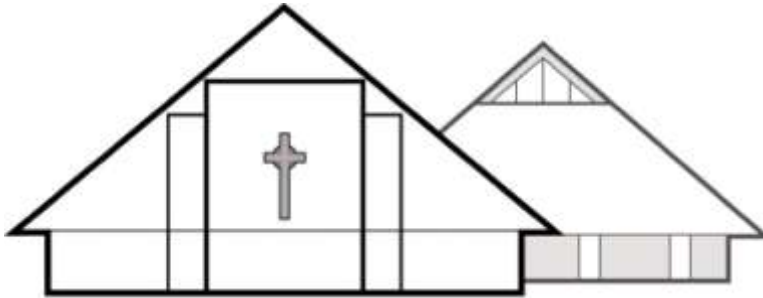




Celebrating
125
Years

**First Presbyterian Church
of New Haven**

Founded February 19, 1886



125 Years Celebrating Our Witness

Rooted in the past with a vision for our future:

Growing in Faith,

Singing in Hope,

Acting in Love.

In 125 years of ministry, First Presbyterian Church of New Haven has sought to be a faithful witness to the Good News. In times of war and peace, depression and abundance, disputes and healing in the wider Presbyterian Church and in the local church, First Presbyterian has dared to inspire faith, to embrace diversity, to seek justice, and to be the beloved community of God. In this year, 2011, we celebrate our witness.

“Rooted in the past with a vision for our future”

In the records of the church we have an account of the early days of the church, as over the course of a number of Sundays, an afternoon Presbyterian service was made available in the lecture room of the Congregational church on College street, to test the water and see if there would be interest in a Presbyterian congregation in New Haven.

We have an account of the first service: twelve people came together, heard the scripture read and preached, prayed a psalm and sang three hymns. It is a simple and surely typical service, conventional, and yet made all the more moving by the list of names of the congregation: nine men and two women. Here are the roots of the First Presbyterian.

But no historical event takes place in a vacuum. That small congregation, and the services that grew out of it, were immediately part of a wider history, a social history of Yale, an economic history of industrial New Haven, a political history of the USA under President Grover Cleveland.

And they were very much part of the history of the Presbyterian Church in the USA – Presbyterianism may not have had a significant presence in New England 125 years ago, but the new congregation was immediately part of the structures of the Presbyterian Church. We will mark not the anniversary of that first small

meeting, but the anniversary of the approval for the organization of a Presbyterian church in New Haven and that permission was granted by a commission sent from the Westchester Presbytery.

When we look at the broader context provided by Presbyterianism in the USA, we find something very different from our account of that ordered, peaceful, and communal first gathering. The Presbyterian Church at the end of the nineteenth century was divided most publically. The issues were about scriptural authority and historical continuity, about the inerrancy of the Bible and the content of the Westminster Confession. A dispute between academics was being played out very publically, climaxing in the heresy trials at the turn of the century.

It was suggested that once the medieval unity of the Catholic Church had been broken by the Reformation, it was inevitable that Christendom would continue to divide and splinter and fracture, and has then done so for the next five hundred years and we are still counting. It was a daunting and haunting thought – that there could be no agreement; that differences and division were with us to stay. Reformed Protestantism now for nearly 500 years has certainly done its part to contribute to that continuing division. That was the world into which First Presbyterian New Haven was born.

But we should try not to judge, but instead try to understand. It is not important where we stand personally on the theological issues that divided the church 125 years ago. If we look back, we will discover attempts to find a middle way, to find opportunities for individuals to voice their concerns and their positions. We will find ill-tempered debate and friends who announced their intention to stand by each other through thick and thin. We'll find people who cared deeply, people in turn molded by their background and their experiences, and by their beliefs. And we will find regrets and changed positions; the stubborn and the hurt. Division may indeed be inevitable, but to engage with that division is to find something profoundly human.

We as a Presbyterian congregation in New England have witnessed, shared and participated in this history. Our roots are in the past, but it informs our hopeful vision for our future.

*Excerpted from the First History Minutes by Elder Rona Johnston Gordon
during worship service on Sunday January 23, 2011*

“Growing In Faith”

Just over one hundred and twenty-five years ago, on September 20, 1885 twenty-three people gathered at 2 p.m. in the lecture room of the Congregation Church on College Street in downtown New Haven. **Rev. James G. Rodger** opened the service with prayer; then all voices were raised together in the singing of *All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name*. The reading was Psalm 124:8, *Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth* and before Rodger preached on the text, the congregation sang *Come Thou, Almighty King*. That Sunday the collection was \$2.80. For the next two months the fledgling congregation worshiped in the YMCA hall until moving at the end of November 1885 to “Presbyterian Hall,” in the old Insurance Building, and then to the Third Congregational Church.

February 19, 1886 is commemorated as the date of the formal founding of First Presbyterian Church of New Haven, born from that nascent community when the Westchester Presbytery formally created First Presbyterian Church. Growth appears to have been rapid, for more than fifty families were connected with the church during its first year and the new congregation was able to purchase the building that had belonged to Third Congregational Church. The congregation did not, however, grow further and, indeed, falling numbers appear to have influenced the decision to surrender the building recently acquired in favor of purchase of a vacant lot on the south side of Elm Street between State and Orange where a new church of an appropriate size would be constructed. Even the largely administrative history of these first years gives a sense of the rocky road followed by the young congregation: on October 6, 1889, just four years after he had preached on that first Sunday afternoon, Rev. Rodger resigned, his departure recorded as being partially necessitated by ill health and partially “because a lack of harmony between the pastor and the congregation led both parties to agree that a parting of the ways was in order.”

The purchase of the land on Elm Street was only a first step towards a more permanent home for the congregation, a process that accompanied the twenty-seven year ministry of Rev. Rodger's successor, **Rev. Dr. Frederick Adolphus Miller Brown**. At first the warehouse of a small factory provided a temporary home while a small chapel was being built on the Elm Street property. By 1900 plans were afoot to replace the chapel on Elm Street with a more substantial church building. With \$10,000 subscribed by the growing congregation, a ceremony was

held on August 25, 1905 to celebrate the laying of the corner stone and the framework of the new building was erected. Funds proved, however, insufficient and works had to be suspended. In 1910, Mrs. John T. Manson offered to pay for completion of the



*Benedict Memorial Presbyterian Church,
Elm Street, New Haven, CT*

“auditorium” with its appointments and decorations including the organ in honor of her first husband, Frank W. Benedict, with the stipulation that the name of the church be changed to Benedict Memorial Presbyterian Church.

The new church was a far cry from the lecture rooms and warehouse of the first generation of the congregation. In homage to the Italian Renaissance, Benedict Memorial by architect W. R. Comstock of Hartford, was massive — and too pretentious for some. Twin corner towers and a high arched ceiling 55 feet above the floor at its highest point provided a tremendous sense of height both from the street and within the sanctuary. Controversial in New Haven at large, the building was also impractical, for rarely did the size of the congregation justify its size.

When the relationship between Rev. Brown and congregation was dissolved in 1917, the former pastor became the church's first pastor emeritus. Under his successor **Rev. Dr. Samuel T. Foster**, the membership grew to 500, the largest it has been in its 125-year history, and a marked contrast with the testing years that had preceded this boom. Twenty-two members had served in the armed services during the Great War. We can glean a sense of the vitality of the congregation in the 1920's from more than just numbers: several well-known evangelists, including Billy Sunday, preached at Benedict and in 1923 William Jennings Bryan addressed a packed house on the subject of evolution, two years before the Scopes trial.

Rev. Dr. Albert von Tobel was called in 1927, his preaching skills, it was reported from other churches he had served, outdone by his wife's musical talents. On account of his ill health, Rev. von Tobel remained at Benedict Memorial only for two years. However, these years left one particular legacy to First Presbyterian — in October 1927 the session had approved the purchase of the baptismal font we use today, named after the second pastor, Rev. F.A.M. Brown.

The history of the Presbyterian Church in the United States is marked by debate and division over authority and contextualization; Benedict Memorial did not remain immune from the realities of the lived church. **Rev. Dr. L. Craig Long**, called to Benedict Memorial on March 25, 1930, had studied at Princeton Seminary during the opening battles of the Fundamentalist/Modernist Controversy. In the shorthand of the time: *Was the Bible the Word of God or the words of people?* On one side were the so-called "fundamentalists" who believed in the literal reading of scripture, and, on the other, the modernists,



Baptismal Font from Benedict Memorial — dedicated in 1927 to Rev. F.A.M. Brown, pastor emeritus

whose position grew out of higher criticism and who adopted a liberal position on issues ranging from the teaching of evolution to the nature of mission. Dr. Long, a fundamentalist and proud believer in the Westminster Confession as second only to the Word of God was apparently at odds with the position taken by the majority of his congregation. In 1932, Long and seven members of Benedict Memorial Presbyterian Church met at his home to create the Calvin Presbyterian Church (Independent), a more conservative church. Long agreed to serve as guest preacher until such time as his obligations to Benedict Memorial were completed. Calvin Presbyterian Church moved from New Haven to Hamden where it became Westminster Presbyterian Church, a member of the break-off Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Lacking the financial means to support a call to the church from 1932 until 1948, Benedict Memorial would rely on a series of guest preachers and temporary pastors. These included **Rev. Frederick S. Curtis** who may have been a retired minister and served at times as preacher and as moderator of Session; **Rev. F. G. Harvey** who was on leave of absence from his Australian pastorates; and **Rev. Kenneth J. Foreman** who sandwiched in a period as guest preacher while on short term leave of absence from Davidson College in North Carolina. **Rev. James Curtis Fahl**, came to Benedict on the understanding that if he proved appropriate to the congregation after one year he would be extended a call, but remained only from 1935 to 1936. **Rev. Dr. Frank A. Hosmer**, a semi-retired minister, served the church during World War II. The **Rev. Dr. Douglass Buchanan**, called in 1944, died only ten months later. **Rev. Clifford Chaffee**, and **Rev. Donald Craig Kerr** served as Stated Supply ministers and held Sunday services, but were not otherwise allotted a leadership role within the church.

The call of **Rev. Allan Vannin Collister** to Benedict Memorial initiated a longer period of service by one minister, but these were four years of acrimony and mistrust that split the church. The story is ours to tell, but not to judge. Pastor, trustees, and session appear to have been divided from the first days of Rev. Collister's call— not surprisingly, money seems to have been at the heart of their disagreement. The church had long been operating at a loss and had drawn on the capital of the Benedict and Manson bequests, which, as a result, dried up in the 1950s. Rev. Collister was accused of spending without regard for the church's poor financial position; some trustees resigned; session was unable or unwilling to step

into the divide. During worship one Sunday, Rev. Collister accused the Board of Trustees from the pulpit of being negligent in their duties, and described Dr. Hitchins, chairman of the board of trustees, as godless. The trustees asked for the pastor's resignation and session turned the whole matter over to the Presbytery. On November 4, 1952, the Presbyterian Committee on Ministry of the Connecticut Valley Presbyterian Judicial Commission reported their belief that the peace, unity, and welfare of the church and the future interests of the pastor and his family would be best served by dissolving the relationship. They permitted the pastor and his family to have free use of the manse and the pastor to receive his salary until January 31, 1953. On November 11, 1952 the Session apologized to the congregation for their participation in the recent and unhappy division. These events split the church and the pain caused to all those involved is palpable in the records. Many families left the church.

Again the church resorted to short-term supplies. **Rev. James Glasse**, who spent his ministerial career as a stated supply while he was dean of a number of seminaries, was appointed for one year. He would later become president of the Evangelical and Reformed Seminary in Lancaster, Pennsylvania as an expert in small churches with stated supplies, a personal knowledge base to which Benedict Memorial would have contributed. His successor as stated supply was **Rev. Thomas A. Keenan**.

The surviving records of the First Presbyterian/Benedict Memorial raise time and time again the financial and practical concerns of meeting the needs of worship and of the congregation. In 1955 came a decision that proved the first step in a long process that would generate the church much as we know it today. The Elm Street property was put up for sale in recognition of the burden on the congregation of trying to maintain and operate this albatross of a building. In its place the church acquired the property at 704 Whitney Avenue from the estate of William R. Shaffer. On September 27, 1954, the last services were conducted at Elm Street; the following Sunday saw the first service at Whitney Avenue. In May 1955 the Elm Street building was sold for \$90,000 and razed to make room for a parking lot.

In that year, 1955, the ministry of **Rev. Dr. Douglas Nelson** began at First Presbyterian Church. The Rev. Nelson would become a most beloved pastor, leading the congregation in worship, caring for the people of God, reaching out to the world in faithful and prophetic ways. Rev. Nelson was a charismatic speaker of

God's word from the pulpit. Known for his oratorical skills, he often quoted Shakespeare at length from the pulpit and delivered his sermons without notes. He said that his eyesight was so poor that he could not focus on both notes and the congregation at the same time. His ministry created a strong and devoted flock of believers. Rev. Nelson and his beloved wife Maxine Mitchell, but best known as "Jerry", were a team. Together they nurtured the small Presbyterian community and were a guiding spirit to once again be a presence in New Haven. Although Rev. Nelson retired in 1978, he remained active in the congregation and delivered a series of lectures on C. S. Lewis, the British Christian writer. He and Jerry continued to be active worshippers and provided council to the pastors who would follow.

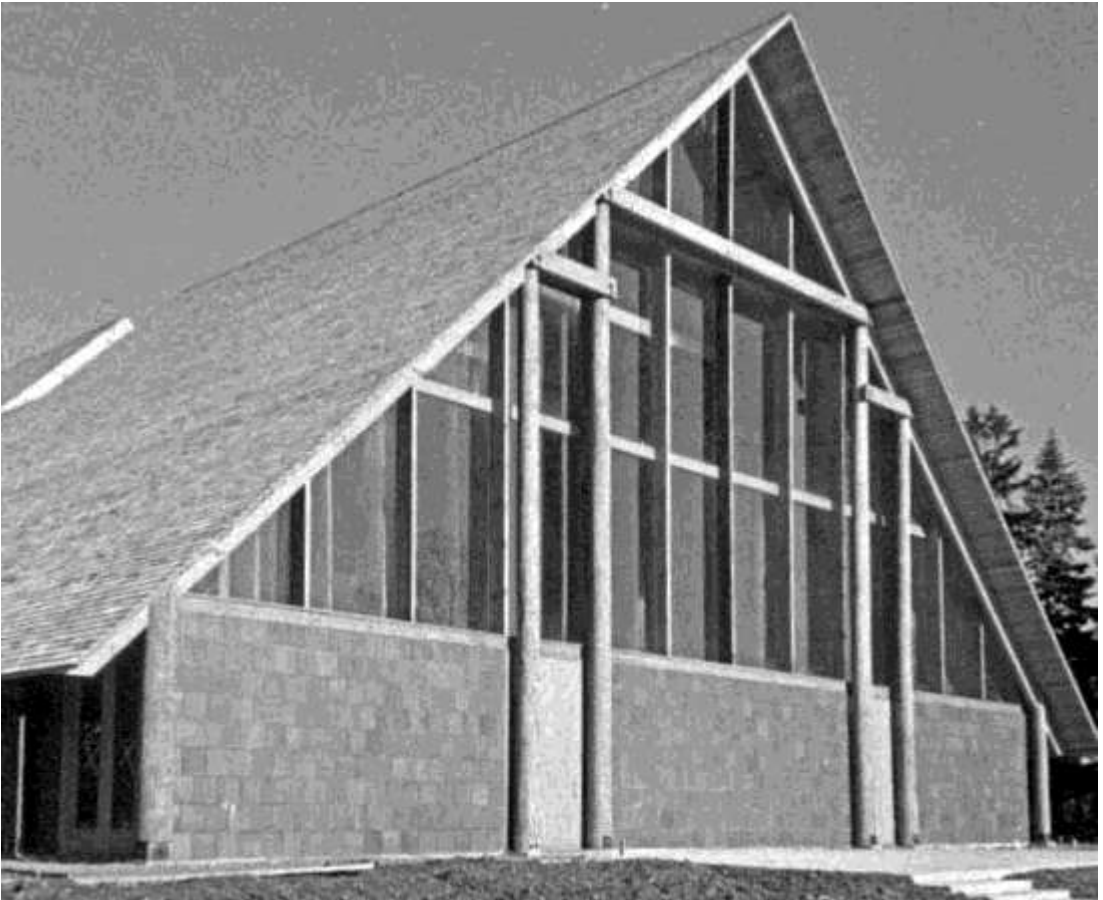
The challenges the congregation faced in 1955 would have appeared very familiar to their predecessors some two to three generations earlier: property had been acquired, but a temporary space would have to be used until a purpose-specific building could be erected. Behind the main house on the new property, the converted carriage house was remodeled into a temporary worship space seating approximately 75. Existing rooms in the mansion were used for Sunday School classes and offices.



Converted carriage house at rear of the former Shaffer property — 704 Whitney Avenue, New Haven

Over the next ten years, the small congregation considered plans to renovate both buildings as well as for restoring and renovating only the mansion while replacing the carriage house with a new sanctuary building. Unfortunately the New Haven Building Department deemed both structures unsuitable by code for use by the church in 1965.

After great reflection and prayer, the congregation decided to build an entirely new church structure on the site. The congregation was blessed to have among its members architects James Owens and John Dinkeloo of the world renowned Hamden firm Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates. They devised an elegant, functional structure that integrated the finest traditions of ecclesiastical design with the beauty of nature and simplicity of materials that matched the church's spirit — and budget. The following year demolition of the former Shaffer mansion laid the way for the erection of the new building. During construction, worship was conducted at Marquand Chapel at the Yale Divinity School. Under the architects' guidance, the small community of faith built their new church home for approximately \$125,000.



Current church building, nearing completion of construction in 1968

The new church building for the renamed First United Presbyterian Church New Haven, Connecticut, was dedicated in 1968. In addition to the sanctuary and Roland Copeland narthex/multi-purpose room, it housed classrooms, offices and a small kitchen. *The New Haven Register* described the new building as follows:

The poles are 14" in diameter and they support 12,000 square feet of shingled roof. The roof slopes from 45 feet to six feet above the ground. The front portion on the north side, will seat 140 people. The Communion Table is located under a massive skylight. There is space for ten classrooms and a kitchen. The walls are made of glazed bricks. The engineers who built the building call it early basilica. Basilican structures were built along the long axis with an aisle on each side divided from the large space by pillars. It is built with 60 telephone poles, of which 32 are inside the building and 28 are outside. The 32 inside and some on the outside are 35 feet tall. They were ordered from a company that supplies telephone companies. The poles form fascinating images within the building and lovely reflections on the glass at either end of the sanctuary. Intricate designs and delightful patterns are created by the combination of poles, trees and sky and the reflections of each. Seen in the changing light of the day and the changing seasons of the year and from different positions in the building, no two views are ever alike.

The style of the church has been termed by some New Haven residents *Telephone Pole Gothic*; according to a current member the church, it has in the past been referred to as *Our Lady of the Telephone Poles*.

Session had agreed to the expenditure of \$10,000 for an organ. Janice Forman, organist at the time encouraged that a tracker-action organ be purchased. The Session invited the Hillebrand family, classical German organ builders, to bid. The new Hillebrand organ was dedicated on June 11, 1969, the gift of Dr. and Mrs. Douglas Nelson, dedicated to the glory of God in memory of their mothers, Flora B. Mitchell and Margaret D. Nelson. In 1982, a gift from the estate of Roland Copeland, after whom the narthex had been named, and another in memory of Betty Simons, augmented by special contributions from the congregation and friends, allowed completion of the organ with the addition of a final 148 pipes.

The ministry of **Rev. Dr. Blair Moffett** began in 1979, and would continue for 17 years. Rev. Moffett, who came from a well known family of Presbyterian pastors and missionaries, would lead the congregation into ever great commitments to mission both close to home and abroad. Locally, he forged important relationships

with the public schools, beginning a “Peacemakers Award” program at East Rock Elementary School in New Haven. Rev. Moffett delighted in engaging the congregation in worship, and fostered a time of deep sharing of prayer concerns within the Sunday morning worship service. Rev. Moffett also taught Presbyterian Polity at Yale Divinity School for most of those 17 years, and became a widely respected expert in issues of our denominational polity. With his leadership, the congregation invited **Rev. Mary Maple Thies** to join him in ministry in 1981, first as an Assistant Pastor, then as an Associate Pastor. When Mary and Blair left First Presbyterian in 1996, they went together in ministry to serve the First Presbyterian Church of Stamford, Connecticut. Rev. Moffett retired in 2008 to New Hampshire with his wife Patti. Rev. Thies presently continues in her ministry at Stamford.

Their years of ministry together in New Haven saw much change and growth. Session approved the design of the current fabric soft sculpture, created by Falmouth, Massachusetts artist and former member Andrea Moore at the request of the Nelson family in honor of Doug Nelson and hung in time for Pentecost, May 22, 1986

Early in 1984 the church became aware that the De Vita property next door would become available for purchase. The church took advantage of this opportunity and purchased the property, with the hope that the large house would be used for adult education and small group meetings. Eventually city zoning laws prohibited such use, and it was renovated to serve as rental property. Currently it serves as the manse, enabling our pastors to live in the neighborhood of the church.

In 1990 the name of the church was changed officially to the First Presbyterian Church of New Haven, from First United Presbyterian Church of New Haven.

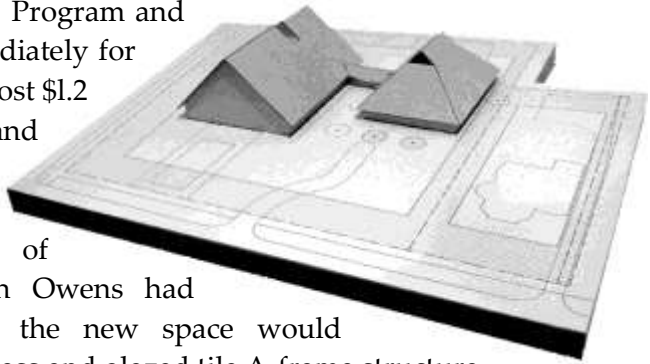


*Fabric sculpture by artist
Andrea Moore in honor of
the Rev. Douglas Nelson*

Rev. Dr. Bill Goettler and **Rev. Dr. Maria LaSala** became co-pastors at First Presbyterian Church in February of 1998, bringing to First Presbyterian a joyous, prophetic, and pastoral ministry. They would share the duties of preaching and pastoral care, drawing on a range of both traditional Presbyterian liturgy as well as the voices of liberation and feminist theology.

The church was growing: classrooms were bulging, fellowship hours were hard to navigate, and the worship space was crowded. Shared meals required setting up tables not only in the Copeland Room, but throughout the classrooms as well. And the galley kitchen could only accommodate a few servers at one time. What was needed was new space for community fellowship.

After extensive study, the congregation decided to build a separate building on the northwest side of the sanctuary. A successful capitol campaign, entitled "Growing in Faith", was held culminating in a congregation celebration luncheon at the Graduate Club in April, 2003. Program and design development started immediately for a building that would eventually cost \$1.2 million. Designed by architect and church member, James Owens, in collaboration with architect of record Christiaan Dinkeloo, son of John Dinkeloo, who along with Owens had designed the original building, the new space would complement the existing timber, glass and glazed tile A-frame structure.



Ground breaking was held after Sunday service on March 7, 2004 and coffee and refreshments were served in the new hall after Christmas Eve service 2004. On May 1, 2005, the now finalized Owens Community Building and Miller Gathering Hall were dedicated, nearly doubling the church's program space. The community building includes an air conditioned multi-use space where 175 people can come together and share a meal and houses a nursery, a toddler room, junior and senior high classrooms, a well equipped kitchen and handicap accessible restrooms.

The buildings as we see them today began to take shape slowly from the mid-1950's; at the same time the church moved beyond that series of short and/or acrimonious pastorates, into the longer calls that have done much to shape the worship and witness of First Presbyterian today.

“Singing In Hope”

Our buildings provided the space to worship as a people of God. We worship God in word and song. Music has always been central to worship at First Presbyterian Church New Haven. Our present Music Director, Patrick McCreless has traced the succession of church musicians who have served our congregation over the past five decades. Through chats with long-time choir members—especially Bonnie Sherman, Mattie Long, and Mike McBride—and with Chuck Forman, it has been possible to trace this succession of church musicians. And through the miracle of e-mail, it has been possible to get in touch with most of these musicians, many of whom have contributed their memories of the church and of their work in it.

We have been able to trace our church’s musical history back to 1959. It was in that year that **Jan Forman** was appointed organist, and that she, Chuck and family moved their membership here. This was, of course, in the “Carriage House.” Jan served for a few years, before deciding to commit herself to teaching in inner city schools. We do not know who was music director when Jan became organist, but we do know that in 1961 **Leon Plantinga**, then a graduate student in musicology at Yale, became music director. At that time the music director and organ positions were separate. As Leon writes in his recent message, “We always had a separate organist (if you had seen me try to play with my feet, you would know why).” Leon remembers that Jan was organist in his first few years, and he also remembers a few details about his experience: “We usually had about 12-18 singers, but did some fairly ambitious things like [Bach’s Cantata No. 4] *Christ lag in Todesbanden* at Easter with instruments—I remember Grace Feldman played [viola da] gamba.” Leon earned his doctoral degree in 1964, and immediately joined the Yale faculty, on which he served until his retirement in 2005. He continued as music director until 1967, when he decided to devote himself exclusively to his teaching and scholarship. He chaired the Department of Music for a number of years, and he has had a distinguished career as a historian of the music of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

In 1966, **Don Saliers**, who was then a student at Yale Divinity School, became organist, and the next year he succeeded Leon as music director. Don sent a wonderful letter in response to our inquiry; it’s worth quoting in full:

“As I recall, I began playing on the old electronic organ in the “Carriage House” worship space before the sanctuary was built. That must have been 1966 or 1967. Then came the remarkable “telephone pole cathedral,” as one church member quipped in my hearing. I began directing the choir in 1967 or 1968 and continued until just before my moving from Yale to Emory University in 1974. We had a terrific small group of singers, including the Plantingas, Michael and Flo McBride, my wife Jane, Bonnie Sherman, Mattie Long, and others. Our favorite repertoire was out of the Oxford 16-17th century anthem book, Palestrina (“Sicut Cervus” [“As the hart longs for the waterbrook,” Psalm 42] was a favorite), with Britten’s Ceremony of Carols at Christmas, and (from time to time) some of my little choral pieces. I recall two occasions when we put together a small ensemble for a Bach cantata.”

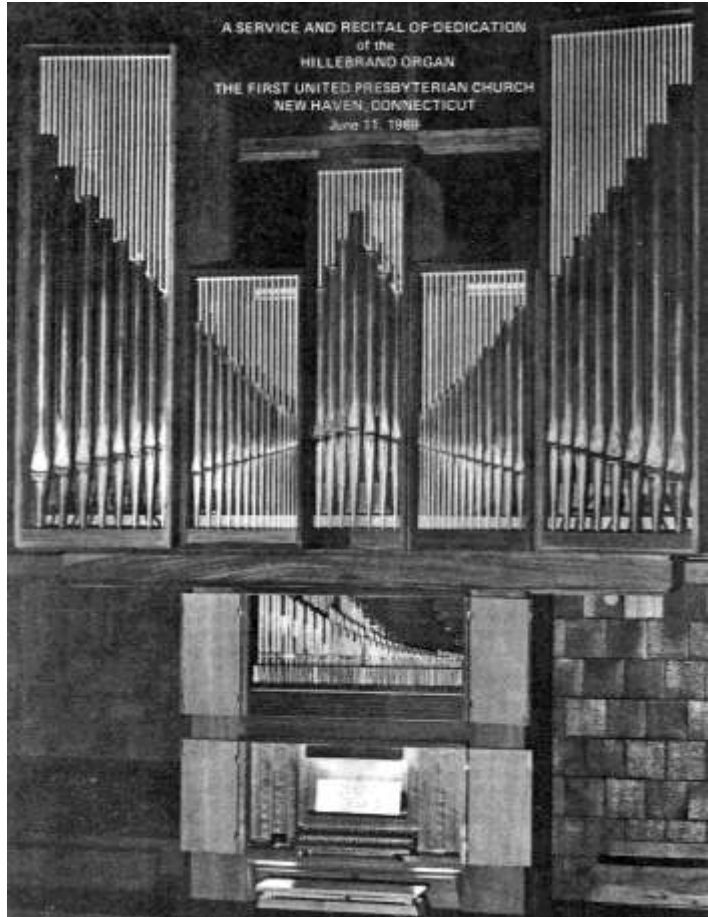
The most important event of my tenure was, of course, the coming of the Hillebrand [i.e., Hermann Hillebrand and Sons, of Hannover, Germany] organ. Jan Forman, herself an organist, was a central figure in the process. It was, from the beginning, a wonderful voice in the room. I vividly recall the day the organ arrived in a huge shipping van. We actually carried row upon row of pipes and placed them carefully along both sides of the sanctuary on the carpeting. We watched with wonder and admiration as the young builders assembled the organ over a period of three weeks. Then Harre Hillebrand came to oversee the final voicing and tuning. Congregational members brought food for the builders and we had a wonderful time with them during the whole process. Douglas Nelson was the pastor who more than once expressed awe at the new depth of congregational singing.

Some of my most lively memories of our years in New Haven center on First Presbyterian--its people, its music, its preaching and worship, and its social conscience. What a privilege at an early stage in my own teaching career in the field of liturgy and theology to have been there. With deep gratitude and a shout of ad multos annos! (many more years!) for the congregation and its musical life.”

To Don’s recollections about the installation of the organ, Mike McBride remembers carrying in one of the large cases in which a section of the organ was to be placed. The men were carrying the case through the back door of the sanctuary when they accidentally dropped it. It was at this moment, Mike says, that he instantly learned some new words in German!

The organ is indeed a central voice in singing and music-making in the sanctuary. Its builders, the Hillebrands, were among the leaders in the twentieth-century rebirth of the kind of organ that Johann Sebastian Bach and his contemporaries would have played. At the time of its installation, our organ was only the second Hillebrand in the USA — the other being the larger organ in the United Church on the Green in New Haven, built in 1967. The organ is called a “tracker” organ because the connections from the keys to the valves underneath the pipes are mechanical rods rather than electrical circuits, as they are in so-called electro-

pneumatic organs, which had almost completely dominated the organ-building industry for many decades prior to the 1960’s. Because of the mechanical, tracker action, the console of the organ must be attached directly to the organ. This is in striking contrast to organs with electro-pneumatic action, in which the console can be very far from the pipework. The placement of the console, with the organist facing directly into the pipes, indicates that the initial intent was that the church would have a separate organist and choir director; there is no way to position the choir so that all of its members can see an organist/director, and also face outward toward the congregation.



Bulletin cover for the Recital and Dedication of the Hillebrand Organ – June 11, 1969

Don Saliers moved on to a distinguished career as a theologian and church musician, serving at Emory until just a few years ago, when he retired as the William R. Cannon Distinguished Professor of Theology and Liturgy. Don has written many books about theology, liturgy, and liturgical aesthetics — one of which, *A Song to Sing, A Life to Live*, he co-authored with his daughter Emily, of the Indigo Girls.

Don was succeeded by **Gayle Kirkwood**, who was music director from 1974 to 1977. Gayle left first to take another church position in New Haven, from which she then moved to Pittsburgh, to become the director of the Pittsburgh Camerata, a professional, *a cappella* choral ensemble dedicated especially to the music of the Renaissance and Baroque periods, and of twentieth-century choral music. She is credited with taking that group to new heights, increasing its repertoire to hundreds of choral works, and really putting it on the map as an elite choral group. She conducted the Camerata until 1998, when she retired and turned to a new career: raising German shepherds to show internationally!

In the academic year 1977-78, **Peter Marshall**, who was at the time a student at Yale's Institute of Sacred Music, was music director and organist. He now is a vocal coach and teacher of accompanying at Georgia State University in Atlanta; he also holds an endowed chair as the keyboardist for the Atlanta Symphony, with which he performs frequently. Peter also has fond memories:

"I served as Music Director my first year as a grad student in organ at the Yale School of Music (Fall 1977-Summer 1978), succeeding Gayle Kirkwood, who had just taken a full-time church position elsewhere in town. The legendary Doug Nelson was in his last year as pastor. John Bailey, then at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, was a member of the church, and served on the music committee, along with Mary Baker, whose husband, organist Robert Baker, was on the faculty. Mary also sang in the choir, as did Flo and Michael McBride, Carol Plantinga, Bonnie and Tony Sherman, Mattie Long, and others whose names I can't recall. Gayle had trained this choir to love Renaissance music, which they sang a cappella and well. How nice it was to be able to do Palestrina's "Sicut cervus" for an ordinary Sunday service!"

Peter Marshall was succeeded by **Bruce Neswick**, who is now music director and organist at St. John the Divine Church in New York City. Here is his memory of his work at FPCNH, thirty years later:

"I was fortunate to be at First Presbyterian for two seasons: 1978-1980. I remember many things about that time: how warm and gracious the congregation was; how talented and devoted the choir was; how fortunate I was to play such a lovely, musical instrument and to have it close to hand for practicing; how rather "high church" the liturgy was, especially with regards to the use of the lectionary; and how the openness and relaxed beauty of the architecture seemed to contribute to the overall happy and peaceful impression I had of the parish. I left before the fall of my third and final year at Yale to become Larry King's first Apprentice in Church Music at Trinity, Wall Street. As exciting an adventure as that turned out to be, I very much missed the community at First Presbyterian. And it has been a pleasure over the years to stay in touch with many of the choir members from my time.

The music director in the years 1980-82 was **Charles Pilling**, who then moved to New York City, to be organist, and then organist and minister of music, at Central Presbyterian Church on Park Avenue. Charles died tragically early, in 1998.

Nicolas Shumway became organist and director in 1982, and he served until 1993. Though active as a singer and keyboardist, Nick's primary job was teaching in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Yale; he wrote a well-known history of Argentina. But he was passionate about music, and he not only simultaneously maintained his positions at Yale and FPCNH, but also directed the Redeemer Oratorio Society (now the New Haven Oratorio Society), and sang in other groups in addition. During his tenure, the Grotrian Piano now in the sanctuary was donated by Thelma Dinkeloo, whose family owned Grotrian Pianos in New York. Thelma's husband, John, was one of the original architects of our present building. Nick organized a dedicatory concert for the piano, which included the choir's singing Gabriel Fauré's *Cantique de Jean Racine*. Nick also, at least in some years, organized a concert series for the church, bringing in singers and players from Yale and from the New Haven musical community at large. He left Yale in order to accept a position at The University of Texas at Austin. At UT Austin he taught in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, and chaired the Department for a number of years. This past July he moved to Houston to become the Dean of Humanities at Rice University.

Jean Jones then served as organist and music director from 1993 to 1999. She remains active as a musician in the New Haven area, and she lives in Branford.

Our current music director, **Patrick McCreless**, came in September of 1999. Pat, like Leon Plantinga, teaches in the Department of Music at Yale (music theory rather than music history, though), and he, also like Leon, served as its chair for a number of years (2001-2007).



Patrick McCreless directs the choir with guest harpist – Advent 2006

Looking back over the past fifty years, and reading the reminiscences of its musicians, we can't help noticing certain themes: the sense that our church has been and is fulfilling its mission, and that it is a place of peace and comfort and joy; the openness and caring of its people; the extraordinary musical and spiritual gifts of its choir members across five decades; and the abiding sense that, though the musicians of our past have given much to the church, the church has also given much to them. As the lovely letters have indicated, they remember fondly, and appreciate, that gift.

“Acting In Love”

Throughout our church history, our members believed the church is as diverse as God’s creation and needs to be intentional in our diverse city of New Haven. That belief has been carried over into the day-to-day life of the church. None of this was new to a congregation that had long been at the cutting edge of social change and social justice movements.

In 1978, First Presbyterian described itself as neither an “urban” nor a “suburban” church because it was near the heart of a major city with a major university and several colleges, with membership numbers and attendee numbers greatly skewed due to college attendees. Engagement with that wider community was seen in the 1970s, for example, when the church agreed to open its Sunday school rooms during the week in cooperation with the local chapter of the American Association for Retarded Children. And for some twenty years from 1973 a group of Korean-Americans met at First Presbyterian Church on Sunday afternoons to create a worshipping community in New Haven where they might worship using the Korean language and teaching Korean traditions to their children. They have since established their own PCUSA congregation, the New Haven Korean Presbyterian Church in Hamden.

Throughout the last decade, the First Presbyterian Church Session consistently voted to approve proposals to General Assembly to set aside the fidelity and chastity provision in order that GLBT persons would be welcome not only as members of the church, but also as leaders. The session endorsed the proposed ministry of Presbyterian Promise, as expressed in its mission statement: to proclaim God’s promise of justice and love in Jesus Christ by organizing inclusive and inquiring churches of the Presbytery of Southern New England into a community of support for the empowerment of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, and for outreach, education and Christian evangelism.

Our responses are not magnificent or world shaking. But we seek to practice healing, compassion, and justice. We have dealt with and continue to deal with hunger, providing canned goods and other non-perishables to the Meal for a Month program for the Christian Community Action food pantry on Davenport Avenue, helping Christian Community Action provide Thanksgiving baskets of food for 1,400 families and some thirty meals a month. On the national and international level we have cooperated with Bread for the World in writing letters to our

legislators and participate in the Walk Against Hunger. We have worked with Columbus House since its beginning in 1981, providing shelter for the homeless and wholesome meals. In partnership with other congregations and synagogues we have provided short-term homes for some of New Haven's homeless, extending to them the same hospitality we extend to each other through "Abraham's Tent". We work with Habitat for Humanity to build housing for low-income working families. We have engaged in regular conversations with Mishkan Israel, a nearby Reform Jewish congregation, on the commonalities of our faith. We have promoted Fair Trade as a response to the grave problems caused by globalization. We have supported the Alternative Gift Market each Advent season, the proceeds from which buy safe water solutions, health care, sustainable eco-systems and the empowerment of women. We continually explore new avenues to "act in love."

125 years ago the First Presbyterian congregation met to worship together on a Sunday, as a community of faith and with hope for the future; they then left that space to encounter the realities of the 1880s and 1890s, in their homes, in their daily life, and in the broader, divided world. History may not repeat itself, but there are surely parallels for First Presbyterian of New Haven today when we look back to that small, hopeful community that was very much part of the broader sweep of human events beyond its temporary walls. We are First Presbyterian Church of New Haven and we are...

*Rooted in the past with a vision for our future:
Growing in Faith,
Singing in Hope,
Acting in Love.*

The Pastors of the First Presbyterian Church of New Haven

<i>125 Years of Service</i>		1886	1911	1936	1961	1986	2011
James G. Rodger	1886 - 1889	■					
F.A.M. Brown	1890 - 1917	■	■				
Samuel T. Foster	1920 - 1926		■				
Albert von Tobel	1927 - 1929			■			
Luther Craig Long	1930 - 1932			■			
Frederick S. Curtis	1933 - 1933						
F. G. Harvey	1933 - 1933						
Kenneth J. Foreman	1933 - 1935			■			
James Curtis Fahl	1936 - 1937						
Frank Hosmer	1937 - 1944			■			
Douglass Buchanan	1944 - 1945						
Clifford Chaffee	1945 - 1947				■		
Donald Craig Kerr	1947 - 1948						
Allan V. Collister	1949 - 1953				■		
James Glasse (interim)	1953 - 1954						
Thomas A. Keenan (interim)	1954 - 1955						
Douglas Nelson	1955 - 1978				■		
Ronald Kittel (interim)	1978 - 1979						
Blair Moffett	1979 - 1996					■	
Mary Maple Thies (associate)	1981 - 1996					■	
Lincoln Richardson (interim)	1996 - 1997						
Stewart A. Pollock (interim)	1997 - 1998						
Bill Goettler (co-pastor)	1998 - 2011						■
Maria LaSala (co-pastor)	1998 - 2011						■

125th Anniversary Celebration Activities & Events:

Time Capsule

Congregation Photograph

Children In Worship – Sharing the Buildings of Our Church

Talk: The Design and Construction of 704 Whitney Avenue – Jim Owens

Talk: The Origins of the Hillebrand Organ – Patrick McCreless

History Minutes “125 Years of Faithful Witness “ – Rona Johnston Gordon,
Nancy Walker, Chuck Forman, Bruce Peabody

Concert with Gavin Black

Gala Luncheon – Sunday February 20, 2011

125th Anniversary Committee:

Beth Aura Miller; Co-Chair; Alan Hogle, Co-Chair;

Liz Copeland, Bruce Gordon, Betsy Mussman, Bruce Peabody,

Rev. Bill Goettler, Rev. Maria LaSala

Celebration Coordinators:

Elder Beth Aura Miller – Chair

Rev. Alan and Elder Teddy Hogle – History

Elder Rona Johnston Gordon – History Minutes

Elder Seth Craigo-Snell – Media

Elder Paul Turner – Events

Elder Mary Webber – Luncheon

Elder Justin Ray – Worship

Elders Jim and Betty Whitney – Written Communication

Mary Hunt – Web Site

Contributors to the Celebration Booklet:

Alan Hogle

Patrick McCreless

Rona Johnston Gordon

Bill Goettler

Beth Aura Miller

David Miller