

Memories of the Church-In-The-Gardens  
Forest Hills Gardens, New York  
1920's to 1980's



As Remembered by Eleanor S. Pitts

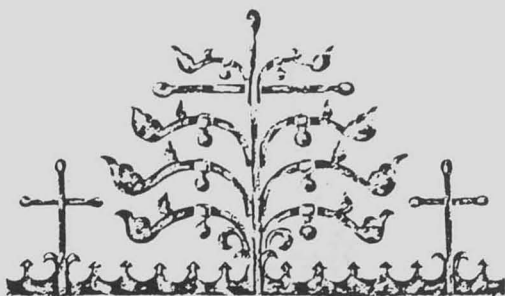
Drawing By  
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The Church in the Gardens  
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FOREST HILLS GARDENS, NEW YORK

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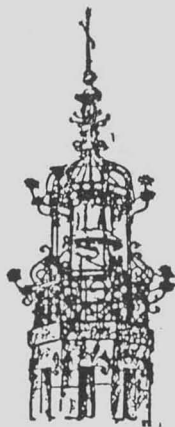
As Remembered by Eleanor S. Pitts



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Forest Hills Gardens, New York

To My Parents, Alfred L. and Pearl G. Pitts,  
for whom The Church-in-the-Gardens meant so  
much, and to which they gave generously of  
their thought, their effort and their time.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The writing of this small volume is due in large part to the suggestion of the History and Records Committee of The Church-in-the-Gardens. Of its members, I especially wish to thank Mrs. Madeline KiENZLE for graciously offering to type my first draft into legible form from my poorly typed original. And I want to thank, in particular, Dr. Susanna L. Hof, to whom I extend my sincere gratitude for her encouragement, and her vision, and for her kindness in reading these memories, and in printing them into book form on her marvelous computer and word processor. I also wish to thank my sister, Mrs. Grace P. Shackelford, for reading what I had written, and for reminding me of several facts I had forgotten.

To all of the above, I owe my deep appreciation, as I do to The Church-in-the-Gardens, where I grew up, and without which this little work could never have been written.

The Author

## PREFACE

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When the Church-in-the-Gardens' 75th Anniversary Committee was arranging the year's celebrations for 1988, I was asked to put together for them my memories of the church. It was my understanding that they were to be placed in the church's historical files, and possibly one or two items used in the entertainment then being organized for the evening of the banquet celebration. Now, some time after having submitted them, I find they are to be published. Although some of the recollections may not be absolutely accurate as to names and dates, they are the best that come to my mind. They include about all I can recall. The view-points, where expressed, of course, are my own. I trust you will understand that since these are my memories, they are necessarily limited and personal. Yet I hope you will find them of some interest, and through them perhaps learn a little more about the past of our beloved Church-in-the-Gardens.

Eleanor S. Pitts

## MEMORIES OF THE CHURCH-IN-THE-GARDENS, FOREST HILLS GARDENS, N.Y.

1920'S TO 1980'S

As Remembered by Eleanor S. Pitts

Of all the churches I have seen in this country, Europe, the Pacific and Asia, there seems to me none more beautiful than our beloved Church-in-the-Gardens in Forest Hills Gardens, New York. From both architectural and spiritual view-points, I think, none can hold a candle to it. The gift to the community of Mrs. Russell Sage, whose vision and support made possible the unique garden community in which the church is set, it was designed by the renowned architect, Grosvenor Atterbury, and architects John Almy Tompkins and Steward Wagner, of which the last lived in the house he designed at the corner of Continental Avenue and Bow Street. Later when a transept was considered and when the Woodward Memorial Balcony was installed in the church, Mr. Wagner, still our architect, was consulted on its construction. The church, built in Norman style, of grey, black and mustard yellow stone with a tower topped by a delicately-wrought iron weather vane, was given to us provided we "open its doors to all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ" and, with the stipulation that the hymn, "Blest Be the Tie that Binds" be sung at each Communion service, and so it has been, although in very recent years, it has been sung after the service rather than during it, thereby perhaps fortifying less well the binding idea of the Communion itself. The title of the church is The Church-in-the-Gardens as carved over the entrance to the church. Possibly fifteen years ago, some people searching old files, found that originally it had been called The Church in the Gardens, and so they changed the heading on various future pieces of church literature. However, to my way of thinking that shows the location, just as though it were pointed out as The Church on Ascan Avenue, and thus it is not a title and does not present the unifying idea intended by the donor, and followed by those of the many denominations who have joined The Church-in-the-Gardens. Yet by whatever name it is designated, it is still our beloved church,

with its architectural beauty that imparts a deep spiritual feeling to those who worship here. The following are some of my memories of The Church-in-the-Gardens as best I can recall them.

### THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

During the 20's Mrs. George Smart was Superintendent. She was a very strong feminist. She was about 5'2" or 3" tall. Her daughter, Helen (later Mrs. James Dartt), taught a class of Primary Grades. The 7th and 8th grades were taught by Miss Helen Hof, aunt of Robert Hof, present member. Miss Janet Perry (later Mrs. Harold Fairhurst) taught 4th, 5th and 6th grade girls. Mr. Alfred L. Pitts taught 5th-8th grade boys. All classes were in the Social Room (the present Music Room) under the church sanctuary, with Primary grades in the center seated on tiny wooden chairs, and Mr. Pitts' class of "big boys" in the room to the left as one descends the inside stairs from the church vestibule -- which room was also the church office. A slatted wooden door was pulled down from the ceiling to close off the Social Room from the rest of the basement. Kindergarten was held in the rotunda inside the entrance to the Social Room from the street-side door. Mrs. Alfred L. Pitts taught kindergarten and primary grades. The High School children's classes were held in church, probably on the landing now leading to the balcony. Choir robes (black with white cassocks) for the children's choir were in closets along each side from the street side entrance, about ten feet inside. Upstairs in the church itself, in the pews to the right of the entry doors, Mrs. Davenport later taught the Intermediate girls, grades 7th and 8th. She became Superintendent in the late '20's. Mrs. Miller, who lived at the southwest corner of Markwood Road and Union Turnpike, was Junior Choir director. She had rehearsals after school on Fridays. The biggest event occurred about 1925 when Helen Keller and her teacher, Miss Sullivan, came to talk to the children. She had reddish brown, crimped hair and talked in a very scratchy voice with no intonation. She asked us for questions and then, as I recall, she seemed to put her thumb on her teacher's jaw and two fingers on her teacher's lips and one on



her voice box as her teacher repeated a question and then Miss Keller answered it. By the late 1920's some classes were held in the Community House with Primary and Kindergarten in Smith Hall; Intermediates in the church Social Room, with girls and boys in separate classes; and with the High School perhaps in the tea room. At this time, Intermediate (4th through 8th) had a worship service each Sunday in the Church Sanctuary where the Minister preached to us, and the Junior Choir in robes sang in the front two pews on the right. Martha Hanes had a lovely voice and often sang solos. When my cousin and I were in the Junior Choir, Mrs. Miller asked us to sing a duet in church. The following Sunday after daily rehearsals with my aunt, an opera singer, we two seven-year olds, in our gowns and cassocks, stood on the chancel steps and sang our song. What it was I cannot recall, but my mother must have been quite embarrassed for I was notorious for straying off key. My cousin, however, had a pretty child's soprano voice, and, hopefully, drowned me out.

The first minister I remember preaching was Mr. Pickett, who conducted the Sunday School church services which were followed by classes. Mrs. Mamie Marvin and her daughter, Mrs. W. Alton Jones, were Superintendents of the Kindergarten and Primary Departments. Later, Mrs. Ovid Jones, and then Mrs. Alan Kissock, were Superintendents. Mrs. Ellsworth Davenport was Superintendent of the Intermediate Grades. At Christmas, stockings were filled with woolen mittens, caps and scarfs and taken to the Italian Mission in Brooklyn where, we children were told, the Mission children were sewed into their clothes all winter to keep them warm in their cold-water flats. Our woolen gifts covered them for the outdoors. At Christmas we gave "White Gifts" for poor children (toys), presenting them at the altar before their being taken to the "orphanage" (Jamaica Day Nursery which we children thought was an orphanage). At Easter in the 1920's each Primary child received from the Sunday School a potted hyacinth plant in bloom. The plants were arranged in concentric circles in the center of the Social Room and looked very beautiful. We children also saluted the Church flag and the American flag at our church services. The Sunday School children put on plays in Smith Hall, some of which were written by Mrs. Kissock and published by Judson

Press. On Children's Day in June, the 3rd grade, whose teacher was Mrs. Mahan, was graduated into the Intermediate Department on the steps to the chancel. The Class recited from memory all the books of the Old and New Testaments in order, and the 23rd Psalm; sang, "Just As I am Thine Own to Be"; and said The Lord's Prayer. Mr. Pickett presented each with a Bible (King James Version) in which was written "Presented by the Church-in-the-Gardens, Forest Hills, L.I., June 13, 1926, Warren Wheeler Pickett" and signed his name. On Children's Day the Kindergarten sang, "Jesus Loves Me," and recited the sentence, "God is Love." The Intermediates memorized and sang, "For the Beauty of the Earth." All marched into church to "Onward Christian Soldiers", which every child loved. Mrs. Davenport gave out certificates and pins for perfect attendance, Cross and Crown Series, a gun metal pin for 6 weeks, bronze for 12 weeks, white enamel on gold for one year, gold wreath for two years, into which the 1st year pin was set. Thereafter, different colored bars with "three years," "four years," etc., were suspended from it. Miss Douglas became Director of Religious Education holding "social service" and crafts meetings weekly in the church Social Room after Sunday School sessions ended. She had black, short curly hair and was rather chubby. We kids never quite understood what the connection of her sessions were with Sunday School. About fifteen children came to her group regularly.

Mrs. Pitts played the piano for the Kindergarten and Primary Departments in the Community House, where they had their worship service before their class lessons. Mr. Samuel Pierce played the organ for the Intermediate and High School service in the church. The classes in the Social Room met in the center of it for the calling of the roll before the service, and in cubicles formed of tan folding screens for each grade's lesson, with teacher and pupils in a circle. There were probably six or seven children in each. Birthdays in the lower grades were noted by a child in front of the assemblage who placed one penny in a round glass bank counting very proudly for each year. Class lessons with drawings were printed on four page slick folders with holes for brass clips and all were placed in each child's yearly binder to take home and keep. Teachers' manuals gave the point of the lesson, Bible

story, with questions and answers following the story and how the teacher should, or could, get the lesson across to the pupils step by step. The manuals were of yellow paper with a stiff back.

By the early '30's, Mr. Battrick, a Canadian, became head of the High School Department and was Director of Religious Education. He was a tall, slim man with black, tight, wavy hair, close cut, and a round face and was rather young and recently married. He held 12th grade class in the Tea Room, after the Kindergarten and other grades had repaired to class. Probably he was not long out of seminary for he was very philosophical and asked questions which were very theological. We wondered why he kept thinking the topics bothered us as they did not. They included, "Was Christ divine?", "Is there a Trinity?", etc. The teachers moved ahead with their classes to the next grade level which made for continuity. In 1928-29 the 7th grade was in the balcony in Hof Hall. Where the 8th grade was then I do not know as I was by then in school in California. By 1930-31, 9th grade was in the Tower Room in the church where Mr. Pierce had formerly played the chimes by pulling a lot of levers on a kind of upright piano. Miss Janet Perry continued with this class from 5th through 9th grades. Her 9th grade in the Tower Room had a textbook, hardcoverd, called Good Sportsmanship, which told how to be a good Christian in everyday situations in life, but had very little mention of Jesus and no Bible stories. Therefore, we spent most of our time trying to decide how to paint and decorate the Tower Room. Whether this refurbishing was ever done according to our ideas no one ever found out, but later it was painted light green. Miss Perry was interested in puppetry and took her 9th grade class to a show in Manhattan where her fiance met her and us and took us all home. He was Harold Fairhurst. They were married December 30, 1933.

The new minister, Mr. Rahill, taught the Confirmation class in a couple of pews in the church. Maundy Thursday the class was confirmed at the evening service. The girls wore white dresses; the boys dark suits and white shirts with ties. It was a big occasion held at night with candles in the side candelabra.

Sometime in the mid-'30's the name Sunday School was changed to Church School, but only the teachers and clergy ever used it. The hymns for the Church School church service were contained in a Youth Hymnal along with responses, psalms, etc. Mr. Battrick insisted the Intermediates and High School students must learn the hymn, "I Would Be True". We thought the words were O.K., but the music was rather dreary.

Since I was away at school, I don't know too much about what happened in the late '30's. In the Mid '30's (about 1933), the Christian Endeavor was started for the High School students, meeting Sunday nights in the Church Sanctuary. It then changed its name in the late '30's to the Sunday Evening Club. During Christmas vacation they went to the Metropolitan Opera to hear "Hansel and Gretel", and Easter they saw Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontaine in "The Taming of the Shrew" on Broadway. The meeting opened with a church service conducted by the Officers and the Director of Religious Education followed by dancing to records in Smith Hall, to which some parents objected, and which others questioned, but it apparently kept the youngsters coming. No one could come to the dance who did not attend the worship service first. Miss Becker was then Director of Religious Education. She was a person of medium height, rather heavy-set, with brown hair. She was orderly and efficient, as I recall. She rented a room on the top floor of the Merrill House on Markwood Road. Since I was away at school, I did not know her too well nor what her accomplishments may have been.

In the late '30's and early '40's the College and Career Club was begun to keep young people regularly tied to their church heritage, as many on entering college had left home and had taken new ideas to mind and not returned after college to the church. The meetings were held primarily during college vacation times. The group was organized for those having outgrown the Sunday Evening Club and the High School Sunday School classes. It was under the Board of Religious Education, as were the entire Sunday School and the Sunday Evening Club. The College and Career Club chafed somewhat under this arrangement which, of course, was done as the Board was anxious to hold this group within the church

circle. Mrs. Harry Galloway was the Superintendent of the Intermediate Grades with the worship service held in Hof Hall and some of the classes held there after the service. However, the 6th grade was taught in the basement between the coat room and the rest rooms. The 5th Grade was held on the balcony of Hof Hall, outside of the room that has been built there. The others, 4th, 7th and 8th, met in three corners of Hof Hall. After the lessons were concluded, the children all met again for a final hymn and the benediction. Miss Dorothy Hill and Miss Eleanor Pitts were two of the teachers, 4th and 6th grades respectively. The new Director of Education was Thomas Craig, a very handsome young man, a seminarian from Union Theological Seminary. Mrs. George Merrill, Sr., asked Mr. Craig which version of the Bible would be presented next June. He said, "King James." She ordered tooled leather ones for her grandchildren, and then he used another version to her dismay. Mr. Craig taught the High School in the early '40's and ran the Sunday Evening Club and the College and Career Club. He was a very popular guest for Sunday dinner at the homes of the young teachers. He was followed by Miss Hazel Perkinson during World War II. She came from Stamps, Arkansas. She was a large, blonde, young woman, with both religious and social attributes. It was she who founded the Business Girls' Club. She and Miss Pitts went to see the English movie, Barabbas, at Radio City Music Hall. She was anxious to learn social dancing, having come of a very strict religious family, and took private lessons at Don Pallini Studio in mid-town Manhattan. She was followed by a pair of young ladies, seminarians also, from Union Theological Seminary: Miss Wolfe running the Sunday School, and the other woman (I forget her name) the Sunday Evening Club and the College and Career Club. Miss Wolfe remained several years, and in the latter part of her time at the church, she ran the entire Sunday School and the clubs and was considered very competent and successful. A farewell reception was held for her. She was succeeded by Mr. Locke, also a Union Theological seminarian. These people gained experience, while our church gained Directors with Christian devotion and knowledge who were young enough to easily relate to the children and, incidentally, easy on the church school budget. Thereafter, the High School began to decline after the 9th grade. Miss Eleanor Pitts taught

the 9th grade one year, but stopped after that as she was teaching the same pupils, for the most part, in Church School as she was teaching daily at The Kew-Forest School, where she was head of the History Department, Administrative Assistant in charge of curriculum and schedule and of girl's college admissions, and later was Dean of Girls. In June, while no longer teaching, Miss Pitts would take over the Children's Day Church Services with pageants which she wrote, directed and produced. Some were based on famous paintings reflecting the year's class lesson theme for each individual class. The huge silver wood frame was made by Mr. William Stevens. Another was the history of the versions of the Bible; another of the Reformation figures. On Children's Day, the Primary Department sang, "This is My Father's World", each year. Mrs. Louis Fehl was Superintendent of the Primary Department. The Superintendent was now called "Leader." Mrs. Edward Williams was Sunday School Choir Director at this time and also into the '50's, with a Cherub Choir and a Junior Choir which were important parts of Children's Day Pageants. These choirs also put on a Spring Recital of musical comedy songs in Smith Hall annually, as well as having a singing part in the Christmas and Easter church services.

In the late '40's and the '50's Miss Ida Van Dyke was Director of Religious Education. She was a graduate of Pembroke College in Brown University. She came from Harrisburg, Pa., to us. She had been a Presbyterian and wished to become a minister, but the Presbyterian Church did not ordain women then, and to become one she was ordained a Congregational minister in The Church-in-the-Gardens. The Board held a lovely reception for her at the home of the Chairman, Miss Eleanor Pitts, and gave her a silver coffee set to use at her new church. Miss Van Dyke's father, a mathematician, in his 90's, came to the ordination. He lived in a home for the elderly on Long Island.

While Miss Van Dyke was at The Church-in-the-Gardens, Anniversary Day was first celebrated by churches in Queens. Brooklyn had celebrated Anniversary Day the first Thursday in June for over a hundred years, to commemorate the founding of the Brooklyn Sunday School Union, with parades of children, mothers and teachers, followed by picnics at the several churches. When

Governor Nelson Rockefeller extended the Anniversary Day school holiday to Queens County, Miss Pitts happened to be Chairman of the Board of Religious Education, and decided with Miss Van Dyke and Miss Hill, head of Religious Education at St. Luke's Church, to follow a similar plan. After meeting for a short church service alternate years in our respective churches in the morning, the two groups of youngsters paraded to Flagpole Green for games and then to their own churches for lunch. Donald Fairhurst played the bagpipes for the parade. The second year we had the games at the Community House, both indoors and out, having closed Borage Place in front of it for safety's sake. The older children swam in the Community House pool. Dr. Clinchy was very helpful at this particular event. However, the Gardens Celebrations Committee's Annual Children's Day followed in two days, so interest sagged, and it was abandoned.

I think it was also under Governor Rockefeller that Released Time was begun. This provides religious instruction at a child's church for children in the upper grammar school years on Wednesday afternoons when, at their parents' request, they leave school an hour early for such instruction. While Miss Pitts was Chairman of the Board of Religious Education, Miss Van Dyke and Miss Hill of St. Luke's and she arranged to have such classes. Some classes were taught in our church and, I believe, some in St. Luke's or else both groups met in our parish house, with the two ladies teaching as well as a couple of other women too. This also lasted for only two or three years and was modestly successful.

I must pay tribute to Miss Van Dyke. As Director of Religious Education, she was excellent. Every month before the Board meeting, she called Miss Pitts, and they discussed the problems and options and brought them before the Board. She also wrote up a list of topics for the agenda for the meeting, that they had discussed beforehand, and presented the enrollment figures, which showed over one hundred children actively present at Sunday School every week, with the teachers enthusiastic and well prepared. She also started a Junior Pilgrim Fellowship for the Intermediate grades. At this time the first Mrs. Howey, Kitty Howey, was Registrar. Although Mrs. Peter Frischman was not on

the Board, she was a trained Kindergarten teacher and was helpful in this area, so Miss Pitts and Miss Van Dyke appointed her "Advisor of Young Children." Mrs. Travis Johnson became the head teacher of the High School, with Mr. Seltzer in attendance to maintain order if necessary. She was the daughter of a Texas Baptist minister with the largest such church in Texas, having over 3000 members. In private life she wrote advertising jingles, such as, "Winston Tastes Good Like a Cigarette Should," and songs, one of the latter for which she and Mr. Cole wrote the music and words, was called "The Church in the Garden" (NOTE: not "Gardens"), which was copyrighted in 1953 and published by Chappell & Co., New York. Her husband sang with Mitch Miller. They were both in the church choir. She was exceedingly dynamic, very blonde and vivacious and talked very rapidly. She was a "fantastic" pianist who could play almost anything by ear. The piano sparkled at her touch. She played, sang, lectured and led a forceful discussion of the lesson each Sunday. Her class each Sunday (10th through 12th grades) had 35 to 40 pupils present. Since she was on TV every morning, she had a great extra attraction for the students. The class met in the Parish House lounge and filled it. Each week Mr. Seltzer was a very faithful assistant. Her class started the annual Christmas tree sale to raise money for its activities.

Later when the Presbyterian Church ordained women, Miss Van Dyke became a Presbyterian minister and got a church of her own in Upstate New York. She married a man with four grown sons, and moved to the Bronx before going to her new church. He was very much interested in the blind and worked with them, not only at the Lighthouse, but in a summer camp in Upstate New York which he and she bought for blind children to enjoy in an outdoor and religious atmosphere. They also had a small boat and she became a fisherman and a sailor.

When Dr. Clinchy became Minister, his friend, Miss Katherine Lenroot, became Co-Chairman of the Board while Miss Pitts continued as Chairman. Miss Lenroot had been the first Chief of the U.S. Children's Bureau, a League of Nations expert in this field, and a U.N. delegate to the United Nations Children's



became ill with heart trouble, Mr. William McKerrow became Co-Chairman. Mr. McKerrow had sometime earlier been Chairman of the Board. He was Director of the Brooklyn Children's Aid Society.

After Miss Van Dyke had left, a new Director was needed. Dr. Clinchy, Miss Pitts and Miss Lenroot made a wide search. They asked a minister just out of Oberlin Theological Seminary and a Forest Hills Gardens resident, but he refused because our church had recently voted against joining the United Church of Christ, and so did several others refuse for this reason. In the end, we chose Mr. George Weekley, recommended by Dr. Cleland of Duke Divinity School who had preached in our church once a month during the war. Mr. Weekley was a Methodist from Alabama who was working and studying at Duke University Divinity School. He was a young man with a little girl and a wife and had no objection to our not belonging to the United Church of Christ. He was popular with the children, the teachers, the parents and the church members, low key and effective. He left soon after Mr. Brewer became Minister to become Protestant Guidance Director (or similar title) at a small college in Cullowhee, North Carolina, where he still lives and works. His oldest daughter, Donna, was married a couple of years ago in 1986 or 1987. Mrs. Vee Willert can tell you more about him. He also did much of the visitation of the sick and homebound and hospital patients who belonged to our church under Dr. Clinchy's pastorate. During this period Miss Grace Pitts, now Mrs. Paul Shackelford, was Church School Registrar. Before that, the first Mrs. John Howey, Kitty, had been Registrar for some years. While my sister was Registrar, two interesting things happened. A child, in registering, said her father was a forger. It turned out he worked in a foundry! For about six Sundays one year, she had to open up the drains in the boys' bathroom as one little boy was wont to walk out of class to stop up all the toilets and watch the water flow down the stairs.

The Board took, at this time, a serious study of various Sunday School textbooks. Under Miss Van Dyke they had been changed from Pilgrim Press to the Presbyterian books in an effort to offer a stronger Bible story connection than had the Pilgrim Press, which possibly was more liberal and was used in the '40's

in our Sunday School, After Miss Van Dyke left, Miss Lenroot and Miss Pitts reviewed a number of programs and, with Dr. Clincy, chose the Judson Press. What has been used since then I do not know. Miss Lenroot, Mr. Weekley, Mr. McKerrow and Miss Pitts were all out of the church or the Sunday School by then. Information on the Sunday School since Mr. Brewer became Minister will have to be told by someone else who was involved at the time. In the late Forties or early Fifties, Mr. James Kriegsmann, member, and a famous photographer, took pictures of the Sunday School in session and made a booklet of them, printed on slick paper, as a gift to the church to distribute. He also made a magnificent portrait of Mr. Cole and one of the Church Chancel which has been made for sale as Christmas Cards and notepaper for the Church. His wife taught Sunday School.

#### HYMNALS

The Primary children had some hymns in their Sunday School lesson sheets, and others the pianist selected. Their favorite was, "Jesus Loves Me This I Know, For the Bible Tells Me So". Incidentally, the Kindergarteners' favorite verse, not hymn, was, "God Is Love."

The Intermediate Grades and the High School used the Youth Hymnal, most likely published by The Pilgrim Press, and not to be confused with The Hymnal for Youth, published by the Westminster Press. The Youth Hymnal was used in the Sunday School's church services, as early as I can recall, when Mr. Pickett preached to us each Sunday, and by the Junior Choir during those services, although the Choir sometimes used anthem sheet music inserted in hard black binders. When Mr. Battrick was Director of Religious Education in the early thirties, it was still used; he conducted the worship service for the Sunday School in the church Sanctuary when Mr. Rahill became minister. When the pageants were held on Children's Day, the regular adult hymnals located in the pews were used.

All through the thirties and into the fifties, the hymnal located in the church pews, was a handsome, brown, leather-bound book, tooled in gold. It was The Pilgrim Hymnal, published by The Pilgrim Press, Boston, copyrighted 1931; what was used before that time, I do not know. When our copies began to show considerable signs of wear, they were replaced by the 1958, Revised Edition, a gift from Dr. and Mrs. Royal Montgomery, in memory of their parents, some for Mrs. Helen M. Cooley, and others for Leila and Andrew Montgomery. Another edition came out in the 1960's and a more recent one in 1981, all bearing the Montgomery labels. It should be noted that when some of the "Montgomery" Bibles began to show wear recently, the W.H.O. gave about one hundred new ones to the church. Some hymns in the former editions have been omitted in the new editions, and some others have been added. The one I personally miss is the Mount Holyoke hymn, "There's a Light Upon the Mountains". The Bryn Mawr hymn, which was usually sung at Candlelight Services, is also omitted. But the Wellesley hymn, "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy", remains. The primary change in the 1958 edition was the lowering of the key to accommodate the lower voices of the American people occurring in recent years, according to the hymn committee that prepared this edition. In later editions, following the growing ecumenical movement, some hymns relating to this were added, including some popular with other denominations.

#### TOWER TOPICS

Started some time ago, possibly under Mr. Cole, it is a news bulletin of church events, and generally also carries a message from the minister. Mrs. Royal Montgomery wrote a section describing events of interest pertaining to members presently or formerly in the church. Thus we would continue an association through our reading of their doings: we learned what a family that had moved to Florida was doing and what church they now attended, we learned of someone's son who had just published a book, or of a

long-time member who had entered a nursing home on the West Coast. When Dr. and Mrs. Montgomery themselves moved away to live in Virginia, these notes stopped although, of course, the rest of the bulletin continued. In more recent years, Mrs. Earl King, a journalist, became editor and spent many long evening hours composing and typing the information given her by the minister, and those of various boards and committees. In an eye-catching scroll, she listed weekly events within the church itself, and saw to it that Tower Topics was current and was mailed out every week. Miss Elma Boyer started a short column in it called, "Mystery Member", describing a member, and asking whether the reader could guess who it was. The following week, the answer to the query was given, and her little weekly anecdote was well received. After Mrs. King left, the writing of Tower Topics fell to Mrs. Helen Howey, secretary, to write it as a bi-weekly bulletin.

#### CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS I RECALL

**THE BOARDS OF DEACONS AND DEACONESSES** were chaired by a number of prominent church members, including Mr. Heuston, Mr. McMillan, Mr. Mills, Mr. Pitts, Mr. Noble, and Mrs. McMillan, Mrs. Pitts and Mrs. Trone respectively. The Deaconesses prepared the Communion and did the washing of cups, tablecloths, etc., afterwards. The Deacons served the Communion. During the war, I remember we had a number of cases of grape juice in our basement for Communion use. It was very difficult to purchase and churches were given priority. The main job of these Boards was to take care of the poor, the sick, the needs of the congregation and the format of the church service. They kept a fund of about one hundred dollars to tide over those persons in financial distress. Mr. Cole always said the Boards were over him and he was a bystander at the meetings to offer background information when needed, but never to determine decisions. Dr. Clinchy took a more positive role and Mr. Brewer a dominating one. It is my understanding and based only on very indirect hearsay, that one of the reasons the Church Council was started was to circumvent a

recalcitrant Board of Deacons and Deaconesses. On the other hand, it may have been created to speed up decisions with a smaller-sized group. Under Mr. Brewer, the two Boards gained an umbrella title of "Diaconate".

**THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES** is the financial branch of the church, in charge of budget-making, salary decisions, real property and other matters. The same men who were chairmen of the Board of Deacons were, at one time or another, Chairmen of the Board of Trustees. Mr. John K. Hetherington was also at one time chairman. More recently women have been chairmen, Miss Mary McCahon, I believe, and Mrs. Earl King, amongst others.

**THE BOARD OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION** has been mentioned earlier and was in charge of the Sunday School as well as the Cradle Roll, taking care of the spiritual life and teaching of Christianity from thereon through and including High School, when High School classes existed. The Director of Religious Education was under this Board and appointed by it. Miss Pitts was chairman in the late '50's and early '60's. Mrs. Margaret Frischmann held a supper in her garden several years each June for the Sunday School personnel; these were delightful evenings. Later Miss Pitts gave a couple of such suppers in the Parish House Lounge. Mrs. Sally Morse Maurer was Chairman before Mrs. Hof. She was particularly noted for developing summer Vacation Bible School which lasted a week annually. More recently the Sunday School was renamed and called the Sunday Learning Community, organized and headed for several years by Mrs. Robert Hof when, I understand, there was a movement towards a less traditional and more progressive educational approach and people of all ages were encouraged to attend.

**THE BOARD OF USHERS** was one of the Boards of the church. However, its name was changed to the Committee of Ushers under Dr. Clinchy because it was said then that the Ushers were not part of the governing church Boards. However, the result was a great decline in the organization and effectiveness of the ushers. Mr. Dusinger (later Lt. and then Commander Dusinger) was chairman

and Mr. Pitts co-chairman. When Lt. Dusinberre (U.S. Navy) left for war duty, Mr. Pitts took over as chairman, and after a while, Mr. Walter Durnberger became Mr. Pitts' co-Chairman. Together they covered the two Sunday services. My father stood at the inner doors of the church to greet the people each Sunday service and knew everyone by name. When he was on vacation in August or was ill, Mr. Durnberger took charge. On Easter and Christmas, both took part because of the crowds in attendance. The ushers were very well organized and exceedingly attentive, courteous and gracious. At one annual church meeting, Mr. Cole presented Mr. Pitts with a handsome pipe on Mr. Pitts' 25th year as chairman of the Board of Ushers. The ushers generally worked in pairs, usually for the same month each year and always wore dark suits for the occasion. Two well known pairs over the years that I remember were Messrs. Bill Bedell and Bill Reydell, and Messrs. Merle Langel and Charles Klee. Allwyn Lassiter was Mr. Pitts' protege, as he called him, a young man in his teens, who was especially helpful on those occasions when the children were in church, and became a fine usher. Another early young usher was S. Ellsworth Davenport III, "Sandy", killed in the war. Two in the '50's were Paul Shackelford, Jr. and Richard Maurer. All were excellent. When Mr. Pitts retired, Mr. Harold Fairhurst became chairman to succeed him.

**THE CHURCH WORLD SERVICE COMMITTEE** reviewed mission enterprises domestic and foreign, for benevolences. Mrs. McKee, Mrs. Walker, Mrs. Trimble, Mrs. Trone and Mrs. Pitts were original members of the committee which had been formed by the Guild. After a few years Mr. Judson was added to it, to make it a Church Committee, not a Guild Committee. The church had two Chinese missionaries whom it helped to support in the late '20's, who were native Chinese and whose names I cannot recall. They came one Spring and set up talks in the Sunday School, and then the Sunday School held a fair in the garden of the Community House where lovely Chinese gifts were sold. I remember I bought a silver, jointed fish on a chain, and a New Testament which the missionaries signed and in which they printed the child's name (in this case mine) in Chinese as well as in English. I still have my New Testament. Miss Oline Nicholson was commissioned by our church. She was a missionary to

India. I think her mission school was near Madras. After the '50's dawned and India became independent, the school could no longer teach Christianity unless the child's parents requested it, so she used Nativity scenes from Christmas cards as prizes. When the child would take the prize home the family would inquire about Christianity. The Business Girls (BG's) sent many such Christmas cards to her each year. The school was a girls' school for poor village children.

**THE FLOWER COMMITTEE** during the '40's, '50's and '60's was headed by Mrs. Harold Green, and then when she died, into the '80's by Mrs. Myrtle Bernecker. It was in charge of flowers and decorations for the church, the floral statement in the church bulletin and the taking of the flowers to the sick and the old. Mrs. Fehl and Grace Pitts Shackleford substituted as assistant chairmen and took flowers to shut-ins and others. After the Parish House was built, Mrs. Pretlow placed flowers and greenery on the mantelpiece of the Lounge year round for many years.

**THE MUSIC COMMITTEE** chairman was Mr. Conrad Taylor. Some of its members included Mrs. Alfred Pitts, Mrs. McKee, Mrs. Taylor, and Mrs. Travis Johnson. It took charge of the choir, rebuilt the organ, had the Descant Organ built, hired the organist, and chose the anthems. Mrs. Pitts had been an organist. The others were members of the choir.

**THE WOMEN'S GUILD** is the strongest, longest continuing organization within the church. Mrs. Getz was prominent in the Guild in the '30's and its president. When she died, her family gave a chased, engraved silver tray in her memory. When my mother, who had also been president, died in the early '60's, my father, sister and I presented an engraved silver tea and coffee service and tray in her memory. Mrs. McKerrow was president when I presented the silver service. The Getz and Pitts pieces are occasionally used at the Coffee Hours following the Church Services especially on Communion Sundays. The Guild gave teas following the devotions and a program each month, except during the summer months, until Mrs. Rahim came and after that luncheons were given preceding the meetings of the same type. One

particular program I recall hearing about was given by a former college classmate of Mrs. Pitts, who had been an interior decorator and had gone blind. She had all the fabrics arranged on a table and, picking each one up, explained its color and use in relation to some of the other fabrics. She had quite an array and amazed the audience with her ability to recognize by feel the quality and the fabric in question. Mrs. William Stevens often gave the devotions and was particularly good at selecting poetry appropriate to the occasion. Every year, the Guild has held an annual bazaar, no doubt since near its inception around seventy-four years ago. I remember my mother used to make a number of beautiful aprons for sale at the bazaar, and on the day of the bazaar she and Mrs. Hill always baked a number of beautiful, tasty cakes which were bought immediately. Mrs. Dougherty for a number of years made gorgeous dolls' clothes and dressed the dolls which she and others donated. The Guild regularly, in recent years, raised \$10,000. from its bazaar for the church, which has come to depend, for a long time now, on this contribution. In the '30's they generally gave \$3,000. Then when the dollar was reduced in value, \$6,000. and with more inflation the above amount. Our Women's Guild had close relations with the Society of Congregational Christian Women of the State of New York, Generally known as the "SCCW". From the Guild, Mrs. Marie Walker, Mrs. Elizabeth Stollmeyer, Mrs Pitts, and perhaps others, were links between the two. Mrs. Pitts became Vice-President of the SCCW of the State of New York and was also a member of the Executive Board of the Congregational Christian Churches in New York City. The office was located downtown on 4th Avenue, and the Board met monthly at a luncheon meeting at the Lambs' Club nearby. I believe there were five members. My mother was the only woman. I think Dr. Lieper and Dr. Horton were also members. Something I could scarcely imagine happened one day when Mrs. Stollmeyer and my mother were returning home from a meeting at the SCCW office. Apparently there was a catastrophe of some sort in the subway. The train halted. Police ran through it and then returned to herd all the passengers out of the train into the tunnel where they were pushed up a narrow iron ladder against the wall to emerge from a manhole in the middle of 14th Street, to be photographed by newsmen!



**THE EVENING WOMEN'S GUILD** was formed during the war by Women's Guild President, Mrs. Pitts, for working women. Many young women entered the work force at this time to assist in the war effort. Women Helping Others (W.H.O.) is a more recent, similar evening organization which puts on a Chinese Auction each Spring for its own benevolences, and operates a table each fall for the Women's Guild, which raises money for the church at its Bazaar.

**THE 'QUAINTANCE CLUB** met in the late '20's and early '30's primarily for social get-togethers with some hymns, first.. It was made up of young married couples in the church. Occasionally they held dinner dances in the Community House.

**THE FORTNIGHTLY CLUB** was similar to the "Quaintance Club. It met in the late '30's and early '40's and was made up of people in their 20s and a few in their 30s and 40s. They held dinners with entertainment following by local artists and themselves, and put on the opera, "Hansel and Gretel" in Hof Hall, with Mr. Pierce, pianist, and Miss Pitts, director. The admission fee was 25 cents! They met twice monthly in Smith Hall, and put out a mimeographed monthly newspaper, largely made by Floyd Hasselriis and several other male members, some of whom were unemployed at the time. Some of the members played badminton doubles in Hof Hall every Sunday night, which was a great deal of fun. The club was disbanded when the men were drafted.

**THE BUSINESS GIRLS' CLUB (BG'S)** was started by Miss Hazel Perkinson, who was Director of Religious Education during World War II (after Mr. Craig and before Miss Wolfe). She came from Stamps, Arkansas. She was large, blonde and pretty. She married a pugilist, had a little girl, and her husband died a few years later after a fight in the ring. The BG's were very cohesive, and had an annual dinner for their mothers and a monthly bridge club, with meetings of the club every month. It was social and formed lasting friendships. We took trips to Broadway shows. We also took the children of the Otilie Home in Jamaica sightseeing in Manhattan and for personal Christmas shopping tours with money we

gave them. Each had a personal "BG", and insisted on calling her "mother" when on these trips. Originally we met in the Church Social Room. The temperature there was 38 degrees. Therefore, to conserve fuel and keep warm, Miss Pitts, as President, took them to her house for meetings where it was not quite so cold. After that we began meeting in various members' homes. As the sugar ration was so small, we could not have one person provide all the refreshments twice monthly for an entire year, hence the monthly change of venue.

**THE ORATORIO SOCIETY**, in the late '30's and early '40's, was led by Mr. Conrad Taylor and met in the Church Social Room for their own enrichment and pleasure. Mr. Pickett played for them.

**MEN'S BIBLE CLASS**, in the late '30's and early '40's was short-lived, revived and then petered out.

**THE SEWING GROUP** made bandages during World War II, and sewed for hospitals. Mrs. Krabbe was a wonderful, longtime, hard worker of this group. The wartime bandages for the wounded were made from cloth window shades soaked several days in water, and then cut and rolled.

**THE GIRL SCOUTS OF AMERICA** was led by Mrs. Wilbur Granzen for a good many years until her death in the late '50's. She was excellent in arts, crafts, badge work, and was a very sweet person. The Granzens' only child died when she was five years old, after which Mrs. Granzen studied Scouting. Annually, altar flowers were given in memory of their little girl.

**THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA** was led by Mr. Lloyd Maurer and in particular, by Dr. Royal Montgomery for whom a shelf of memorabilia has been placed in the Parish House honoring him. Mr. Maurer was leader, I think, of the Naval Scouts.

## THE MINISTERS I KNEW WHO SERVED THE CHURCH-IN-THE-GARDENS

Although I knew who **DR. DAVID LATSHAW** and **DR. CLARIS SILCOX** were, I was too small to ever have seen them in the pulpit. However, Dr. Silcox's daughter, who must have been in her early teens, had long, honey-colored, wavy hair and was very lithe, and "too grown up," we little ones thought. The Silcoxes lived on Ascan Avenue between Juno and Kessel Streets.

The first minister I remember preaching was **MR. WARREN WHEELER PICKETT** who served as pastor from 1926 to 1932. He was rotund with very tight, black curly hair and had an excellent voice. He gained all the children's support by telling them, in one of his sermons given to the Sunday School, how he had played baseball as a boy. This really surprised us as we had no idea a minister could ever possibly have played baseball! Under him, the Sunday School had its worship service in the Church Sanctuary at 9:30 A.M. He wore a voluminous black robe when preaching. The Picketts had two daughters, Winifred and Lucy, both children when he was minister. The family lived on Ascan Avenue between Juno and Ingram Streets. Mrs. Pickett was a graduate of Mount Holyoke College.

**DR. BURTON**, a world-renowned clergyman, lived on Rockrose Place. and preached in our church occasionally. His mother-in-law had baked the doughnuts for General Custer before his famous battle. This always intrigued me. Dr. Burton's wife came from the Dakota Territory where her parents, who had a small hotel, had been part of the frontier reform movement.

In the period of the late '20's and early '30's, the church was closed all summer from mid-June (following Children's Day) until about mid-September. In those days, the town was practically empty as wives and children stayed at their summer homes for the entire season and husbands joined them on weekends. Some rented cottages in Normandy or Cornwall or took a lengthy tour of Europe. Other youngsters spent the summer in camp. Thus

the number of people to attend church was rather small. However, the Deacons and Deaconesses one year, probably 1928, decided to keep the church functioning for the summer and to fill the pulpit themselves. I remember particularly Mrs. Merrill conducting the service one Sunday and giving the sermon. This was the first time I ever saw or heard a woman preach. She did not, however, preach from the pulpit, but from the lectern. I think Mr. McMillan also preached one Sunday that year. The ministers were on vacation for the entire summer. When Mr. Cole came to the church as minister, he wished to preserve the practice of not being there during the summer, and so the idea of having summer ministers began. One I recall was Dr. Pleasant of the Queens Federation of Churches who usually came every summer once or twice to preach.

For a good many years, Mrs. Heuston entertained the visiting ministers at her home on Deepdene Road during their weeks here.

**MR. JOHN RAHILL** served the church from 1933 to 1940. I am still amazed that he, our future minister, while a soldier with the American army in Russia during World War I, marched, occasionally rode, and mostly walked across a large part of Russia, through Siberia and down into China! Apparently, as the Bolsheviks moved north and eastward, the American soldiers, becoming separated from each other, scattered over this vast terrain. At last, like others of them who drifted into Tientsin, or similar seaports, he managed to come home to the U.S.A. As I recall, he spoke gratefully more than once of those White Russians who had assisted and protected him in his trek through Siberia and into Manchuria, en route to a Chinese port. Incidentally, a good many White Russians settled in this area of northeastern China around Tienstin about this time. Mr. Rahill was slim, of average height, with fine brown hair and a very high forehead. He was very intellectual and learned and had some connection to, or at least an interest in, the Oxford Movement's more recent emphasis on Christian responsibility in the solving of social problems. He was a graduate of Williams College. His sermons amused us children who counted the number of quotations he made per sermon, sometimes as many as eighteen. He was fond of

quoting from a modern translation of the Bible in his sermons and was very partial to Goodspeed's translation of the New Testament. He did not wear a robe, but preached in a business suit. He had a very hard-working, lovely wife who changed the Women's Guild format from having teas to having luncheons. He was the first minister to start out in the parsonage, although I think the Picketts lived there in their latter years here. Marion Rahill, their daughter, was very much interested in drama, and attended The Kew-Forest School from which she was graduated. She later married a distant cousin, Mr. Greaze-Kelley and moved to an apartment in Kew Gardens. Mr. Rahill's mother also lived in the Parsonage. Mr. and Mrs. Rahill retired to a Congregational Home for Clergy in Claremont, California.

**DR. THOMAS NADAL**, who served the church from 1941 to 1942, was a fantastic preacher and a fine administrator. He was rather short and slim with wavy grey hair. He was a retired college President of Olivet College, Olivet, Michigan, and prior to that of Drury College in Missouri. He had several shelves of sermons filed by topics in his home library in the parsonage. One of his sermons which he preached I recall vividly, was on the subject of "The Power to Become." His daughter, Ruth, who was not very well, lived with them. Mrs. Nadal was a gracious, capable minister's wife. Dr. Nadal built up the church attendance in one year from about fifty or sixty on a Sunday under Mr. Rahill in later years, to well over a hundred each week.

**MR. FRANKLIN COLE**, who served from 1942 to 1953, continued to build the church membership and attendance, until it was so large, with sometimes 30 or 40 new members joining four times yearly, that there was talk of enlarging the church, and meetings were held regarding a transept to be added. However, wiser heads prevailed, saying perhaps the community may change and so large a church would not be needed. In the end the balcony was built, given by Mrs. Woodard in memory of her husband. The balcony has the problem of delaying sounds a fraction of a second under the balcony, especially noticeable in unison reading and singing. Mr. Cole's wife was the daughter of a judge from Indiana. They had two little boys, Randolph and Franklin, who attended The Kew-

Forest School, but went to boarding school (The Middlesex School) for high school. Mr. Cole was chaplain on the U.S.S. Missouri at the signing of the surrender papers by the Japanese Ministers and General Mac Arthur. He brought home little silver teaspoons with a pagoda on the handle for some church ladies. He became a friend of Toyohiko Kagawa while in Japan and together they wrote and published a little book of poems. Mrs. Cole belonged to the Junior League in New York City. Mr. Cole wrote a play, "The Littlest Angel," published by a Boston firm, which was presented one Christmas Eve Midnight Service. Mr. Dreyer, a former actor and director, directed and produced the play. For it, Mr. Cole rigged a star in the rafters that moved from the rear of the church to stop over the Manger. Mme. Karen Branzell, the great Metropolitan Opera contralto, and church member, sang a solo, "O Holy Night," which was thrilling. As usual the church overflowed with people. He also pasted coats-of-arms on the side windows of the church which remain there today. Easter he had two filled church services, plus two Smith Hall filled services heard by broadcast. On regular Sundays the overflow of about 15 to 20 people, was seated in the Social Room to hear the service. Mr. Cole had been on radio in Portland, Maine, where he had had a church. Mr. John McMillan, Vice-President of Cities Service, was Chairman of the Committee which chose Mr. Cole, and Mrs. Pitts was a member. It met at his house on the Corner of Fairway Close and Greenway South. Mr. Cole told the Committee which interviewed him that he wished to run his Sunday services on the same type of tight time schedule as on radio, which idea they liked and which he did, one hour precisely. The two services which were identical, were soon held each Sunday. A good number of Roman Catholics joined our church at this time, over thirty one year. While he was minister, the choir marched in and out of the Sanctuary at the opening and close of each service. They sang a three-fold Amen in the vestibule very softly after the benediction, and before their procession into the church, he prayed for them and they sang a short opening response which was very effective. Mr. Edmond Rickett, an Englishman, was the organist at this time. He had been a friend of Sullivan, of Gilbert and Sullivan fame, and had worked with him in England. He wrote a book in the '40's about Sullivan and his music. Mr.

Rickett composed a very, very beautiful music version of The Lord's Prayer, much lovelier than Malotte's, not dramatic, but thoughtful and poetic in tone, which was sung every Sunday for many years while he was organist and many years afterward, until someone thought we should say the prayer instead of having the choir sing it. Of course, we said it to ourselves while it was sung anyway. Unfortunately, by doing so, we have lost a great piece of music with deep devotional quality, composed at our organ by our organist for our church. Mr. Rickett composed a number of other anthems, published and sung in many churches. He was a short, somewhat stocky man, with grey hair and glasses without frames. Under Mr. Cole and Mr. Rickett, we had our first paid soloists, Jean Poole Deeb, soprano, and Manly Price Boone, tenor, who partook of our church life and were our soloists for many years. Mr. and Mrs. Anderson, bass baritone and contralto, respectively, were also paid and with us many years. Their two little boys were born at this time and attended our Sunday School. Some time after his return following the surrender of Japan, Mr. Cole introduced our Affirmation of Faith, which was printed each Sunday in the Church Bulletin. A year or two later the Affirmation was mimeographed and pasted on the inner side of the back cover of each hymnal. While Mr. Cole was our minister, the church celebrated its fiftieth anniversary with a banquet and entertainment in Hof Hall. In 1953, when I returned home after a long summer's vacation, I was very much surprised to learn that Mr. Cole might leave our pulpit, which he did. He took a church in, or near, Chicago. Later he returned to Maine, to a house a parishioner of his Portland Church had lent him many summers, and which he later bought, on Prout's Neck, Maine, where as far as I know, he and his wife still live, and there in Portland, he preaches on local television. A number of times my family and I have visited the Coles there when we vacationed in Ogunquit. In 1975 he came down to Manhasset to conduct a memorial service for a former Church-in-the-Gardens parishioner, Mr. Rex Smith.

While Mr. Cole was minister, a Forest Hills Gardens woman left \$125,000 to each of the four churches in the Gardens, which sum our trustees decided should never be touched in its principal, but only the interest and dividends from its investment should be

used for the church's requirements. Whether this had changed, I do not know, although I think under Mr. Rowe it may have been. When Bruce Preston's aunt died, around the same time, she left her house on Slocum Crescent to the church as a parsonage for the Director of Religious Education. A big discussion followed in a church meeting in which Mr. McKerrow stood up for this, but the trustees sold the house, fearing, perhaps that it might be as difficult a financial problem as the Borage Place houses had been for us.

Mr. Cole at first preferred to be called Frank Cole, then after his return, Franklin Cole, and in the last few years here, Franklin P. Cole. He was a graduate of DePauw University, and later received an honorary doctorate. While he was our minister, the tennis courts were removed and the Parish House built where they had been. There is a history capsule in the cornerstone, placed one evening in a candlelight outdoor ceremony, with everyone receiving a little shovel with a tag and ribbon attached stating the event. In the early '50's Mrs. Claude Ramsay and Mrs. Frank LaGrange gave new pews and cushioned seats to the church in memory of their husbands. The trustees gave the old pews to a Greek Orthodox Church in Jamaica.

**DR. JOHN CASTERL**, a professor at Union Theological Seminary, was the pastor for pastoral needs from 1944 to 1946, during Mr. Cole's term as Naval Chaplain, and was on call for such services. He conducted and preached every fifth Sunday of those months having a fifth one. The other Sunday preachers were also world-renowned clergymen and superb preachers. Dr. Hornell Hart, of Duke University; Dr. Luccock, a great homiletics professor of Yale Divinity School and mission author; Dr. Schroeder of Union Theological Seminary; and Dr. Cleland of Duke University Divinity School, who had formerly been chaplain at Amherst College and soccer coach there. They maintained a very large congregation for us while Mr. Cole was away at war. Since Miss Pitts had known of Dr. Cleland while she was in a near-by college, and since he knew our church, she suggested to Dr. Clinchy and Miss Lenroot that he might help us in our quest for a new Director of Religious Education. Thus it was through Dr. Cleland that we chose George



Weekley.

**DR. RUSSELL CLINCHY** succeeded Mr. Cole and served the church from 1954 to 1963. Like Mr. Cole, he had a vibrant voice that carried very far and could fill Hof Hall without a mike. Mr. Cole was over six feet tall, broad shouldered and blonde. Mr. Kriegsmann made a handsome photographic portrait of him. Dr. Clinchy was similarly built, with a shock of white hair. When Mr. Cole was minister, the church members voted, after thoughtful discussion over a period of time, to join the United Church of Christ. The United Church of Christ was founded in the early '50's as a combination of the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Churches of which each of those two denominations was also a merger of two denominations. Dr. Douglas Horton was one of the leading Congregationalists involved. It was said that the leaders of the two churches had met at a conference, had become good friends, and grew excited about the possibilities that might evolve from their two denominations joining together in an ecumenical move. Some people felt that since the Evangelical and Reformed Church had bishops, bishops would be placed over the Congregational Christian churches, whereas in the latter the membership was the controlling factor. However, a promise was given that this would not be so, and as the constitution of the new body was formulated, I think it was decided that those churches with bishops could keep them and those without would maintain their pure democratic form of government. My parents, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred L. Pitts, were selected as our representatives to the UCC.s annual national meeting. According to the United Church's procedure, a second and final vote of the congregation as to whether they wished to become part of the United Church of Christ was to be taken a few years later. But before the time had come, Mr. Cole had resigned. Dr. Clinchy, who succeeded him, favored the newer National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, as did Mr. Kenneth Judson, a member of our church since boyhood. The National Association of Congregational Christian Churches was formed after the United Church of Christ and was highly opposed to it, strongly favoring the continuance of the congregational church polity. Dr. Clinchy may have been one of the founders of the National Association;

certainly he was one of its leaders and was one of its officers, possibly its president, at one time. When the time for the final vote was near, the United Church of Christ sent our congregation a registered letter as a reminder. A church meeting was called and a few evenings later was held in the Parish House Lounge, chaired by Mr. Judson, with Dr. Clinchy and about 50 or 60 members attending. The registered letter, however, was neither mentioned or read. Mr. Pitts, a forceful speaker, favored the United Church and rose to speak in its behalf, but was interrupted by Mr. Judson who wished to bring to a vote the National Association. At the time the latter organization had two New York City churches as members, one with fewer than 40 members, as I recall, and a total nationwide membership of barely over 100 churches. By comparison, the United Church then included 1000 churches as members and was growing rapidly. By the end of the evening, the majority of those present had voted our church into membership in the National Association of Congregational Churches. However, Dr. Clinchy, wisely, I believe, remained with the clergy retirement insurance fund of the group that had formed the United Church of Christ. Our church sends delegates to the National Association's annual national conferences. I believe Miss Dorothy Horn was our representative there once or twice in recent years. After we had joined the National Association, about a dozen or so members of Union Congregational Church in Richmond Hill sought transfer of membership into our church because Union had joined the United Church. Dr. Clinchy asked the Deacons and Deaconesses to accept the group which they did. Among those were the Shearmans and the Fischers. Dr. Clinchy was not as good a sermon writer as Mr. Cole, or else he got wound up on his subject, because, as people often remarked, he had three or four endings before reaching the final conclusion. He had a pleasing sense of humor. One time he gave us a sermon on the Lord's Prayer and told of a Long Island commuter to Manhattan who, listening to his son's evening prayers heard the child say, "Lead us not into Penn Station!" He was a preacher who knew how to express the feelings, thoughts, hopes and sorrows of a universal and personal nature and relate them through Biblical text to his congregation, with each person feeling he was talking just to that individual. He was a very kind person and an easy one to talk to. When my mother lay on her death bed, he came

at 4 o'clock in the morning to be with her and pray with and for her, and came back to stay several hours. When she expired an hour or so later, he returned to the house to make arrangements and to console us. His beautiful funeral sermon for her was remarked upon by many people who had come from distances to the service at the church. Such was his Christian sincerity. He was the first minister we had to be named Minister Emeritus and to return to preach occasionally. He and Mrs. Evalina Clinchy, his second wife, who was goodness personified and most helpful everywhere in church affairs, retired to Princeton and later moved back to Michigan and lived with Miss Lenroot in her house, where I understand, they both died in the early '80's.

**MR. ALVIN BREWER**, who succeeded him, was a much younger man with three boys, and a daughter, Stacey, who was born while he was here. His wife was pleasant and supportive and tried to be every helpful, but she seemed shy and lacked some of the outgoing ways of Mrs. Clinchy so that it took awhile for one to learn to know her. It was said she had gone to work so her husband could attend divinity school. Mr. Brewer had a strong voice, and occasionally a caustic comment to make in his sermons, but his sermons were presented with depth and to the point. He suggested to the congregation that they read the book, popular at the time, entitled, I'm O.K.; You're O.K., which he incorporated into one or more of his sermons. The trustees donated \$1,000. to Piedmont College, whose President preached in our church one Sunday and from which Mr. Brewer later received an honorary doctor's degree. I believe his daughter is a graduate of Piedmont. For some reason, Mr. Brewer sought a change and resigned, assuming that he had received an official call to another church. However, this must not have been so, as he found out, and, therefore, one Sunday he surprised the congregation when he said he would remain here as our minister, although a committee was already searching for his replacement. The trustees, and perhaps the deacons and deaconesses, too, then recalled him. During his tenure, I think, the Descant Organ was removed from the balcony, as the organist, Miss Wightman did not use it and some new people in the church thought the space was needed for pews. It was a beautiful addition to the regular organ. Miss Wightman (Mrs. Fairhurst)

was a lovely person and an excellent piano accompanist on concert stage and through her we obtained fine soloists -- paid soloists since Mr. Cole's term -- with agreement of the Music Committee.

**MR. DAVID ROWE** was a very young minister, with a rather long hair style, but he belonged to a new era. He had a superb, ringing voice, and his sermons were entrenched in Biblical stories and worthwhile. I recall that Mr. Rowe stated, during the wedding ceremony of my sister, Grace to Paul A. Shackelford, that they were the first couple he had joined in holy wedlock who were both members of the Church-in-the-Gardens. Somewhat overly interested in Zaire mission work, he sought to raise money from our parishioners for two motorcycles for ministers and missionaries there, and spent several summers working there too. He was interested in Habitat for Humanity and became its President. He was a graduate of Mt. Hermon School, Colgate College and Andover Newton Theological Seminary. His father, also a minister, has occasionally preached in our church. He favored the Good News Bible, and arranged to have it purchased in quantity and placed two or three in each pew. He commuted to Philadelphia for courses toward's a Doctor's Degree before leaving us for a church in New England. His wife, Bonnie, and he had a bright little girl named Cameron, who was made an honorary member of the W.H.O., and a son, Aaron.

**MR. ALBERT CAMPBELL**, who lived on Burns Street, was a thoughtful substitute minister at this time. He acted in this capacity over a period of two or three years before retiring to New Hampshire.

When Mr. Rowe left, **MR. STEVEN BERRY** became our minister and I am sure he can best tell about himself. He introduced glorious orchestral music with four or five musicians into the Easter services. His wife was Swiss-born, and very talented in art and crafts and in organization. They had three little boys. Like Mr. Rowe, Mr. Berry brought more young families into the church which, of course, is very important in the continuing life of the church. They both also increased the outside involvement of the church in various groups. Mr. Brewer was interested in Creedmore State

Mental Hospital and was instrumental in gaining a Protestant chapel for it, donated by Mrs. Bertha Reiner, a church member. Mr. Rowe was active in Habitat for Humanity and Mr. Berry in the film/video ministry.

## OTHER MEMORIES OF THE CHURCH-IN-THE-GARDENS

### WORLD WAR II

As in every aspect of life and every group throughout the nation, the Second World War had an impact on the Church-in-the-Gardens. Chairman of the Board of Ushers, Mr. Henry Dusinberre, a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, who left for naval war as a Lieutenant, later promoted to service as a Commander, was stationed after the war in Louisiana and never returned to our church. Also, as mentioned earlier, S. Ellsworth Davenport III, a young usher, made the supreme sacrifice, as did Walter Leon, a young choir member with a handsome bass baritone voice, who was killed in Belgium in the Battle of the Bulge. Our minister, Franklin P. Cole, as we all know, enlisted as a chaplain in the U.S. Navy, believing his place lay with the men who were fighting, rather than with his church in Forest Hills. He was attached to the U.S.S. Missouri at the time of the signing of the surrender papers by the Japanese ministers and General Douglas MacArthur. During his absence, the pulpit was filled by other fine preachers. Also, the Fortnightly Club faded away as the men were drafted or enlisted, and was replaced by the Business Girls' Club. The Church Social Room became the scene each Wednesday evening of the American Red Cross First Aid Class in which we made crutches, slings and splints, practiced artificial respiration, saying rhythmically as we straddled "the victim" and pressed down on his ribs, "Out goes the bad air, in comes the good air." Perhaps the lesson we learned best was the antidote for poison -- drink dishwater! On our last evening, after our final written examination, a little party was held, for which I was elected to bring the sugar, a severely rationed item. Thus when we were

leaving, I took back home the remaining sugar in its little paper bag. However, when my mother used it to bake one of her famous cakes, a special treat at the time, the cake rose unusually high. And no wonder, for I had brought home, not sugar, but Ivory Snow! Over at the Community House the Sewing Group of the Women's Guild made bandages for the armed forces and in the kitchen the American Women's Voluntary Services (AWVS) helped local housewives to can fruits and vegetables they had grown in their Victory Gardens. My mother was one of the "canning teachers." I remember her telling the family one evening that a lady had brought in a whole bushel of homegrown swisschard to can! And finally, one Sunday in August 1945, Messrs. Frank LaGrange, Kenneth Judson, my father and perhaps another man, possibly Harold Mills, took a telephone call from Wall Street, in what was then the church office. The caller announced that the War in the Pacific was going to cease next day when there would be a gradual leak to the press and then a delay of several days before the public announcement, in order to temper the exuberance expected when the great day would arrive for which everyone had waited and worked so long. Thus a few days later, on August 14, 1945, after Japan had agreed to surrender, V-J Day was proclaimed. Mr. Cole was present at the signing. The conflict, which remodeled the world and affected our church, too, came to an end.

### THE CHURCH HISTORIAN

The Church Historian for many years was Miss Marguerite Doggett, under Mr. Cole and Dr. Clinchy and her co-chairman was Eleanor Pitts. Miss Doggett had worked in the Library of Congress, and at first, while our historian, was head of the Long Island Section of the Queensborough Public Library at the main building in Jamaica. When she retired from there she remained our historian. She was responsible for binding the minutes of the Board of Trustees and of the Boards of Deacons and Deaconesses, as well as the binding of church bulletins. Miss Pitts was in charge of keeping the scrapbook containing all news clippings as well as other items and memorabilia pertaining to the church, its members and congregation. Miss Doggett had a sister who had lived in

Switzerland and owned a villa on the Riviera. After she became a widow, she asked Miss Doggett, who had retired, to come and live with her. Miss Doggett said, "No", because, she told me, there was no library within a radius of ten miles. She was indeed a true librarian! After about fourteen years we both resigned and Mrs. Fehl and Mrs. La Grange became co-historians in the early '70's. Miss Doggett then went to South Carolina to live near her niece and died there. I believe Mrs. Seeler may have taken over this responsibility for a time.

While she was historian, Mrs. Adelaide Fehl studied old church membership records for those persons, still in the church, who had been members for fifty years. On Sunday, October 15, 1978, at a special ceremony included in the 11 o'clock service, Rev. David J. Rowe, then minister, presented eighteen members, some in absentia, each with a beautiful boxed book, entitled, Leaves of Gold: An Anthology of Prayers, Memorable Phrases, Inspirational Verse and Prose published by The Coslett Publishing Company, Williamsport, Pa. 1948. These eighteen were Mesd. Marguerite Brown, Fanny Butt, Janet Fairhurst, Caryl Heuston, Bess Lauer, Julia Lisk, Natalie Maurer, Mary Grever, Mrs. John Evans, Mrs. W. Alton Jones, Florence Priest; and Messrs. Henry Hof, Jr., George Dickel, Alfred L. Pitts; and Mr. and Mrs. Herbert McMeekin and Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Standerwick. In my father's copy was a hand printed, large bookplate and a note reading, "Presented to Alfred Pitts in appreciation of fifty years of faithful membership and participation in the life of The Church-in-the-Gardens, October 15, 1978." There was nothing that could have pleased him more than this statement of the church he loved so much and to which he had given so much of himself over a period of fifty years. As he once said, he "had held every man's office in the church except that of minister," which was true. A number of years later, on two separate Sundays in the Spring of 1985, Mrs. Nancy Davenport Larsen and I each received similar inspirational Leaves of Gold when we became fifty year members, and perhaps one or two other people received them, too, in church ceremonies that year when Mr. Steven Berry was the minister. Insofar as I can recall, these were the only three times that such ceremonies were held. I think it is a lovely thing to do.

## THE TREASURER

Sometime in the latter twenties, my father was Treasurer. I remember he wrote figures in a big red book, the largest I had ever seen, so big it wouldn't fit on my mother's desk and so he worked on the breakfast room table. Perhaps the most dedicated Treasurer and certainly the longest in office was Mr. Almon Johnson, a marine insurance specialist and inventor. Each Christmas he sent to his friends magnificent cards depicting an historic ship and stating a beautiful Christmas verse. One I recall was based on the carol, "I Saw Three Ships Come Sailing By, All On A Christmas Morning." Quiet, efficient, thorough, he served as a volunteer through most of the '50's, '60's and '70's. Tall and slim, he sat each Sunday in the third pew and then spent several hours on his work as Treasurer up in the office across the hall from the minister's office suite.

## CHURCH SECRETARIES

My sister tells me that my aunt, Mrs. Frank Pitts, was secretary in 1928. She wrote in the Bibles presented to the third grade on Children's Day the personalized statement and signed Mr. Pickett's name as minister. The church did not have regular secretaries for some time, although I recall Mrs. Kissock acted as secretary one year. The first one I actually remember was Miss Betty Minor, who was secretary in the early to mid '40's, I think. I remember she came from Virginia. She held her wedding in our church. The pews were full and everyone waited and waited, wondering if the wedding had been called off. When about an hour had passed, she arrived. It seemed she had taken a long nap at Mrs. Plaisted's house, thinking, she said, that brides were always late! Miss Henrietta Hamilton was secretary for about a year. Mrs. Frieda Sherwood was secretary for a long time. She was very calm, efficient and had the office in apple-pie order always. When she and her husband moved to Indiana, she came every year with her dog to take care of Mr. and Mrs. Claude Williams'



house when they went on a month's vacation. I'm sure you can learn details of recent secretaries from them, themselves.

### ANNUAL CHURCH MEETINGS

There were two wonderful women, each of whom for quite a few years, took charge of the annual church dinners held in January in Smith Hall. The first, in the late thirties and the forties, was Mrs. John Price, whose husband was editor of the Christian Herald, for which reason they then moved to Chicago. The other was Mrs. Doris Schmidt, later Mrs. Charles Campbell. They were both superb cooks and super managers and organizers. After dinner there was usually an invited clergyman speaker and a statement by the minister about his work of the prior year. Then the meeting was called to order by the Clerk, who for several years was Malvern Hill, Jr., then Harold Lardaro, then John W. Hetherington, each a young lawyer. The various chairmen read their annual reports, some of which surprisingly, were quite humorous, especially those of the Treasurer, the Music Committee, the latter given by Mr. Conrad Taylor whose British accent and wit added a note of whimsy to his description of anthems and choral responses. After explanation and discussion of the proposed budget followed by a vote and the additional nominations and vote on the long list of candidates for various church offices, the meeting ended. The evening was always a delightful affair, held in the otherwise dull lull of mid-January which produced camaraderie and unity as well as progress in church affairs for the ensuing year. About the time Mr. Lloyd Maurer became accountant for the church, the annual church meeting with dinner was eliminated and with it went perhaps a deeper understanding of the policy and functioning of our church. At the same time, the start of the fiscal year was moved to spring and the annual church meeting was held in the church Sanctuary immediately following the Sunday church service. It may be that the present occasional church suppers during the year have a similar social function to the former church dinner at the annual meeting.

## THE EVERY MEMBER CANVASS

The Every Member Canvass was an annual affair, and still is, of course, for in one way or another money must be raised to satisfy the budget. It used, however, to be conducted in a shorter time, more pleasantly, more graciously, and perhaps, more effectively. One Sunday in early fall, the men on the committee met in the Social Room after returning from an early Sunday dinner at home, at about 2 P.M. to turn in their pledges and to receive each a personal list of people to be visited that afternoon, from whom to seek pledges. About 4:30 or 5 P.M., they returned to hand the chairman the pledges they had received and to see how close they had come to fulfilling the budget, and perhaps to increase their own pledges further. A great deal was accomplished on one afternoon. Although not all church members and parishioners could be canvassed that day, those from whom very sizable and moderately sizable pledges could be expected, were visited plus the members of the committee and their families. However, when Mr. William Wehner became chairman, he changed the process by stopping the visiting and awaiting response from a general letter with follow-up notices of various sorts. This method, I believe, has continued from the mid-fifties. It should be observed that whatever means are used, an announcement is first made officially from the chancel steps during the church service regarding the seeking of pledges by the proper official, just as is done for the call of the annual church meeting.

## THE PARISH HOUSE KITCHEN

The Parish House Kitchen was designed and organized by Mrs. Caryl Heuston who was a graduate home economist of the University of Wisconsin. The entire kitchen was arranged so that as food was prepared and made ready to serve, the persons involved did not get into one another's way, and things moved efficiently through location of equipment for a continuous line of work and all doors opening in a direction that would not interfere with others at work.

## THE HEUSTON LIBRARY

The Heuston Library was dedicated in memory of Alfred Heuston, an active and prominent member. He was a law partner with White and Case. The desk belonged to him and was donated by his wife. The solid mahogany shelves were made and donated by a cabinet maker who was a member of the church.

## THE ORGAN

The organ use to be located in the middle of the chancel with a semi-circle of chairs behind it for the choir and curtains hiding the choir and organ from view. In the '30's it was moved to the right side just beyond the chancel and a stairway was built to it, thus exposing the beautiful architecture and stained glass of the chancel. The organ has been overhauled several times. Once there were squirrels born in the bellows. When Mr. Conrad Taylor was chairman of the Music Committee the organ was reconstructed and a descant organ built at the back of the balcony which was a lovely addition to the music. When both were completed, a famed New York organist gave a concert one evening. However, Miss Wightman scarcely ever used the Descant Organ and under Mr. Brewer it was removed, giving room for about ten or twelve more balcony seats.

## THE CHIMES

The Chimes were originally played by the organist at a console in the Tower. Later a Sunday School classroom replaced the Console Room. In the late '50's Mr. Trone, a musician, trumpet player, I think, chose the present chimes which Mrs. Harold Brown gave to the church in memory of her husband, a prominent church member and fine congregational singer.

## COMMUNION CUPS

Communion Cups of metal were purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Taylor in England where, at a communion service they had attended in a large Congregational church in southwest England this type had been used. It consists of an individual cup and a small tray that sits on top of the cup to hold the bread. These were shiny and looked much like silver. However the shine did not last for long as someone placed them in the dishwasher in the Parish House kitchen with detergent instead of washing them in warm soapy water and all the protective shine disappeared. Even so, they looked nice and were a means of reducing movement in the serving of communion, especially with a large congregation to serve. I think it was Mr. Brewer who did not care for them. Since then we have returned to the use of bread served separately from the grape juice.

\* \* \* \*

During Mr. Berry's tenure, the Church-in-the-Gardens celebrated its 75th Anniversary and the Women's Guild its 74th in 1988. It is interesting to note that Mrs. Harold Fairhurst was possibly the last of those members who had been present at the founding of our church when it was located in a store in Station Square. She died a year or so before the Anniversary. She was a patient at the Congregational Home for the Aged in Brooklyn. The church officially commemorated its anniversary with a banquet in the Community House on October 8, 1988, culminating a series of lesser year-long events. Former ministers of the church and neighboring clergy were in attendance at the banquet. Small blue and white tiles depicting the church were given to each diner and a stage show was presented. The year closed out with the compilation of a beautiful new directory of those presently affiliated with the church, including in it photographs of many of them.

Eleanor S. Pitts  
September 13, 1988