

## ELM STREET CHURCH HISTORY RELIVED

**1815** — The first official Women's organization of the church is formed.

**1821** — The bell for the original church is cast by the Joseph W. Stevens Company of Boston, and weighs 914 pounds. This was the first bell in Southbridge.

**1839** — The church is enlarged with the addition of a Vestry, and new windows. Two box stoves are installed, and they provided the only means of heat in the building.

**1850** — The present parsonage was built sometime around this date. There is no record of the actual date.

**1851** — The church celebrates its 50th Anniversary.

**1856** — Six members of the church establish a mission church in Gerson Butts, Iowa.

**1869** — Major renovations are made to the church. The organ loft and pulpit are lowered, the pews are rearranged into a semi-circle, gas lighting is installed, and a new furnace is put in. The church was 44 x 50 feet and had 275 seats.

**1875** — Clarissa Pratt, a member of the church leaves for Turkey on a missionary trip. Assistance was given to her on a yearly basis by the Women's Organization.

**1883** — Permanent damage is done to the church during a violent windstorm. The steeple was blown down and crashed through the roof. It was decided that a new church must be built. The old church is dismantled and moved to lower Elm Street where it was later destroyed by a fire.

**1885** — The current church is built at a cost of \$17,500. A new bell for the church is cast. The bell from the original church had been badly damaged and it was broken into pieces and became part of the new one. Up until this date, the church was referred to in many records as the "South Church" or "Old South Church." When the new church was built, it was first called the "New Old South Church." Shortly thereafter the church was renamed "Elm Street Congregational Church."

**1891** — Mr. and Mrs. Charles D. Monroe give the Johnson and Son Trickett organ, which is still in use today, as a gift to the church.

**1901** — The 100th Anniversary of the church.

**1921** — The Union Church at Globe Village disbands, and many of its members join our church, which greatly increases our membership.

**1938** — The Susan Knight rooms

are added to the rear of the church to be used as Sunday school rooms. Susan Knight, a teacher in the Southbridge schools, makes this possible through a bequest. Our conference room and offices now occupy this space.

**1938** — The hurricane of 1938 blows the steeple off of the church, and also destroys the stained glass window on the Park Street side of the Sanctuary. The window is replaced through a memorial contribution left by Miss Carrie Stone, and a decision is made not to replace the steeple.

**1943** — For several months during this year we were without a pastor, and the Universalists invited us to hold our meetings with them. In July of the same year Reverend Kraft was called to our church and our country was still at war. The Baptist Church was without a pastor as he had gone into the Army as a chaplain. For three years we held joint services at their church, with our minister occupying the pulpit.

**1951** — Celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the church.

**1953** — Our present Chancel was built and dedicated.

**1956** — Fellowship Hall, the kitchen, Sunday school room, and the

nursery are built.

**1957** — Elm Street Congregational Church and the Congregational Religious Society, who were in charge of business and financial matters, incorporate as one organization and new by-laws are approved.

**1960** — Elm Street Congregational Church approves the Constitution of the United Church of Christ by a majority vote.

**1967** — Elm Street Congregational Church, Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, and Southbridge Federated Church form "Operation Friendship."

**1968** — The Wrighton Fund is established by a bequest made by William J. and Christina R. Wrighton. This fund provides the church with significant funding each year.

**1970** — At the Annual Meeting of the church, a new constitution and bylaws are adopted.

**1975** — Southbridge native Gilbert Martin composes two hymns, "Fight the Good Fight," and "Psalm of Gratitude," and presents them to the Church.

**1975** — During the winter of 1975-76, the national energy crisis forces worship services to be held in Fellowship Hall.

**1981** — Nancy Cook is elected as the first female moderator of the church.

**1984** — The office, nursery and vestry are renovated.

**1986** — The Senior Youth Fellowship travels to Dunelm, New York on a Mission trip.

**1992** — The parsonage is renovated.

**1993** — The Sanctuary is painted and the large screen which had been covering the organ pipes is removed.

**1994** — The Senior Youth Fellowship travels to Kentucky on a Mission trip.

**1995** — The church's first computer is purchased.

**1996** — The original slate roof of the church is replaced.

**2000** — Elm Street Congregational Church votes to become part of the Southbridge Interfaith Hospitality Network.

**2000** — Church members Ken and Edie Deres compose a hymn, "Thank God for His Sustaining Grace" for our 200th Anniversary celebration.

**2000** — The bathrooms in Fellowship Hall are completely renovated and made handicapped accessible, and energy efficient windows are installed throughout the building.