

The New Haven and Northampton Canal (also known as the Farmington Canal) opened, carrying passengers and goods, and passed right by ACC. The route went from New Haven to Simsbury and eventually Northampton, Mass.

1829

Founding of the Temperance Society of Northington.

1830 REV. FRANCIS H. CASE (1830-1840). Town of Avon Incorporated.

Rev. Case was called on November 15, 1830; installed on December 22, 1830. The ‘pastoral relationship was dissolved’ April 28, 1840. (Connecticut Church Abstracts, ACC, p. 8)

The first young people’s society was formed. Meetinghouse of the youth group were held in the schoolhouse near the church. [From “Your Heritage from the Past,” a publication by ACC in History Room ACC file.]

1830-1831

Repairs to meetinghouse to stop water coming down chimney and to repair the windows.

1833

Gallery pews altered to benefit the singers. [Rettig, *Onward*, p. 11]

1830-1891

Meetinghouses in Avon Center (ACC) and West Avon (WACC) used alternately for Town Hall for and for electors’ meetings, until the first town hall was completed in 1891. [MacKie, 78]

1838

The Town of Avon founded in 1830, so the church applied to the state Legislature to change its name from “The United Religious Association of Farmington.” Seven years later (1845) the Legislature voted, and the association is first referred to as The Ecclesiastical Society of East Avon.” [Congregational Church 1915 Manual, p. 13-16, and MacKie, 56. “The First Church of Christ” in Avon was the West Avon Congregational Church.]

1839

The famous abolitionist and public speaker, Abby Kelley Foster, came to Avon and was not warmly received by the minister. This vague reference came from a Clara Barton re-enactor who also portrays Kelley, and spoke to Nora Howard in 2014. More research needed; was probably either the ACC or WACC minister.

1840 REV. STEPHEN HUBBELL (1840-1853)

Rev. Hubbell was called as pastor on December 16, 1840. He was installed December 31, 1840. His wife, Martha S. Hubbell, was admitted to ACC on March 1, 1841, by letter from the church in Wolcotville. He and Martha were dismissed August 15, 1853. They went to North Stonington. [Connecticut Church Abstracts/ACC, p. 21-22; ACC Manual 1915 says they were dismissed July 1, 1853]

In 1915, the son of Rev. Hubbell, who was also a minister, Rev. William S. Hubbell (born 1837), returned to ACC to give a lecture. Rev. William Hubbell was about three years old when the family moved to Avon, and he spoke of his memories to the *The Hartford Courant*, as reported on August 31, 1915, p. 16 (online).

At that time his church contained square pews around the outside, and in the galleries (balconies) more square pews, which my father sometimes called play boxes, and in these sat the vivacious young men who sometimes needed calling down by my father that they be more attentive to the service. Near the center of the church sat Richard Gleason Green, who afterwards became a noted clergyman in Springfield, Mass, and who was author of Funk & Wagnell's 'Dictionary of Religious Learning.' He was a most exemplary young man even in his 'teens, and my father told me that I might look away from the preacher every time that Richard Gleason Green did so; with the result that I kept my eyes continually on Richard Gleason Green, in order not to miss my chance.

The church was hit by lightening during a service, and of the panic which ensued." He said it was the most interesting church service he ever attended. He also recalled the considerable excitement when Fred Ripley, who kept the tavern, decided that he could not afford to continue it without a bar.

W.S.H. said that "Sunday evening was called 'courting night' and was set aside for social, kindly, festivities." He said that his father allowed him, as a boy, to attend a first Wednesday of the month Training Day. There was a sham fight between the Avon Greene and the Bushwackers of West Avon, on the Farmington Meadows, "where they were not likely to hit anything." His father allowed him to attend because it was "probably the last militia parade which will ever be seen in the state of Connecticut." There was hope, W.S.H. said, for the end of war. But he said that "It was scarcely ten years later that my father was placing his hand on my head in blessing, and bidding me god speed as I went out to fight for my country in the War of the Rebellion. I remained in the service three years and after the battle of Gettysburg there was a report that I had been killed, which was published in the *Springfield Republican*, with an obituary, which I have been trying to live up to ever since."

1841

New name adopted: "The Congregational Church in Avon." [Cong. Church 1915 Manual, p. 16]
March 1841: Repairs made.

1840

Sometime after 1840, the balcony stairs were enclosed., according to Kelly, *Early Ct. Meetinghouses*.

1842

2nd parsonage, on West Main St. c. 1842-1873.
April 1842: Fundraising for meetinghouse repairs.

1843

March 1843 vote to put lightning rods put on meetinghouse. [1915 Manual p. 14]
Rev. Hubbell established the Temperance Society of Avon on May 14, 1843. [A short-lived Temperance Society had been established in 1829.] Avon's third attempt to establish a Temperance Society occurred in 1861. [Temperance Society Minute Book, ACC Archives.]

1844

Vote to paint and repair the meetinghouse.

1845

The CT State Legislature granted permission for it to be called Ecclesiastical Society of East Avon [1915 Manual, p. 13] [Mackie, p. 56, says it was called the Congregational Church in East Avon. [MacKie, 56]

1845-1847

Temperance orator John B. Gough lectured at ACC, at the invitation of Rev. Stephen Hubbell. Gough was at the beginning of his temperance crusade. (MacKie, 124, from "Avon as it was Sixty Years Ago, in the *Hartford Courant*, August 30, 1913. Report of speech by Rev. William S. Hubbell at Avon Congregational Church.)

March 31, 1847

Vote to install the stove pipe up in the body of the house sufficiently above the pulpit to enter a large pipe or drum then to pass through the plastering and thence to pass into the chimney above.

1847: Rev. Dr. Horace Bushnell was a friend of Rev. Stephen Hubbell. When Bushnell was tried for heresy over his book published in 1847, the trial was held at Hubbell's home (the ACC parsonage). The matter was dropped.

1849

Vote to fill dirt around the meetinghouse, making "the Green of suitable and handsome grade." Put plaster on ceiling on that part of the house over the singers 'seats. Also see "pews."

1851

Centennial of formation of Northington Parish and its local church. Celebrations at West Avon Congregational Church.

1852

Unusually large baptism. Six children of Jephtha C. & Lucy Ann Chidsey, baptized September 3, 1852: Frank Edward, Sarah Jane, Ellen Diana, Anna Lucelia, Adeline Catharine, Adelaide Charlotte. [Connecticut Church Record Abstracts, ACC/online.]

1853

Publication of the novel *The Shady Side, or, Life in a Country Parsonage*, by the wife of ACC's pastor. Mrs. Martha Stone. She wrote about the challenges of her church and community life, thinly disguised as ACC and Avon. The scandal caused the dismissal of her husband from ACC in 1853. [See also 1867 for her other book.]

1855 REV. HENRY M. COLTON (1855-1859)

Rev. Colton and his wife Lucy were admitted to ACC on July 5th or 8th, 1855, by letter from First Congregational Church, Woodstock, CT. He was dismissed to the Congregational Church in Middletown, CT. [Connecticut Church Abstracts/ACC p. 14]

c. 1855: Sewing Society established. [Name changed 1896 to Ladies Aid]

1858

Voted February 22, 1858 to build "a hall or conference room" on the north side of the meetinghouse. This was the first fellowship hall. To build it against the north wall of the meetinghouse, they had to cover over windows on that side, (including an arched window behind the pulpit). This 1858 conference hall was replaced in 1953 with ACC's second fellowship hall.

In 1858, slip pews replaced the box pews that had been on the perimeter of the first floor. "It was probably at that time the windows on the north wall were closed and plastered over, including an arched one behind the pulpit." [Rettig, *Onward*, p. 11, says 1850s in general.] Nora Howard thinks this may have been when the high pulpit was removed.

1859 REV. E.D. MURPHY (1859-1864)

He was ordained pastor June 8, 1859. He served until May 24, 1864. (Ct. Church Abstracts/ACC online, p. 28.

A member and leader of the Avon Debating Club, established February 6, 1859 and lasted less than a year due to lack of attendance. The Club met and debated issues of the day in the new Conference Room addition of ACC. [Debating Club Minute Book, ACC Archives.]

1860

Roof re-shingled. Money raised by subscription to paint and grain the seats in the body of the church. [Manual 1915, p. 15]

1861

The new Friends of Temperance in Avon met "in answer to the invitation of [Avon Congregational Church pastor] Rev. E. D. Murphy, who occupied the chair." "The Friends of

Temperance” organized a new Temperance Society of Avon, to “renew efforts to suppress the evils of intemperance and to promote a healthy sentiment on the subject of temperance throughout the community.”

Under the leadership of Rev. Murphy, and with “due notice given from the pulpit,” the Temperance Society members circulated a Pledge tin Avon. Out of 150 people approached, 80 were “willing to sign.” They used the Constitution of Avon’s Temperance Society of 1829. The Minutes of the 1861 Society abruptly end on June 19, 1861. The Civil War had begun.

1861-1865 The CIVIL WAR

Women of ACC made “Comfort Bags” for Connecticut soldiers, with tea, needle and tread, a New Testament, stationary and stamps. [MacKie, 137]

...churches in the Valley were active in their support of the ‘Anti-Slavery’ movement. Church women everywhere banded together forming Ladies Aid Societies and Sewing Societies. Our women, 80 strong, organized and became a new force in the church, at first by sewing for the Union soldiers. The whole community collected blankets, food, and medical supplies....often shipped south, free-of-charge, by the Hartford and New Haven Steamship Company. [Rettig,, Onward p. 9]

1865: Bell rung with such force at end of Civil War that it cracked; not used for 4 years. [MacKie, 139]

The historical *Hartford Courant* (July 11, 1913, p. 11, online) references Edgar Woodford of West Avon drilling Avon men in ACC basement. He was born April 15, 1824 in Avon. Studied Civil Engineering and was surveyor (and made important map of CT). He married Mary Elizabeth Kellogg, daughter of Rev. Bela Kellogg. His gravestone is in the West Avon Cemetery, but he was buried on Hilton Head, S.C. in the National Cemetery.

THE GRAVE OF EDGAR M. WOODFORD: WAS MARKED BY GENERAL J. R.
HAWLEY Address in Avon Written by Dr. E. W. Kellogg
HANDSOME CATHEDRAL WHERE GRAVE WAS.

Written and Delivered by Dr. E. W. Kellogg at the Memorial Service at the West Avon Cemetery, Sunday, May 26, 1913.

*Early in life he was captain of the militia company in this town and vicinity, and I remember seeing his drilling this company upon the Green **near the church at East Avon**, when I was a small lad.*

*... Mr. Woodford was an abolitionist of a pronounced type.... He had a strong desire to enlist but could not conscientiously do so under existing conditions. He did, however, gather a squad of young men whom he drilled in the manual of arms at stated intervals **in the lower part of the church**. I was present at one of those drills.*

When Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, he immediately enlisted as a private soldier....

Dr. Kellogg had Woodford's diary, which stated that before leaving for the Civil War, he attended church at the West Avon Cong. Church... "The next day he attended a town meeting at East Avon [in the ACC] and the following day came the heart breaking farewell to his beloved family and other dear ones. He left for Hartford and New York.

He sailed for Florida, September 1, 1862". He died in 1862 after the exertion of helping many wounded men board the ship.....

1862

ACC church-goer Frank Hadsell (1858-1949), who lived a few doors down on East Main Street, wrote in his diary for 1862 that at this time, he "sat in the gallery during service. ...At the north end, was the high old fashioned pulpit, now discarded. At the south or front end, over the vestibule, were the seats for the choir. Now the pulpit was not as high as the choir seats, but high enough for the minister to see the singers very well." From Frank Hadsell's diary: *Rev. E.D. Murphy was our minister at this time.... In the later years of our stay at the Murphy house I went to Sunday school. Not that I wanted to - most boys don't - but I had to. Mother made me. I don't think S.H. [Samuel Hadsell, his father] cared one way or another about it. I don't remember that he ever went to church. We did not have a pew at this time and I sat in the gallery [balcony] during service. The church faces south, the gallery runs the whole length of the church on both sides. At the north end, was the high old fashioned pulpit, now discarded. At the south or front end. over the vestibule were the seats for the choir. Now the pulpit was not as high as the choir seats, but high enough for the minister to see the singers very well.*

1863

Frederick Olmsted Bulkley, who attended ACC, died in the Civil War. Although parents Charles and Helen Bulkley were ACC members, but he is not listed as a member in the Ct. Church Abstracts for ACC. The abstracts record that he died "in hospital at Hilton Head while connected with the Army." The epitaph on his East Avon Cemetery gravestone:

Frederick Bulkley

Co. C. 7th Reg.

C.I.I.

Died at Hilton Head

November 26, 1863

Age 21

Servant of God, well done

Rest from thy loved employ

The battle fought, the victory won

Enter thy master's joy

1864. REV. GEORGE CURTISS (1864 - 1868)

Rev. Murphy's pastoral relationship dissolved May 24, 1864. Rev. Curtiss was called Dec. 5, 1864. He was settled at ACC on June 26, 1866.

First recorded memorial donation: \$600 to ACC in memory of trustee J.S. Tryon.[It may be that this was the earliest that the church had a trust fund account in which to deposit such gifts.]

1865:

The Civil War ended in 1865. *Churches of Connecticut* (v. I, p. 60) states that at ACC “18 men [served in] the war, of whom one member of the church lost his life.” Bell cracked with vigorous ringing at news of war’s end.

1867

Publication of *The Sunny Side, or, the Country Minister’s Wife*, by Martha Stone Hubbell. Rev. Hubbell and his wife had been dismissed from ACC and Avon, when she followed up her 1853 scandalous book with this more optimistic look at parsonage life.

Approved to hire Music teacher for singing approved Sept. 10, for \$200 expenditure.

1867 From Frank Hadsell’s diary: November. On the 28th S.H. [his father, Samuel Hadsell] paid 6.00 for a raffle and 13.50 for a pew in church. It was probably while we had this pew that I gave a pepper lozenge to an old lady who sat in the pew beside me. I don’t know who she was, but I remember I chuckled inwardly to think of how the lozenge would bite her tongue. I told Mother about it when I got home and she scolded me. ...The lozenge I gave the old lady did not come from a penny roll. - It was full size and very hot.

1869 REV. HARRY G. MARSHALL (December 6, 1869 - December 1871)

Ordained at ACC on Feb. 1, 1871. He came from the First Congregational Church in Milford. Dismissed March 1872 to the church in Charlemont, Massachusetts.

June, 1869: The recast bell (which cracked in 1865) was hung in steeple.
\$200 spent on ACC singing school and new furnace, to supplement the meetinghouse stove heat.

Hours of services in 1869 Manual: Sundays: worship 10:30 a.m.; followed by Sabbath School; second preaching service 1:15 p.m. Prayer meetings Sunday and Thursday evenings. [p. 18]

1869 From the diary of Frank Hadsell, June, 1869, about the Church Bell. “The raising of this Bell was quite an event to me, a boy of 11 years. A very long rope with pulleys was used and a crowd assembled on the church Green one pleasant afternoon. Breathlessly I watched the Bell ascend as the men pulled on the rope fearing it might fall and when it was safely landed hurried home to mother and told her all about it.”

1870

From Frank Hadsell’s diary: *After the Rev. Geo. Curtis we had H.G. Marshall for our minister, a man of different type, -youngish, red haired and athletic. He lived in the old parsonage first occupied by Rev. Mr Hubbell and consequently was our next door neighbor at the west. He was a fine skater and frequently came to the fuse shop pond and skated with the boys and girls.*

The Rev. Stephen Hubbell came to Avon in 1840 and left in 1853. His wife became famous as the authoress of Shady Side, a book which portrayed the trials of a country minister’s life. It was actually the story of the Hubbell’s trials and struggles. His experience is [described], fictitious (sic) names [were] used for the town and characters therein. This book gave great offense to Avon people. It is hard to obtain now. I have a copy which I bought in a second hand Book Store and gave to Mother in 1903.

This summer I did a thing on a par with my crawl through the canal sluice. Terry was painting the church and ladders were strung on the steeple. One afternoon after the painters had gone Arthur Woodford, Jim McCarthy and I crawled through a cellar window and went up to the belfry. Then we dared each other to climb up the spire to the top. I started first and reached the ball. When I came down the others refused to go up. As usual I told Mother all about it and she said I had done a fool hardy thing and secretly I agreed with her.

From the diary of Frank Hadsell, for April 5, 1870. *The church pews were sold for the ensuing year and we took half of a pew. John Chidsey took the other half.*

A bill in the archives from Hartford paint/glass/brush dealer, George S. Burnham, to ACC, June 7, 1870, charged for illegible things, but also for turpentine (four gallons total \$2.50); 2 gallons of (I think) varnish, for \$8; 3 pounds putty (24 cents); 2 quarts oil (55 cents)...

Rev. Thomas D. Murphy was dismissed from ACC on December 4, 1871. But he was possibly a member, and not an ACC pastor. (Conn. Church Abstracts/ACC on line, p. 28.)

1872 REV. CHARLES PITMAN CROFT (October 29, 1873- April 6, 1875)

Rev. Croft was born Sept. 29, 1843 in Putnam Valley, NY. He was raised a Methodist, and graduated from Wesleyan University in 1869. Upon graduation he became minister of the Simsbury Methodist - Episcopal Church. He married Julia Mather (1833-1911) in 1871, and they lived in the deacon Mather homestead in the Weatogue section of Simsbury. Methodist ministers were expected to change parishes every three years, so when it came time to leave the Simsbury church, he changed demonizations and was ordained pastor of the East Avon Congregational Church [ACC] on October 29, 1873. (Find a Grave.com for Rev. Croft) Admitted to ACC by certificate on October 5, 1873. (Connecticut Church Abstracts, ACC, p. 14.)

After leaving ACC, Rev. Croft did mission work for Center Church of Hartford, and supplied pulpits in Torrington and Watertown. In 1874, at age 30, he was named to the board of trustees of the Simsbury Public Library. He was pastor of the church in Terra Haute, Indiana for about 4 years (1880-1884). He then retired to Simsbury. He actively supported the right of women to vote. He died November 16, 1921. [FindaGrave.com]

1874

From the diary of Frank Hadsell: *Feb 1st...Aunt Julia had joined the church and the Rev. Croft was trying to start a revival but I did not think he would succeed. I never took much stock of Aunt Julia's profession of faith in the church. However I presume she was as sincere as many others. So far as my observation goes it is a very difficult thing to live up to what one promises when they become a church member and most of them flunk it.*

From the diary of Frank Hadsell: *February. Lib Richards has joined the church. The Rev. C.P. Croft came to this church in 1872. He was a very able man and gave great satisfaction to every one except a few old members who thought he was too sensational. Men who had never been to church went to hear Mr. Croft and he was doing really good work, but the carping and*

faultfinding caused him to resign in 1875. There upon there were several who declared they would never go to church again and I think they did not. I was a Sunday school scholar when he came to Avon and we had a Christmas tree in the church in 1872. When all the gifts had been taken off my name had not been called. So Mr. Croft gave me a nice pocket bible which I still have.

1875-1876 REV. NATHANIEL H. EGGLESTON

1876 REV. WILLIAM BASSET (1876-1877)

Fire damaged the church in 1876. Voted May 1876 to repaint the meetinghouse exterior, and repaint and fresco on the interior. Total cost \$1,202.54. Of this amount, \$685 paid by insurance. Labor for cleaning off wallpaper and paint (\$65.25); 25 windows repaired (\$100); interior painting (\$163.98); exterior painting \$179.38); frescoing (\$252.50); paint & oil (\$128.60); joiner work (\$22). The original windows with small panes were replaced by two over two windows. In 1959 these were replaced by copies of the original 1819 windows with 20 over 20 panes. Insurance paid \$685 of this.

After the 1876 fire, the small paned windows were replaced with two-over-two panes, “with the exception of one protected from the fire by gallery stairs....” [Rettig, *Onward*, p. 11] Those replacement windows were replaced in the 1950s with copies of the original windows from 1819.

The wooden columns under the gallery are not original but there is no record when they were installed. The unusually tall columns above are original. “The plain solid shafts with boldly carved Scamozzi Ionic capitals are structural supports. The pilasters against the north wall and the arch behind the pulpit may have been added at the time of the conference room changes or following the fire.” [Rettig, p. 11]

The Christian Endeavor Society was organized in 1876. ACC’s Senior and Junior Fellowship groups of the 1970s grew out of this youth group movement at ACC.

On February 24, 1876, the grand daughter of ACC’s first pastor, Mary Louisa Kellogg, married Yung Wing (1828-1912). They met through Mr. Yung’s educational work in Hartford. The wedding was performed by Rev. Twitchell, pastor of Asylum Hill Congregational church. Yung Wing was the first known Chinese student to graduate from a United States University (Yale 1854). He furthered Chinese/American relations, and published (1909) *My Life in China and America*.

1877 REV. MILTON G. AYERS (April 1, 1877-April 1, 1878)

1878 REV. L. CURTISS (1878-1879)

From the diary of Frank Hadsell: *Ida [his sister, about age 17 and hired out] wrote to Mother and to me. She did not like it at Lovelands.... She felt discouraged. Mrs. Loveland had told her that if she did not dress better she would not get acquainted at church, for no one would notice her. How true this is. - now in 1930, as well as 52 years ago, I think this applies to practically all churches. Therefore their profession of a christian spirit is a mockery and a delusion, and is one*

reason why I have never been much to church. I think church members are very hypocritical in this matter as well as in some others.

1878 From the diary of Frank Hadsell: *September.... Mr. Seeley the new minister came with his family on the 18th and occupied the Homer Chidsey house which in 1879 was bought for a parsonage. .. [Laura Chidsey, the oldest Chidsey daughter]..had become insane, but not considered bad, and lived at home. One Sunday, some time after this date, she created a scene in church, as she stepped up before the pulpit and told Mr. Seeley he had prejudiced (sic)her people against her,- had treated her as no gentleman should treat a lady, etc. All this, before L.F. Webster and Oliver Gabriel bestirred themselves and led her out of church. She was taken to the asylum in Middletown, and died there. [Rev. Seeley arrived at ACC in 1879 so Hadsell may have been wrong about the date.]*

1879 REV. NICHOLAS J. SEELEY (February 25, 1879- Resigned November 12, 1895)

Rev. Seeley had one of the longest ACC pastorates. His 16 year pastorate tied with that of Rev. Schoonmaker). Rev. Seeley was ordained at ACC on Feb. 25, 1879. His wife Amanda and his daughter Laura D. Seeley were admitted to ACC on May 1, 1879 upon a letter from the church in Plainville.

Parsonage # 3, at 2 Climax Heights, now Avon park North, c. 1879-1907

1880

“Two aged women of the church, sisters, murdered in their house” in 1880. *Churches of Connecticut*, vol. II, p. 34, at UCC archives in Hartford.]

This story is in the historical Hartford Courant (online) for January 18, 1882, when the person charged with finding the killer submitted his expenses (\$1,131) to the State. On the night of May 30, 1880, Maria Event and Mrs. Chidsey, ‘two aged women living alone in a small house in Avon, were brutally murdered. Detectives worked on the case but discovered nothing, other than one Ernest Moses, an escaped lunatic, who was suspected of the murder, was found dead some months later. Moses had been seen in the vicinity, and had assaulted women before. The funeral of the two women was at ACC on June 1, where they had been members. [Courant, June 2, 1880] An article in the *Courant* on Oct. 31, 1991, noted that the Chidsey House was afterward called ‘the murder house,’ and that it was located near where the Police Station is today. It was demolished in 1938 to make room for Rt. 44.

1886

A reed organ had been installed in 1865. Then a pipe organ, 1886-1918/1919; then another pipe organ in 1919; and now the Austin organ.

1889

Mr. F. M. Alford donated more land for the church.

1891 From the diary of Frank Hadsell: [Regarding his marriage, out of town] June 21. “*Mate [he called his wife this] was insistent that I must get a new suit to be married in - a black Prince Albert coat and vest and a ‘nice looking ’pair of trousers. She was horrified to know I had not thought of doing so, but it had not occurred to me as being a matter of consequence. I suppose this is characteristic of me - a disregard of the conventionalities in such things and which may have worked to my disadvantage sometimes.*[He soon after went to Collinsville to order a Prince Albert Coat and vest of black diagonal, from “*Laubenstein the tailor.*”]

1896 REV. C. K. FANKHAUSER (May 21, 1896-May 1900)

The church held its first recorded fair. The Sewing Society this year was renamed the Newly named Ladies Aid Society. [p. 21 Church 1915 Manual, p. 21.]. This church fair later became the Holly Berry Fair.

A set of 3 chairs for the Pulpit was purchased with funds from Ladies Aid Society. They are black walnut, Victorian Gothic Revival, 1865. Two deacon’s chairs are same.

1896-1900

Rev. Moulton wrote in his Historical Address (1919) that for the past twenty years, “some of the young pastors, perhaps most of them, used ACC as a gateway to a larger and more inviting field of service.” This explained, he said, the shorter pastorates of the next pastors. He also said that while Rev. Fankhauser “was living in what was then the parsonage, the house now occupied by Mr. Sherman W. Eddy and family, a fire broke out in his study, during a brief absence, from a lighted lamp resulting in a personal loss of manuscripts and other valuables that could not easily be replaced. “ One wonders if this also meant that some church papers were lost.

1897

The church and parsonage were thoroughly repaired. [*Churches of Connecticut*, vol. 2, p. 34.]

1901 REV. SAMUEL A. FISKE (July 1, 1900- April 1904)

The ACC Archives has a Bible printed in 1901, and presented in memory of Cornwall Talcott Millard, during the pastorate of Rev. Fiske.

A new furnace was installed. Old one had been installed in 1869.

1901-1904, during Fiske's pastorate, a new communion service with individual cups, table linen, and a mahogany communion table were donated.

1904 REV. ERNEST F. MCGREGOR (July 1, 1904-June 1, 1907)

The church annual report to the [national] Congregational Church noted that the Christian Endeavor Society had been disbanded. Report also said the value of the meetinghouse and land was \$7,500; value of the parsonage \$1,800.

1905

By Laws adopted May 2, 1905: This church's new name: the East Avon Congregational Church.

1906

ACC's 4th parsonage, 1906-1941, was located on West Main Street across from ACC, where the car dealership parking lot is today. The church purchased the house and three acres from Dr. J. L. North in 1906 for \$3,000. In 1941, John H. O'Neill purchased the parsonage, barn and about 2 acres for \$8,000. [Howard, Avon, p. 96.]

1907 REV. HOWARD GARFIELD CONNELLY (October 1, 1907-November 1, 1908)

Rev. McGregor had been called to Clinton, Connecticut on June 1, 1907. He belonged to the Church of Christ. He had been ordained on July 15, 1905. He left ACC in 1908 after being called to a church in Archmore, Oklahoma.

November 1, 1908 - June 6, 1909 - ACC was supplied by different ministers. [In annual report to the national Congregational Church.

1908 REV. GEORGE McCLARY

Rev. McClary is listed in the annual report to the Congregational Church for the Yearbook as starting here on June 21, 1908. He had been ordained May 15, 1907, and was a Disciple of Christ. [Yearbook in ACC archives.] The church noted in its annual report to the (national) Congregational church that it was free of debt.

1909 REV. CLARENCE M. SMAIL (June 6, 1909-May 29, 1910)

Rev. Smail received his B.A. from Bethany College in West Virginia. He was from Perrysville, and was a Disciple of Christ. He had been ordained on Dec. 23, 1907. He left ACC in 1910 for Greensburg Pa. Rev. Smail is in the Yale graduate directory as being in Greensburg, PA., in 1912. [Bethany College in Yale directory (online) for graduate school graduates of 1909.]

1910 REV. WILLIAM ALBERT HARP (June 10, 1910-June 18, 1911)

Rev. Harp was a Disciple of Christ. His address in the report to the Congregational Church Yearbook was New Haven [Yale?] so it seems he was part time at ACC.

1911 REV. GEORGE McCLARY (July 2, 1911-June 2, 1912)

Rev. McClary was a Disciple of Christ. After ACC he lived in East Hampton, Ct.

REV. JOHN CLARK ARCHER (June 9, 1912-June 15, 1913)

Rev. Archer's address at this time was New Haven, so perhaps he was at ACC part time. He was a Disciple of Christ. The meetinghouse was repaired and painted for \$300. Rev. Seeley was still living 'in the parish.' ACC had no debt.

1913 REV. FREDERICK J. CLARK (1913- February 8, 1914)

Rev. Clark was of the Methodist Episcopal faith.

1914 REV. ANDREW LEITCH (February 14 or 15, 1914-July 3, 1917)

Rev. Leitch had been ordained in February 1913. He was a Disciple of Christ. He moved to New Haven in 1917.

This year the annual report to the national Congregational Church noted that the parsonage was free to the minister (meaning he did not have to pay rent).

1915

Printing of *Congregational Church Avon, Connecticut. Manual, Historical Sketch and Membership Roll.*

In 1915, ACC already was a member of the Farmington Valley Association.

1917 REV. JOSEPH LANGDON MOULTON (September 17, 1917-1918)

Rev. Moulton went to India as a missionary. He was ordained at ACC on May 24, 1918.

The Christian Endeavor Society was started in September 1917, and there were 30 young people in it. The annual report to the Congregational Church (national) said there was no church debt.

1918 REV. JAMES W. MOULTON (July 7, 1918 - May 7, 1922)

Rev. James Moulton was the father of Rev. Joseph Moulton.

For the first time, the form to be filled out about ACC for the Congregational Church annual Yearbook had this question: "How many names are on your War Service Roll of Honor?" ACC answered 'one.' [re: World War I]

From the Journal of Frank Hadsell: *Report of the surrender of the Germans was sent out early in November. This was premature but on the 11th they did surrender and the greatest war in the history of the world was ended. Of course this was the signal for manifestations of joy and relief all over the country, and even in Avon something had to be done. An impromptu parade was hastily organized and Mother and I stood in the doorway that cool November day and watched it pass by. [The parade passed by Avon Congregational Church.]*

1919

100th anniversary celebrated September 7-8, 1919. Repairs included painting, carpentry, masonry, new carpets, vestibule linoleum, and a new organ, total cost \$5,285.

August 28: There would be no Sunday services at West Avon Congregational Church so that everyone from WACC could attend the “Centennial Celebration of their sister church in Avon.”

[*Farmington Valley Herald*, Aug. 28, 1919.]

ACC archives has the “Pulpit Bible,” given in 1919 on ACC’s Centennial, by Adelaide Smith. By 1919, a part of the meetinghouse foundation threatened to collapse. Under the supervision of S.W. Eddy, a superintendent of Ensign-Bickford, it was rebuilt with additional supports. The basement was fully excavated (it had been smaller originally) and finished.

A reed organ had been installed c. 1865. Then a pipe organ, 1886-1918/1919; then another pipe organ in 1919; and now the Austin organ).

The pastor felt responsible for the 100 families in the parish, even though not all attended or were members of ACC.

Meetinghouse interior painted. Pulpit given for ACC’s centennial, by Miss Nellie W. Williams. Said architectural historian J. Frederick Kelly, “The pilastered reading desk of cherry that stands upon [the pulpit platform] is of early design and workmanship and may be of the same date as the church edifice itself. [See Kelly’s book for photo of the pulpit in 1948 with a mahogany or varnished surface.] Was probably 1950s that it was painted white - at the same time the church interior was painted.

Annual meeting report of 1919 (ACC Record Book 1904-1943 filed in the Annual Reports, p. 133) noted that “debts” and “debtor” had been substituted in the Lord’s prayer recitation, replacing the old way of saying “trespass” and “trespasses.”

c. 1920

First real basement was dug. “Mr. Kellog saw to it that a stove was set up... a real basement [was not] dug until a hundred years later.” [Rettig, *Onward*, p. 8.]

1920: Miss Mary E. Moulton (daughter of Rev. James Moulton) was commissioned at ACC on August 15, 1920, as a missionary of the American Board to Rhodesia, South Africa, supported by the [ACC] Woman’s Board of Missions. (ACC Annual Report for 1920, p. 139, in ACC Record Book 1904-43, in Annual Report file; also in ACC’s annual report to the Congregational church Year Book in Boston. ACC was very proud of this.)

1921

The church incorporated with the Ecclesiastical Society of East Avon to become the Avon Congregational Church. The East Avon Ecclesiastical Society donated \$200 to ACC upon this occasion. There were 36 young people in the Christian Endeavor Society.

1923 REV. WILBUR W. KAMP (November 1922-June 28, 1925)

Rev. Kamp was a Friend [Quaker]. He left in 1925 for Poughkeepsie, NY.

There were 20 young people in Christian Endeavor.

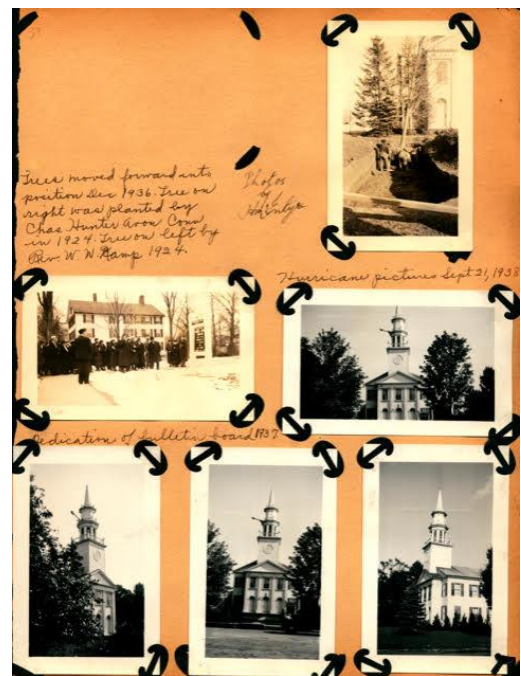
This year the parsonage was repaired and painted.

1924

Meetinghouse maintenance: shingling the roof, repairing the steeple, built a new chimney, painting the church exterior, conference room painted. [ACC Record Book for 1904-1943, annual report for 1924, p. 145.] The church was painted on the exterior.

The church considered “photostatic” copies of church and Ecclesiastical records to deposit at the Ct. State Library. [ACC Record Book for 1904-1943, annual report for 1924, p. 145.]

Two large trees on front lawn ACC. Photographs in Scrapbook # 2: photos (top and center left) of moving two trees forward in December 1936. Both had been planted (too close to the meetinghouse) in 1924. In four photographs taken after the hurricane of 1938, the tree on the right was planted by Charles Hunter; the tree on the left by the Rev. Wilbur Kamp, ACC pastor 1922-1925. Photos by Herbert McIntyre.



1925 REV. RALPH EDWIN KNIGHT (Sept. 17, 1925-August 29, 1926)

The earliest surviving Sunday Bulletin is dated June 28, 1925, in the ACC Archives. It was for Rev. Kamp’s last Sunday. The Bulletin said that “As this is Rev. W.W. Kamp’s last Sunday with us, we would like a full turnout on this occasion.”

1926 REV. CECIL E. PEARSON (October 5, 1926-1929)

Rev. Knight left for New Providence, Iowa.

1927

On Sunday, January 24, 1927, a new church sign (the “announcement board”) on front lawn was dedicated to Belle Latimer Hamilton. A devoted member, she took church minutes since 1910. The sign given by Scoville J. Hamilton (her husband) and Franklin A. Latimer (her brother). Scoville Hamilton was an ACC deacon, and in the lumber business. (*Hartford Courant* article in ACC Scrapbook No. 2 - obituary for Scoville Hamilton, March 1938.)

Two items from the annual report to the national Congregational Church:

The Ladies Aid Society financed the building of a kitchen addition (\$1,800).

The kitchen basement was excavated, and 55 young people in what was probably the Christian Endeavor Society, but it was unnamed in the report. Conference room painted.

1928

A new kitchen was built on the west side of the Conference Room, by the Ladies Aid Society. Underneath the workers were excavating for Sunday school rooms. The new kitchen and excavation was dedicated April 15, 1928. (ACC Annual Report for 1928, p. 152). It cost about \$1,000 [ACC annual report to the national Congregational Church]

Sherman Eddy was president of the board of trustees. [ACC annual report to the national Congregational Church]

1929 REV. JOHN PAUL CLARK (Sept. 8, 1929-August 7, 1932)

Rev. Clark was a licensed Methodist Protestant minister. He left ACC for Gratio, Ohio in 1932. Parsonage shingled. New heating system.

1930

ACC installed a new heating system for \$2,100. Choir. Chairs purchased in 1930. Junior Choir started in the 1930s. Conference room basement painted.

1931

The Dramatic Club was formed in 1931; still going in 1936. The Club gave plays and skits as fundraisers for Avon needy, and presented plays during church services. Some were written by club members. About 59 members.

Mother’s Club started about now. More excavating church basement. Built cemetery wall and church wall.

The value of the meeting house and parish hall was \$20,000. The value of the parsonage \$5,000. [ACC Annual report to national Congregational Church]

1932 REV. JOHN R. WHEELER (October 1932-1936)

Rev. Wheeler was part time. He had been a minister in the Association of the Quebec-Sherbrooke of Canada (United Church of Canada). He had been ordained in June 1928.

Rev. Clark left ACC for Ohio in 1932, to “take up rural work in Ohio,” and lived in Gratio, Ohio. [ACC Minister’s Report, 1933, p. 1]

May 6, 1932, a maple tree was planted on the church lawn in commemoration of George Washington's [birth] bicentennial. (ACC Annual Report, 1932.)

The Men's Club was formed December 2, 1932, and had 55 members. The club had suppers with a speaker or entertainment. [ACC Annual Report, 1932, p. 174]

Pastor had formed a Dramatic Club; wiring done in church basement; Christian Endeavor Society disbanded. Donation of \$500 in memory of Miss Delinda Woodford

1933

Rev. Wheeler's goal was to visit every "protestant in the area." [Pastor's Report, 1933, p. 2]

1934

Steeple was repaired inside. Meetinghouse painted on exterior. Gold leaf put on weathervane. Conference room painted.

1935

A church library had been started. [ACC Annual Report, 1935]

Annual chicken pie suppers at this era. Cooked and donated by members.

1943-1945: the church exterior had been painted. (\$250 as a budget item, and presume this is the full amount.

New oil burner put in furnace.

1936

Rev. Wheeler left in 1936.

March 1936: several weeks of rain flooded the Farmington Valley.

From June 15-Sept. 26, 1936, the meetinghouse was renovated. Services were successfully held at the Recreation Room of the Ensign-Bickford Company.

The meetinghouse expense report: (church redecorated for a cost of \$3,000)

Interior painting by George W. Smith, \$889.

Plastering \$200

Carpet made and laid \$765

22 pairs of new curtains

Upholstering 5 pulpit chairs and pulpit cushion.

[ACC Annual Report of May 1936-May 1937.]

The meetinghouse interior was redecorated, at a cost of \$2,880. [Annual Report for May 4, 1937, p. 176.] Chandelier was installed, donated by Mrs. W.R. Hodge of Avon in memory of her son Ernest Miller Hodge, long time superintendent of the Sunday School (he became superintendent in 1920) The chandelier dedication was Sunday, Sept. 17, 1936 at what was termed the "reopening of our church." Mrs. Hodge unveiled the chandelier.

Mrs. Fred Woodford donated items to the archives. (May 5, 1936 annual report, p. 174)

A second service on Sunday's attracted average attendance of 13. [Annual report to national Congregational Church]

1937 REV. BURCHARD ABRAHAM HYLTON (September 1937-1939/40)

Rev. Hylton was from the Pacific Northwest Conference. He was a Methodist Episcopal, ordained in 1916.

Dramatic Club disbanded. (Annual report, May 4, 1937, p. 178.)

The Historian Mrs. Rowe completed the history scrapbook; it was put in the fireproof vault of Ensign-Bickford Co. (Annual report for May 4, 1937, p. 178.)

Donation in memory of Mrs. Belle Latimer Hamilton, \$500.

ACC asked Cemetery Association for a gate in the fence. (Annual Report Nov. 14, 1937, p. 183.)

1938

Hurricane on September 21, 1938. Spire and upper octagonal stage damaged in the hurricane. New steeple, an exact copy - including the original weather vane - dedicated in 1949. [So, no steeple from late 1938 until 1949.]

The *Hartford Courant* reported on Feb. 27, 1948, ten years after the hurricane, that the steeple had been removed when it was found it was leaning 6 inches toward the church building. The fund to replace the steeple stalled, as new people came to town and interested waned. Many in the congregation supported enraging the Sunday school and church offices instead of replacing the steeple. Finally the replacement and repaired steeple was dedicated on November 20, 1949.

The church historian reported on May 3, 1938 that the church records had been Photostatted and put in the Connecticut State Library.

Memorial gifts in memory of Walter B. Stowe of \$1,000, and a bequest in memory of Mrs. Lillie Wheeler Coe for \$4,282. This last sum was the largest memorial gift amount received to date, as recorded in a list of Gifts and Bequests through 1963.

There were about 28 young people in the young people's society. Chairs purchased for Sunday school.

1938-1939

Rev. Hylton said "our community is rapidly becoming suburbanized." [Pastor's Annual Report, 1939-1940]. The historian received 9 photos about removing trees from the church lawn, grading the lawn, and 12 photos showing hurricane damaged steeple.

The entrance was built to the church basement.

1940 REV. WILLIAM JOHN HAMILTON, Jr. , licensed. (September 1940-1942)

The congregation voted to hire Mr. George McLean Milne to begin July 1, 1940. He may have been serving as the Acting Pastor when Hylton unable to serve. The vote was 16 YES and 15 NO. The motion carried to hire him. On May 2, 1940, three weeks later, Rev. Hylton gave his pastor's report. Hylton resigned then and it was accepted by a vote of 16-15. On August 5, 1940, three months later, call extended to William J. Hamilton, Jr. [Annual Report for 1940, pp. 186, 189-191, 194. Sources also in ACC Archives file on 1940s history]

1941

Rev. Hamilton got his mail at Elizabeth Street in Hartford [Hartford Seminary] and so may have been at ACC part-time.

ACC's 5th Parsonage and barn and half the church's land were sold to John H. O'Neill for \$8,000 in May, 1941. This was all on West Main Street across from ACC, between the former Avon library and parsonage # 4. A new parsonage was built for \$8,000.

From a *Hartford Courant* article (dated May 6, 1941, and in ACC Scrapbook No. 2): *The annual meeting of the Avon Congregational Church Tuesday night authorized the trustees to sell the parsonage, retaining a site with 90-foot frontage on Main Street, where a new home for the minister will be erected. The property will be purchased by John H. O'Neill, owner of a garage adjoining the parsonage. Rev. William Hamilton, pastor, was authorized to appoint a building committee including the trustees, Mrs. W. H. Hadsell, Edgar Brown and himself to plan the new building. The parsonage has been used by the church for about 30 years, and formerly had been the residence and office of several physicians.*

From Frank Hadsell's diary: *The story going around was that the church people would sell the parsonage (the Murphy house where we lived 1862-1866) to John O'Neil and build a new parsonage to the west, and this was done but why it was done I never knew - and I may say here that I do not think the new parsonage is as good and attractive as the other one they sold. But their modern ideas and ways of living differ more or less from those of 40 years ago. I was told that the new parsonage would be built by the local carpenter.*

1942

The Mother's Club withdrew from ACC in order to be non-sectarian. It became the "Mothers' Club of Avon." (ACC Annual report for 1942, p. 198)

1943 REV. EDWARD VANSTONE POPE (October 1, 1942-September 19, 1943)

Rev. Pope was a part time pastor at ACC, focusing his time on preaching; he was not licensed. At the same time he was a full time student at Hartford Seminary Foundation. He resigned to continue his studies. He was ordained at ACC Sept. 19, 1943. (His ordination bulletin is in the Pilgrim Record of Service in the ACC main office, p. 168.) Farewell party Sept. 18, 1943.

Rev. HAMILTON had enlisted in the US Army during World War II as a chaplain. He was dismissed from ACC on February 17, 1946 to the Grand Avenue Congregational Church, New

Haven. [US Army chaplain in ACC Annual Report, 1942-1943; dismissal source: ACC's Pilgrim Register list of pastors, p. 47)

September 1943: The two upper sections of the steeple was removed. Ten years before, it had been found to be 6 inches "out of plumb" and was leaning toward the north. By 1943, it was 22 inches out of line to the north, so it was removed. The Hurricane of 1938 was thought to contribute to contributing to the leaning tendency already there. The church hoped to get a repaired spire up there as soon as possible. Cost estimate was \$10,000. [September 8, 1943, The Hartford Courant, p. 2; Xerox is in AFPL History Room ACC file box.]

REV. ROGER PLANT HORTON (September 26, 1943 - February 27, 1944)

Rev. Horton was a student pastor at Hartford Seminary, and his program ended later in 1944. On February 27, 1944, ACC called Rev. Woodruff.

The steeple was removed for repairs, by R.G. Bent. \$875.

The ACC Historian received 15 photos by Walter Tiffany of removing the church steeple, 1943.

1944 REV. DR. WATSON WOODRUFF, O.D. (April 1, 1944-August 31, 1949)

Rev. Dr. Woodruff had been ordained in 1907.

Farewell party for **Rev. Roger Horton**, March 18, 1944.

Rev. Woodruff was at ACC by May 1944.

Rapid growth of ACC after WW II, with farms being turned into residences.

1944 - May 1, 1945

There was also a photo of Dr. Woodruff's first confirmation class of 9, taken June 25, 1944 by Mr. Gladwin Lusk.

1946 - 1947

Historian Ethel Rowe reported that she had been given photos of ACC interior view at Easter, taken Easter 1946 by George Alcott. She had two scrapbooks about the church:

1 was 1818-1936; # 2 was 1937-1947.

An architect had made plans to enlarge the parish rooms, but it was too expensive, so church will wait. From the Journal of Frank Hadsell for June 16 "The church is closed for repairs until August 30 and I think this was mostly filling cracks in the plastering and painting the interior by Geo Smith."

1948-1949

Couples Club formed [ACC Annual Report for 1948-1949]

Meetinghouse was painted. Downspouts and gutters installed.

1949

Rev. Woodruff resigned in 1949. Just a few weeks later the Jerome and Laura Lane Johanson had been hired. [ACC Annual Report, 1949]

REV. E. JEROME & REV. LAURA LANE JOHANSON

“Co-Pastors” (September 1, 1949-April 30, 1964)

November 20, 1949: Steeple, damaged in 1938 hurricane, replica re-dedicated. Guest speakers were John Holcombe, Jr., president of the Antiquarian & Landmarks Society, and Chief Justice William Maltbie of the State Supreme Court of Errors. He brought greetings from the Greater Hartford Council of Churches. Dr. Watson Woodruff, retired pastor of ACC, gave the invocation. Rev. E. Jerome Johanson gave the scripture reading and benediction. As he pronounced the benediction, the steeple was floodlighted. Laura Lane Johnson led the dedication ceremonies. The church was decorated by the Garden Club of Avon with Sherman Eddy contributing his talents to the preparations. The church was filled to capacity. Weather vane is original. Maud Ely Gibbons of Avon started the fund to build an exact copy. According to a 1987 poem by Freda Read, Jack Odegard rebuilt and painted the steeple “in his retirement years). [Desc. Of deception in Hartford Courant, November 20, 1949.]

ACC Historian received photos by Herbert McIntyre. [ACC Annual Report]

1950-1951

November 3, 1950: Installation of co-pastors Rev. E. Jerome Johanson and his wife Laura Lane Johanson. [Their installation bulletin in ACC Pilgrim Record of Service, ACC main office.]

On January 18, 1951, Jerome Johanson sailed to Lund, Sweden, for 7 months for his sabbatical. He studied there and sent back news and photos to ACC. His wife, Rev. Laura Johanson, stayed in Avon and was sole pastor of ACC.

There were 64 children on the cradle roll, babies through Kindergarten. The ‘primary’ students (grades 1,2,3) averaged about 35 in school each Sunday. The ‘junior’ department had about 40 students; grades 7-12 had about 36 students;

The ACC Historian received 100 newspaper clippings to add to the records, photographs, old attendance records.

1952-1953

Parish Hall Addition - groundbreaking (1952). Fellowship Hall, kitchen, classroom space. Dedicated April 26, 1953. Cost \$60,000. It took 8 years of planning and fundraising. Contractor Lars Hogblom. It was “modern, efficient, and beautiful. Our people are all proud of it.” [Rev. E. Jerome Johnson, ACC Annual Report, 1952-1953, p. 3.]

ACC’s 3rd fellowship hall built, replacing the 1858 one at the north side of the meetinghouse.

The door on the west side of pulpit was installed. The railings on the front steps were donated by Ensign Bickford.

c. 1952. The cross on north wall was designed by artist Clifford Jones at the request of anonymous donors. Clifford Jones made sure it was hung property to catch the proper shadows. Built by Lars Hogbloom. Made of elm wood. Dedicated to the glory of God and in memory of a family member of the donor.

ACC was represented at the tercentenary celebration of First Church Farmington, its grandmother church.

Mrs. Rowe, ACC Historian, finished the 3rd scrapbook, covering 6 years. She put it in the vault at Ensign-Bickford Company, until ACC had a suitable place.

Sunday school Nursery-K had 63 students; total number of children enrolled in church school were 227. There were 21 teachers (3 men and 18 women).

Church membership was the highest in its history up to that point: 419.

1954

In September, Evans Brothers Movers of Glastonbury moved “the old Avon parsonage” to its new location, approximately one mile west on Route 44.

Schulmerich Carillon bells were a gift from C. Frederick Woodford for pre-recorded hymns, in memory of his wife Elsie B. Woodford, who had died September 9, 1953. It was dedicated at a church service on October 24, 1954; a bronze memorial plaque was placed in the rear of the meetinghouse. Played every evening at 5:55 pm and Sunday mornings. New carillon installed c. 1990s. The steeple bell retired from use.

105 men from the Farmington Valley Laymen’s Association attended a meeting at ACC, with dinner served by the Ladies Aid Society.

The 35th anniversary of Lester Bradley as ACC organist and choir director from 1920-1968. [Bradley in 1976 ACC Annual Report, Feb. 1, 1977, p. 3]

George Gabriel, formerly of Avon, died on November 19, 1954 and left a bequest to ACC of \$10,000. He had lived in Hartford for the past 52 years. His father had been ACC treasurer of ACC and of the Town of Avon. [Gabriel biography, *Hartford Courant*, Jan. 14, 1955, online.]

1953-1954: Ladies Aid Society sent 28 packages of used clothing (571 pounds) to Congregational Christian Service Committee for Korea and Italy.

Basement Sunday school rooms were under construction, and 25-30 men helped each week. The Avon Community Kindergarten opened Sept. 5 (1953 or 1954) with 27 children.

1955

Average Sunday attendance was 150. At the Easter breakfast at Fellowship Hall, 378 attended. The Johanson’s presented a slide show (Script is in the annual report papers, and one there were slides that went with the slide show.) There were 33 baptisms. The Parish House was used for church organization meetings, girl scouts, woman’s club, and other groups.

Flood of Farmington River cuts off Avon from Hartford. Meetinghouse used as refuge for the stranded, and headquarters for relief groups. In what was called the 1st flood, over 100 people slept in the Parish House and in the church. During what was called the second flood, on October 16, 1955, 24 people slept in the Parish House and church. The counselors and children of Camp Shalom were cared for at ACC. The Red Cross, Civil Defense, and ACC workers gave hundreds of people food and shelter. [Rettig, *Onward*, p. 10]

The sale of Christmas trees totaled \$250, for the Building Fund.
Donations in memory of George Gabriel of \$10,000, the largest recorded gift to date.

1956

A Youth Director (from Hartford Seminary) was employed. The church school had 278 enrolled. Average attendance was 201 children and there were 34 teachers.

1957

United Church of Christ established by the merger of the Congregational Christian Church and the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Plywood covering put on floors in the sanctuary and narthex. Narthex also got vinyl tile (grey and black alternating pattern).

1958

Began use of silver plate communion ware, engraved in memory of Herbert E. McIntyre ,ACC member and superintendent of Ensign Pickford Co. (Six trays, 2 bases, 2 covers with crosses.) ACC has other silver plate items that are not part of the McIntyre set.

FAVARH was organized at meetings at ACC in 1958. About 4 families started this organization, with the mission to help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Sunday afternoon, October 5, 1958: dedication of Marker for the site of the first Meetinghouse in Avon. Austin Hunter had asked Willis Chidsey if he knew the location of the original meetinghouse. Willis said that Clarence B. Curtiss could show them. His uncle, Naaman Curtiss, had shown him years before and many stones at the site were still there, near a shallow place in the river where it could be forded. Curtiss formed a committee to erect a permanent monument at the site: C. Fred Woodford (of ACC), C.B. Curtiss, Charles W. Hunter, Edward T. Prowe, Austin R. Hunter. Curtiss and Mr. Woodford made the concrete marker, on the Curtiss Farm. The foundation was poured on the site using stones from the original and leaving one partially exposed in the front. The ministers taking part were: Rev. G. Harland Lewis, First Church, Farmington; Rev. Frederick M. Bradley, West Avon Cong. Church; Rev. E. Jerome Johnson, ACC. "There is much satisfaction in having the site permanently marked as Mr. Curtiss was the last living person to know the exact location." [Event's record by Austin R. Hunter; copy in AFPL History Room, ACC File Box.]

Original meetinghouse Location, 1754: GPS coordinates 41 degrees 47 minutes and 29 seconds N; 72 degrees 49 minutes and 48 seconds W. Near the foot of the driveway to 191 Reverknolls, and on the east end of front yard of 205 Reverknolls. The land was owned in 1958 by Mr. and Mrs. G. Harry Davis of Waterville Road. "They have kindly given permission for the marker to be erected, and will be present for its dedication." [*Courant*, Oct. 2, 1958, p. 10D, online.]

1959

The twenty restored colonial windows of the Avon Congregational church will be dedicated at the Sunday morning service, Dec. 13, at 11 a.m. There are only two of the original windows installed when the Church was built in 1819 that remain. They are the two lower front windows of the Church. The other two upper front windows were replaced with replicas of the original

windows by Mrs. Maud Ely Gibbons when the steeple was restored in 1949. The windows were replaced by four pane sash after a fire damaged the Church in 1876. Mr. and Mrs. Richard A. Merkle started the project to restore the colonial type sash with the first given in December 1958. Since then other members and friends have subscribed for the other nineteen windows.... The new windows were installed y John S. Eddy, a member of the Board of Trustees. [Hartford Courant, Dec. 13, 1959. Archives Scrapbook No. 4.]

In 1959, as noted above, the 1876 windows were replaced by copies of the original 1819 windows, with 20 over 20 panes. Twenty panes may have significance. This number in the Bible is a symbol of completeness. It is connected to a period of waiting, labor or suffering that is one day rewarded. [# 20 meaning from wikipedia.]

Plaques under each of the 1959 windows identify donors.

New red carpeting installed, and not replaced until 2010. (Earlier carpet had been installed 1919) ACC sells Christmas trees as a fundraiser. Pays \$173 for trees; sells them for \$290. Five new classrooms built under the old Church cost \$6,500. Dedicated 1960.

1960

Annual Report describes the idea of having union services to build a closer relationship between ACC and the West Avon Congregational Church.

ACC approved joining the United Church of Christ. Said pastor Jerome Johnson, "I feel quite certain that the merger of our Congregational Christian Churches with the Evangelical and Reformed Church will be consummated at Philadelphia next July. I expect to be there to share in this important event. We have altogether too many separate denominations in our Protestant Churches." Rev. Johnson suggested the church change its name (Avon Congregational Church) to reflect its new status, such as The United Church of Christ in Avon, or The Avon United Church of Christ." [Annual Report for the year 1960, pp. 3-4] [See also 1961]

1961

"The Avon Community Kindergarten" held classes in the Parish House five days a week.

[See also 1960] The General Council of Congregational Christian Churches and the General Synod of the United Church of Christ met in Philadelphia from June 29-July 6, 1961. The General Council took the final steps to enter the United Church of Christ. The vote was taken on July 4, 1961. The vote was unanimous and the "General Synod spontaneously arose and sang the Doxology. It was a great thrill for all of us who shared that experience to realize that we were actually taking part in one of the great moments in church history occurring during the 20th century. With all my heart and mind I believe that this action is in keeping with the mind and leading of God." [Rev. Jerome Johanson's Annual Report for the year 1961, pp. 3-4]. This put ACC into the World Council of Churches, where there were 198 different denominations.

July 2, 1961: the first union summer service of the Avon Congregational and West Avon Congregational Churches, at 9:30 a.m. (Held in July at WACC.)

1962

There were 56 new members. The growth over the past ten years “has been very steady and healthy.” [Annual Report for the year 1962, pRev. Jerome Johanson’s report.]

The Memorial Fund was established to accept gifts in memory of loved ones.

1963

Said Rev. E. Jerome Johanson in his annual report for the year 1963, *The assassination of President Kennedy struck all of us as a shocking and dastardly deed. We simply could not conduct our Sunday morning service two day later without marking this tragic [the original choice of words “shocking” was crossed out] event in our prayers and sermon. The attendance that Sunday morning was about 50% greater than usual. And yet our Church was filled again the next noon for the memorial service. None of us will ever forget the impression those four days left upon our minds and hearts.*

Three new windows in the front of the church were dedicated during the morning service of February 24, 1963.

1964 REV. JOHN A. BANKOSKY (Sept. 13, 1964 - Nov. 17, 1968)

[Before he departed ACC this year] Rev. Johanson was approached about a possible merger of ACC with the West Avon Congregational Church in the future. The Long Range Planning Committee was formed. The conclusion was that a merger was untimely and unlikely. Avon was growing and the town would need “two churches.” There could be a sharing of activities and staff. (Annual Report for the year 1964).

May-July, 1964: DR. JAMES ENGLISH was Interim Minister.

May 11, 1964: Board of Trustees asked Long Range Planning Committee to consider offer from J. Anthony O’Neill to buy the Old Parsonage from ACC.

Rev. Bankosky’s installation service was November 15, 1964. He resigned Nov. 17, 1968, and received a letter of transfer to West Barnstable, Mass.

1965 EDWARD MAYES, Licensed Associate, Minister of Christian Education (1965-1967)

ACC’s 6th parsonage purchased, 1965 to the present. 69 Rosewood.

Austin Organ installed Dec. 21, 1965.

Historian Barbara Rettig was maintaining a scrapbook about ACC. She had a file of color slides of events and people. Some prints of those slides are in the scrapbook. She wrote a brief history of ACC and its ministers for the United Church of Christ book on church history. Barbara made typewritten notes on 74 of the meetings of the East Avon Ecclesiastical Society 1854-1921. [Nora Howard, 2020, has not located these.]

John H. Kiser was the church photographer. There are two Sunday morning services. Newcomers could fill out cards located on backs of pews, to connect with the pastor.

1966 Assistant Pastor Levering Reynolds III (September 1966 - February 28, 1969) Full time, licensed.

A burnished aluminum communion service purchased with Special Gifts Fund.
New organ donated by C. Fred Woodford, and a plaque erected for C. Fred Woodford.
The ACC Usher volunteers seem be men only. No women.

1967

Another summer of union services with West Avon Congregational Church.
In his annual report, Rev. John Bankosky referred to “problems in the church” and “questioning ...what God would have us be.”

1968

The cross in the pulpit (not on the north wall) was created by Roy and Walter Read about 1968 when Dr. James English, former Conference Minister, was ACC’s interim minister. The wood and piece of iron scavenged from a raft which floated down the Farmington River during the 1955 flood. [Bob August, p. 4]

Rev. John Bankosky resigned Nov. 17, 1968, and received a letter of transfer to West Barnstable, Mass. [ACC Pilgrim Register, p. 79]

Edgar Brinckerhoff was a candidate for Licensure. ACC worked with Farmington Valley Association of the UCC leading to his ordination.(p. 1 of Annual report for the year 1968.)

There was a banquet for Rev. Joseph Moulton and family, “Commemorating his 50th years in the Missionary field. The fact that ‘Joe’ was commissioned in our Church made it double enjoyable. He gave us a witty and wonderful review of 50 years.” [Annual Report for the Year 1968, p. 1.]

Levering Reynolds, III, resigned as Assistant Minister on Dec. 4, 1966. He remained however until April 25, 1969, with a letter of transfer.

Sunday services had been held two times on Sunday mornings. This schedule was reduced to one service. Church school for 7th-12th grades and adults was at 9 am. Church school for crib room through 6th grade was 10:30 a.m.

Only men are ushers (not women).

1969 REV. THEODORE CARPENTER SCHOONMAKER (September 1969-1985)

Rev. Schoonmaker was born in Amherst, Massachusetts, August 27, 1921. Boston University (1942); Chicago Theological Seminary (1945). He had been ordained in 1945. He died March 19, 2003. He had one of the two longest pastorates, tying that that of Rev. Seeley (16

Celebration of 150th Anniversary Year of ACC (Special morning worship service, Sept. 21, 1969; afternoon Festival Service of Music, Commemorating the 150th Anniversary, 3:30 p.m.)

Levering Reynolds, III, had resigned as Assistant Minister, effective February 1969. The Assistant Minister position was being eliminated. He wrote that "There are enough opportunities here for at least three ministers to be employed full time." (Annual Report for the year 1968.)

The interim minister had been DR. JAMES F. ENGLISH, who began on January 5, 1969 and served at least through December 1969 (according to the list of marriages he performed, in the ACC Pilgrim Register.)

The "old parsonage" on W. Main Street was rented through June 1970 and may be sold. "New parsonage on Rosewood Road occupied by the new minister, Rev. Schoonmaker.

1972

Meetinghouse listed on National Register of Historic Places. The Avon Congregational Church's application (1972) noted that the meetinghouse "shows the influence of Charles Bullfinch, who, with his Boston churches, moved the previously traditional side entrance to the end, where the entire gable end became the dominant feature and readily was given to decorative details." Hymn racks widened about 1972 to fit both hymnals and pew Bibles.

1974: November 24th, Heritage Sunday (ACC's 155th anniversary)

Sunday school children attended the first part of the service, wearing Pilgrim hats. Two men in frock coats and top hats, with muskets, greeted people outside the church. The bell was rung; the tithingman rapped his stick. Procession down aisle: deacons in pairs; Bible carried in and placed on the stand; Rev. Schoonmaker led the service. Someone carried wood in during the message by Rev. Schoonmaker, and the person said "we trustees must keep the fires going" and he left the wood up front. Lining of hymns - a deacon sang one line of a hymn and the congregation followed. Fundraising: pews were 'for sale' for the day; could purchase in advance. [Described in letter from Roger Winslow to Rev. English]

1975

Plexiglass storm windows and two ceiling fans installed about 1975.

1975-1977: 3 year, \$50,000 Renovation Program to preserve meetinghouse. New roof, resetting front steps, exterior paint, renovating Sunday school rooms, paint and Sanctuary, new sewer.

1976 - Nation's Bicentennial

Meetinghouse interior and exterior painted. Storm windows installed in meetinghouse.

As a bicentennial project, and in honor of the former organist and choir director, the steeple bell mechanism was repaired and new 40' bell rope installed. The bell was rededicated on Easter Sunday, 1976, and rung by teenager Glenn Boswell. Roy Read and Walter Read did the bell work and reconditioning the pulleys and ropes.

Heritage Sunday Sept. 19, 1976. Many wore old-time outfits. Glenn Boswell pealed the bell. Edgar Brown started worship at 10:30 by rapping his tithing stick. Deacons silently filed in leading pastor Schoonmaker. Bruce Daube carried the original 1818 Bible. Rev. Schoonmaker's sermon was based on excerpts from Rev. Porter's sermon in 1823 at First Church Farmington, ACC's mother church. A long prayer was augmented by short prayers from the congregation. The choir sang old hymns accompanied by Cliff Carlson on an old 'pump' organ. The worship service programs were composed in old style format by Fred Read. The collection boxes had long handles, made for the occasion. A group photograph was taken after church. John Nessler wore a high buttoned coat and powdered wig. There was a Luncheon and the town bicentennial parade. ACC and West Avon Congregational Church shared a float, with a bridge between the two churches and the theme, "fellowship, past and future." [Annual Report for the year 1976, p. 6; Rettig, *Onward*, p. 13]

Sue Smith began as organist and director of music.

1977

Church roof repaired for \$12,202. Painting the church (presumably the exterior) cost \$10,200. (Annual Report for the Year 1977.)

1978

Old photographs of ACC went on display in vestibule (and remained till about 2017). Rev. Laura Johanson gave the ACC archives detailed notebooks from each year of her co-pastorate with her husband, featuring church bulletins and more.

1979

C. Frederick Woodford died in 1979.

Marian Hunter, ACC historian, continues to collect, assemble, research and file.

Photograph taken of Rev. Ted and Hazel Schoonmaker on ACC front steps on their 10th anniversary at ACC.

Keola refugee family arrived, sponsored by ACC, with ties to Laos and Cambodia.

1981

"Parish Tidings" newsletter launched by Newsletter Committee, to relieve the pastor of publishing the church newsletter.

Realignment of Route 10 and 44 disruptive.

Special Gifts purchased the 2-volume *Early Connecticut Meetinghouses* for the library (now in archives).

Moderator Bob August noted that in 1961, twenty years ago, there were just 3 churches in Avon (ACC, WACC, St. Ann's Catholic Church). Interrelationships were "limited or diffident." He said that there was now more communication between the Farmington Valley religious organizations, and the annual Ecumenical breakfast. [Annual Report for the year 1981, p. 10]

ACC Property Title: ACC met with the Hunter family (heirs of Joel Wheeler (the original land donor), who still had ownership rights. The 1819 deed was vague and ambiguous. If ACC ever 'removed from the premises,' the land and improvements would revert back to the Hunter family. ACC wanted a Quiet Title. [Annual Report for the year 1981] Several years later, the congregation voted on March 10, 1985, to confirm "all prior actions of the Board of Trustees regarding the Quiet Title Action and the signing of the Stipulated Judgement." The heirs of Joel Wheeler, including Austin Hunter and family, agreed to the Quiet Title Action This means that by the year 2014 the church will have full title to the property on which the structure stands." (Parish Tidings April 1985)

1982

Rev. Schoonmaker was on sabbatical, April 15-August 1, 1982. [see Annual Report for details]

ACC considered putting vinyl siding on the meetinghouse, which would have cost of \$11,780. Church considers buying 10 West Main Street and 14 West Main Street, from Anthony O'Neill's sister Mary O'Neill Pulford for a total of \$190,000.

The church updated the 1969 church history booklet, under the direction of Barbara Rettig.

Discussion in Board of Trustee minutes (filed with the Annual Report) about having a piano in the sanctuary near the pulpit. Minutes of Feb. 15 note that a piano was moved there as needed for Sunday services, moving back and forth between Fellowship Hall and the Sanctuary.

1983

12 West Main Street purchased from the Anthony O'Neill Family for \$131,000.

Baseboard heating for balcony installed 1983-85.

Edgar Brown died in April 1978, and it was reported in the Annual report for 1983 that he left ACC \$90,000, which went to the Special Gifts committee.

1984

ACC was continuing "to investigate the computer front." [Email and website started in 1999.] [Annual Report for 1984, p. 2]

1985

Interim minister (before Bouton arrived) was **ROBERT SINGER**, who began serving in December 1985.

An access ramp was installed for the first time. The front pews on the inner aisle were altered for the hinged seat feature for handicapped seating.

At a Congregational Meeting on March 10, 1985, a resolution was voted to confirm “all prior actions of the Board of Trustees regarding the Quiet Title Action and the signing of the Stipulated Judgement.” The heirs of Joel Wheeler, including Austin Hunter and family, agreed to the Quiet Title Action This means that by the year 2014 the church will have full title to the property on which the structure stands.” [Parish Tidings April 1985]

1986 REV. WARREN HUSSEY BOUTON (1986-1996)

Ted and Hazel Schoonmaker departed. “The Reception for Ted and Hazel was not only evidence of our good will toward them as they left our parish but it was even more an act of appreciation of how they worked and cared and prayed amongst us.” (Annual Report for the year 1985, p. 9)

Memorial funds were used to purchase carillon. The former carillon was beyond repair.

1987

March, 1987, Rev. Bouton was installed at ACC.

Attendance was growing so there was consideration of adding a second Sunday morning service.

1988

The hymn board on the north wall (at right, as you face the pulpit) was made in 1988 by Walter Kusiak of Weatogue. It is a copy of the existing one (on the left, placed sometime after 1918). Bob August of Avon stained the boards, and Roy Read provided the hook. Bruce Elliott installed the new board. Made possible by Special Gift memorial fund in memory of Henry McLaughlin.

A sound system was installed in the sanctuary, and tied to speakers in Fellowship Hall. It had microphones for use in either facility, receiver units for the hearing impaired, and a tape recorder to record the service. The church provided large-print bulletins for each service.

Attendance was growing and 50 new members joined. The Long Range Planning Committee met once to discuss the need for additional church meeting space and the viability of a second Sunday service.

Steeple roof repairs were made inside and out.

ACC entered into a consolidated parking lot agreement with B.B.Builders, after finalizing ACC’s lease agreement with the State Dept. of Transportation. The lot was resurfaced, and in the spring the lighting and landscaping would be completed.

1989

“...we need to address the fact that at present the size of our Church properties is not adequate to respond to the growth projections of the Town of Avon and to our goal to increase Church membership.” [Annual Report for the year 1989, section on 12 West Main St.]

Gift received for Memorial Garden installation.

MEMORIAL GARDEN

“LORD, YOU HAVE BEEN OUR DWELLING PLACE IN ALL GENERATIONS.” Psalms 90:1

(as of Feb. 2018)

Cameron John Young, 1951-1998
George S. Emery, Jr., 1936-1999
Bradford Mason, 1926-2001
Olive Carman Russell, 1923-2002
Elsie Loren Frost, 1919-2003
Doris Johnson Fuller, 1925-2004
William P. Russell, 1924-2008
Freida W. Mason, 1916-2009
Leo E. Boswell, 1932-2011
Catherine F. Eastwood, 1924-2014

ACC has a photo in the archives of the memorial garden plaque of the First Church of Christ in West Hartford, almost an exact image of the ACC plaque. The West Hartford plaque's scripture is different. The ACC garden committee clearly used the West Hartford plaque as a guide.

In August of 1989, the ACC Special Gifts Committee recorded a gift of \$2,756 for the "Alice Sanderson Memorial." She was a Tuesday Crafters member. The memorial bench and tree and shrubs, on the west side of the ACC exterior, was provided by Sanderson & Co. The plaque for Alice Sanderson's memorial garden area is stone, and set in the ground near the bench; it reads

Garden
In remembrance
ALICE COOMBS
SANDERSON
1916-1988

The Flower Garden in Honor of Jennie Boswell's work as superintendent was located west of the path that leads into the garden today (2018). It was beside the office/education wing built in 1953; this wing was removed in 2001 and replaced by the new Fellowship Hall wing.

1990

Steeple repainted.

A second computer was purchased in late 1990 (from annual report for 1991 year).

1991

There was a parking agreement with businesses to the west of ACC, dated August 1991. This agreed to the right in perpetuity for ACC and the businesses to use the 67 parking spaces. (Annual Report for the year 1991).

1993

A new Mission statement and By-Laws were adopted [Annual Report for the year 1993] Warren Bouton's doctoral dissertation play "One Church's Story" was presented at ACC, as part of his earning his Doctorate in Ministry at Hartford Seminary.

1994

ACC renovations. Exterior was stripped, painted and restored; steeple repaired by Valley Restoration in Torrington. For 175th Anniversary of ACC in 1994.

1995

October 22, 1995, was the 50th anniversary of Ted Schoonmaker's ordination. He returned to ACC and gave the sermon. There were 122 people at the reception following the service. Rev. Warren Bouton departed ACC. "Someone who has affected in us in many ways, large and small, does not slip easily out of mind." (Annual Report for the year 1995, p. 1.)

INTERIM MINISTER Dr. RONALD ALAN KITTLE arrived September 1995.

1996 REV. EDWARD T. FALSEY (November 1, 1996 - August 30, 2007)

Chester R. Woodford died.

1997

Ed Falsey was installed as pastor at the end of 1997.

A new ACC sign was put on the lawn, made by Charles Kilgore.

1998

A prayer chain began, with deacons and others.

c. 1998: Jennie Boswell had a garden with three white rhododendrons planted (near present day Memorial Garden) in her honor, after she retired after 20 years in Christian Education. This location was near the entry to parish offices.

Church members served in Guatemalan mission work.

New playscape at Avon Nursery School.

1999

Use of the internet to communicate with members began, mailing the Sunday Bulletin to all who were on an email list. Sue Smith created and maintained the ACC website. ACC was continuing "to investigate the computer front." [Annual Report for the year 1984, p. 2]

Facilities Review Committee created in the Spring to assess space needs for present and future.

3rd Annual Blessing of the Animals.

Christmas Eve service changed from 11 p.m. to 10 p.m.

2000

Endowment Fund policies were approved by Congregational vote on January 16, 2000.

2001

The first class of Stephen Ministers was commissioned April 1, 2001.

September 11, 2001. Said Ed Falsey, *The events of September 11th touched us in profound ways that we are just beginning to understand. Immediately after the tragedy, people instinctively turned to the church for answers, sanctuary, consolation and community. To respond to the needs before us, we held a joint service with West Avon Congregational church, opened the church for a day of prayer and mourning, and held a candlelight vigil. Our worship services (music, prayers and sermons) have been an important way in which we sought to access and extend God's love and compassion. Through this all, we have been reminded of the compelling role the church has in giving voice and body to God's love for all people. In a world rent apart by divisions and differences, hatred and hostility, we need to share in the message of God's inclusive and uniting love.* [Minister's report in Annual Report for the year 2001, p. 3]

After three years of planning, the congregation voted on October 14, 2001 to proceed with a major construction project, called The Building for Mission and Ministry, 3rd Century Campaign. The fundraising goal was \$1,893,500. This project would remove the 1953 addition

to the church (offices, classrooms, Fellowship Hall, kitchen), and build a new Parish Center. [Annual Report 2002, p. 17. The final project cost, as reported in the 2004 annual report, was \$1,851,301. Fundraising continued even after the new wing was dedicated, and the church received supplemental donations after the new wing was dedicated Oct. 6, 2002.]

Said Bruce Elliott as moderator, “But when we consider the context of the decision - the economic and social uncertainty of those weeks immediately following the terrorist attacks on our country - I think we have a shining example of the strength of our community and hope for the future. Demolition of old Parish Hall.” [Annual Report for the year 2001, p. 1]

In July, the church offices relocated to 12 West Main Street. Church meetings were held throughout Avon. The Sunday school met in the Italian Club on Old Farms Road. Groundbreaking for new parish hall was Sunday, November 11, 2001. (The 1953 Parish Hall was demolished Nov. 2001.) The worship service the day was one “of thanksgiving and celebration on the groundbreaking of our new parish center.” Said Rev. Falsey, “In saying ‘goodbye’ to that building which served the church so well for a half-century, we remember, thank and celebrate those within the church who gave so much of themselves to build and care for the earlier building.” [Annual Report for the year 2001. Report of the Minister, p. 3]

From Email to Nora Howard from Bruce Elliott, November 2020: All contractors engaged for the project were committed to making sure we never missed holding Sunday services in the Meeting House during the construction period including through winter 2002. Immediately before the demolition phase began, local carpenter and ACC member Mike Covert built a temporary ramp system for access & egress through the front doors. The doors at either side of the pulpit were then temporarily boarded up so there was no access or egress that way. There were no doors from the balconies into the new space before the building project. The church offices and a meeting/rehearsal space temporarily occupied the entire first floor at 12 West Main. The offices were always open on Sunday morning to allow access to the bathrooms for church attendees. FYI Sunday school classes also were uninterrupted during construction because the Italian Club allowed ACC to use their building for Sunday school. As ACC Christian Educator - Carol Randolph was instrumental in making the Sunday school arrangements work. Use of the Italian club was a gift to ACC from the club members.

2002

June 2002: Carol Randolph, minister of Christian Education, retired after nearly 20 years.
Community Open House at ACC, September 22.
6th annual blessing of the animals on the church lawn, Sept. 29.

The construction of ACC's third Parish Hall was completed. It was dedicated Sunday, Oct. 6, 2002, after a 5-year process of planning, fundraising, and construction.

The church had 5 choirs: Alleluia choir (K-2), Joyful noise (teens), Youth, Celebration Ringers, Senior Choir. Hitchcock chairs stenciled with our meetinghouse were commissioned for minister's study. There was a new communion cloth.

2003

The Archive Room installed under the sanctuary, named in memory of Michael Covert and overseen by Dwight and Betty Douglas. File cabinets were given by Special Gifts.

The Memorial service for Pastor Emeritus Theodore C. Schoonmaker was on March 29, 2003. Rev. Schoonmaker, who had died on March 19 was "A calm and steady influence when we needed those qualities the most." (Annual Report for the year 2003, p. 5)
There were 40 children in the Christmas pageant.

2004

National Register Nomination Attempt for Neighborhood: Owners in the proposed district surrounding ACC opposed the nomination and wrote letters of opposition. The National Park Service denied the application. Avon is only the 2nd town in the history of the National Register to have their "town center" denied the application because of owner opposition.

A new Memorial Garden was created between Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall.
Rev. Falsey and volunteers attended workshop about safe church policies.

2005

In September, the Congregation voted to accept the donation made by a couple, for a new faith based, self supporting nursery school that would be associated with ACC.

A refugee family from Ethiopia arrived on Feb. 17. ACC sponsored the family through Interfaith Refugee Ministry in New Haven.

There was discussion about expanding to two services on Sundays but the choir was unable to sing at both services. (Annual Report for year 2005, p. 18)

2006

ACC had raised \$533,000 for capital improvements. Payments received thus far paid off the 2001 mortgage for the new Parish Center, and had almost paid for the steeple restoration, meeting house painting, and a new roof. The weathervane's gold leaf gilding was refurbished, replaced in 2006.

January: a group from ACC went to Tweed New Haven Airport to welcome a family of refugees from Afghanistan to the new apartment ACC had prepared for them. In December, another ACC group waited at the limousine depot in New Haven to welcome a refugee family from Somalia.

The Avon Nursery School opened in September, serving 3 and 4 year olds.

ACC adopted a Safe Church Policy, mandatory for insurance coverage.

November 5, 2006 was the 10th anniversary of Ed Falsey's ministry. The celebration luncheon in Fellowship Hall was attended by 160 people.

2007 REV. BRENDA PELC-FASZCZA (September 1, 2007-2009)

In June, Rev. Falsey notified the church that he would be resigning.

Steeple repaired c. 2007. Organist Sue Smith resigned.

2008 - 2009

Sept. 2008: The Building and Grounds Committee oversaw renovation of the second floor commercial space of 12 West Main Street into a two-bedroom apartment. Remodeled the third floor apartment was remodeled. The meetinghouse interior was repainted; and steeple and organ work completed.

2009 - 2010 REV. KENNETH D. FULLER (September 1, 2009-May 1, 2011)

Rev. Fuller was installed as minister on June 13, 2010, after having been here about nine months.

New red pew cushions installed in May.

New ACC sign on Route 44 c. 2010.

Avon Nursery School playground expanded along the north side.

In 2010, ACC celebrated a decade of being a Stephen Ministry Church.

2010: First Friday community Dinners begin in February. Still going strong in 2020.

2011 - 2012 REV. MARTHA F. CHENAULT (June 2011/Interim Pastor; Dec. 9, 2011/Designated Pastor - 2016)

March 6, 2011: Rev. Kenneth Fuller resigned and his farewell reception was May 1, 2011.

A book on Avon's church in the 1700s and early 1800s by ACC historian Nora Howard was published, *Catch'd on Fire, The Journals of Rev. Rufus Hawley, 1863-1812*.

The organ was refurbished. Leathers restored, mechanical parts overhauled, musical capabilities expanded with the addition or ranks of pipes. There were electronic upgrades and the orientation of the louvers was modified to improve the sound.

2012 - 2013

Rev. Chenault's title changed from Interim Pastor to Designated Pastor.

18 people signed up for the Bethel Series Bible study, a 2-year class.

ACC aided the resettlement of an Iraqi refugee family, Mike and Hadeel.

The ACC Christian Service and Outreach Committee, and ACC members, supported many programs. Recipients included Avon Gifts of Love, Avon Social Services, Avon Fuel Bank, Avon Food Pantry, Christian Activities Council, Hartford Area Habitat for Humanity, Foodshare, Loaves and Fishes Stone Soup, Interval House, and ACC Day of Caring activities; support of national and world services included to the United Church of Christ, IRIS (International Refugee and Immigrations Services), Home for Heroes, Salvation Army, Hurricane Sandy Relief, Adopt a Classroom, at Gaffney School in New Britain, and Avon Lion's Club Literacy Project. For Simply Smiles, four from ACC volunteered for a week at the Lakota reservation, South Dakota.

2013-2014

At long last, ACC's ownership of its land and buildings was settled, after almost 200 years. At a Congregational Meeting on March 10, 1985, the Congregation voted to confirm "all prior actions of the Board of Trustees regarding the Quiet Title Action and the signing of the Stipulated Judgement." The heirs of Joel Wheeler, including Austin Hunter and family, agreed to this Quiet Title Action. That meant that by the year 2014 the church would have full title to the property on "which the structure stands." [See Parish Tidings April 1985 and section on this timeline for 1985.]

June 2014 - June 2015

After study and a congregation-wide survey, ACC'S mission, vision, core values and guiding principles were approved at the Annual Meeting on June 1, 2014.

The Mission of the Avon Congregational Church

The mission of the Avon Congregational church is to enable people to know God's unconditional love and to be a community of faith helping one another to live as Jesus Christ lived and taught." The Vision is that "We will be an open, caring, and growing community As we explore new and proven spiritual pathways we will encourage one another to discover our unique

significance in God's world. We will worship work and celebrate together joyfully. Using our gifts to reach out to others, we will create a world of Compassion, peace and justice.

The Statement of Inclusion

A statement of inclusion, approved at the June 7, 2015 annual meeting, based on John 13:34-35:

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. But this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love or one another. The Statement is In keeping with the life and teaching of Christ Jesus, we joyfully and unconditionally welcome all people of any age, gender, sexual orientation, race, culture, ability or social or economic status into our community of faith. We affirm the humanity of all people as unique individuals made in God's image. We also affirm the special gifts that each person has to offer. We invite all to participate in the full life of the church and covenant of our Christian community."

2015-2016

On January 1, 2016, the church "took a shared leap of faith and implemented a new five ministry, team-based program structure." The goal is greater community participation and for continuity in ongoing worship. The five ministries are Welcoming, Nurturing, Worship, Outreach, and Support. [Annual Report, p. 13]

2016-2017 - After the departure of Rev. Martha Chenault

2016-2017: Interim minister **Rev. Donna Cassity**

July 2017-October 15, 2017: Interim Bridge Pastor, **Rev. Donna Manocchio**

October 16, 2017- early 2018: Interim Bridge Pastor, **Rev. Matt Laney**

Feb. 15, 2017: Two consultants from the Architectural Preservation Studio in NY City attended the Financial Planning Meeting regarding their report on the restoration and maintenance needs of the meetinghouse, which come to an estimated \$ 397,000. They noted it was in good condition for being almost 200 years old. A summary of their report is on page 5 of the annual report for 2016-2017.

The Avon Nursery School marked its 11th year of operation.

The Historic American Buildings Survey of the Library of Congress accepted the 17 drawings by ACC member Chester Case (completed in 1993) into the collection. This was during the summer of 2017.

2018 July - September Rev. ERICA NIERENDORF (July though September)

Pastor Erica Nierendorf began her ministry in July 2018, as ACC continued to search for a settled, full-time pastor. Karen Levan became Music Director in August.

2018 Rev. CHRISTOPHER SOLIMENE, began as Settled Pastor. Oct. 1, 2018

Rev. Christopher Solimene presented his Candidating Sermon, “Wow!” on September 9, 2019, and was called that same day by the ACC congregation to be the settled pastor. Pastor Chris began his ministry on October 1, 2018. He was ordained October 21, 2018, at his home church, First Church of Christ Congregational, New Britain, for his pastorate at ACC.

The Morsels of Care Ministry began. Volunteers provided baked goods for Pastor Chris to give to newcomers or those in need, after Sunday services.

There was a growing and robust program of outreach, including sponsorship of boy in India, through Global Ministries and Family Village Farm, named Sathiyaraj.

A Restoration Committee was formed to restore the Meetinghouse (repairing the foundation, installing new finials, restoring steeple railings and decking, and painting the exterior) - in time for its 200th anniversary on Sept. 29, 2019.

There were many church improvements: hallway painting and decorating, updates to 12 West Main Street, new kitchen cabinets, refrigerator and dishwasher. A new carillon was installed in the steeple.

2019

Summer: Meetinghouse painted on exterior, top to bottom; repairs to foundation.

200th anniversary of ACC, held with dignitaries and a full meetinghouse on September 29, 2019.

Publication of history of ACC and West Avon Congregational church: *A Tale of Two Meetinghouses* by Nora Howard, Marj Bender, Jeannie Parker.

2020

Covid-19 - 2020-2022 (more story to unfold...this is as of Feb. 2022)

ACC's report on this was written for the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ in late 2021. A copy is at ACC.

March 15, 2020: Last ACC worship service (before the state shutdown) in the meetinghouse.

Around this time: Southern New England Conference of the UCC: “when pandemic began,” it recommended the suspension of In-Person, Inside worship for 2 weeks. The recommendation then, over time, went from “two months” to “Spring” to “Summer.”

March 18, 2020: E-Tidings reported that the church campus was closed until further notice. Staff would continue working following protocols.

March 22, 2020: First ACC worship service on facebook, with Kathy Smith operating Pastor’s iPhone, on a rolling kitchen cart.

May 15: ACC steeple bell still rung every Friday evening 7 pm, by Dick Lytle, in honor of health care workers and first responders.

May 19: First ever ZOOM Steering Circle Meeting. Covid Task Force appointed to plan re-opening of ACC.

June 4, 2020: Installation of National Register Sign, on the lawn.

June 21: Outdoor worship for first time, on front lawn of ACC

July 19: Outdoor picnic for all at Lion’s Club in Unionville; indoors due to heat.

Sunday, August 23, 2020: First official worship service ‘back together’ after 5 months apart. Whereas a handful of people had been allowed in before on Sundays, by pre-registration, today 30-60 allowed in, depending on how social distancing seating works out. Overseeing in the Narthex: Betsy and Peter Van Loon. Other changes include (some of which had been in place before this, as practice) enter through Rt. 44 door and check in at Narthex, only a few allowed in Narthex at one time, health questions, mask wearing, donation box in place (no passing of the plate), no congregational singing, Seating fills up from front by pulpit to back; dismissal from back to front (so no one has to pass by others) and leave by Rt. 44 door (one way in and one way out, to avoid contaminating the Playground door hallway where others enter during the week.

January 11, 2021: installation of new sound and camera system begins in the meetinghouse, to better record it during worship and other gatherings. For facebook and ACC website.

Jan. 17, 2021: First Sunday worship with new sound system and one new camera.

Jan. 24, 2021: First Sunday worship with last weeks’ new sound system and one camera, AND now 3 cameras.

March 14, 2021 Celtic Sunday

ACC reopened to worshipers, sitting at physical distance. This is exactly one year after the last service before the Covid-19 shutdown (ACC was open August-November, 2020).

May 19, 2021: Ct. Governor lifts most restrictions. Vaccinated people can do almost anything. ACC Task Force on hiatus unless needed.

August 11, 2021: Notice to the congregation: *While we believe most church members have been vaccinated and everyone has done their best to mitigate any outbreak of sickness, the COVID-19 Taskforce is unanimous in our decision to request once again that All Must Wear Your Mask inside Avon Congregational Church Regardless of Vaccination Status for Worship. Our request is consistent with the recommendations of the CT Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control.*

Thursday, August 19, 2021: The region had a drenching morning rainstorm, which flooded the ACC basement - for the first time in anyone's memory. Then ensued a call to 911 by Pastor Chris, the help of first responders and the electrician in securing the area, a dumpster delivered, and church family members emailed to come immediately and help move items to the dry Fellowship Hall.

Fall 2021: Some normal activities at ACC; mask wearing required depending on color code of CT. map and transmissions.

December-January into February, 2022: Surge in virus cases with omicron variant. More restrictions in place.

January 2022: Rev. JENNIFER McCLEERY began as Associate Pastor, with Pastor Chris. Called unanimously on Dec. 5, 2021.

Jan. 10 & 31, 2022: Walk in Covid-19 Clinics at ACC for ages 5 and above.

January 9 and 16, 2022: congregation and friends invited to watch virtually, and not attend; to help stop spread of Covid and omicron variant. Regular services will resume when things start a turn for the better. All invited back for Jan. 23 service and going forward now. Present at Jan 9th service: Pastor Chris and Kent, usher Bob Linderman, Sunday school teacher Jane Keeney and Norm Keeney, Karen/organist; and one congregant; Present at Jan. 16 service: Pastor, Kent, Karen at piano, Nora videographer, and about 4 congregants.

Jan. 23, 2022: All invited back in to Sunday worship.

Feb. 13, 2022: Coffee hour resumes.

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