

# THE TOWER

OCTOBER 2012

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*Celebrating 125 Years in Service to the LORD  
1887 - 2012*

Park Congregational Church  
United Church of Christ  
Worshiping in Davis Chapel  
111 Park Avenue  
Worcester, MA 01609  
Telephone: 508-752-2468

E-mail: [parkchurchucc@juno.com](mailto:parkchurchucc@juno.com)

Website: [www.parkcongregationalchurch.org](http://www.parkcongregationalchurch.org)



[www.facebook.com/ParkCongregationalChurch](http://www.facebook.com/ParkCongregationalChurch)

The Rev. Dr. Gary R. Shahinian, Minister

Telephone: 508-756-5667

Cell: 508-451-8785

Fax: 508-753-7354

E-mail: [shahinian.bogosian@juno.com](mailto:shahinian.bogosian@juno.com)

## A NOTE FROM THE MINISTER

“125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Speech on Park Congregational Church’s Past”  
(this is the first of three installments of the three speeches delivered on Sunday, September 23, 2012, at the Wachusett Country Club during the program of Park Congregational Church’s 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Banquet)



Our 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee has chosen as our motto, “Our Past Has Inspired Our Future.”

Henry Ford once said that history is bunk. Well, Mr. Ford produced some fine automobiles, but he was mistaken about history. Perhaps no institution is more clearly defined by its history than the Church. The Christian faith is based on a collection of writings and practices that date from antiquity. The Bible is not only a historic book, but it’s a historical book, that is, it tells the story of the history of God’s redemptive dealings with people, a history that must be embodied by every local congregation today. The practices of the Church likewise over their almost 2000-year history are not only interesting traditions to read about and then forget, but also must in some significant ways seek to inform each local manifestation of the Body of Christ today.

The celebration of the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Park Congregational Church is a reminder that our congregation started at a definite point in history, in 1887, as a community of faith steeped in the scriptures and practices of Christianity. Over the past 125 years, our church has interacted with the Worcester community of which it has been a part in such a way that it has profoundly impacted the lives of several thousand people, not only those who have officially joined the church, the exact number being 2242, but also those who, though they never became members, nevertheless were ministered to in ways that impacted their lives for the better.

Through its various ministries and missions over the past 125 years, Park Congregational Church has created its own little snippet of history within the broader history of Christianity. Today we should be like Janus of Roman mythology, who looked simultaneously forward and backward. Our look back at 125 years of our congregation’s life should give us encouragement and hope for the future.

We should not look back at our church’s past, to times when our congregation was much larger, to recall nostalgically the “good old days.” Rather, I think we should look upon Park Congregational Church’s past to recognize how we have been formed and identified by our history and where that history is leading us.

As we recite on Communion Sundays, we are members of the United Church of Christ, a denomination that stands in the Protestant tradition of Christianity. But we are not stuck in the Protestant Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but, as we also recite on Communion Sundays, we “affirm the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own in reality of worship, in honesty of thought and expression, and in purity of heart before God.” And so, though we read the scriptures each Sunday, we finish by proclaiming that “God is still speaking.” Though we sing hymns hundreds of years old, we read and study contemporary theology books and novels in our Bible studies and watch Hollywood films and television programs in our Movie Matinees and Lenten Series.

Of course on this anniversary we have many personal memories of our involvement in the church, the generations of your own families who have been born, baptized, married, and buried in this community of faith; the worship services, programs, and events of the church that you have attended; even the church meetings that stick in your mind, most of them good, some of them, perhaps, not so good. You remember on this day all the ways that Park Congregational Church has helped to shape you into the persons you are. All of you are part of Park Congregational Church’s history in some way and today is the day that we celebrate that.

We are all identified by our histories. Each of you is here today because you have some historical connection to Park Congregational Church. Each of us owes who we are to our past: our heritage, our upbringing and education, our family members and traditions, our work experience, and our social involvement. We should try to find a meaning for all of those things. We should try to do that not for the sake of the past, but for the purpose of the present, our present as individuals and as a church. You and I, our congregation as a whole, are products of where we have been.

But we claim that “our past has inspired our future.” In what ways is this true? In what ways has the present makeup of Park Congregational Church, our ministries and missions, been inspired by the past? I’m not going to engage now in a summary of our church’s past 125 years. You can read a brief three-page summary for yourselves in the anniversary booklet. I’ve preached on this subject in sermons and written about it in previous issues of the *Tower*. We can learn a lot from the past. That’s why we study history. But we don’t study history for history’s sake. The most important function of history is to lead us into the future.

Jesus makes that plain. He instructed his disciples to remember his teachings and what he had done. Every month we observe Holy Communion in remembrance of Christ. We are admonished to remember, not to be chained to the past, but to turn our attention to how we should minister and carry out Christ’s missions as a congregation for the future. We should certainly remember our church’s history and

what we have accomplished over the past 125 years, but we shouldn't *dwell* on that history. Our purpose as Park Congregational Church is not to be found in where we have been, but rather, in where we are going.

What God has done for us in the past always leads us into the future. Our anniversary celebration today naturally turns our gaze on Park Church's past as we see the photographs on the PowerPoint presentation, in the booklet, and on the display tables. But we must allow that history to be part of our church's movement into the future.

One of my favorite theology books is Jurgen Moltmann's *Theology of Hope*. In that work, Moltmann writes, "From first to last . . . Christianity . . . is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionary and transforming the present." The promise of God's future is "the glow that suffuses everything here in the dawn of an expected new day." (Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 16). It is our faith that God directs our journey through time, both as individuals and as a church, so that it reaches its appointed goal, that sustains us to the end.

I'm going to conclude by reading to you an actual letter written by a parishioner to a Methodist minister in Ohio.

"Dear Reverend:

I'm not going to set foot inside that church nor contribute one red cent as long as you are the pastor there.

Nothing personal, understand. It's just a question of whose church this is.

I've heard about the abominations you are committing in the sanctuary—singing children's songs, teaching songs that are not in the Methodist Hymnal, baptizing at the door of the church, standing out in the open talking to people instead of preaching behind the pulpit where a preacher belongs, changing the announcements, changing the offering, changing the recessional, changing everything! What do you think you're trying to do?

Knock off with the folksy and keep things smooth, solemn, and dignified the way they were before you got here.

Whose church do you think this is, anyway—yours or mine?

Signed,

Henrietta Peckingham, Parishioner"

Let us never forget that Park Congregational Church is not your church or my church, but it's Jesus Christ's church.

Thank you and enjoy the celebration!

Blessings in Christ,

Pastor Gary



**★ Thank You! ★**  
**★ THANK YOU! ★**

**OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS**

- 3 Liz Cape
- 8 Aurora Lewis
- 9 Justin Rose
- 10 Kelly Holbrook
- 11 Ashley Benoit
- 14 Dan Proulx
- 16 Barbara Papazian
- 24 Thomas D. Smith
- 31 Sheila Smith

. . . to the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee for all the hard work they have done throughout the year in making our yearlong church anniversary so successful and meaningful. Beginning with the Anniversary Worship Service of February 26, the concert in April, the Scottish Tea in April, and culminating in the memorable banquet on September 23 at the Wachusett Country Club, this year will go down in Park Congregational Church’s history as one of the most memorable. Thank you to everyone who planned, participated in, and attended all of these events.

. . . to Jennifer Nodelman who arranged to have the piano tuned at the Odd Fellows Home and for her monthly participation in the service there. The residents always enjoy listening to her lovely voice accompanied by Lee Bartlett on the piano. The two of them greatly enhance the worship service through the beautiful music they produce.

. . . Park Congregational Church family and friends for your “Get Well” cards, telephone calls, visits, and prayers following Daphine’s recent stroke. She is coming along nicely at Fairlawn Rehab. The target date for her return home is October 8. Fran also is gaining more strength each day following his surgery and has been at home now for several weeks.

Fran and Daphine Spear

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**THOSE OF YOU WHO RECEIVE A HARD COPY OF THE TOWER, PLEASE REMEMBER TO SEND IN YOUR \$10.00 ANNUAL DONATION TO OFFSET THE COST OF PRINTING**

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**WE CONGRATULATE KIMBERLY TONEY AND DENNIS PELKEY WHO PLAN TO WED ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2013, IN THE SANCTUARY OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH**



## THANKSGIVING DONATIONS

This year we will once again purchase supermarket gift cards for the needy. Please be sure to mail your donation to the church made out to “Park Congregational Church” and marked “Thanksgiving Project” on the memo line of the check. Those of you who have offering envelopes can use the Thanksgiving envelope. We again thank Ann Lavalley and Christine Wilson for overseeing this ministry.

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## MOVIE MATINEE ON OCTOBER 14 WILL FEATURE *DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*

From the classic horror story by Robert Louis Stevenson, this 1931 version is widely considered to be the best of all the film adaptations. Fredric March won the Academy Award as Best Actor for his riveting performance of Dr. Henry Jekyll, who believes that there are two distinct sides to men, one good and one evil. His noble attempt to separate the two, however, ends in disaster. This film version includes 17 minutes of previously censored material. Please bring your lunch to the Roy Room following the worship service. The film will start at 11:30am. The movie is suitable for youth and children. A fun film for the Halloween season.

THE CHILDREN'S TOWER  
October 2012



"Our Past Has Inspired Our Future"

Dear Children,

Oh! Are you exhausted from all the partying and celebrating we as a Church Family have done this year as we marked our Park Congregational Church's 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary?? Wow! Event after event! But the best of all, our Anniversary Banquet just a week ago! Older members! Newer members! Friends and even animals!! Yes, our NEADS dog "Benny" and Pastor Kelly with us to make our Church Family complete!! All the wonderful pictures, plaques, and pieces of our church history on display for all to see! Hearing the voices at the banquet saying, "That's me when I was in the choir 50 years ago!" "That's me when I was a Boy Scout!" "Oh, heavens, that's me in the picture of our Sunday School play way back when." The voices carried throughout the afternoon as past joys and, yes, some sorrows were recalled as folks looked through objects and pictures, seeing not only themselves but loved ones who were no longer with us, yet for their spirit.

And what NOW? What do we do after we have put the pictures away that brightly shined, reflecting our past history? What now?? We look to the FUTURE!! And what is our *future* of Park Congregational Church? I have an idea of what our FUTURE will stand for in our church history. Let me tell you . . .

F = faith

U = us

T = tithing time and money

U = united

R = remembering

E = everlasting

Yes, children. FAITH in ourselves, FAITH in our God. US, together in worship and work. TITHING our time to serve and money to support. UNITED in all that we do. REMEMBERING our past and all who sacrificed for it. And last, but most important, EVERLASTING . . . everlasting commitment to Park Church, EVERLASTING devotion, EVERLASTING sacrifice, EVERLASTING faith in Jesus Christ and His promise of EVERLASTING LIFE!

Celebrating our past, present, and looking forward to God's continued blessings upon our Park Congregational Church and Her FUTURE . . . . . *your friend, Linda*

## ONE VOTE

One vote made Oliver Cromwell Lord Protector of the Commonwealth and gave him control of England (1645)

One vote kept Aaron Burr—later charged with treason—from becoming US President (1800)

One vote saved US President Andrew Johnson from being convicted during his impeachment trial (1868)

One vote changed France from a monarchy to a republic (1875)

One vote elected Rutherford B. Hayes US President, and the man in the Electoral College who cast that vote was an Indiana Representative also elected by one vote (1876)

One vote admitted Texas, California, Oregon, Washington, and Idaho into the United States (1845, 1850, 1850, 1889, 1890)

One vote made Adolf Hitler head of the Nazi Party (1923)

One vote per precinct would have elected Richard Nixon, rather than John F. Kennedy, US President (1960)

Your vote matters! Be sure to vote on Election Day, November 6, 2012!!!



Park Congregational Church  
111 Park Avenue  
Worcester MA 01609