

Let No Person be a Stranger in our Home-Like Church

It was the need for a church to be within walking distance of home that gave rise to the Arlington Street United Methodist Church. At the end of the 19th century, Crown Hill residents attended the Main Street Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1892, however, its minister, the Rev. Dr. C.W. Rowley organized a Bible study group to meet in Crown Hill homes. Soon afterward the Crown Hill worshippers secured a larger, more centrally located meeting room on the second floor above a grocery store owned by S.J. Gaskill. The Thursday evening and Sunday services in the Crown Hill Chapel were held above the store on the corner of Arlington and Gillis streets.

The Arlington Street United Methodist Church saints began marching in when the foundation of our present church was laid in November 1898. The Vestry was completed and dedicated in September 1899. The work on the sanctuary continued and Rev. Garland states that "much of the work was done by lantern light after a hard days work, none were too proud to work, and none too holy to shovel, to saw, to hammer or paint." Our church continued to grow. During this time, The Ladies' Aid Society, which is now The United Methodist Women, was the right arm of the church when it came to financial aid. The minutes of their first meeting read as follows: "Gathered around the fire in the Methodist Chapel last Wednesday afternoon, January 10, 1894, were sixteen ladies, patiently waiting the time to organize a Methodist Society in which we could all work in harmony for the building up of our Chapel and also in accomplishing what good we could outside." The "workers" accomplished many projects, while paying for furnishings of the "Chapel" and contributing to aspects of the church. The Society was responsible for many of the church suppers. In 1897, the ticket price for a baked bean supper was just 15 cents!

In 1912, the Parsonage at 54 Haines Street was completed and our present Parsonage, next to the Church, was purchased in 1943. Our present organ was installed and dedicated on February 6, 1927. We have been very fortunate in having dedicated organists at Arlington Street Church for there have been just three regular organists to play our Moller Organ. To commemorate the "liquidation or organ indebtedness" a Jubilee Day Celebration was held on Sunday, February 23, 1930.

Less than three months from this celebration, the great Crown Hill fire

swept through this section of our city. The Baptist Church on Allds Street, where Infant Jesus Church now stands, was completely destroyed, but our church was spared. Rev. Hays used his weight to good advantage by breaking the banister so that the piano might be pushed into an open field. We were determined to have music if all else was lost. Also, the communion plate and cup were buried in the ground to protect them from the fire.

In 1947, a new oil furnace was installed in the church, which was later changed to gas in 1968. Quite a few stories might be told about our old hot air furnace. The registers, which were placed in the aisles of the sanctuary, would erupt with a blast of hot air when the furnace was fired. Many a skirt and choir robe was billowed up. During wedding ceremonies, the wife of one of our ministers would sit near the register ready to bat down the bride's gown if an emergency arose. Then there was the time that pepper was introduced into the oven which turned out to be quite a sneezing affair. One Sunday when the collection plates were missing, a volunteer hastily varnished some paper plates. To speed up the drying process, they were placed on the furnace. The fumes soon drove everyone out – no need for the plates!

Another memorable event in our Church was Consecration Sunday held on November 10, 1958, commemorating the remodeling of the sanctuary, the entrance and the remodeling of the parsonage. In 1964, on the land where our new Addition was built, we purchased the Merrill property for our church school annex, which was demolished in 1973 as the building was in disrepair. Our next major change was the extensive renovation of the kitchen, which added the dishwasher and other updated appliances. Not only was the kitchen heating up, but also so was the sanctuary. In 1980, the ceiling fans were added to "cool down" the parishioners. On hot days, when they leaned backed against the old pews, a stained impression would be left on their clothing reminding them of where they had been on that hot day. So in June of 1990, our current padded pews were added, dedicated and the sanctuary was painted. In honor of our 100th Anniversary in 1992, members of our church celebrated by planting a new tree, however the tree did not like our soil! Our project for the new millennium was an Addition, which included a lift for the handicap, new music room, new Sunday School rooms, and a pastor's study, which was dedicated on September 26, 2004.

It is hoped that this history will enlighten you as to how Arlington Street

United Methodist Church became known as a warm and friendly church. We have and continue to reach out to our community through various venues. Some of our community activities include: Annual Crop Walk participation; preparation and serving of food at the Nashua Soup Kitchen and we offer health counseling through the Parish Nurse Program in cooperation with Saint Joseph's Hospital. Also, we helped our Crown Hill neighbors enroll in the Nashua recycling program by distributing bins, brochure and encouragement. The Women's organizations contribute to the Gathering Place, Pastoral Care, Salvation Army and Caregivers. One of our best known community programs is our public suppers. Our outreach support encompasses worldwide projects with members of the church who traveled to Costa Rica and to Peru for construction of new churches. Contributions have been made to the Heiffer project to buy animals for undeveloped countries. Supplies have also been sent to third world countries to help people, especially children in need.

Today, Arlington Street United Methodist Church is blessed with having numerous ministries within our church which continue to foster Christian growth and support. Some of these ministries include: Community Outreach Ministry, Music Ministry, Youth Ministry, Children's Ministry, Men's Ministry, Women's Ministry and Senior Ministry.

As we face the future, we remember that our challenge today differs somewhat from the challenge our ancestors faced. In the formative years of Arlington Street Church, 95% of its members lived on Crown Hill and transportation was not as convenient as it is today. Figuratively, the church was brought to the people. Today, we bring the people to the church and this is done by opening our doors wide through an atmosphere of hospitality. We invite you to be a part of our church today and a piece of our history tomorrow. By Roger Gaskill & Samantha Gaskill Jean

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