



The Presbyterian Church

New Castle, Delaware

**A History of
New Castle Presbyterian Church**

1651-1989

Jean E. Bankert

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Chapter I THE BEGINNING

New Castle Presbyterians as a congregation stem from the first services of the Dutch Reformed (Calvinist) founders of New Castle. A clergyman of that faith accompanied Peter Stuyvesant and his men in 1651 when they built Fort Casimir. In September 1655 when Stuyvesant recovered the fort from the Swedes, services of the Reformed Church were conducted by the Rev. Johannes Megapolensis during Stuyvesant's stay at the site. Thereafter laymen were appointed to read to the people on Sunday from the Book of Homilies.

The Dutch West India Company recognized the authority of the established Church of Holland over their colonial possessions. Specific care of transatlantic churches was entrusted to the Classis of Amsterdam by the Synod of North Holland. All the colonial clergy were approved and commissioned by that body and of course, they were all Calvinists. They were generally men of high scholarship and thorough theological training. The Dutch settlers on the Delaware, unlike their pastors, were as a rule uneducated, hard drinkers, turbulent and irreligious.

On July 12, 1656, government of the colony was transferred to the city of Amsterdam and it was given the name of New Amstel. The city agreed to send out "a proper person for a schoolmaster, who shall also read the Holy Scriptures in public and sing the Psalms." Evert Pietersen, who passed an examination before the Classis, accompanied Director Jacob Alrichs to New Amstel to serve as the schoolmaster. He had 25 pupils, young and old, and school was held in the house in which he lived rent free. The pupils attended school only in the winter when they were unable to work in the fields.

At this time Andries Hudde, the Secretary and Surveyor of New Amstel, sold his dwelling house on the Strand, site of #26 and #28 today, to Director Alrichs to be used as a church "for the benefit of the community." This house was remodelled in autumn of 1657 and enlarged by one-half in 1659.

The Classis soon commissioned the Rev. Everardus Welius to take charge of the congregation, now grown to 19 members. The Classis reported on May 25, 1657:

"He is a young man deserving of such praise in many respects. For he is such a one in life, in study, in gifts, in conversation, that we expect nothing else than to hear, in due time, that he fills his office with fruitfulness under God's blessing and grace."

The Rev. Welius arrived on the Waegh on August 21, 1657. When he died on December 9, 1659, a victim of the violent epidemic of dysentery that raged through New Amstel that fall and winter, he left a church with two elders, two deacons and a membership of 60.

The authorities of New Amstel constantly reminded the Directors in Holland of their needs and great desire for a minister. However, no one was sent until the spring of 1662 when the Rev. Warnerus Hadson was selected by the Classis and embarked for New Amstel, but he died on the voyage out. A letter from the Rev. Henry Selyns of Brooklyn dated January 9, 1664, informed the Classis of the death of Domine Hadson and stated:

"It is necessary to supply his place, partly on account of the children who have not been baptized since the death of the Rev. Welius, and partly on account of the abominable sentiments of various persons there, who speak disrespectfully of the Holy Scriptures."

In 1664 Sir Robert Carr, at the head of an English expedition, sailed up the Delaware River. He found Fort Casimir so feebly defended that it surrendered without resistance. All civil and military officers of the town were taken prisoner, but the inhabitants, on taking an oath of allegiance to the British Crown, were left "in undisturbed possession of their property." It was expressly stated that "the people be left free as to the liberty of conscience in church as formerly." In the records of this period, it is noted that "on

Sandhook stood a small wooden church" in which the Dutch continued to worship as an independent congregation. The name of the town was changed to New Castle and incorporated in 1667.

The church secured the services of the highly learned clergyman Peter Tesschenmaker in 1679 to minister to a congregation which had grown to 160. He was a graduate of the University of Utrecht with a license to preach. He had served the English Reformed Church at The Hague, and that city's Dutch and English consistories sent excellent testimonials to New York concerning his character and preaching ability. English as well as Dutch and probably Swedes and Finns in the community attended the services at which the Rev. Tesschenmaker at first preached alternately in Dutch and English. Later the Dutch quarreled with the English members who withdrew from the church for a time. The Rev. Tesschenmaker was not satisfied with the support given him for his living--it was little and always so late that he was forced to collect it himself. He therefore accepted a call to Staten Island.

Left without an ordained minister in the summer of 1682, elders John Moll and Jean Paul Jacquet and deacons Engelbert Lott and Jan Bisch wrote to the Classis of Amsterdam on September 25, requesting a pastor of their faith and giving a description of their unhappy situation:

"We live here among many Lutherans, whose teachers preach in a very unedifying manner and among a still greater number of Quakers who are given to errors. Apparently they will not cease their efforts to draw into their fold the fickle ones. Therefore preaching and catechizing in the clean, upright true Reformed religion is very necessary here, especially as a great many unreliable, dissolute people move in here among us."

The congregation was not successful in obtaining a pastor and not until 1690 did a clergyman of that faith even visit New Castle. Rudolph Varick, a Dutch clergyman, wrote to the heads of the church in Amsterdam:

"Coming at last to New Castle, I preached on three Sundays and administered communion. I had there a little church full of people, Dutchmen, Swedes and Finn."

As the persecution of non-conformists and Presbyterians continued in England, Scotland, Ireland and France, many of these devoted people found their way to New Castle and received a cordial welcome from their Calvinist brothers. With the arrival of the Rev. John Wilson, a Scotsman, accompanied by the Rev. Jedediah Andrews, in 1698, the church was welcomed into the Presbyterian fold. English had supplanted Dutch as the official language and the congregation was a mixture of Dutch, Huguenot, Scotch and Calvinist English. That year Mr. Wilson "preached in the court house because the old Dutch church had gone to decay."

Chapter II FIERY ZEALOTS

In March of 1706, the year Benjamin Franklin was born, a group of Presbyterian ministers from the middle colonies, under the leadership of the Rev. Francis Makemie, met in Philadelphia and organized the first Presbytery in the New World. The church in New Castle joined with six others to establish this body which was the beginning of the Presbyterian Church as an institution in the life of this country. The Rev. Makemie, who is called the Father of Presbyterianism, had been extremely active in organizing churches on the Delmarva Peninsula and served as the first Moderator of The Presbytery. Mr. Wilson was chosen the following year to succeed him.

The present gambrel-roofed church was built in 1707. When Thomas Janvier and John Brewster sold to the church the lot on which it was built, the deed revealed the mixture of origins of the congregation--of the three agents who signed it for the church, one was of Dutch, one of French and one of English extraction: Roeloff De Haes, Thomas Janvier and Sylvester Garland.

Col. Robert Quarry of Philadelphia reporting on conditions in New Castle wrote on January 20, 1709:

"Makemie . . . by his subscriptions from persons in England and those he hath influenced here, has built an Extraordinary good Meeting House in this Town, with a considerable allowance to their Minister."

The masons of that day laid their brick with lasting thoroughness and precision, using thin joints of lime mortar made from oyster shells to build the 18-inch thick walls. The great oak trusses which still support the roof were hewn and fitted by expert ship carpenters. The original building included that part of the present building which extends an equal distance on each side of the doorway facing the Green. Additional land was purchased in 1712 and an extension added to the building the width of the two windows toward

the northeast end. The line of this addition is readily visible today on the exterior of the building.

Original research by the late Judge Richard Rodney revealed an interesting story about the Rev. John Wilson and the Presbyterian Church Glebe. William Houston was a prominent landowner and merchant in New Castle and a boyhood friend in Scotland of John Wilson. In 1699 and 1700 he was one of the four members of the Pennsylvania Assembly representing New Castle County. He made his will on May 25, 1707, leaving the bulk of his estate to his brother, Anthony, a furrier in London. However, it did include the following item:

"I give and bequeath to Mr. John Wilson during his natural life all that 300 acres of land (on the south side of Christine) betwix the land of Mr. Jaspar Yeats and Doctor Spreys and to his Successors Presbitarian Ministors (sic) of New Castle forever, and ever after it shall be called Houston's Glebe."

William Houston died in December 1711 and his will was probated on December 11, 1711, but there was no settlement of the estate at that time. A few months later in 1712 the Rev. John Wilson died. Neither John Wilson, James Anderson nor Robert Cross, all Presbyterian ministers from 1711 until 1723, had possession of the Glebe.

Anthony Houston arrived in America in 1722 and apparently did not share his brother's fondness for the Presbyterians. On September 23, 1723, Anthony sold and conveyed to Col. John French, the Deputy Register of Wills, the 300 acres which were to have been known as Houston's Glebe. There were several attempts made in later years to recover the Glebe, the last in 1771 on behalf of the Rev. Joseph Montgomery, but they were in vain.

The Rev. James Anderson served as pastor from 1713 to 1717. Mr. Anderson was described as a "man of talents, learning and piety, and a graceful popular speaker." After leaving New Castle he was pastor of the Wall Street Church in New York until 1726, when

he accepted a call to New Donegal, Pennsylvania. He died there on July 16, 1740.

The unanimous decision of The Presbytery in 1716 to set up four presbyteries and an annual synod resulted in the formation of the Synod of Philadelphia along with the presbyteries of Philadelphia, Long Island, and New Castle. The fourth proposed presbytery, that of Snow Hill in Maryland, never met. The first meeting of New Castle Presbytery was held on March 13, 1717, in New Castle. Those in attendance were the ministers and one elder each from New Castle, Christiana Creek (Head of Christiana), Welsh Tract (Pencader) and Appoquinimy (Drawyers). Petuxen and Petapsco were not represented.

The division of responsibility between the Synod and the Presbyteries, though not spelled out, appears to give administrative responsibilities to the Presbytery and judicial responsibilities to the Synod. Thus most of the agenda at Presbytery was devoted to the supplying of preaching to the various congregations, the examination of candidates for the ministry and settling disputes as to how close a new meeting-house may be built to an existing one. Judicial cases, even when brought before the Presbytery, were referred to the Synod "by reason of the paucity of our numbers." The number of ministers attending a Presbytery meeting in the early years was usually three or four and even that number was difficult to maintain.

The third pastor of the church was Mr. Robert Cross. He came from Ireland and was received as a licentiate by the Presbytery in 1719, by whom he was appointed to supply the pulpit in New Castle, "excepting that he shall preach every fourth Sabbath in Kent County --and without recommending to the said people of New Castle to endeavor to provide the said Mr. Cross with suitable accommodations and encouragement." The compassion and forgiveness of the church is evidenced in an affair involving Mr. Cross. He was accused by Synod and admitted himself guilty of fornication. He was suspended for four Sabbaths. New Castle church asked that he continue as their pastor and in 1721 Synod "restored him unto the exercise of his pastoral office there."

Mr. Cross served the congregation until May 1722, "when he represented to Presbytery, that he had not that competency of subsistence from the people of New Castle, which was sufficient and desired to be left to his liberty." Presbytery granted him "an act of Transportability from New Castle and at the same time do recommend him to continue in New Castle, if his congregation can afford him a competent maintenance." In September of the following year he accepted a call from a church in Jamaica, Long Island.

A call was issued to the Rev. Gilbert Tennent, a young popular preacher, in 1726. He occupied the pulpit for several months when he suddenly left. The people of New Castle were "generally dissatisfied with Mr. Tennent's conduct in leaving them disorderly" and sent to Presbytery a letter received from him accepting the call. The matter was presented to the next general synod and Mr. Tennent was rebuked by the Synod, "which he seemed to accept in a penitential manner." Mr. Tennent went on to become a charter incorporator of the Presbyterian Ministerial Fund in 1759, founder and first minister of the Second Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia and a founder and trustee of College of New Jersey, now Princeton University. He was described as a "fabled Christian and a true theologian, who made it the delightful business of his life to serve God."

The following letter reveals the state of the church for a number of years after Mr. Cross left:

"To the Revered Presbytery of New Castle to sit at Pencader April 8, 1746, the humble supplication of the Congregation at New Castle and Pidgeon Run, sheweth

That we have been for some considerable time past in great confusion occasioned by Religious Commotions, so as to be unfit to make any application to your Wisdoms for supplys, but now Blessed be God we hope we are in away (sic) to encourage the preaching of the Gospel amongst us: We have been using some pains to discover what we can do that way; and we fancy we can in a short time give proper encouragement to a candidate to settle

amongst us if your Wisdoms / as we hope ye will / will please to grant us these six or twelve months ensuing; we will take care to see the gentlemen paid for their trouble . . . we are also satisfied that the frequenter we have supplys it will proportionately advance our ability to have a fixed pastor; we hope your Wisdoms will take our case into your serious consideration and comply with our supplication and petitions as in duty bound shall ever pray that the pleasure of the Lord may prosper in your hands."

In 1756 the church at Christiana Bridge joined with New Castle in calling the Rev. Daniel Thane, who remained for six years. When the two churches were unable to agree on a pastor in 1765, Presbytery ruled that New Castle having the majority should be allowed to prosecute their call to the Rev. Mr. Magaw. He accepted, but before the date of his ordination, he declined the call.

It is well to point out here that during the early 1700's there was a great rivalry between the Presbyterian Church and the Episcopal Church, which had been established in New Castle in 1689. In 1703 Immanuel Episcopal Church was built very close to the site of the log fort on the Green, which had been demolished in 1701. The English had neglected to obtain legal title to the land, however, and the local Presbyterians, as successors to the Dutch Reformed Church, were enraged, claiming prior right to the site. When they built their own meeting house in 1707 as close to the Green and Immanuel as they could get, the Rev. George Ross wrote indignantly to England that "our troublesome neighbours have builded themselves a chapell (sic) in the very shadow of Immanuel Church."

Another area of contention concerned the church bell. The very first bell in New Castle belonged to the Dutch Church. It was used to call townfolk to meetings as well as the faithful to prayers. When the English arrived, the bell was taken to the fort and eventually installed in the cupola above the Episcopal Church. The Presbyterians considered this a deliberate affront and contention over the bell became so intense that the governor of Pennsylvania (which included New Castle at that time) had the bell removed to Philadelphia.

Soon the vestry of the church learned that the governor's wife was advertising the bell for sale, reportedly to cover her husband's gambling debts. A vestryman was quickly dispatched to Philadelphia to buy the bell and it was rehung in the Episcopal Church.

Thomas Holcomb, in his Early Ecclesiastical Affairs in New Castle, Del. and History of Immanuel Church, published in 1890, reports that the Episcopal minister, Jacob Henderson, wrote on July 26, 1713, to the Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts:

"You will find by my last, and the letter from our vestry, that I have used as much discretion as I possibly could in making my request to the Hon'ble Society for a release from my service in this place which I hope the Hon'ble Society will grant me as soon as may be. I cannot in conscience leave it, till I have their answer because it is a Town in which there is a large Presbyterian Meeting House whose Minister would make great advantage of such a vacancy . . ."

On September 17, 1722, George Ross, the current Episcopal minister, wrote the following to the Society:

"The Church at New Castle is environed with greater numbers of dissenters, than ever, by reason of their fresh recruits sent us of late from the North of Ireland. They call themselves Scotch Irish, and the bitterest railers against the Church that ever trod upon American Ground. I wish I had better neighbours or keener weapons to stop their career."

Mr. Ross goes on to request two or three dozen copies of Bishop King's book, Invention of Men, stating "This would be a welcome present to a people who are threatened with an inundation of these fiery zealots, to give us laws and rule over us with a high hand."

Mr. Ross reported on October 9, 1725, that the books had been received:

"The truth is, since that useful book is come among us, the chase is turned and the zeal of our Dissenting Brethren, or more truly, their malicious clamors, are insensibly abated. We hear no more of their Scotch Irish champions, who can no more stand before our venerable Authors than Dagon before the Ark."

Chapter III THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

In 1767 the congregations of New Castle and Christiana Bridge united in a call to the Rev. Joseph Montgomery. Using the occasion of a Fast day proclaimed by the Continental Congress on July 20, 1775, Mr. Montgomery preached a fiery sermon in favor of independence before the militia companies of Col. Samuel Patterson. Taking a text from Deuteronomy he compared the Americans to the Israelites facing their enemies. Declaring that the British were frightened at the prospect of America's future greatness, he denounced the efforts of the mother country to reduce Americans to slavery. He advised his listeners to go forth to serve God, and their cause would be blessed.

Mr. Montgomery, while pastor of this congregation showed a deep interest in the very important work of educating young men for the ministry, and was instrumental in establishing the Presbyterial Education Fund.

Presbyterians as a whole were peaceful loyal subjects of Great Britain, but they believed that they owed allegiance to the King of Kings. Dr. John B. Spotswood points out in his Historical Sketch of the Presbyterian Church in New Castle, Delaware, that "they had duties to perform to that great Being, which were paramount to all earthly claims, and when they were commanded to contravene His Word, to do that which their Bibles and consciences told them they ought not to do, there their obedience ceased, here their loyalty to earthly kings terminated." They saw in the encroachments of the government on their civil rights, the occurrence of a similar encroachment on their religious rights.

The Act of Uniformity, which required that every clergyman must be reordained, if he had not before received Episcopal ordination, had actually been put in force in the colony of Virginia. The Presbyterians and non-conformists in the northern and middle states expected daily that it would be imposed upon them. Rather than submit to this tyranny, 2,000 Presbyterian ministers left England and Scotland and they would refuse to submit to this Act here. When the struggle began, they almost to a man supported the American

cause. For them the Declaration of Independence on the 4th of July, 1776, was a declaration of religious as well as civil liberty.

The labors of Mr. Montgomery were so interrupted by the war that he resigned his charge and joined the American Army as a chaplain. At the close of the war, he moved to Pennsylvania and when impaired health prevented him preaching, he turned his attention to civil affairs.

The church has in its possession an extract from the will of Mary Hill of Appoquinimink Hundred dated October 24, 1776, proved November 28, 1776, and recorded in Will Record L-1-100. This states:

"Item: I do desire and order that one year after my decease the sum of thirty five pounds be paid unto Thomas McKean, now of Philadelphia and Mr. George Monro of Red Lion Hundred to be by them expended in purchasing such vessels of silver as they shall judge proper to be used in the administration of the Lord's Supper and that my name be engraved on them and to be appropriated to the use of the Presbyterian Congregation of New Castle."

There are no silver items in possession of the church with Mary Hill's name engraved on them. One might speculate that the onset of the Revolution must have prevented Thomas McKean and George Monro from carrying out this bequest, if indeed they even received the thirty five pounds.

The pulpit remained vacant from 1779, served by supplies furnished by Presbytery, until the Rev. Samuel Barr was installed in 1791. Mr. Barr arrived in this country from Ireland in 1784. He was a licentiate from the Presbytery of Londonderry. He was first sent to New London CrossRoads as a stated supply. From there he appears to have gone to the Presbytery of Redstone in western Pennsylvania and then to have returned to this part of the country. He preached in New Castle for a year and received a call to become pastor. His installation took place on August 9, 1791. He stayed until August 3, 1796, when

at his request the pastoral relation was dissolved. He died here
31, 1818.

Chapter IV A NEW CEMETERY

The early 19th century church records indicate clearly the duties of the officers of the church. The Session, composed of ordained elders, was responsible for the spiritual well-being of the members. They set dates for Communion services; received new members, mainly on profession of faith and after a rigorous examination; and encouraged moral behavior by suspending temporarily or dismissing members who fell from grace. The Trustees were responsible for collecting pew rents and for the operation and maintenance of the church. The officers regularly called on members of the church who had failed to attend services.

The Rev. John Latta was called in 1800 and served as pastor until 1824. He was described as an eloquent and faithful preacher, and an active and useful member of the church courts, serving as Permanent Clerk of the General Assembly from 1807 until 1824. During his pastorate this notation appears in the Session Book on November 2, 1801:

"The Session of New Castle Congre. met agreeable to appointment. Present the Rev. John E. Latta, pastor, Wm. Ruth, Robert Barr and Samuel Barr, Elders. Appeared before them, Mrs. Barr late Jean Enos wife of John Barr. She confessed herself guilty of a breach of the Seventh Commandment, and having expressed her sincere sorrow and genuine repentance for the same and also her Hearty and firm resolution that hereinafter by the grace of God she would endeavor to walk in the Statutes of the Lord, blameless, the Session agreed to admit her to Privileges in the church--and she hereby is admitted--and ordered that this minute be read from the pulpit in the presense of the Congregation--and accordingly was read the 22nd of this instant November."

Joseph Barr was not so fortunate, for in 1803 he was

suspended from membership until he could prove he was not the father of an illegitimate child--or confessed his guilt!

About 1800 the use of the land adjoining the church as a burial ground was discontinued when the following resolution was adopted by the Board of Trustees:

"Whereas, it is found from experience that burying grounds in the improved parts of towns are very injurious to the health of the inhabitants and otherwise inconvenient, and

Whereas, the present burying ground adjoining the Presbyterian Church in the town of New Castle and belonging to the same from its unnatural situation being low and wet, renders it unfit to be occupied for that purpose, therefore

Resolved, that it is the opinion of the Board that no stranger or others (Except those who already have part of their families buried there) shall after this day be permitted to bury in the said grounds."

John Stockton deeded to the trustees one-half acre of land west of town for use as a cemetery for the price of \$1 on October 8, 1804. On October 26, 1832, the trustees purchased from Margaret Sexton a tract of land 255' 6" square containing about one acre for \$90 which adjoined the original one-half acre.

At that time there apparently was no road to this additional land. The New Castle Frenchtown Railroad which was adjacent to the cemetery agreed to transport funeral parties in railroad cars to the cemetery provided the time fixed for the funeral did not interfere with regular travel on the railroad. In later years the railroad agreed to construct and maintain a road leading to the entrance of the cemetery.

During the early 1800's many structural changes were made in the church. In 1801 Jacob Belville, a local carpenter and an elder

of the church, was commissioned by the trustees to build the balcony. He was instructed to collect the money with which to pay himself from the church members, present no bill for extras, and if any surplus money was collected, to return it to the church.

Two years later, at the request of Dr. Archibald Alexander, one of the trustees, and Jacob Belville, John Tripp "measured, vued (sic) and valued" the work done in the church by Mr. Belville and found it amounted to sixty two pounds, eight shillings and three pence, or \$349.99. Mr. Belville had collected \$275.50 leaving a balance of \$74.49. In the spring of 1804, the trustees circulated a subscription list requesting contributions from members to help discharge this debt. Dr. Alexander was the lone signer--his contribution \$3.

Finally at a trustees' meeting on April 28, 1809, they agreed to pay Mr. Belville the balance of \$74.49 for constructing the balcony and \$2.50 for glazing windows. In order to do so, Charles Thomas was authorized to collect the interest and rent due the church from James McCullough. However, the records do not show that this debt was ever satisfied.

Major interior changes were made in 1818, at which time the magnificent window at the end of the church was filled in and the pulpit erected in front of it. When the trustees in a report read publicly by their secretary, Nicholas Van Dyke, on March 26, 1819, announced the completion of the project, they took satisfaction in the comment:

"In new-modelling the seats, the trustees have adopted the most approved plan of modern-built churches by making single pews all fronting toward the pulpit."

The Rev. Joshua Danforth was called in 1825 after the death of Mr. Latta, and when he left to "try another field of gospel labour" in 1827, he made the following comment on the ability of the church to attract a minister:

"I should not perhaps be honest (though this is a subject which I always shrink from touching) did I not say that a much stronger objection would be formed in the irregularity and scarcity with which the salary is paid. Much of the peace of a conscientious man depends or should depend on the honesty and promptness with which he meets honest demands. And a minister of the Gospel cannot preach to others what he cannot practice himself. His worldly comforts depend on the same foundation with those of his people."

In 1833 according to the information contained in original receipted bills in possession of the church, the exterior was completely covered with stucco. The cost of labor and materials for stuccoing the front, which was "laid off in stone work", was 35 cents per square yard, while plain stucco for the other three sides cost 22 cents a square yard.

During this period many prominent citizens of New Castle were members and served the church in various capacities. As noted before, Nicholas Van Dyke served on the Board of Trustees and later as a Ruling Elder. Kensey Johns, Jr. was elected a Ruling Elder in 1815 at the age of 24. The Session Book records:

"On the 28th day of March 1857, the Honorable Kensey Johns departed this life in the 66th year of his age having been for 42 years a Ruling Elder in the church. He lived the life and died the death of a Christian."

Chapter V SABBATH SCHOOL

Beginning in 1827 and continuing through 1857, very complete books of the Sabbath School proceedings are available for study. Children and adults met together in a morning or evening session and were addressed on such subjects as dying and the great sin of lying. The meetings were opened with singing and prayer and closed with "exhortation" and prayer. Separate classes were held for male and female students, except for examinations which were held jointly in the meeting house.

All studied Lessons of Judson's Questions covering such subjects as proving that Christ is divine, that the Holy Spirit is Divine, the Omniscience of God, and that all men are sinners by birth and actual transgression.

In 1830 a Sabbath school for children only was formed. "The object of the school shall be to teach the children to read the work of God; to impress on their minds the importance of piety and to persuade and encourage them to pursue the paths of peace and true holiness."

No teacher had more than six scholars, and was, if possible, to provide his or her own substitute when absent. If tardy without good excuse, a fine of five cents was levied and contributed to the school Missionary Fund. The rules for the children were equally strict. Each child enrolled had to attend church unless specifically excused by the teacher. Any pupil absent for two Sabbaths in succession was visited by the teachers. Children were discharged for bad behavior and on November 23, 1833, it was reported that "one unruly boy promises to do better."

A call was extended to the Rev. William P. Alrichs after he had served as supply pastor for three months, but for some reason he requested that Presbytery return the call, which they did. The Rev. John M. Dickey was appointed supply pastor and a formal call was issued to Mr. Dickey on March 14, 1830. He accepted on the condition that they would be willing to "dispense with my services every other Sabbath afternoon." On May 19, 1830, after a worship service at 11

a.m., Presbytery met at 3 p.m. and agreed to ordain and install Mr Dickey. At 7:30 p.m. he was "regularly ordained a minister of the Gospel by prayer and the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery; and installed as the pastor of this Congregation."

Late in October 1831, Presbytery delivered a call to Mr Dickey from the churches of West Nottingham and Oxford. The congregation at New Castle addressed a lengthy communication to Presbytery indicating their complete satisfaction with Mr. Dickey's ministry among them and concluding:

"This congregation does believe that the present welfare and future prosperity of this Church are mainly dependent on the decision of the present question. If the existing connexion (sic) is now ruptured, we fear greatly the result. Since the death of our former Pastor, Mr. Latta, who for a long period laboured amongst us, we have been to a certain extent in an unsettled state, a state by no means favourable to the advancement of the interest and prosperity of the Church. We have reason to believe that Mr. Dickey's efforts have been blessed in harmoniously uniting the members of the congregation, and exciting many to an anxious interest for their eternal welfare. In our judgment there has been no period in the History of this Church for the last 20 years in which the withdrawing from them of their spiritual Teacher would have been so fatal to its vital interests, as it would be at the present time. A spirit of Godly inquiry is now abroad amongst us--many are anxious on the subject of their eternal salvation. If our Pastor should be withdrawn at this interesting crisis, what in all probability, may reasonably be expected? The buds that bid so fair to blossom and produce fruit abundantly will be nipped--coldness and languor will prevail; and our State as a Christian Congregation be worse than in the days past. Believing, as we do, that the cause of Christ will be more effectually promoted by the continuance of the connexion (sic) between our Pastor and ourselves, than

Chapter VI THE "NEW" CHURCH

The Rev. John B. Spotswood, D.D., became pastor in 1842 and through his efforts in 1854, a Gothic style church was built on the lot adjoining to the northeast which was the original burial ground of the early Dutch Reformed Church. With the building of the new church, the graves were moved to the newer cemetery west of town.

Subscriptions to build the new church were \$13,672 and a loan of \$1,279 was obtained. There were outstanding bills amounting to \$1,423, making a total debt of \$2,702. The Building Committee reported in 1855 as follows:

"It is very important that this sum should be raised at once to discharge the debts now due for the building and to defray the estimated cost of that which is yet necessarily to be done as well as to replace the present inefficient furnace with a new one of such construction as will warm the house and make it comfortable in cold weather."

This same year, the spire of the new church blew down in a severe windstorm. An inspection of the timbers revealed that it was badly built of hemlock and was not pinned into the mortises at the base. The inadequate furnace and the spire seem to be prophetic incidents--for almost one hundred years, the Trustees were to fight a never-ending battle trying to keep up with the repairs to the "new" church!

The Trustees reported to the Congregational Meeting on May 4, 1859, the total sum for which pews were then rented was \$925, of which \$518 was unpaid, and debts amounted to \$985. The report continued:

"It will appear from the above statement that if the pew rents for the future would be promptly paid as they become due and the arrears now due were paid up, that the church would soon be able to discharge all its indebtedness as above stated including the considerable

sum due the Pastor for his salary...The trustees have endeavored to discharge their duties in this matter but their endeavors must necessarily continue to be unsuccessful unless all the members will determine for the future to be very zealous, active and prompt in the discharge of their duties to the church."

A letter from the pastor was read at a Congregational Meeting on March 23, 1864:

"To the members of the Presbyterian Church and Congregation in New Castle

Dear Brethren,

Under the painful conviction that my labors among you are not crowned with success, and believing that a change in the pastorate, would, under divine blessing, tend to promote the best interests of the church, I respectfully request you to unite with me in an application to the Presbytery for a dissolution of the pastoral relation existing between us.

It is very painful to my heart to make this request, but fidelity to the cause of My Master, and to yourselves seems to require it.

Invoking on you the blessing of the Great Head of the Church and commending you to the work of his Grace, I am

Very affectionately and sincerely
Yr. Friend and Pastor

s/ J. B. Spotswood

The meeting unanimously adopted a resolution stating that the "sole reason assigned for this request was that the church was not

flourishing; that in their judgment the ministry of Dr. Spotswood was eminently evangelical, pure and faithful and the state of the church cannot be chargeable upon it nor upon him; that the best interest of the church require that Dr. Spotswood remain their pastor; and therefore, they decline to unite with him in requesting Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship."

In October 1864 the Trustees were authorized to make alterations and repairs to the new church, as soon as the necessary funds were subscribed, and the Pastor and two church members were requested to solicit these funds. By April 1865 the work had been partially completed, but it was found to be extensive and more expensive than originally estimated and additional subscriptions were needed.

Since the financial operation of the church was supported mainly from the pew rents, continued failure of members to pay their rents forced the Trustees to take drastic action on one occasion. In their minutes of June 29, 1866, the treasurer was directed to send by mail to the pew holders the bills for rents at the end of every quarter. At the end of 20 days, further notice was given to those in arrears at that time, by placing a list of the unpaid bills in the vestibule of the church! Matters apparently did not improve over the next two decades, for when Dr. Spotswood resigned in 1883, he was paid \$1,350 covering portions of his salary for 1876, 1877, 1878, and 1880.

The Rev. William P. Patterson was called in 1884 at a salary of \$1,200 a year to be paid quarterly. At a Trustees' meeting on September 4, 1889, a letter from him was read stating that four years ago he had requested an alteration in the pulpit, but as of the present time, it had not been done, although other work on the church and Manse had been completed. He wrote:

"I do not fail to appreciate the hesitation which some of our people naturally have in view of such a change and I have tried to respect fully 'the sacred associations' which have been so often mentioned, preferring to

labor as long as possible under a disadvantage than to appear as if desiring to inflict a wound."

The Board of Trustees deferred action until the April 1890 Congregational Meeting; however, the Committee on Church Property was instructed to find out the cost of constructing a platform and reading desk as Mr. Patterson wanted, instead of any alteration in the present pulpit and platform. The Committee reported the alteration would cost \$150, but at the April meeting, the matter was not resolved.

In the meantime, Mr. Patterson was granted an extended leave of absence at full salary in December 1889. In October 1890 he was requested to resign and Presbytery severed the pastoral relationship on June 24, 1891.

The Rev. S. B. Wylie was installed on October 1, 1892, at a salary of \$1,200 a year along with use of the Manse and four weeks vacation. The Manse was a fine old house on The Strand which had been given to the church in 1885 by Samuel M. Couper. The Ladies Committee had contributed furniture, rugs, china, kitchen utensils and other items, including a feather duster and a soap cup to be used there.

At a Congregational Meeting on March 31, 1893, the treasurer reported that out of 300 members, only 70 were regular contributors through the envelope system. He urged that this number hopefully could be increased by sending a letter to those who did not contribute in this manner; however, there is no record of the success or failure of this effort.

Chapter VII A NEW CENTURY

During the first two decades of the 20th century, the church led a hand-to-mouth existence and its financial decline continued. Pew rents and envelope subscriptions were constantly in arrears and special collections were called for regularly. Many times the trustees were forced to use the principal from various bequests to pay current bills. One month the treasurer reported a balance of \$6 in the General Fund.

In 1918 the Trustees recommended the pew rents be abolished, making every pew free for the use of anyone and this policy was adopted at a Congregational Meeting in June. At this meeting the Trustees stated:

"It is not necessary to state that the larger the congregation the less the proportionate share of each member. It is therefore expedient that we give serious thought to the matter of larger attendance."

They pointed out that Sunday School attendance had fallen to a very low ebb and a very small number of young people were in evidence at church services. The future of the church rested in a large degree upon the interest of the younger members.

A property at the corner of 5th and Delaware Street was given to the church in 1921 and became known as "Marble Hall." It was used for several years for church activities and rented out for meetings of other town organizations. It was sold in 1924 and the proceeds used for alterations to the Manse.

When Presbytery dissolved the pastoral relation of New Caspary Church and the Rev. Wylie, at his request on September 28, 1924 the following resolution was adopted by the congregation:

"That the Congregation deeply regrets the necessity of this action, but concurs in it at the specific request of the Pastor.

That the Congregation further desires to convey to the Presbytery of New Castle deep appreciation of its Pastor as a man among men, and a true minister, whose life has been spotless, and whose preaching has ever been the pure religion of Jesus Christ.

Faithful and sympathetic as a friend, loyal and helpful in every good work, the Pastor of this church has left behind him a memorial of thirty years" service in the hearts of his people."

All church properties were in constant need of repair and it was necessary to borrow money from the New Castle Trust Company which increased the church indebtedness alarmingly. The Trustees reported they felt "the Manse in its present condition is a burden and a hindrance in enabling us to obtain candidates for the pulpit." They proposed that the two properties on The Strand and "Marble Hall" be offered for sale. The first floor of the Manse could be used for a church hall, the second and third floors converted into rental apartments. They asked permission to investigate acquisition of a suitable site for building a new Manse. They hoped the proceeds from the sale of these properties, if properly invested, would yield more income than the rentals had.

It was necessary to borrow \$2,150 to pay off an old loan of \$900 and to pay for the new furnaces which had just been installed in the church. Another blow fell when a roofing contractor informed the Property Committee that the badly-needed new roof for the Manse would be \$600. The Trustees ordered the roof repaired, not replaced.

The Rev. William Gibson of Georgetown was called as pastor in December 1923. After surveying the properties, both church and Manse, Dr. Gibson made certain recommendations on ways to improve them. The Trustees on January 24, 1924, unanimously ordered the improvements to the church be undertaken immediately and Dr. Gibson was given the authority to plan and execute the work. The treasurer was to pay such bills for the work as approved by Dr. Gibson. Late in January the house at #24 The Strand was sold for \$2,500. Bonds were purchased and used as collateral for a \$2,150

loan from the New Castle Trust Company.

The Session and the pastor were handling the alterations to the church, the Property Committee the repairs and improvements to the Manse, and the bills were being presented to the Trustees for payment! In an effort to stem the tide and maintain some control over the finances of the church, the Board of Trustees adopted some stringent rules:

1. The treasurer should not pay out any money except upon presentation of a bill and by order of the Trustees in three ways:
 - a. by consideration and action on a particular bill.
 - b. by empowering the treasurer to pay certain bills upon approval of some designated person, such as a chairman of a committee, the secretary, etc.
 - c. by empowering the treasurer to pay upon presentation and without further approval, bills for certain necessary purposes such as salaries, light, heat, etc.
2. Mr. Gibson was to be paid \$166.66 and 2/3 cents the first of each month.
3. The treasurer was instructed to pay bills for such work at the Manse as was authorized by resolution at the meeting of the Board of Trustees on November 26, 1923, upon approval of the Chairman of the Property Committee.
4. The Cemetery Committee was instructed to operate within the means available to it, these generally being special gifts designated specifically for the care of the cemetery.

At this same meeting, however, they ordered at the request of the Session the purchase of 100 new hymnals for \$125. They also remarked on purchases authorized by individuals on behalf of certain church organizations but without authorization of such organizations. The Trustees felt morally responsible for these debts and they requested church organizations to make sure that, particularly in the case of contracts amounting to any considerable sum, the organization either have the money on hand with which to pay or be able to secure the necessary funds. A report was to be prepared showing in detail the bequests the church had received so that steps might be taken to form a permanent trust fund to protect and perpetuate these funds.

A letter was received from Dr. Gibson stating that he would not occupy the Manse until it was completed, referring to the erection of an out-kitchen with sun parlor above it which had been added to his original alteration request. A special Congregational Meeting was called, before which the Property Committee presented a detailed report on the repairs that had been made to the church and the Manse. The Trustees prepared a statement in which they said they had authorized and practically completed all the work on the Manse it could conscientiously do without the instructions of the congregation. They would not order any additional major alterations until that which was definitely approved had been completed, a full report prepared and the congregation presented with the facts. This decision was received unfavorably by the Pastor.

The expenses for the Manse had been \$2,541.55 with about \$200 to \$300 in bills still outstanding; the church expenses were \$2,463.93. In regard to the bequests and permanent funds, a thorough investigation showed a total of \$2,775 was needed to restore these funds to the proper amount, but these were considered deferred liabilities and not pressing obligations. For the fiscal year ending March 31, 1924, a cash balance of \$249.33 was the only free asset. Bills payable and due and the New Castle Trust Company loan made a total indebtedness of \$3,379.59.

The statement of the Board of Trustees was read so rapidly by the secretary of the meeting that few, if any, got an intelligent idea of its contents. Dr. Gibson pleaded for the completion of the Manse as he

had planned it and the congregation voted that should be done at a cost not to exceed \$1,500. Since the congregation did not specify that this be carried out by the Trustees, the planning and completion of the work was left in the hands of the Pastor. At their next meeting, the Trustees requested the secretary to prepare a statement asking the congregation to make extra contributions to help liquidate the debt.

At a subsequent special Trustees' meeting, Dr. Gibson, as spokesman of the Session, recommended that a note for \$3,000, endorsed personally by individual Trustees, be drawn and the money used to pay current debts and complete the work on the Manse with the remainder being used for the erection of a fence around the rear of the church yard and the erection of a kitchen attached to the rear of the Sunday School building (the old church).

The Trustees promptly adopted a resolution stating that they felt a responsibility to see that the outstanding debts for work which they had approved be paid, but they could not assume personally liability for prospective bills for additional alterations. They would be willing to draw a note as suggested and when endorsed by members of the congregation sufficient to make it acceptable, to present it to the bank. Then five of the Trustees submitted their resignations, so that more representative Trustees could be elected. However, they pledged their continued membership and interest in the church. The next day the Session amended its recommendation to include work that could be "reasonably" done and requested another Congregational Meeting to rescind approval of alterations to the Manse amounting to \$1,500.

In 1925 the New Castle Trust Company was appointed to act as fiscal agent for the church, for the purpose of handling securities and special bequests, the income from which was to be turned over to the Trustees in September and March of each year. In addition the house at #26 The Strand was sold for \$2,000.

Acousticons were installed in certain pews in the church and those using them were asked to pay \$17.50 for the earpieces. Control of the tennis court grounds in the church yard was transferred to the Young Mens Association and approval was given for the organization of a club under the supervision of the Association to carry on

recreational activities there. The tennis court was apparently built sometime before 1918 by one of the organizations of the church, for there is no mention in the minutes of the Trustees' meetings of its construction being authorized by them.

In October 1925 the Property Committee was instructed to procure an estimate of the cost of heating the kitchen and study in the Manse. For \$106.42 a hot water heater for the kitchen with a radiator in the study above could be installed. Dr. Gibson offered to give the Trustees his gas range in exchange for this improvement.

An every Member Canvass in December 1925 produced a total of \$1,952 pledged for local church support. The Trustees granted the Young Mens Association and the Womens Service League permission to establish a "Building Fund Committee" with the understanding that the Board of Trustees would assume no financial responsibility for projects undertaken and that it be approved by a special congregational meeting.

The Trustees recommended that the fire insurance coverage be increased in 1926, but that "the present state of finances will not permit the increased expense of larger premiums at this time."

Chapter VIII THE DEPRESSION

Major defects in the brownstone church appeared. Contractors were consulted and reported that for safety reasons one inch iron tie rods should be placed across the church to support the five main roof rafters. The work was ordered done and when the contractors refused to accept compensation, they received the "appreciation and thanks of the Board."

A special meeting of the Trustees was called in May 1927 with an invitation to the Session to attend, to discuss the matter of responsibility and supervision of the physical property of the church. At this meeting, it was reported that:

"The Pastor took exception to the spirit, intent and action of the Board and after a rather vehement denunciation of the Board as a whole and of its members personally, verbally presented his resignation as pastor and withdrew from the meeting."

A few days later Dr. Gibson met with the Board informally and apologized for his attitude and actions at the previous meeting. He admitted that while it had taken him some time to see the matter in its proper light, he would assure the members of the Board that in the future, all matters pertaining to the maintenance, alteration or addition to church property would be referred to the Board. A formal letter from Dr. Gibson was read at a Congregational Meeting on May 11, 1927, and was accepted in the spirit it was written. At this meeting a Board of Deacons was created, the first in many years.

Over the next few years, the financial condition did not improve. Repairs to the Manse and Gothic church were almost continuous and at times the cash balance on hand fell as low as \$1.97. The Womens Service League contributed varying amounts regularly to be applied to the church debt, the coal bill which was chronically in arrears, and the pastor's salary. In 1930 a \$600 bequest was diverted to the General Fund with the understanding that, at the

earliest opportunity, the amount would be returned to the Endowment Fund to the credit of the donor. The deplorable financial condition was discussed frequently at the meetings of the trustees, but no definite decision was made, nor action taken.

On September 28, 1931, the trustees asked Session, if, in view of the present indebtedness of the church, they should order a supply of coal for the big church. The answer was yes--and the Women's Service League came through again in November, contributing \$245 to be applied to the coal account!

The Pastor suggested in 1932 that his salary be reduced to \$150 per month and asked that this be done without the approval of a Congregational Meeting. Since his salary was fixed by the terms of his call, the Trustees felt it was not in their power to change this. However, they did resolve to pay the Pastor \$150 and apply the unpaid monthly balance of \$16.67 to the expenses of the church.

The cash balance on July 26, 1932, was \$1.41. The minutes of that meeting read:

"There was considerable discussion regarding the difficulty of securing sufficient money in this time of severe depression with which to pay the current expenses of the church. The interest from trust funds has shrunken greatly, individual contributions are being reduced and in some cases stopped altogether and the activities of auxiliary bodies are resulting in considerable reduced returns. The future certainly looks difficult and the Board sees no path ahead other than that of holding expenses down to the very minimum."

In September the Trustees suggested to Session that the Gothic church be closed during the winter, effecting a savings in coal, electricity and janitorial services. Session agreed and minor changes were made in the Sunday School building (the old church) which created a generally satisfactory effect.

The funds pledged for 1933 were greatly reduced and Trustees and Session met jointly in an attempt to solve the financial difficulties. Dr. Gibson stated that although he admitted to being subjected to embarrassment and hardship in not receiving his full salary, he understood the situation and would be content if small sums could be paid him from time to time so that his immediate and necessary needs would be met. He suggested borrowing again from permanent funds, but the Trustees felt this would be an unwise course of action. A special Congregational meeting was called for March 1, to inform the members of the situation and the members voted to conduct a special Every Members Canvass to acquaint all with the gravity of the situation, but there is no report on the success of the campaign.

Again in the winter of 1933-34, services were held in the Church House. The pastor opposed another special appeal for funds, feeling that curtailed financial support caused by the severity of the depression was exaggerated and that certain members were withholding their personal participation in church work and individual contributions for other reasons. He felt that the added pressure of another appeal for funds would fall mainly on the already conscientious contributors.

Dr. Gibson suggested that an informal meeting of all Board organizations and interested members be held. The following suggestions were made at this meeting:

1. that a Finance Committee be created to follow up on delinquencies in pledges and contributions
2. that a canvass be made to secure substantial sums from those able to contribute to eliminate the current deficit
3. that a canvass be made of members stressing the policy of small amounts from a great number of people, the money to be used for emergency repairs
4. that, because for some time current income has not been sufficient to meet current expenses, an effort

be made to increase the number of contributing members of the congregation.

The first and third suggestions were approved, the second was temporarily deferred and the fourth referred to Session.

At a special Trustees' meeting in August, 1934, a canvass by mail was planned followed by personal calls by members of a special committee and this time it would include out-of-town friends. However, at the conclusion of the canvass, revenues were still not sufficient to meet ordinary expenses. The sum of \$510 was collected, of which \$190 came from outside the congregation. The Gothic church would remain closed during the winter months.

On January 15, 1936, disaster struck--fire broke out around a faulty chimney in the second floor of the Church House. It was discovered quickly before it spread to the roof framing and belfry timbers. It was extinguished in a short time and the janitor requested to stay in the church all night. However, it broke out again the next morning in the second story floor joists at the base of the same chimney.

Insurance company representatives appreciated the old church and expressed a willingness to restore the damaged parts carefully and completely. They offered to construct a new chimney, or, if the trustees wanted to remove the furnace to the cellar of the other church and run underground heating lines to the Church House, they would allow the church the cost of the chimney. Such a change would cost \$208 more than the insurance allowance and the trustees felt the finances of the church could not bear this extra burden. At this moment a bequest of \$300 was received, designated for use in repairing the church. The Property Committee felt that no better use could be made of the bequest than in altering the heating system to protect the Church House from future damage by fire. The Trustees commended the Goodwill Fire Company on the interest and care shown by the manner in which the fires were extinguished so that fire and water damage was minimized.

The Trustees requested that the big church be closed during the

winter of 1936-37, but Session decided that services would be held there for it had plans which justified the expense and Dr. Gibson had offered to be responsible for collecting sufficient money to pay the added cost of operation.

At a Congregational Meeting in May, it was recommended that a Finance Committee of five members be formed, whose task it would be to plan and execute activities calculated to increase the income of the church. The Financial Secretary, who kept the pledge records, was to give the committee the names of members who supported the church, but not the amount of their contribution; Session would supply a list of all communicant members; and armed with this information, this committee did not attend the Congregational Meeting in December called especially to approve this plan, so it was not adopted until the following May.

Late in the summer the Property Committee reported a large crack in the stonework around the south corner of the church tower, causing the whole wall in that area to bulge. The tower was inspected by a Wilmington contractor, who stated that it was in very dangerous condition, the damage having been caused by water getting into the wall and freezing. He said that the stonework on that corner had to be taken down and rebuilt at an estimated cost of \$1,000! He offered to do the work on a basis of the actual cost of labor and materials without any profit to his company. He also reported that the entire stonework of the church needed attention. Repointing would not suffice--all mortar should be dug out and new forced in. This work would probably cost an additional several thousand dollars.

Only 6 persons attended a special Congregational Meeting on October 13, 1937--an insufficient number to properly consider the serious financial matters for which it was called. Dr. Gibson invited the Trustees, Session and officers of other organizations of the church to meet with him in the Church House on October 8. The Trustees prepared a statement of facts for use at the meeting. They were:

1. \$2,000 was needed now for tower repairs and pastor's salary.

2. A number of large expense items were expected in the near future.
3. The New Castle Trust note was still not paid and several bequests which had been used for current expenses should be repaid.
4. Session held the direct responsibility for the number of members and the interest of these members.
5. A special Congregational Committee should be appointed to formulate and execute a plan for raising funds necessary at this time.

It was decided that a special Congregational Meeting should be called for the purpose of electing additional elders. The work of the Pastor and the Session was hampered by the fact that a Session of three elders was required by law to have all three present in order to transact business. At this meeting on November 16, 1937, two elders were elected, 18 persons were named to the Special Finance Committee which was to raise money for the immediate needs, and 6 persons were named to the Permanent Finance Committee authorized by the Congregational Meeting in May, which was to conduct the annual Every Member Canvass and raise regular funds for the general expenses of the church and its mission and benevolence contributions.

In December the pinnacle on the cracked corner of the tower was leaning in such a way that it could fall at any moment. The Trustees ordered it taken down immediately at a cost of \$100. The Special Finance Committee reported in January 1938 that \$567 had been collected, \$360 designated for the pastor's salary and \$207 for the tower repair. A letter was received from the Rev. S. Beattie Ayde pledging \$100 for repair of the tower, the check to be sent when the repairs began. By April the special committee had raised \$427 for salary, \$322 for the tower, \$100 of which was used to remove the pinnacle.

In June 1938 the Property Committee reported that the roof of the Manse was in very bad condition and at least the front half should be reroofed at the earliest possible moment. A wood shingle roof which would be more in keeping with the house would cost \$200. The Trustees recommended that the next interest payment received be used for this purpose and also that the exterior woodwork of the Manse be painted at a cost of \$92.

The Board recommended in October that the worst spots in the walls of the big church be repaired, but that the cost of complete repairs was too high to be undertaken then. A special canvass was made to cover the cost of these limited repairs.

In February 1939 the Trustees decided to sell the shares of duPont stock which had risen considerably and reinvest the money in shares of Wilmington Trust Company stock. They felt the duPont stock would not maintain its recent gains, but that the Wilmington Trust Company was an established conservative institution whose stock would gradually increase in value.

In a last ditch effort to regularize the financial operation of the church, the Trustees addressed a letter to the Session on March 7, 1939, excerpts of which follow:

"As a Board, the Trustees wish to accept its full obligations and responsibilities and to avoid the improper extension of activity of influence into fields of authority reserved to other bodies of the church.

It is recognized that the Session is the superior agency of the congregation and that the Board of Trustees is subordinate except in matters regulated by civil law .

Everyone truly interested in the health and effectiveness of the church should be concerned primarily in the solution rather than the technicalities of the situation and this is the spirit in which our suggestions are tendered.

Because of the insufficiency of income the prompt payment of our obligations is impossible and proper operating and maintenance conditions cannot be supported. The board can disburse only what it receives. (There followed a tabulation of envelope and plate contributions and interest received from 1924 to 1938.)

The potential membership at any given time, and the possibility of securing the interest and support of that number, is of course largely a matter of opinion and not readily subject to proof. We do feel, however, that a real field of opportunity exists both in our church and for our church; and that it is as great as, or greater, today than at any time within the past fifteen years. In the community we believe there is material for an effectively functioning congregation from the standpoint of program, membership and support.

In the spirit of constructive candor, we suggest three things for the consideration of the Session; 1) that you seek the facts and then make a genuine effort to determine why they exist; 2) that you formulate a plan that may be reasonably expected to overcome the causes of the present condition; and 3) that you assume the leadership that constitutional authority vested in you, in executing that plan."

The Pastor requested additional information on the amounts contributed by the Womens Service League, Christian Endeavor, Sunday School, special fund raising committees, etc., for consideration at the next Session meeting. The Trustees provided the information, adding:

"Generally speaking, the above tabulation of other income is largely a matter of deficit financing or money given for stipulated purposes, neither of which constitutes a sound foundation for budgetary control.

. . .Money should be a means of facilitating the work of the church and not a major objective itself. Revenues should come mainly from pledged contributions rather than collections. Our normal obligations should not be created until the means to properly meet them has been provided. That they are eventually met would be but a poor answer if prior to that accomplishment, hardships had been imposed, frictions created and the entire perspective of church life had been distorted.

The pledged contributions and interest from investments should be an amount sufficient to comfortably meet the ordinary operating expenses of the church. Extraordinary expense and church services of many kinds might rightly be the field for group activity in the various departments or organizations of the church or the reason for an occasional special canvass. Unless and until such a basis is established we must consider our financial condition as unsatisfactory."

At the request of the pastor, the Trustees, deacons and Session met on March 14, 1939. The Pastor spoke at length on Presbyterian law and his opinions of what should be done about the financial condition. While he felt he was giving the opinion and position of the Session, it developed that there was a misunderstanding and the Session had not approved the subject matter as it was presented. As a result, the Session pledged they would give consideration to the facts as presented by the Board of Trustees and called for an Every Member Canvass to be held to secure pledges for current year envelopes and if possible, determine why there had been a decline in the support of the church. At the end of the canvass, 65 members had pledged \$1,331.20 for current operating expenses and \$213.20 for mission and benevolences. Sixteen members showed no desire to contribute regularly.

The church limped along for the next two years with little or no progress being made and in May 1941 Dr. Gibson resigned. This presented the Trustees with another problem--\$1,650 was owed him

for back salary and five month's salary for the leave of absence granted to him. In March 1942 Dr. Gibson's furniture was still in the Manse. The Board of Trustees granted him 30 days to remove it or the matter would be reported to Presbytery.

It was now all too evident that the builders of the "new" church lacked the skill of the craftsmen of the colonial times, for the Gothic church was usable only in warm weather--its furnaces inoperable and beyond repair--and the money to repair the large holes in the walls was simply not to be had. The Manse was a fine old house, but it was large, costly to heat, and in poor physical condition.

Chapter IX THE TURNING POINT

The year 1941 proved to be the turning point. With the resignation of Dr. Gibson, it was necessary to depend on supply pastors to perform the official duties and Merle S. Irwin, a senior at Princeton Theological Seminary, came to New Castle in that capacity. Upon graduation in the spring of 1942, he was called as full time pastor.

He was young, energetic and enthusiastic, and encouraged a small group of members to seek solutions to the seemingly overwhelming problems facing the church. When Mr. Irwin resigned to become a Navy Chaplain in 1944, the situation had improved --membership had increased, old debts were being liquidated and the church was becoming a fiscally sound operation. The Property Committee requested two Wilmington builders to inspect the Gothic church and report their findings. When five months later the inspection had not been made, Mr. Albert Haddock, an architect and builder, was contacted. Although he and an engineer did inspect the property, they were not willing to estimate the cost of repairs.

In June 1945 the Session appointed a Committee of Twelve representing all boards and organizations of the church and this committee sought the advice of Dr. John W. Christie, a church historian and pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Wilmington. From that moment on, Dr. Christie served as a guide and mentor--he opened doors to higher church officials and when obstacles were encountered, he either overcame them or guided the determined group around them. His first advice was to seek the interest and assistance of Presbytery, pointing out the historic position of New Castle Church in Presbyterianism. Members of the committee attended the October 1, 1945, meeting of Presbytery to present their case and the Stated Clerk was ordered to write Dr. Hermann Morse of the Board of National Missions in support of the committee's request for a survey of the situation.

The church had now been without a full time pastor for over a year. Dr. Christie advised them to set a reasonable salary figure and redouble their efforts to obtain a pastor. In July 1945 the Rev. Olson Pemberton agreed to serve as supply while completing graduate work at Princeton. However, Mr. Pemberton intended to become a missionary in Brazil and was not a candidate for full time pastor.

Six months later Charles A. Scheuringer, AIA, and consulting architect for the Board of National Missions, visited New Castle to study the church properties. His recommendation to raze the Gothic church and restore the 1707 church came as a shock and was met with mixed feelings. Mr. Scheuringer estimated the cost of renovating the Gothic church at over \$20,000. His proposal recommended construction of a parish building connected to the 1707 church by a cloistered walkway. His estimate for razing the Gothic church, restoring the old church and constructing a new building was \$125,000! At a Congregational Meeting on November 10, 1946, the members voted by a 77% majority to accept his recommendation to tear down the Gothic church and to restore the 1707 meeting house. A few weeks later one member of the Board of Trustees resigned because he did not agree with the future plans. However, when the Restoration Fund drive was held two years later, it is recorded he contributed generously.

Mr. Pemberton and his family departed for Brazil in January of 1947 and the church was again without a pastor. Some months later a member of the church suggested that a higher salary should be offered and agreed to underwrite any salary deficit for a one-year trial period, if the right man could be found.

The "right" man proved to be the Rev. Russell L. Jaberg, pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Trenton, NJ. Mr. Jaberg accepted the call and was installed on June 12, 1947. He immediately embarked on a program to attract new members to the church from the surrounding community. This was a difficult task for the old church buildings had little appeal to strangers. In a letter from the Trustees to the Congregation in August, it was obvious that Mr. Jaberg was succeeding. It was reported that:

"In the short time Mr. Jaberg has been our pastor, the weekly contributions have increased gratifyingly. It is believed that under his strong and inspiring leadership, the size and interest of the congregation will grow and be reflected in the offerings."

The Manse was repaired and redecorated at a cost of \$4,000, in addition to the volunteer services of the men and women of the church. All but \$1,500 was paid from funds available to the Trustees. This amount was borrowed from the bank and it was hoped the debt would be liquidated in a few months.

Late in 1947 Historic New Castle, Inc., a non-profit body sponsoring the preservation and restoration of New Castle's colonial and post-colonial buildings, was formed. Restoration of the church was the first large-scale undertaking of the sort in New Castle, although it was not directly connected with the program of the foundation. Through the generosity of this group, the consulting services of Albert Kruse, AIA, and Perry, Shaw and Hepburn, AIA of Boston who were the architects for colonial Williamsburg, were offered to the church. Mr. Kruse was ultimately retained as architect for the restoration of the church.

The General Assembly passed a resolution endorsing the project and Marts and Lundy, a firm specializing in organizing and directing financial campaigns for religious and educational institutions, estimated the giving potential of the church and community to be between \$15,000 and \$25,000.

At a Congegational Meeting in November, it was decided to abandon the plans for the new Parish Building and repurchase the house at #26 The Strand, which had been sold in 1926. This property would be usable immediately with little, if any additional expense and would provide considerable facilities for Sunday School classrooms and other parish activities.

In February 1949 formal application was made to the Board of National Missions for a grant of \$20,000 and the services of Mr. C. A. Dermarest to direct and execute a fund drive were also requested. The

Church Restoration and Parish Improvement Fund Drive was launched on Sunday, May 1st, with an Every Member Canvass. By the end of the week, \$32,000 had been pledged - a figure 28% higher than estimated.

In June of 1949 the Board of National Missions informed the church that it had deferred all applications for funds until its December meeting. It stated that it had written to grantees suggesting they release their grants, if their construction projects would be further delayed. If such releases were secured, the funds would be reallocated to New Castle Church.

The Board of Trustees responded with dismay! Although they knew the grant was not assured, they felt they could count on the Board of National Mission's assistance. In several years they had brought "the old church from a distressing state of decline to one of real effectiveness." They pointed out that Mr. Jaberg had done a magnificent job in the face of great obstacles. Anyone knowing the situation at first hand was humbled by the faith, unity and spirit of sacrifice which produced this result. Twenty thousand dollars was a critical sum to them. The Board of Trustees felt that in all human efforts there were values which outweigh even desirable procedures and established policies. Surely among the approved grants totaling \$250,000, there were one or two amounting to \$20,000 which could be deferred with less harm done than if they had to bring their program to a halt.

A month later, the Board of National Missions reported that they had secured a release of \$10,000 of previously granted funds and suggested that the church apply for a \$10,000 Building Aid Silent Loan. The loan would require no interest or principal payments for the first five years of its life and interest payments thereafter would be 4% per annum with payments on the principal semi-annually over the next ten years. A subsequent Congregational Meeting approved the amendment of the church's application for a grant of \$20,000 to a request for a \$10,000 grant and a \$10,000 loan. The Board of National Missions approved both the grant and the loan, and Mr. Scheuringer approved and commented favorably on the revised plans for the restoration prepared by Mr. Kruse.

Approximately \$20,000 of the subscriptions were on the basis of deferred payments over a period of three years. Cash was needed to meet contractual obligations and the Board of Missions offered to advance the required amount on the basis of it being liquidated as the pledges were paid.

W. C. Haddock Construction Company was awarded the contract and it was soon apparent that an additional \$20,000 would be needed. An appeal was made to public spirited persons of wealth and the \$20,000 deficiency was made up.

In a letter to the Congregational Meeting on February 6, 1950, James T. Eliason, Jr., President of the Board of Trustees, stated:

"I sincerely hope that each one is conscious of the blessing which has come to us as a result of our sincere effort to do what we thought was right. May we hold fast to that spirit of unity and effort which overcomes pettiness and prejudice and builds common accomplishments....A new day had dawned for this old church."

Chapter X THE RESTORATION

No documentary evidence had been found which described in detail the interior of the original church. Information passed down from earlier generations indicated a high pulpit with a sounding board above it, family box pews, brick aisles and a gallery. After extensive study of nearby old churches, Mr. Kruse concluded that Christ Church, east of Laurel, Delaware, most closely resembled the original New Castle Church and used it for his model.

The first step was to remove the stucco from the exterior walls, which was done without interfering with the use of the building. This revealed that there had been a brick belt course across the entire front wall, which had been chipped off when the stucco was applied, and that a brick keystone had topped each window frame, stretching to the belt course. The vertical mortar joint running up the front and back walls clearly revealed the 1712 extension of the original building. On the back wall, four of the windows had short belt courses the width of the window, but the second window from the southwest end had none, indicating that there had been no window there when the church was built.

The southwest wall revealed the large circle head window and the small rectangular window above it. These windows had been removed and the openings filled with bricks at the time of the 1818 remodelling.

At this point it was decided to completely strip the interior of the building and arrangements were made to hold services in the local movie theater. The location of the original door was revealed when the plaster was removed from around the second window from the southwest end, exposing the larger doorway arch filled in with bricks. Below this arch the original granite doorsill was found, still in place.

The evidence was mounting that the wall directly opposite the front door was the proper location for the high pulpit. It was on the center axis of the original building and on the exact portion of the rear wall that had no belt course. In the cornice molding above the spot was

a hook, which undoubtedly held the support rod of the sounding board over the pulpit, just as it does today.

Mr. Kruse was convinced that the cornice molding was the only piece of original woodwork. This was carefully stripped of its paint, layer by layer, to reveal the original green color.

The roof trusses were found to be sound, except for one spot. It was thought the cause of this damage may have come from the weight of the cupola and bell. A new steel support was designed to take the strain of the cupola completely off the truss.

Work was begun in July, 1949, and completed a year later at a total cost of \$70,000. The interior of the church now resembles what it must have been when it was built in 1707.

In 1948 under the leadership of Circle #1, the members of the church sponsored the first New Castle Antiques Show. It was quite successful and became one of the premier shows on the Eastern seaboard, attracting many well-known dealers. The proceeds from the show were used to pay off the Board of National Missions loan.

As the years passed, however, the proliferation of antique shows and flea markets made it more difficult to attract quality dealers and in 1982 at the conclusion of the 35th annual show, the Session of the church decided to discontinue the show.

After the restoration of the meeting house and demolition of the Gothic church, the house at #26 The Strand was used as a parish house and the church office was housed in rented quarters in the Arsenal-on-the-Green. It soon became obvious that another building was needed to house these activities. On June 8, 1959, the new Christian Education Building, designed by Albert Kruse, was dedicated, built on the ground once occupied by the Gothic church.

During the 11-year pastorate of the Rev. Wilbert B. Smith who came in 1952 the congregation developed a strong commitment to its mission responsibilities. As a result of its benevolence giving,

New Castle church soon ranked near the top among all Presbyterian churches of comparable size.

With the advent of the more turbulent domestic issues in the 1960's and the 1970's, the focus of the church's life shifted toward local mission. This development coincided with the calling of the present pastor, the Rev. Ralph Johnson, in 1963. Under his leadership the officers and members encouraged participation in ecumenical programs with other Protestant and Catholic churches in the community. During this period, the Session adopted and incorporated in its Acts of Session a declaration that our congregation welcomes all who accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior without regard to race, color, national origin or economic status.

In recent years other notable outreach projects include:

1. the purchase of special life-saving equipment for the Goodwill Fire Company's ambulance service;
2. spearheading the first local Head Start Program;
3. playing a key role in establishing a popular Lay Academy program;
4. recruiting of other congregations and service groups to begin and maintain a Meals-on-Wheels service to residents in this part of New Castle County;
5. maintaining consistent concern for the hungry in our community - for whom we have a year-round Emergency Food Pantry and most recently a one-day-a-month provision of dinner for the Emmanuel Dining Room in Wilmington;
6. and providing space for the New Castle Senior Center when it outgrew its beginnings in the Progressive Club.

In 1982 the church had a year-long celebration of the 325th anniversary of its founding. In the words of Mr. Johnson, "over the centuries, this everchanging collection of Christians who have constituted this congregation have sought to respond to the incredible

gift of God in Jesus Christ, by themselves seeking to shed His light and love upon the particular human needs of each age."

After twenty-six years service the Rev. Ralph R. Johnson, Jr. retired on November 5, 1989. In the words of James T. Eliason, Jr. addressing a congregational meeting on February 6, 1950, another "new day" has dawned for this old church.

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