

Andover's Historic Church Celebrates its 150th Anniversary

Some history of the Congregational Church

Pastor John Wagner

We recently changed our name (formerly Andover Congregational) to Andover Community Church. A community church may mean different things depending on the church, but "congregational churches" originally, were quite literally churches of the town and community.

The original settlers of New England brought with them a fervent Christian commitment and the basic form of church parishes with them from old England. You may have heard these were the "Puritans." And so they might be called, though originally "puritan" wasn't a name they had chosen for themselves, but actually a term of derision used by their opponents. It referred to the desire of these reformers to "purify" the faith and practices of the Church of England, and to "purify" the morals and religious faith of its members (No surprise, they were often resented as meddlers.). But originally, the Puritans were simply a reforming movement comprised of clergy and laity within the Church of England. Eventually, many thought a better way would be to come to the New World that was opening up to English settlement, and establish model Christian communities and a new life together. Commercial incentives, no doubt, also played a role, but religious faith was a major concern for many in the 1600s.

Now, on to "community churches:" the early settlers of Massachusetts (and older areas of New Hampshire and other New England states) legally required that worship services with preaching be provided for, before a town could be incorporated. In other words, the citizenry were not only to participate in the government of their new towns (by town meetings, etc.) with elected officials leading them in their civic life; the citizenry of every new town were to participate in the town or "parish" church with their elected clergy leading them in their religious life together.

Early on compulsory attendance at worship was dropped, but every town still had to provide for preaching and worship for those who wanted it. The Puritans, or shall we call them "early Congregationalists," did not reject the idea of "parish churches" (the model they brought with them from old England). What they rejected were those community churches being governed by bishops. Back in England those being made bishops usually were not men of great piety or even faith, so much as political appointees because of their connections (second sons of nobility, etc.). Congregationalism meant every Christian believer should have a say in running the church, because every true Christian has the Holy Spirit. This of

course, led to its own problems.

Their intention was never to suggest that the Christian religion is a matter of majority vote, or the lowest common denominator of religious ideas. These early people of New England generally believed in "keeping the faith once and for all delivered to the people of God." This meant that reforming the Church and Christian faith, life, and practice would always lead Christians back to the writings of the Apostles and their "disciples" (the New Testament), and also to the Hebrew Scriptures of Israel (which we know as the Old Testament).

So "community church" may mean different things to different people. Here in Andover our church building dates back to 1796. We celebrated its 200th anniversary in 1996. It was originally the parish church "meeting house" of the Town (the second one). The town had arranged for services and preaching since its incorporation, but it was in 1782 that Rev. Josiah Badcock became the first settled pastor, the first and only minister actually called by the town. After Rev. Badcock retired in 1809, services and preaching continued to be conducted in the town-owned meeting house (the church in East Andover) but these were supported by various religious societies. Some called themselves free-will Baptists, some "Christians," and some "United Baptists" (You can read all about it in the writings of Ralph Chafee obtainable at the Andover Historical Society).

In 1840 the Town of Andover finally divested itself of ownership of the Church meetinghouse, giving it to members of the Christian denomination. They proceeded to give the original 1796 building a thorough renovation including the addition of the entryway with belfry and steeple. Essentially the look of the building today is that of the 1840 renovation (with organ, heat, lights, and plumbing added over the years).

In 1865 the "Christian church" congregation could no longer sustain ministry, but a Congregational society was formed. In 1869 they called their first pastor, the Rev. Howard Moody. Since that time, except for brief lapses between ministers, there have always been services held with preaching by called pastors and there has always been a continuing congregation.

At Andover Community Church we thought we ought to acknowledge the past and the men and women of Christian faith who for the past 150 years have been together here at ACC for Christian ministry and mission in the town of Andover. We'd like to invite anyone of good will and interest to a service of celebration and giving thanks this coming September 22, 2019. Following the service there'll be an outdoor picnic, to which we hope many will come. More information and details about this service will be provided next month. 

Andover Community Church August News

Press release

This is an update on what's been happening or about to happen at the Church. See feature article (on this page) regarding our 150th anniversary celebration.

Over \$500 was collected for the "Aspire Women's Center" in Laconia. "Aspire" is a pro-life organization which provides life-affirming pregnancy support service. This includes pregnancy tests and ultrasounds for pregnancy confirmation for women in the community experiencing unplanned pregnancies with the hope of encouraging alternatives to abortion.

The Andover Community Church float whose theme was "Team Jesus" took 1st place at the 4th of July parade. Thanks to Karen Forsberg and all who helped put it together. The Church also sold cotton candy at the 4th of July celebration. All profits (over \$250) were designated to a charity called "Love 146". This organization deals with the

prevention of human trafficking by means of education. It also provides help in restoring those lives who have been affected by this hideous crime.

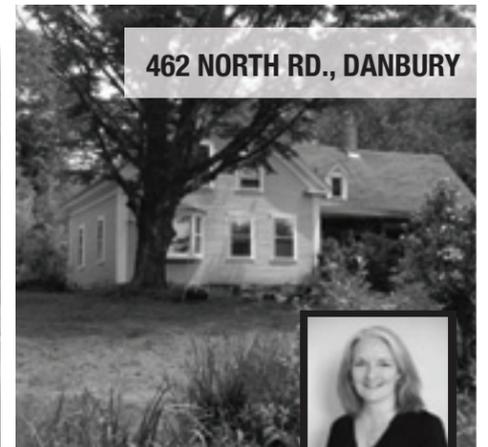
Please join us on August 4 for our Annual Church Picnic at the Andover town beach on Highland Lake. Come for great picnic food, fellowship, swimming or game playing. The service will be held at the church at 9:30 AM and we will gather at the lake about 11 AM.

You are always welcome at the Andover Community Church. Feel free to call the church office (735-5160) to speak with Pastor John Wagner for more information on what's going on at the church or if you need help in any way. Our Church service and Sunday School both begin at 9:30 AM every Sunday.

Thought for the day: "Patience is the ability to keep your motor idling when you feel like stripping your gears". (Read Proverbs 16:32) 



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