



*Black Rock Congregational Church • 1849-1999*



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Dr. Stephen A. Treash, Senior Pastor

# **You hold in your hands a precious family album!**

*This volume is our Black Rock family photo and memory album. It spans 150 years of God's faithfulness to us as a church committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

*I'm so glad that my church family album is less embarrassing than the family photo album my parents keep. We all should be glad my father wasn't around with his camera in Black Rock's infancy—and at bath time.*

*1849 to 1999. That is a long time but, praise the Lord, Black Rock doesn't act its age. At a time when many churches are winding down, we are revving up! As a vibrant, vital, vigorous church, which continues to grow in every way, I guess you could say that Black Rock Congregational Church is 150 years young.*

*Black Rock is one of those rarities: we are a church with a glorious past, a dynamic present and an even better future! Indeed, our best days are still ahead!*

*But for now, relish in our first century and a half by taking some time to flip through this Black Rock family album.*

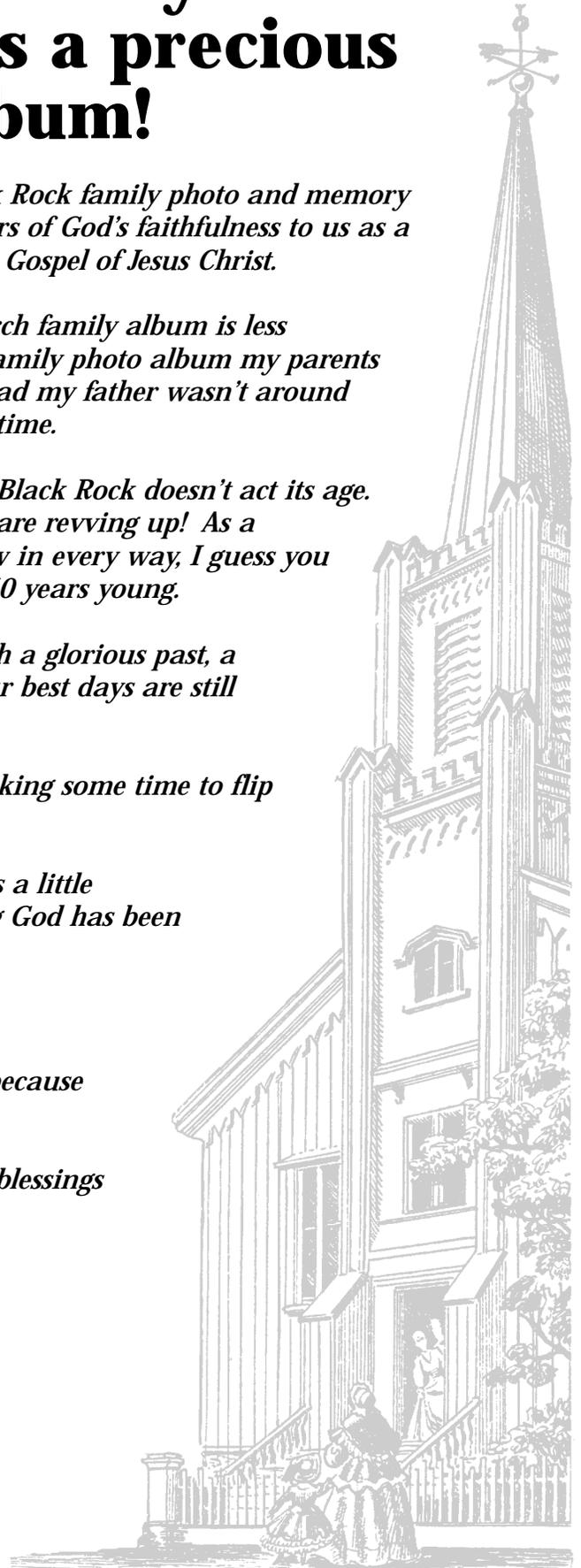
*Note how we've changed (all right, maybe this album is a little embarrassing after all). But also note how unchanging God has been in His faithfulness to us.*

*By the end of this album, you will want to sing.*

*You will want to sing "Happy Birthday" to Black Rock because 150 years is something to celebrate.*

*You will also want to sing, "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow!" because God has been so good to us!*

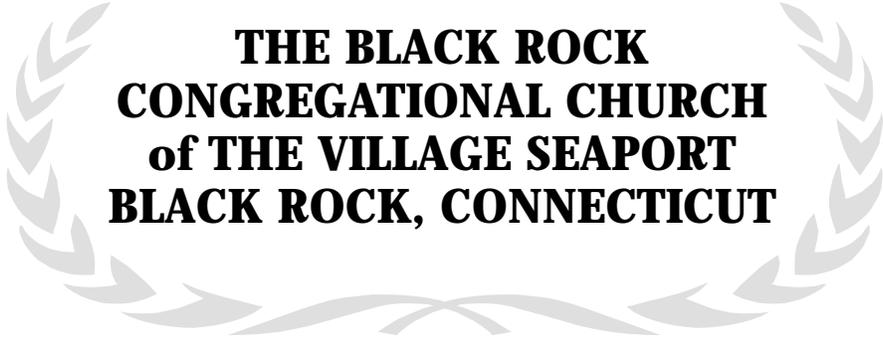
Pastor Steve



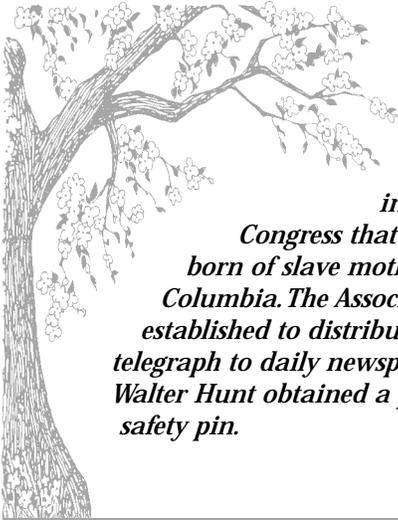
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# Chapter One

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## THE BLACK ROCK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH of THE VILLAGE SEAPORT BLACK ROCK, CONNECTICUT



*In 1849, the Gold Rush in California was under way and Lincoln had just introduced a bill in Congress that would free the children born of slave mothers in the District of Columbia. The Associated Press was established to distribute the news by telegraph to daily newspapers. In New York, Walter Hunt obtained a patent for the first safety pin.*

### HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

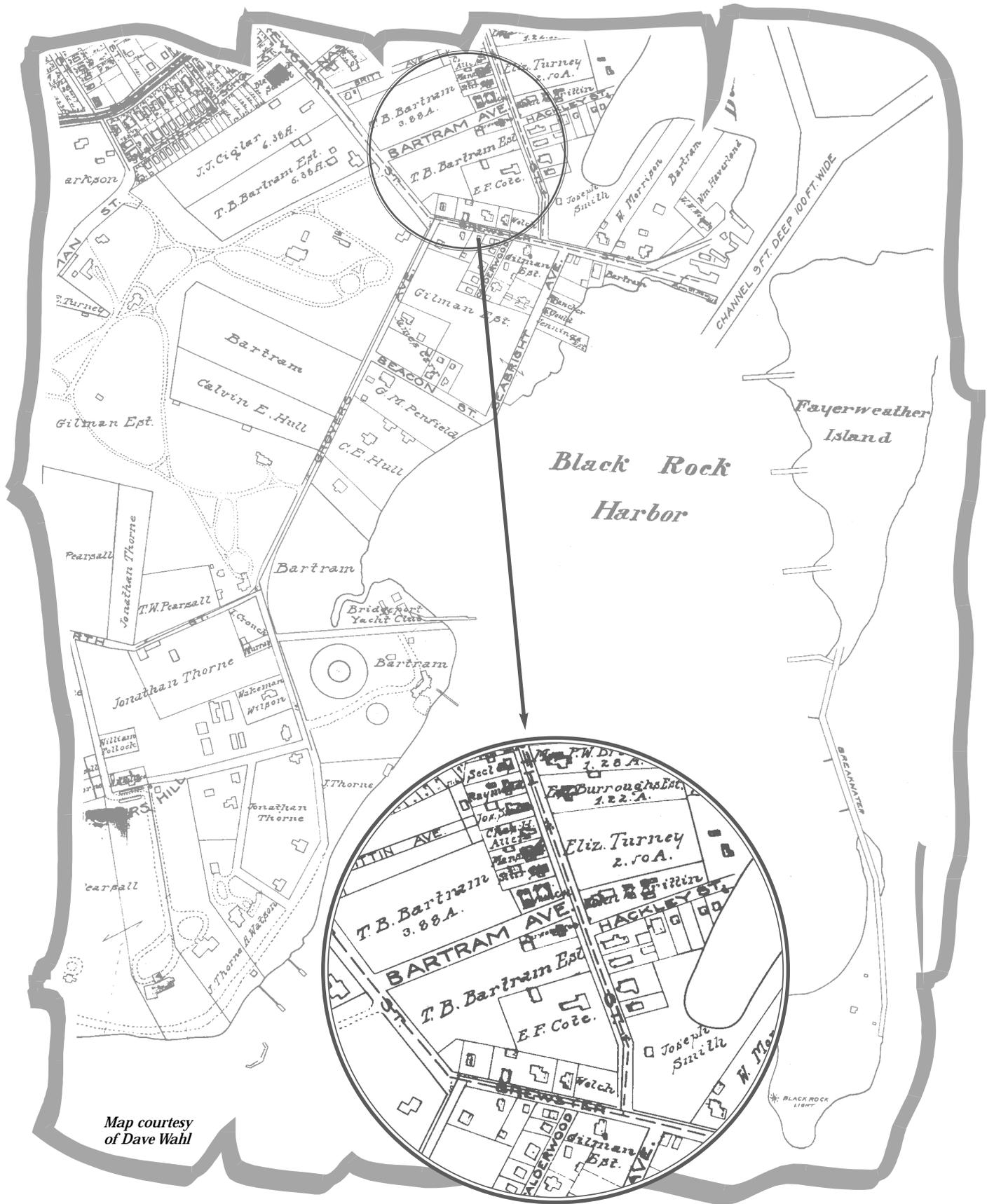
East of Fairfield and south of Stratfield, a little settlement was made at the tip of the peninsula formed by two creeks and the sound. This settlement became known as Black Rock Village—named from the black rocks along the shore—and was for three generations a family holding. **Thomas Wheeler** came from Concord, Massachusetts, with a company of pioneers in 1644. Separating from his companions, who settled in Stratfield and Greenlea (now the area of Seaside Park), Wheeler established his home at the head of Black Rock Harbor. The harbor became the center of interest in this old village, and during “the old salty days” many houses were the homes of sea captains. The history of Black Rock is made up of the heroic, the commonplace and the humorous, a history written between the lines of church and probate records, old deeds, long lost logs of the merchant ships and a journal written by **William Wheeler**, Clerk of the Black Rock Church.

The temptation is to dwell on the first hundred years of Black Rock - of raw land pioneering, hunting, fishing and farming, its Indian troubles and witch burning - or to live the next hundred years with Black Rock as an important seaport and center of shipbuilding, sailing and ocean trading. In 1820 there were less than 100 men, women and children in the area and yet twenty-eight of these were away at sea at one time, one half of them as sea captains. Our history however, starts at the beginning of the third hundred years when seafaring, while still of greatest importance, was starting to make way for the industrial development of the neighboring city of Bridgeport.

A small band of faithful families, and their ancestors before them, traveled by foot, horseback, and carriage to worship in the First Church of Christ, Fairfield. The Society of the First Church, Fairfield, at the period in which we are now interested, was described by a contemporary as “a parish sturdily conservative in all its traditions and ways” and its pastor, **Dr. Atwater**, was commended for the “strength of his orthodoxy and the zeal of his championships.” He met the challenge of the new theologies of that day. “An atmosphere of reverence pervaded the church, constituting the guiding, governing force in the Society, giving a commanding character to ordinary Christian activities.”

In order to reach Fairfield, our ancestors had to ford the Unquowa River (now called Ash Creek) and later cross the crude bridge over its marshy waterway, the natural boundary dividing Fairfield from Black Rock.

# *Black Rock Area • Bridgeport, Connecticut Circa 1910*



Transportation difficulties, weather conditions, and the distance of three miles all added together to produce the idea of a separate meeting house at Black Rock Village, just when, we cannot know. A clue appears in the Fairfield records at the annual meeting of the mother church in December, 1847. Joseph Bartram was named chairman of a committee to investigate the expediency of altering or remodeling the old Fairfield Meeting House, which indicates that no new building was in their thinking at that time. Less than two months later on February 1, 1848, the original subscription list for a church building in Black Rock was drawn up. It contains these phrases:

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*"Shall be free for worship by the Congregationalists, Methodists and Baptists denominations until the 1st of January, 1852, unless this association is sooner incorporated by the legislature of this state and whenever so incorporated it shall be subject to such rules and regulations as are the several Congregational Churches and societies in the Western Consociation of Fairfield, with which it shall be connected .... Any person shall become a member and be entitled to vote by paying \$5.00, this subscription may be made payable in money, suitable materials, or labor, so far as the building committee shall deem needful and expedient."*

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The subscriptions on this list totaled \$2,430 and were made payable on or before January 1, 1849. We later note that at a meeting of the male members of the First Congregational Church of Black Rock, held at the home of Alanson Allen, October 1, 1849, it was voted to present to the Consociation of Fairfield West (at their annual meeting in Stanwich) a request to be received into their number as one of the Consociated Churches of that district. This request was granted on October 8, 1849. Allen was postmaster, operator of the village store, school teacher, and deacon of Black Rock Church. His home mentioned above is said to be the oldest existing house in Black Rock located at 266 Brewster Street.

According to the minutes of the annual meeting of the Fairfield Ecclesiastical Society held December 23, 1848, the vote of acceptance of the certificate of fourteen members of Black Rock

who withdrew from this society is as follows:

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*"To the Clerk of First Congregational Society of Fairfield we the undersigned each respectfully do hereby certify that we withdraw ourselves from said society and from this date will cease to be members thereof." Fairfield 23 -December in 1848.*

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|                 |                    |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Seth Perry      | George E. Shelton  |
| Lewis Burr      | Thomas B. Bartram  |
| Joseph Bartram  | Thomas Ransom      |
| Alanson Allen   | Benjamin Penfield  |
| David Lockwood  | William Wheeler    |
| Mary B. Nichols | Elizabeth Penfield |
| Sarah Brewster  | Mrs. Ruth Bartram  |

The departure of the first Black Rockers affected the mother church financially, for we read "through the formation of a new Congregational Society at Black Rock, the taxable list of the Society must suffer serious reduction." Our Fairfield ancestors did not depend on the passing of the plate but levied a tax each year. It seems to have averaged about two cents on the dollar and the collector was paid about nine dollars for his job. Although it did cause a setback to the mother church financially, the separation was in good spirit and she bade the Congregational Society "Godspeed in her mission of evangelization." According to minutes of a meeting of the Fairfield Ecclesiastical Society, the following was submitted:

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*"The formation of a daughter church in Black Rock, the following persons were dismissed at their own request September 2, 1849, for the purpose of founding a new Congregational Church at Black Rock"*

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|                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| Seth Perry         | Elizabeth B. Solley |
| Catherine Perry    | David Lockwood      |
| Jane Perry         | Sarah Brewster      |
| George E. Shelton  | William Wheeler     |
| Isaac W. Jones     | Aimira Wheeler      |
| Mary Jones         | Thomas Ransom       |
| Alanson Allen      | Catherine Ransom    |
| Nancy Allen        | Lewis Burr          |
| Mary B. Nichols    | Eliza Burr          |
| Benjamin Penfield  | Elizabeth Smith     |
| Henrietta Penfield | Eunice Bibbins      |
| Elizabeth Penfield | Susan Bibbins       |



*Black Rock Church – Parsonage and Chapel, early 1900s*

The group moved ahead with plans for the new church immediately.

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*“At a meeting of the male members of the First Congregational Church in Fairfield, residing in the Village of Black Rock, Connecticut, held at the store of Mr. Alanson Allen, September 3, 1849, it was unanimously resolved that we do proceed to take the necessary steps to organize ourselves into a separate Church of Christ to be denominated First Congregational Church of Black Rock. Whereupon, it was voted unanimously that Thomas Ransom, Seth Perry, and Alanson Allen be a committee to take the proper and necessary steps to carry out the aforementioned resolution.”*

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Signed: William Wheeler, Clerk

Alanson Allen was a great, great uncle of Viola Carpenter Flug and his store mentioned above was located at the foot of Brewster Street near where the Fayerweather Yacht Club is now situated. Joseph Smith, who was known as “Uncle Joe” in the village was Vi Flug’s grandfather and Sally Sulik’s great grandfather. He joined our church on May 5, 1876, and was a member until his death in 1942. At one time “Uncle Joe” was an owner of the Alanson Allen store and also was postmaster of the Village. William Wheeler, Clerk, kept the journal in Black Rock on which Mrs. Lathrop’s book, *Black Rock, Seaport of Old Fairfield* was based.

The first meeting to actually organize a Congregational Society was on Monday evening, February 14, 1849, at 7:00 P.M. in the school house of the village. The purpose of the meeting was “to organize a Congregational Society, to choose officers for the same, to build a house for religious worship, and all other business that the Society might deem necessary or expedient ....” The site for the new church was next for consideration. Two lots were offered but the one accepted was recorded as follows: “Captain Thomas B. Bartram offered a lot south of Widow Wakeman’s residence gratuitously provided the society would raise the subscription list one third more ..... the site being 80 ft. front and rear and 120 ft. deep, bounded easterly by the road leading from Black Rock to Bridgeport, north by the homestead of Anna Wakeman, westerly by land of Thomas B. Bartram, southerly by the same... ..”

This is the corner of Ellsworth Street and Bartram Avenue where Black Rock Church stood until it was torn down in 1968.



*Joseph Bartram*

Ellsworth Street, which was laid out in 1802, was originally known as Church Street until renamed after the family of Verdine Ellsworth. Her home became the Black Rock Parsonage at 155 Ellsworth Street across from the church building. This home had been built in 1840. After the church was built Captain Bartram had a path cut through his property from his home to the church so he wouldn’t have to take the long way around. This path is known today as Bartram Avenue. Captain Bartram’s home still exists at the head of Bartram Avenue on Brewster Street. It is presently owned by St. Mark’s Lutheran Church and used as a Senior Citizen Center.

“The Building Committee made some remarks relative to the size, form, style, and expense of the church to be built, and they intend to get a draft for the same and receive proposals from the builders who work cheapest and best and report at our next meeting.” At the next meeting “Henry W. Fancher reported respecting the quarrying of some stones for the basement of the house; said they could be easily obtained at Bibbins Quarry and that we might have them gratis. At the meeting of April 27, 1840, Joseph Bartram, Esquire, made a number of remarks on the Monroe Congregational Church, the building being built in 1847, that he had been to view, and thought ours would be larger than needful. He thought we had better build smaller for two rea-

sons: We were so few in number and we would hardly be seen in so large a church and likewise we would be in debt a thousand dollars or more. The eventual Black Rock Church cost approximately \$3,000. Note that typical "Yankee thrift" was displayed in the building of the Black Rock Meeting House.

Yankee thrift also displayed itself in the assessment of the pews in the church. The society agreed to assess the most convenient seats at \$5.00, decreasing down to \$3.00 for the less desirable ones, according to their situations. Pew rentals continued through the 1800s and on into the 1900s. Some of the more prominent members of the community had silver plaques engraved with their names on them. These plaques were still found on the ends of several pews when the church was torn down in 1968. Pew rentals were assigned by numbers placed on the end of each pew. In the Society's records from 1850-1857, entries show the results of the auctioning of pew rents, prices varying from year to year. As late as 1920 pew rentals were still in use.

On Sunday, August 5, 1849, a young minister, William Jessup Jennings, one of four sons of Mr. and Mrs Jessup Taylor Jennings of Greens Farms, Connecticut, stepped to the pulpit of the newly constructed meeting house of the First Congregational Church of Black Rock. Rev. Jennings gave his message from Hebrews 2:1-3.

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*"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"*

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William Wheeler, Clerk, in recording this first meeting also gives the text of the afternoon message, Isaiah 57:21,

*"There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."*

He tells us the Sabbath Sunday School numbered 50 scholars and then, seemingly with great joy, adds this note, "Services for the first time on the Sabbath (tis supposed) for two hundred years since the settlement of this village." The people gathered in the church that day were Godly men and women filled with praise and thanksgiving to their Lord for the completion of their first meeting house. They were filled with anticipation of what God was going to do in their midst and in the years to come.

On August 8, 1849, at 2:00 P.M. the new meeting house was dedicated. The house was filled to overflowing. Five clergymen were present. William Wheeler, our Clerk of that day writes, "Dr. Hewitt's sermon was very appropriate, more specifically the closing address to the members of the Society and Church commending us for our enterprise and energy in erecting our neat and well built edifice and if we were as well adorned all would be right. Our little Christian band was in tears - not of sadness, but of joy." ❖

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# Chapter Two

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## MINISTERS 1849-1999



*During the next 10 years Abraham Lincoln would be elected president, the nation would wage a bloody Civil War and Lincoln would be assassinated. Reconstruction would lead to President Johnson's impeachment. The United States purchased Alaska for seven million dollars and Louisa May Alcott published Little Women.*

*In a historical partnership, Ira D. Sankey joined Dwight L. Moody and became songleader for the revival team. Henry Stanley found David Livingston in the heart of Africa.*

*In the years that Rev. Woodruff would minister to the people at Black Rock the US would fight The Spanish American War, the Titanic would sink on its maiden voyage, Alexander Graham Bell would send a voice over wire. "The Blizzard of '88" paralyzed the Northeast with drifts up to 15 feet high. The automobile made its appearance in 1903 as the "horseless carriage." In 1915 Fanny Crosby was laid to rest in Bridgeport's Mountain Grove Cemetery. The United States fought in the First World War.*

### HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

#### **Rev. William Jessup Jennings**

**Rev. William Jessup Jennings** was installed March 1, 1850. His ministry was fruitful. To the original list of ten from the Fairfield Church and 10 others from Bridgeport were added 47 more before he asked to be released in 1857. With his request were enclosed letters from two doctors stating that it would be best for him to leave the rigorous winter climate of this seaboard.

The church had a good beginning, its confession of faith contained such foundational truths as these:

*We believe in God, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost....*

*We believe that God created all things by His power....*

*We believe that the Scriptures, the Old Testament and the New Testament are the Word of God, the only unerring rule of faith and practice....*

*We believe that men are naturally enemies of God, that the carnal mind is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can it be....*

*We believe in the absolute necessity of repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ....*

Rev. Jennings had given messages stemming from these great truths. He and his church parted regretfully.

#### **Rev. Marinus Willett**

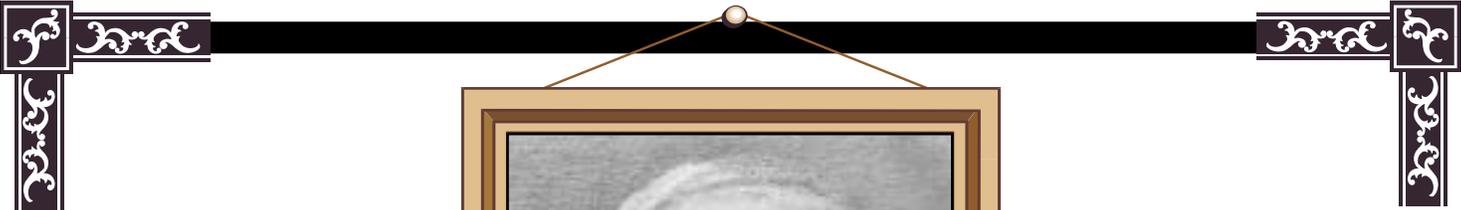
In May, 1858, the **Rev. Marinus Willett** was ordained and installed as the second pastor. In his letter of acceptance he stated that he put "his entire reliance on divine strength to come to you an able and faithful minister of Jesus Christ; for this reason I entreat your prayers that I may be approved of God among you - a workman that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth." He served for three and one half years leaving in October, 1861. Three members were added to the church during that time on Confession of Faith.

#### **Abram D. Baldwin** - Acting Pastor

An acting pastor, **Abram D. Baldwin** of Durham, Connecticut, served the church from 1862 to 1866. He was followed by another acting pastor.

#### **Rev. Frederick W. Williams** - Acting Pastor

**Rev. Frederick W. Williams** served for a period of seven and one half years, from 1866 to 1874.



*Above Center: Reverend Henry Collings Woodruff, Pastor of Black Rock Church 1881-1922*



*Left: Miss Mary A. Bartram who later became Mrs. Henry Collings Woodruff (pictured right)*



*Woodruff Memorial Hall*



*The Chapel*

## Rev. Howard W. Pope

The fourth pastor called to the church seems to have had an especially outstanding work. His name was **Rev. Howard W. Pope**. He was strongly evangelistic and the church prospered spiritually. He served from 1874 to 1881, with a yearly salary of \$1,200. He had to leave the church because of the harsh climate and later became a teacher at the Moody Bible Institute. He was a very effective personal worker and wrote many tracts. The last few years of his life were spent in blindness.

## Rev. Henry Collings Woodruff

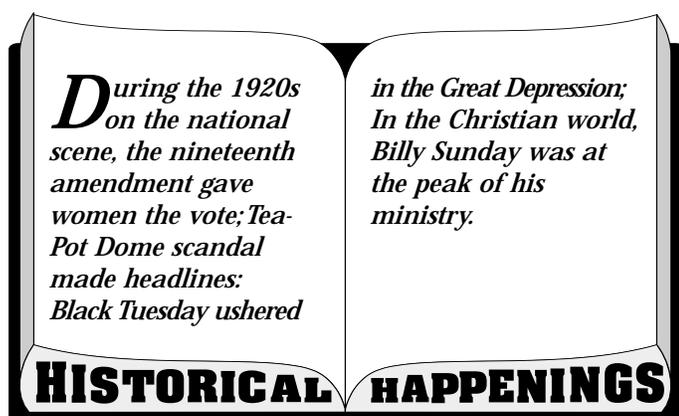
**Rev. Henry Woodruff** was born in Brooklyn, New York, on February 16, 1845. He was accorded liberal education opportunities and in 1860 was graduated from Yale College. He afterwards attended the Andover Theological Seminary. In 1881 he accepted the pastorate of the Black Rock Church. Three years later on October 15, 1884, he married Mary A. Bartram, a granddaughter of Captain Bartram who had given the lot to the church. The Bartram family was quite wealthy, having made their fortune through trade in the West Indies. It was said that everything Bartram touched turned, if not to gold, at least to good, honest copper and silver. The Bartrams gave much financial support to Black Rock Church and gave many memorial gifts.

Rev. Woodruff served the church for the longest period of time of any pastor, 41 years, from 1881-1922.

Several interesting facts can be noted about Rev. Woodruff. Every Sunday he rode to church in his chauffeur-driven Pierce Arrow automobile. One member, in recalling those days, states that "even his gardener, Henry Bunce, dressed like the Prince of England." A very scholarly man, he seemed to have had a problem bringing his message down to the people. Most of the time he spoke over their heads. Rev. Woodruff himself was a true believer who was concerned for others and their salvation. He was a strong denominational man.

During his ministry the second church building was erected. In the winter of 1886 it was decided to build a chapel. In the following spring it was to be adjoined to the church for the use of a Sunday School and social gathering place. Later the chapel was moved further back to make room for the Woodruff Memorial Hall where it stood until it was torn down in 1968. Rev. Woodruff died in 1922, while still in the pastorate. His widow, Mary B. Woodruff, donated funds for the building of the Woodruff Memorial Hall. The cornerstone exercises for this memorial were held on Sunday afternoon, October 8, 1922. **Rev. Charles S. MacDowell**, the new pastor, presided. The services of dedication for the Woodruff Memorial Building were held at 3:00 P.M., April 29, 1923.

## THE QUIET REVIVAL



## Rev. Charles Haddon Spurgeon MacDowell

The sixth pastor, **Rev. Charles H. S. MacDowell**, was called to the pastorate in October, 1922. He had previously been with the Salvation Army and had also been a traveling musical evangelist.

During Rev. Woodruff's years a strong evangelical emphasis in the church did not exist.

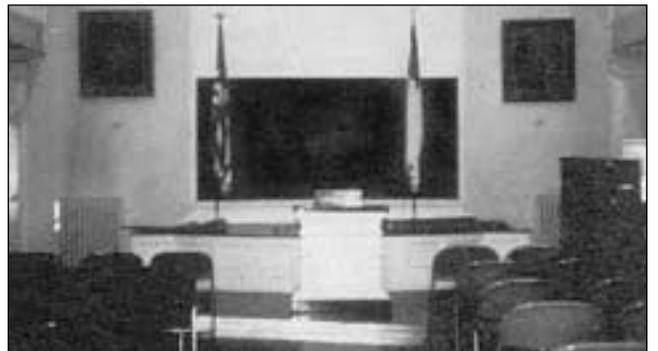
When Rev. Charles Haddon Spurgeon MacDowell came in 1922, he brought with him a



*Black Rock Congregational Church and Woodruff Hall, circa 1930*



*Woodruff Hall, circa 1930*



*Woodruff Hall*



*Parsonage acquired in 1874 by the Ladies Society • Reverend Howard W. Pope*

love for the Word of God and a deep interest in young people. The church was at a low ebb with little, if any, interest in the message of the Gospel. Rev. MacDowell encouraged Bible study groups and attendance at Bible conferences and camps. Both of his daughters, Winifred and Ruth, married men who came to know the Lord in a dynamic way under the ministry of their father. Arnold Borgman and Eldridge Carpenter became spiritual leaders in the church and they, with others who came to know the Lord as well, spearheaded the new direction of the church into an effective, evangelical Bible-believing congregation.

The Lord also raised up other role models, including Roy and Bea Carley, Ray and Harriet Whittles and Dom and Betty Carletti. Their homes were used for Bible study groups to build and strengthen young Christians in the faith.

The truth as expressed in Hebrews 4:12,

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*"The Word that God speaks is alive and full of power, making it active, operative, energizing and effective." (Amplified)*

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brought about that quiet revival through the faithful preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

The character of Black Rock Church as it is known today originally developed under Rev. MacDowell's ministry by the means of his youth Bible studies. He was a dedicated student and teacher of the Word of God and had a deep interest in young people. He encouraged them to form Bible studies and to attend Bible Conferences and camps in the summer. It was

out of this group of young people that many many leaders of the church were developed.

Rev. MacDowell was with the church for twenty-one fruitful years. Many changes were made in Sunday School and Church. Wednesday prayer services took on a completely new meaning as Mr. "Mac" began Bible Study series. One in particular on prophecy became the means of many Black Rock members coming to know Christ in a personal way. In 1932, a Sunday evening service ministry was begun. Outstanding Christian businessmen were brought to the pulpit during these services, bringing a new spiritual revival into our church. The practice of infant baptism was dropped on March 24, 1938, as Rev. MacDowell announced, "A dedication service will replace infant baptism at Black Rock." He said, "Nowhere in the Bible can be found any direct text regarding the baptism of infants." This caused quite a stir in the local area and several people left the church. However, there was no actual split in the congregation. Reverend MacDowell was forced to retire September 1, 1943, because of ill health. It was at that time that he was named Pastor Emeritus, and remained in Black Rock until his death in 1957.

During Rev. MacDowell's ministry the Black Rock Church had become a corporation organized under the laws of the State of Connecticut in 1923.

The church had experienced "The Quiet Revival." Black Rocks character would forever be altered.



**T**he country had come through one of the worst depressions in history leading into World War II. President Roosevelt, the man who had led us through the war years, died in April of 1945. In the summer two nuclear bombs were dropped on Japan thus ending the war. The G.I. bill allowed many of the returning servicemen to obtain a college education, including Bible School and seminary.

**T**he United Nations was formed to bring "Peace in Our Time." In California a young man set up a tent in busy Los Angeles. The press, on orders from William Randolph Hearst, gave coverage to the meetings and the national exposure told the nation that the Gospel is still alive. The evangelist was a young preacher named William (Billy) Franklin Graham. The United States was again on the brink of hostilities while conducting a Police Action in Korea.

## HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS



*Seventh Pastor of Black Rock Church, Reverend Charles MacDowell and wife, Sarah Wylie MacDowell*



*Arnold and Winifred (MacDowell) Borgman*



*Royal and Beatrice Carley*



*Reverend Harry L. Cox, Interim Pastor in 1952, with wife Cora*



*Ruth (MacDowell) and Eldridge Carpenter*



*Reverend Leonard S. Pitcher resigned as pastor in December of 1947*

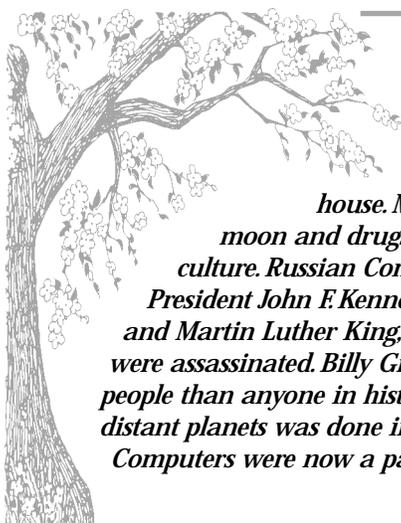


*Dr. Howard Z. and Mrs. Cleveland. Dr. Cleveland served the church from 1949 to 1952*

The church was without a pastor for two years. It was during this time that, in January 1945, it was voted to “sever Black Rock Church from association with the Congregational Denomination making the church free and independent of other churches and ecclesiastical authorities but free to work in harmony with any other church groups or individuals of like precious faith.”

### Reverend Leonard S. Pitcher.

**Rev. Leonard S. Pitcher** was called to the pulpit in June 1945. Mr. Pitcher came to Black Rock from the National Bible Institute where he was serving as professor of English, Bible, and Church History. Mr. Pitcher and several young married couples felt the need for a social evening of fun and fellowship closing with a brief presentation of the Gospel where they could invite friends who did not come to regularly scheduled services. This was the beginning of Married Couples. At first, the couples met in the church. However, it wasn't until the decision was made to meet in homes that the program began to take full effect in the lives of many of their friends. Monthly meetings began in the homes of the Borgmans and the Whittles alternately. Because of the increasing number in attendance, Married Couples was forced back to the church. Mr. Pitcher served at Black Rock until his resignation December 31, 1947, to return to the National Bible Institute faculty.



*During the next four decades the world changed drastically. Television took its place as the head of the house. Man walked on the moon and drugs became a part of our culture. Russian Communism collapsed. President John F. Kennedy, his brother Robert and Martin Luther King, a civil rights leader, were assassinated. Billy Graham addressed more people than anyone in history. Space travel to distant planets was done in the name of science. Computers were now a part of daily living.*

## HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

### Dr. Howard Z. Cleveland

**Dr. Howard Z. Cleveland** served the church from 1949 to 1952. Before coming to Black Rock he had been Assistant Professor of Bible and Theology at Wheaton College in Illinois. He was a dedicated and faithful servant of Christ and preacher of His Word. The church prospered under his Bible teaching. During his pastorate Black Rock Church celebrated its Centennial on August 8, 1949. It was celebrated with a buffet supper and vesper service in the parish hall. Dr. Cleveland spoke on “The Price of Peace,” the same topic as that of Reverend Jennings on August 5, 1849. Mr. Arnold Borgman was chairman of the Centennial Committee.

During Dr. Cleveland's term of service, the Bridgeport area was hit by a severe hurricane. On November 25, 1950, at 11:02 A.M. several of the church members living on Ellsworth Street and immediate area watched as our steeple crashed into the roof, piercing the sanctuary ceiling with the weather vane. The steeple was never replaced.

Dr. Cleveland left Black Rock to return to the teaching field, first at Westmont College in California and then in Bemidji, Minnesota.

### Reverend Harry L. Cox – Interim Pastor.

**Rev. Harry L. Cox**, a beloved missionary of the church, served as Interim Pastor for the next year.

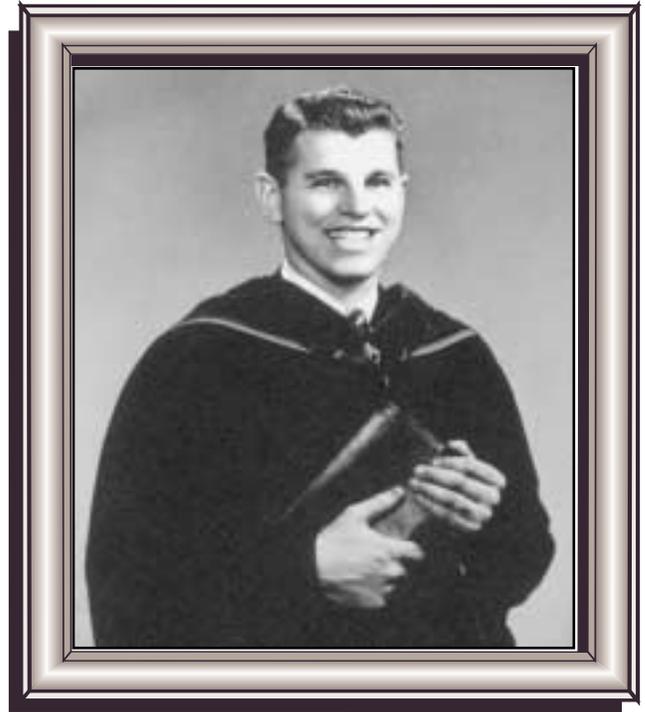
Harry Cox had a long and strong association with Black Rock. He was the first missionary in which our church took a personal interest by definite support, prayer and concern. He left for Nigeria under Sudan Interior Mission in December 1933.

Harry returned in 1936 for an early furlough for surgery on a duodenal ulcer. During his recovery he married Cora Renkema, an SIM nurse he had met in Nigeria.

In 1952 Rev. Cox again began to serve as Interim Pastor when he was on medical furlough. This second period of service lasted until Rev. Stanley Allaby arrived. Shortly after Rev. Allaby became pastor, Harry was pronounced well



*Pastor and Marion Allaby in 1997*



*Pastor Stanley R. Allaby in 1957*



*Pastor & Mrs. Stanley R. Allaby. Their children, Norman, Kim, Stephan, Darlene*

enough to return to the field! Such was God's provision for our church.

On June 8, 1975, it was voted to take on Harry Cox as part-time Minister of Visitation upon his retirement from the mission field in September 1975. He served in this position for several years before moving to Florida.

## **Rev. Stanley R. Allaby**

On September 1, 1956 **Reverend Stanley R. Allaby** became Pastor of the Black Rock Congregational Church. Pastor Allaby had just graduated from Gordon Seminary and completed a five year internship working with Reverend Norman Townsend in the Quidnessett Baptist Church in North Kingstown, Rhode Island. Although the church had hoped for a man with more pastoral experience, they welcomed his youthful enthusiasm and responded to his leadership. The first few years of his ministry saw good, solid growth take place in the church, the Sunday School, and the youth work. It was not long before a second morning worship service had to be added to accommodate the people who were coming. Even after adding a second service it was not uncommon to have to put chairs in the aisles at the second service.



*Standing left to right: Roger Blundell, Minister of Youth;  
Roy Williams, Minister of Music  
Seated left to right: Rev. Donald Roberts, Associate Pastor;  
Rev. Stanley Allaby, Senior Pastor;  
Rev. William Carson, Education*

Modifications were made in the church buildings. The old parsonage on Ellsworth Street was used for Sunday School and for Nursery, but the facilities were far from adequate for the growth of the church. This need really accelerated our need for a larger facility. (See Chapter 5) The dedication of our present building at 3685 Black Rock Turnpike, Fairfield, on March 31, 1968, marks one of the achievements of Pastor Allaby's ministry.

Another major accomplishment of Pastor Allaby's ministry was the initiation of the Annual Missionary Conference. During the second year of his pastorate, Pastor Allaby initiated the First Annual Missionary Conference. (See Chapter 4)

In 1977 Rev. Allaby was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity by Barrington College, Barrington, Rhode Island and on May 24, 1978, he received an earned degree of Doctor of Ministry from Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He is listed in *Who's Who in America*, *Who's Who in the World* and *Notable Americans of the Bicentennial Era*.

When asked for what he would most like to be remembered as Pastor of this church, Pastor Allaby replied, "If people could say of me, 'He loved his people. He faithfully and responsibly proclaimed the Word of God, and he lived what he preached,' that is what I would like to be remembered for."

Under Pastor Allaby the church grew to an active adult membership of over 800 people. In January of 1997 he sent a letter to each member and friend of the church and announced that he would be retiring on May 31, 1997, just three months short of 41 years of continuous ministry. At the retirement celebration over 700 members and friends gathered at Sante's Manor in Milford to wish Pastor and Marion God's blessing on their retirement.

Rev. Allaby is married to the former Marion Johnson of Scotia, New York, and is the father of four children, Norman, Darlene, Kimberly, and Stephen.

## **Dr. Stephen A. Treash**

**Pastor Steve Treash** is currently the Senior Pastor of Black Rock Congregational Church. He was Associate Pastor before he assumed his present position in June 1997 upon Pastor Allaby's retirement.

Stephen Treash was born in Oak Park, Illinois, on September 1, 1961. In 1977, the Treash family moved to Connecticut and joined Black Rock Congregational Church. Steve became active in the church and in Black Rock Teenagers.

Following his graduation from Trumbull High School, Steve attended Wheaton College, from which he received bachelor degrees in Biblical Theology and Business Economics with honors. During his Wheaton years, Steve served as youth pastor at the Wheaton Evangelical Free Church and ministered extensively to both junior and senior high students. As a junior at Wheaton, he sensed a strong call from God to become a pastor. Consequently, Steve went directly from Wheaton to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Hamilton, Massachusetts.

While at Gordon-Conwell, Steve served as a hospital chaplain, short term missionary to Calcutta, India, rescue mission worker in urban Boston, and as a pastoral intern here at Black Rock between his middle and senior year.

In 1987, Steve graduated summa cum laude from Gordon-Conwell, first in his class of nearly 300.

He began as Black Rock's Assistant Pastor on September 1, 1987. During his time at Black Rock Steve has gained experience in nearly every level and aspect of our total ministry. He has ministered to our children as Sunday School teacher and Vacation Bible School leader; to our youth as event leader and retreat speaker; to our young adults as the founder of Living Circle and HighPoint; to our single adults as advisor to Fairfield County Christian Singles and Divorce Recovery Workshop; and to our adults and senior

adults through his counseling, teaching, preaching, visitation and conducting of numerous weddings and funerals. He has also led mission trips to Jordan, Russia and the former East Germany.

In 1996, Steve received his Ph.D. from the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. That same year he was called to be the ninth Senior Pastor of our church. In addition to providing spiritual leadership at Black Rock, Steve serves as a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Evangelicals and is active in supporting area clergy members.

Steve's wife, Jennifer (Wilson) attended our church and youth group as a teenager. She graduated from Christian Heritage School in 1988 and Messiah College in 1992. She and Steve were married in Black Rock Congregational Church on October 17, 1992. She is active in the leadership of the Contemporary Service and in women's ministries.

Under Pastor Steve's leadership, the church continues to grow spiritually and numerically. His passion is for focusing the church on our purpose—"to know Jesus Christ and make Him known." Pastor Steve is much loved and the church is blessed under his leadership. ❖



*Stephen and Jennifer Treash*

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# Chapter Three

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## OUTREACH TO YOUNG PEOPLE

### **Black Rock Teenagers and Youth**

**F**rom the early beginnings of “Black Rock Teenagers” in 1937 until the present, our youth ministry has made the Gospel relevant in the lives of young people and has witnessed to the life-transforming power of Jesus Christ.

God’s blessing on this youth outreach was evident as the group grew from members meeting in homes to meetings in the Chapel and Woodruff Hall on Bartram Avenue averaging 60–100 teenagers in attendance every Saturday night. Because of the group’s high profile, The Bridgeport Post published a flattering article about “Teenagers for Christ” and their activities in 1947, citing it as “the best established and attended group of its kind, since it offered a healthy, positive solution to the problem of delinquency and restlessness in the youth of today.”

God provided many dedicated and talented student leaders who could articulate their faith simply and clearly, to challenge teenagers to make a commitment to Jesus Christ and encourage them to put into practice His teachings. The quiet, steady, contagious dedication of mature Christian advisors and many other Christian teenagers behind the scenes resulted in a warm, winsome evangelistic approach to a large number of high school students from the Greater Bridgeport area and Fairfield County. Teenagers seeking to find meaning in life, new thrills, and entertainment were attracted to Teenagers because of the opportunity to make new friends in an informal way and participate in the good times that included trips, retreats, discussions, and sports. Speakers, films and testimonies introduced them to the greatest adventure one could ever know, and many responded to the call of Christ to dedication and commitment. Bible studies, prayer groups, mission work in Bridgeport and witnessing to friends and family built a strong founda-

tion upon which many discerning, intelligent young people accepted the challenge to help fulfill the Great Commission by taking the claims of Christ to the world.

Thirty years ago a transition time began from a commitment to the group to individualism as the Baby Boomers shared very little in common in terms of thought and attitude with their parents’ generation. This required a change in the forms and styles of ministry to these adolescents who listened best within the context of an individual relationship versus pulpit preaching and mass evangelism. The first full-time Youth Minister was hired and efforts to recruit prayer partners for each teenager, to disciple and counsel them, and to build a lay staff were part of the program that evolved. Lack of manpower and staff training revealed the need for a strong base of committed students learning to walk intimately with God with a vision and desire for outreach.

Gradually during the 1980s within small group and nurturing experiences such a core of junior and senior high students emerged. This resulted in increased attendance at weekly meetings and monthly events. At this time a very successful group for young adults called “Living Circle” had its beginnings. Also, a parents’ group was included as part of the ministry to teenagers.

The 1990s introduced mission trips both in the U.S. and other countries as opportunities for outreach. The first Annual Youth Conference was held. Then came some difficult years during which teens experienced frustration, a restlessness in response to cultural changes, peer pressure and the effects of dysfunctional families. This was reflected in the youth group by spiritual apathy, a lack of unity and worldly conflicts.

About three years ago, a new vitality and



*Harriet and Ray Whittles*



*Ray and Harriet Whittles' Thursday night Bible Class for young men and women*

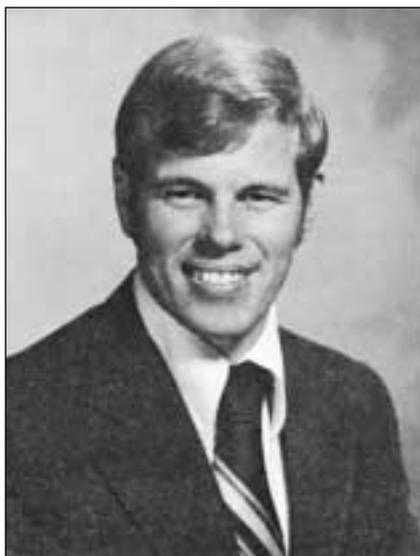


*"SATURDAY NIGHTERS" • Starting top left to right: Gordon Hubbard, Ed Matto, Joyce Matto, Edie Lendrat, Hazel Burnett, Myrtle Simons, Jim Simons, Helen Hubbard, Meta Ashley, Beverly Homan, Dot Gombas, John Ashley, Bob Mott, Ed Lesko, Jose Camenero, Julie Gyana, Ruth Ervine, Adele Beach, Lillian Lesko, Verna Walter, Marth Ironside, Al Smith, Fred Gombas, Bill Koerner, Charles Osterlind, Bill Smelter*

excitement was felt in the group which led to the establishment of The Rock Student Ministries - the name chosen because of a desire to let God "Rock" their lives, friends, church, community and beyond. In this student-driven ministry they are taught and prepared to reach out to their peers and encourage each other. One form of outreach has been B.A.R.N. (Big Audacious Revival Nights) during the summer months. A leadership core continues to be developed to work with the middle school students and senior high cell groups. Their activities include Bible study, prayer, discussions, special events and excursions.

Although the leadership has changed over the years, the basic message has never been compromised - the need for salvation, spiritual growth and participation in the Great Commission. Music, praise, worship, prayers, testimonies, large amounts of humor, and fun have always been a part of Black Rock Teenagers and the Youth Ministry. Activities and the way in which the Gospel is communicated, however, have had to change so that this generation can understand the message and be reached with God's love more effectively. ❖

| <b>Youth Pastors and Leaders</b> |                                     |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1930s to 1970                    | Various church leaders and members. |
| 1971-1975                        | Roger Blundell                      |
| 1976-1977                        | Larry Waterman                      |
| 1978                             | John Miller                         |
| 1979-1983                        | Dave Scheaffer                      |
| 1984-1986                        | Don Ferris                          |
| 1986-1994                        | Craig Weyandt                       |
| 1988-1996                        | Rod Robertson                       |
| 1994-1996                        | Linda Wever                         |
| 1997-1998                        | Mark Popadic                        |
| 1998-                            | Tim Popadic                         |
| 1998-                            | Kevin Butterfield                   |



*Roger W Blundell  
Minister of Youth  
1971-1975*



*Tim Popadic  
Director of Student Ministries  
1998-present*



*Kevin Butterfield  
Director of Middle School Ministries  
1998-present*



*Chapel • Center of youth activity*



*Chapel Fireplace*



*Present day youth group*

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## Chapter Four

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### MISSIONS AT BLACK ROCK

**T**he history of Black Rock Church as a mission-ary-sending church began 66 years ago. A group of people from Black Rock attended a New England Keswick Bible Conference and became acquainted with a young man, Harry Cox, who was preparing to leave soon for Nigeria under Sudan Interior Mission (SIM). A warm friendship developed between Harry and the church. It was decided to send Harry a modest amount of monthly financial support, and in December of 1933, he left for Africa. From that small beginning, the church began slowly to accept other missionaries who needed prayer and financial support. By 1958, Black Rock was helping to support eight missionary couples.

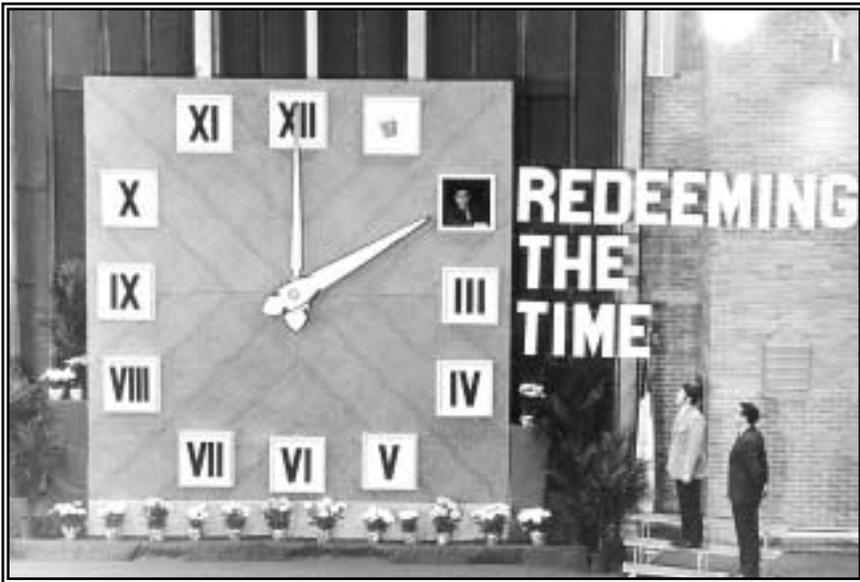
When Pastor Stanley Allaby came in 1956, Black Rock had a missions conference only every few years. His desire was to stimulate the church's interest in missions by having a conference every year. Each year an interest-catching theme was chosen and the sanctuary was decorated to display the theme. Some early themes were "Time is Running Out," "Christ, the Light of the World," "Launch Out." A famous one featured a whale that actually regurgitated Jonah! The first Faith Promise program goal was \$22,000. During the 1960s the number of missionaries sent out increased considerably. At the end of the decade, our annual missions budget was set at \$74,000 and we were helping to support 50 families or singles in the field as well as many mission organizations and projects.

Throughout the '70s, many aspects of our missions program were developed. More attention was given to the care of our missionaries, many of whom had no retirement plans. A need for a place for our missionaries to stay while on home assignment was recognized, and in 1977 a duplex which became known as the Missionary Furlough Home was purchased on Roseville

Street in Fairfield to accommodate two families. It has been in almost constant use since then and is much appreciated, especially by families with active children! Around this time, Black Rock also joined with other missions-minded churches to support a new organization called ACMC, Advancing Churches in Missions Commitment. ACMC was formed to help churches increase their awareness of their missions responsibility. The Mission Board also began to make a more concerted effort to interest our young people in career missions and encourage more short term trips. Attendance at the Urbana Student Mission Conference was also strongly encouraged. By the end of the '70s, the Faith Promise was \$170,000.

The last year in the '70s was an exciting one as our church adopted a Cambodian refugee family, bringing missions to our doorstep! The Puth family was warmly welcomed, and before long there were other Cambodians worshiping at Black Rock. A strong fellowship was formed and a Cambodian pastor, Chhon Kong, was called. He was later sent by this fellowship as a missionary to Cambodia. Now called the Asia Evangelical Fellowship, this vibrant group meets in the sanctuary on Sunday afternoons and is praying that the Lord will enable them to buy their own building.

The decade of the 1980s was a significant one for the missions program. New winds in mission philosophy were beginning to blow, and Black Rock responded by calling our first Minister of Missions, Douglas Christgau, in 1984. Doug organized and developed the existing programs and added new ones. The prayer partner program took on new life as did education programs for the Sunday school. "Short term missions" began to target adult participants as well as young people! In 1986, Pastors Allaby and Christgau spearheaded the formation of the Southern Connecticut Missions Consortium, a



*Huge Conference theme high-lights the Annual Missionary Conference. Missionaries from all over the world explain modern missions to the Congregation during the eight day conference*



*1965 Conference*



*1966 Conference*

# *Mission Conferences*



*1970 Conference*

group of nine churches in the area who joined together to send out career missionaries from only the nine congregations. The first couple to be approved was Lee and Becky Prior from Calvary Evangelical Church, going to Ivory Coast, Africa, in 1987. At present, twelve couples or singles are supported by the Consortium. By the end of the eighties, our Faith Promise was \$400,000.

A highlight of the early 1990s was the decision to participate in the Adopt-a-People program which targeted the world's unreached people groups. Black Rock adopted the Tamajaq people of Niger, West Africa. Predominantly Muslims, the Tuaregs, or Kel-Tamajaq as they prefer to be called, are a semi-nomadic tribe with no indigenous church and only a handful of Christian believers. We began praying for a Christian work to be started among them, and in 1992 and 1994 groups from Black Rock went to Niger on short term projects to become acquainted first hand with them. We began to support several missionaries — Renee Routhier and Bruce and Robin Walton — who work among them. BRCC members, Larry and Ann Boyle, have worked among them as well. A recent development is our growing relationship with the only known Tamajeq pastor, Nouh Yattara, who has spoken at Black Rock. The Mission Board is considering how we can be partners in ministry with Pastor Nouh's small church in Timbuktu, Mali.

The '90s have also seen an exciting ministry develop right here in Connecticut. For four sum-

mers, Royal Family Kids' Camp, started by a BRCC member, has involved many in our church in a ministry to abused and neglected children from the Bridgeport area through a week-long camp program.

When Doug Christgau left our church in 1996, we felt the loss keenly, but by January 1997, God had supplied us with another outstanding Pastor of Missions and Discipleship, Rev. Larry Fullerton, from Wheaton, Illinois. Pastor Larry has continued to develop our missions program and has introduced some exciting new ministries. He has expanded opportunities for short term adult missions (S.T.A.M.P.) and has set the ambitious goal of sending half our congregation on a STAMP trip in the next 10 years. In November of 1997, he led our first annual Fall Missions Festival featuring our local missionaries. As a pastor for our missionaries, he travels overseas twice a year to visit missionaries in their places of ministry. God has blessed his ministry in the two years he has been at Black Rock. Our Faith Promise goal for this year, 1999, is \$567,000.

God has multiplied the missions outreach of Black Rock Church. From one man going to Africa in 1933, 79 families and singles now serve in 22 countries around the world. Hundreds of people have prayed, given of their resources, and been obedient to the call to go over these years. As we enter the next millennium, we are excited to see what He will do for we believe that the best years of missions at Black Rock rest in our future. ❖

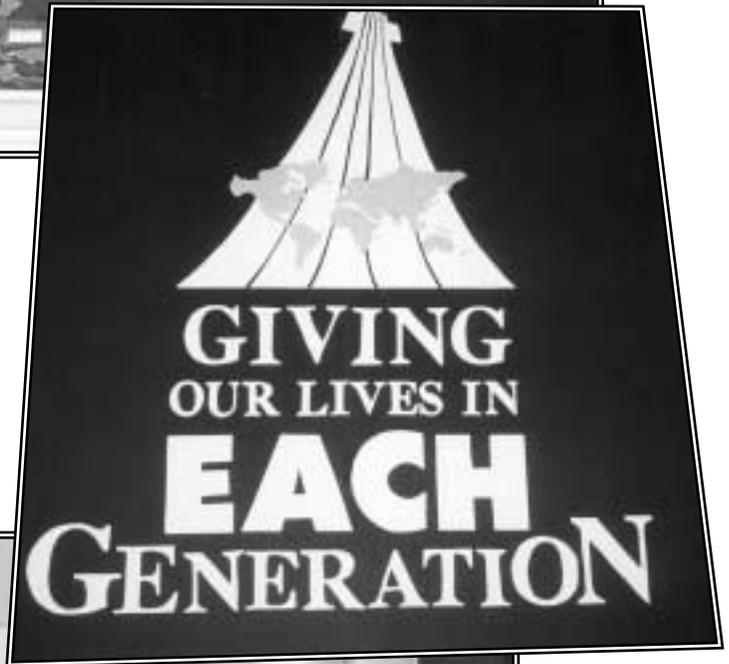


*Far left: Rev. Larry Fullerton,  
Minister of Missions &  
Discipleship • 1997-Present  
Left: Rev. Douglas Christgau,  
Minister of Missions • 1984-  
1996*

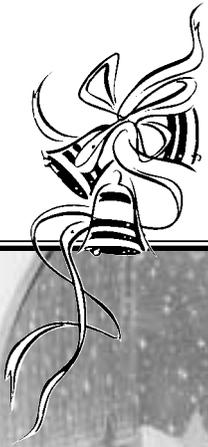


*Above and right, 1995 Conference*

## *Mission Conferences*



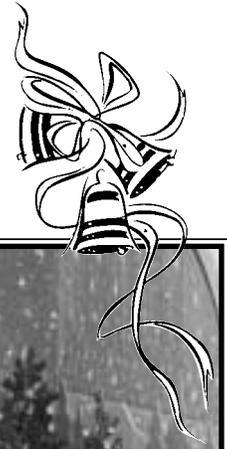
*1999 Conference*



# *Sights and Sounds*



# of Christmas 1998

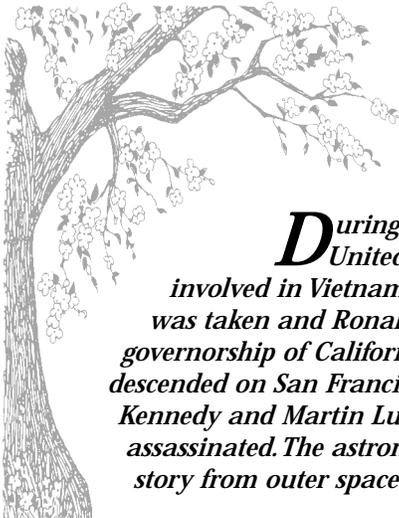


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# Chapter Five

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## THE CHURCH BUILDING



*During this period of time the United States became involved in Vietnam. The first space walk was taken and Ronald Reagan won the governorship of California. The flower children descended on San Francisco and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King were both assassinated. The astronauts read the creation story from outer space.*

### HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

#### Relocation

As early as the 1950s the church facilities at 161 Ellsworth Street were becoming inadequate because of the church's steady growth. Already the Sunday School and teenage ministries were bursting at the seams and were among the largest in the state.

The first step in a relocation plan was taken in 1954 when the church bought a four and one half acre shore front property with a large, old house at 184 Grovers Avenue not far from the church's location on Ellsworth Street. All church activities were anticipated to be at the Grovers Avenue location, and by 1957 plans were completed for a beautiful church to be built on that site.

The first plan was to build a colonial church, but upon investigation the price of that style of church was found to be far greater than our ability to pay. This was a great disappointment, but after talking to builders and architects we found we could get the same number of rooms and the same quality of building for much less if we switched to a contemporary style. Plans

for this were drawn up by Royal Carley, a member of the church, and approved by the church.

During this period of time some real differences about location for the new church had arisen. Many people wanted a Fairfield location. For the next three years, between October of 1961 and November of 1964, we tried but could not find any land in Fairfield. Many concluded that we must have been mistaken about God's will and that He really wanted us to build in Black Rock. In November 1964 the church decided to come back to the Grovers Avenue location again. Members who had favored a Fairfield location were satisfied, and unity existed about going to Grovers Avenue.

In March 1965 a kick-off banquet was held at the University of Bridgeport. On that night alone over \$100,000 was raised. In June 1966 we went before the Bridgeport Zoning Board. The result was certainly not what we anticipated: the Zoning Board determined we could not build on the land we owned in Bridgeport. The outlook seemed very bleak indeed, but in this dark hour we told God that as a church we still trusted Him even though we could not understand why this had happened and why He allowed those who opposed us to get an apparent victory.

The Lord did not wait long to demonstrate His grace toward us. Within 24 hours several of the businessmen of the church had found a beautiful six acre piece of land on Black Rock Turnpike and out of their own funds made a deposit on the property. Within a few weeks the legal work was completed and our present property was purchased. The Building Committee that supervised the building of the new church consisted of Paul Josephson, Chairman, Eldridge Carpenter, Roy Carley, Edward Lesko, Dom Carletti, Art Davies, Arnold Borgman, Richard



*Building Program 1955-1968  
Harbor Site for Black Rock Church*



*Groundbreaking: Left to right, John L. Sullivan, First Selectman fo Fairfield;  
Paul Josephson, Building Committee Chairman; Reverend Stanley Allaby, Pastor;  
Richard Littauer, Chairman of the Board of Trustees*



*Sunday morning worship, 1949*



*Mr. Paul E. Josephson,  
Building Committee Chairman*



*Original location of Black Rock Congregational Church in Bridgeport, circa late 1940s*

Littauer, Bill Magee and Al Helgren. In September 1966 Arnold Gustavson of Lyons and Mather was hired to design a new building for the site. Ellsworth Decker, a church contractor from Elmira, New York, was engaged as contractor and builder. In February 1967 we went before the Fairfield Zoning Board and the next month we got zoning approval. Groundbreaking ceremonies were held on Sunday afternoon, April 30, 1967. On the next day, after several years of numerous delays and some trying disappointments, work was begun on the new church. Pastor Allaby preached a sermon showing that God had taught us several important lessons during this period, primarily that only He, not we, could build a church. Only He knew the style and location that would be best for us. It was up to us to have faith and trust in God knowing that His plans and His timetable were perfect.

Major emphasis was now placed on the building program and every church member was asked to become involved and to make a pledge to the program payable before March 1968. The bank required guarantors for our mortgage loan. One letter was sent out by the finance committee and it was exciting to see well over \$200,000 come in without any prompting or follow-up.

The congregation was responsive in other ways also. Mr. Decker was a Christian contractor, agreeable to receiving help from talented members of the congregation in such areas as painting, electrical work, kitchen cabinets, etc. This enabled us to save a considerable amount of money. The entire construction period was a time of joy and excitement as we saw the building take shape. Luncheons were held at various times for the work crew, at which we shared Christ and the ministry of Black Rock Church.

On January 28, 1968, the cornerstone laying took place. Pastor Allaby and Paul Josephson laid the cornerstone, with Eldridge Carpenter, church moderator, and Ray Whittles, representing the Elders, also participating. A guided tour of the building followed the outdoor service.

On March 24, 1968, the old Black Rock Church on Ellsworth Street was deconsecrated and the following week, on March 31, our new church at 3685 Black Rock Turnpike, Fairfield, was dedicated. The church sanctuary had a seating capacity of 550 and classrooms and meeting areas for 40 Sunday School classes, Bible classes, and other functions. Dr. Robert Cook, President of King's College in Briarcliff Manor, New York, gave the dedicatory sermon. With the completion of the new building, a spirit of gratitude to God for all He had enabled us to do was evident. His hand of blessing was clearly seen in the land acquisition, the financing of the program and the construction of the new building. Our hearts were filled with praise for all He had done.

### **Additional Growth**

The evidence of God's blessing on the ministry of our church in the intervening years since 1968 shows itself in that we have been challenged to continually improve and expand our facilities. Our parking lot has been redesigned several times to accommodate more automobiles of members and visitors. The garage was constructed for necessary storage. In 1984 we added much needed class rooms, enlarged the office space, and changed the position of the choir loft for more seating space and better acoustics.

The recent major renovation and expansion in 1998 beautified and addressed critical needs in the church building. A large new Welcome Center was constructed with new and enlarged ladies' rest rooms; the kitchen was enlarged and completely renovated; the Mainwaring Child Care Area was built; Woodruff Hall was fitted with a soundproof divider system and two new offices; all class rooms, halls, offices, and restrooms were upgraded by new carpeting, tile, painting, cabinets, files, and coat hooks.

Currently we are moving forward with plans to further expand the parking lot, enlarge the garage, and provide an updated, new child play area. Praise the Lord that we have the problem of continual growth! ❖



*Cornerstone laying ceremony at 3685 Black Rock Turnpike.  
L to R: Rev. Allaby, Paul Josephson, Eldridge Carpenter, Dominick Carletti*



*New construction at 3685 Black Rock Turnpike*



*Black Rock Congregational Church  
3685 Black Rock Turnpike, Fairfield, Connecticut 06432*



*Exterior of new Church*



*Interior of new church at time of dedication*

## *Our Growing Church*



*Interior view of Church*



*Construction of new building in 1967*

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## Chapter Six

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### THE CHANCEL CHOIR AND MUSIC PROGRAM

The music program has always been a special part of the ministry at Black Rock Church. Many choir directors and organists preceded our present Minister of Music, Pastor James Marshall.

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*"Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord".  
Psalm 150:6*

*"Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints". Psalm 149:1*

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Rev. Woodruff led the choir, followed by Mrs. MacDowell, who both directed the choir and played the organ. The entire MacDowell family was very musical. They brought with them a new spiritual emphasis in the use of music in the church. Mr. Charles Noren, a bass soloist, led the choir in the early '30s, followed by Howard Walters, and then Jules Loxsom. Jules wrote several arrangements which the choir sang. Winifred Borgman followed Jules Loxsom in directing the choir. Winifred worked with all ages. Roy Williams remembers going to the Borgman home on Hilltop Road and practicing on Sunday afternoons with the youth choir. Mrs. Borgman arranged for small ensembles and introduced brass to the ministry of music.

Mrs. Rodney Allen was one of the early organists, when the old pump organ was in the balcony of the old church. Mrs. Alice Rogers, as volunteer organist, served for many years and later was paid \$5.00 a week. She retired on January 1, 1957.

The Frederick Franz family joined our church in 1950 and became active in the music program. Mrs. Franz played the organ. Her daughter, Marie Stone, became choir director, and Ruth Franz directed the Junior Choir. They brought with them a family string trio and introduced the beginnings of our graded choir system. At this time the new Baldwin grand piano was purchased for the sanctuary and was dedicated to

the memory of Agnes Reed Kantor, missionary to the migrants in California, who died in 1950.

After Marie Stone resigned, Jules Loxsom again became choir director and served until 1959. One of the stories shared by a former choir member was about the time Jules took the Sunday anthem home with him after rehearsal and on returning Sunday morning forgot it. The choir rallied by pulling out the old favorite, Stainer's "God So Loved The World," and sang it that morning without anyone in the congregation knowing what happened.

Helen Kuster led the choir from 1959 to 1960. It is remembered that during this time Helen divided the choir into quartets. Mr. Robert Wunsch served as organist from 1957-1962.

Mrs. Marion Allaby conducted the Senior Choir from 1961 to 1970. During her ministry the choir produced a recording entitled "*King All Glorious*," which consisted of the songs presented in the first annual spring concert in June of 1962. Mrs. Allaby organized the first brass choir that performed for some of the services and on special occasions. She also presented the first "Singing Christmas Tree" in 1967. Men of the church constructed the tree, designed by Roy Carley, which consisted of sturdy risers with different platform levels almost three stories high erected outside. Carolers stood on the risers. The Singing Christmas Tree became a real family involvement and outreach ministry. After the program, the listeners were invited inside for refreshments. In subsequent years a manger scene was added, as well as hand bells, and a brass choir.

Mark Kasmin was the organist from 1962-1970 and during his ministry the church purchased an Allen Electric organ, and in 1977 the church purchased the present Allen digital com-



*Good News Singers in 1973*



*Good News Staff • 1982-1983.  
Back Row: Irv Levy, Dave Sulik, Peter Fix  
Middle Row: Kevin Magee, Ann Levy,  
Sally Sulik, Carol Van Dusen  
Front Row: Ted McAndrew, Roy Williams*



*Good News Instrumental Ensemble*

## *Spread The Good News*



*Handbell Choir*



*Good News Staff • Early 1970s  
L to R: Bob Sulik, Bee Josephson, Sally Sulik, Laurie Lauchlan,  
Roger Blundell*

puter organ. The organ was dedicated on March 4, 1977, with well known composer and musician Paul Liljestrand of Nyack College as the guest organist.

### **Mr. Roy Williams - Choir Director and Organist**

In May 1970, the church called **Mr. Roy Williams** to return to his home church to serve on a part time basis. The music program of the church improved and grew under his leadership, and in 1971 he was appointed our first full time Minister of Music.

Since the Singing Christmas Tree had become a Fairfield tradition, Roy continued with this 25-minute presentation for two consecutive nights in December. The tree had now been reconstructed by Larry Boyle to hold 90 singers. Holding the program outside was unique, but the cold weather presented many obstacles, and consequently it was terminated.

The following year Roy presented a Christmas program inside the church called the "Living Christmas Card." The idea had been conceived by Roy Carley years earlier when Roy was a young boy in Black Rock. The new Living Christmas Card consisted of drama and music in which secular and sacred numbers were performed.

During this period the Senior Choir became involved with the Married Couples programs which were held monthly on a Saturday night at the church for the purpose of inviting friends and business associates. The fun evening always concluded with a five to ten minute devotional. In 1971 the choir presented a Thanksgiving dinner program for Married Couples which four hundred attended. Mr. Williams had elaborate decorations, and tables filled Woodruff Hall, the foyer, and hallways. In succeeding years other programs followed. "Some Enchanted Evening" was especially well remembered as well as "Winter Wonderland." Each was a high quality program. These years brought great growth in the church. God was blessing.

Mendelsohn's Oratorio, "Elijah," was presented in 1973. Pastor Allaby preached Sunday morning sermons on Elijah for a few weeks consecutively, and the choir sang about the passage of Scripture. The choir members were required to read the book entitled *Elijah*, and also know the scriptures about which they were singing.

For the Bicentennial on July 4, 1976, Roy combined the whole music program of BRCC in a united effort to present a program on the steps of the Fairfield Town Hall to commemorate America's two hundredth birthday. Included were special effects and costumed characters such as Betsy Ross and Abraham Lincoln.

Choir robes changed through the years. The first ones were black with white starched collars. Choir members also wore black beanies. Blue robes with a gold stole followed, and finally the current maroon robes with a gold stole were adopted.

Roy introduced Bill and Gloria Gaither's music which was well received. The new music brought wonderful choir participation.

Roy loved working with young people and during his ministry at Black Rock he organized The Good News Singers. The love was mutual; Roy was affectionately called "Mr. Music."

### **Good News Singers**

In 1971, twenty-eight young people eager to expand their opportunities for spiritual growth and evangelistic outreach formed a small singing group, calling themselves the Good News Singers. This remarkable fellowship attracted nearly seventy-five young people each year. Each young person who sang with the Good News Singers gave testimony of a personal faith in Jesus Christ. Their commitment, however, extended beyond that required for a weekly rehearsal and concerts. A personal commitment to and participation in an extensive training session on evangelism was required of each member. The classes were taught by Roger Blundell, Minister of Youth at Black Rock Church. The highlight of each year



Mr. Roy A. Williams  
Choir Director and Organist was  
called "Mr. Music"



Good News Singers, 1984 to 1985

## Good News Singers



Summer of 1975, The Good News Singers prior to leaving for Glasgow-Manchester on tour

was the annual summer concert tour. By means of concerts in churches, schools, parks and shopping centers, the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ was carried to young and old alike in twelve states and Canada. The expenses for the concert tours were paid by the teenagers themselves, friends, and relatives. The Good News Singers also contributed love gifts and offerings.

In 1974 the staff was joined by Carol Van Dusen and Ted McAndrew. Carol assisted Bob and Sally Sulik as an advisor and Ted assisted Roy in conducting the Singers.

The success of Good News in performing for local churches led to many opportunities to perform in churches and shopping malls throughout the Northeast and Canada. In 1978 and again in 1981, Good News was invited by Evangelist Mike Hencher to Great Britain to share God's Word through music in churches, schools and prisons in England, Scotland and Wales.

Singing in the schools of the United Kingdom gave the Black Rock teenagers a new opportunity for evangelism. After each performance for the school, the Singers were invited to individual classrooms to answer questions about their faith. On one occasion after performing for a school and sharing in the classroom, the Good News advisors were invited back to the school for a brief meeting. Tearfully, the Headmaster shared with them his staff's commitment to rededicate their lives to serving Jesus Christ.

On another occasion the Black Rock teenagers had a chance to share the Gospel with 125 boys and young men in prison. The hosts were very unruly and very noisy. They really didn't want to hear the message of salvation. As the Singers bravely continued their program, a noticeable hush came over the once ill-mannered audience. When some of the Singers shared their testimonies, no one in the audience was talking. All were listening very carefully. At the end of the concert, Mike Hencher invited the young men to come up and receive valuable material that could help change their lives. Jesus was the answer. Ninety-six young men came forward!

The Good News Singers continued their ministry under the leadership of Roy Williams with Bob and Sally Sulik as advisors until 1983.

Roy did not want to move into contemporary music and felt someone else was needed to do that. In 1984 Roy and Flo Williams retired from the music ministry to return to Auburn, Maine.

## **Reverend James Marshall - Minister of Music**

**Reverend James Marshall** assumed the music ministry in 1984. Pastor Jim, as he affectionately came to be called, had been Roy Williams' friend and roommate at Barrington College in Rhode Island. After years in a pastorate, he now wished to concentrate on music. His outstanding abilities for creating, planning, and executing high quality musical programs soon became evident. Always looking for excellence, he lovingly urged and helped those involved in the music ministries to perform to the best of their ability. His skill in achieving dramatic effect gave the church services and special presentations an added touch which improved their delivery and heightened the spiritual impact. Pastor Jim, moreover, was always sincerely concerned that the music or drama itself was the outpouring of a life committed to Jesus Christ; for those he led he became a spiritual mentor and friend. He has become greatly loved by the choir, those who work with him, and the congregation.

From the Good News Singers Pastor Jim developed the Good News Ministries. In addition to singers, the ministry now included puppets, handbells, and drama, which enabled students of various abilities and talents to participate. On tour the group traveled as far west as Colorado and performed at many locations in Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Washington D.C., New York, New England, and Canada. As a result of these concerts the teenagers were invited to perform at a New York City block party and share God's love with thousands of people. Only the Lord knows the impact that our teenagers have had on thousands of listeners over the years.



*Reverend James Marshall, present Minister of Music*



*The tradition of the "Singing Christmas Tree" began in 1967*

## *The Singing Christmas Tree*



*Singing Christmas Tree in 1968, with bell choir and manger scene*

Although he had only arrived in August, in December of 1984 Pastor Jim produced the first "Sights and Sounds of Christmas" concert. The choir consisted of nearly 100 singers, and the first orchestra was formed with 33 musicians. The concert has become a classic. For the past 15 years Pastor Jim has staged an annual Christmas concert that has grown in extravagance, variety, and number of performances. From being presented three times in the beginning, it grew to eight performances in 1998 and nine are anticipated for 1999. Between four and five thousand people are attracted to the extravaganza each year from the surrounding area, which makes the concert our leading evangelical witness to the community. Much positive feedback has been received, and many who attend hear the Gospel preached for the first time.

The Chancel Choir itself has grown in depth and numbers during these years. Currently nearly 90 participate. Much to Pastor Jim's delight, younger people are being attracted to the choir. Although the Christmas concert is their main performance for the year, they have undertaken Easter programs and have joined other churches on occasion for special performances. For the last ten years the choir has participated in the Operation Hope Concert, a ministry which helps the homeless. The concert is held in St. Thomas Church in Fairfield each May, and many other church choirs in the Fairfield area participate. Of course this is all in addition to their outstanding weekly ministry at the traditional service. Their high level of competence reflects their talent and commitment, under Pastor Jim's leadership.

Music has been used throughout our 150-year history to lift praise to God and present the Gospel to the lost. ❖



*Handbells Choir*



*Good News Choir*



*Good News Choir*



*Puppets Ministry*



*Right: Chancel Choir with Handbell Choir • 1998*



*Left: Food collected from "Sights and Sounds of Christmas" • 1998*

## *Music Ministry*



*Toy soldiers "Sights and Sounds of Christmas" • 1996*



*Good News Ministries • 1991*



*Good News Ministries • 1989*

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# Chapter Seven

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## OUTREACH MINISTRIES

### Children's Ministry

**B**lack Rock has been deeply committed to reaching and teaching the children in and out of the church in the local community, spreading the good news of Jesus Christ to all. This has been accomplished through regular Sunday School programs at the church, through many children's Sunday School programs that have been taken into the neighboring community and through various ministries conducted at Black Rock for children. The early Sunday School program records are sparse but Sunday School has always had a hearty attendance.

In the early days Black Rock had a Sunday School ministry to the Protestant Orphanage that was located on the corner of Fairfield Avenue and Ellsworth Street from 1899-1935. That continued until the orphanage moved away from the Black Rock area.

A Sunday afternoon program at Father Panik Village, in Bridgeport, was conducted for many years. Regular Sunday School classes were held in the West End Youth Center and P.T. Barnum housing project. The program included Sunday School, and a large sports program for young boys. There were also activities for the girls. Bill Koerner directed for many years. He had much help from Don and Dean Borgman, George Wiles and Karen Bruner. They were instrumental in this ministry for the many years it was in place. In 1994 there was a reunion of former members of the West End Youth Center and Sunday School. Over two hundred former participants came out for this event. One young man who now practices law, remarked, "If it hadn't been for the lessons I learned as a boy at the center, I would not be where I am today."

Black Rock has been blessed over these many years with many dedicated and gifted teachers

and leaders. In the early days, all the students from primary through high school met together in Woodruff Memorial Hall for opening exercises before splitting up into classes. Cubicles were used to separate the classes, using both levels of the auditorium in the early building. We have had to add portable classrooms to handle the ever-increasing numbers in our Sunday School program even in our current building. God has continued to bless us with a wonderful Sunday School ministry.

Scripture memorization was an important part of the early Sunday School program. Some of the favorite verses taught by "Uncle" Eldridge Carpenter in Junior Church were Isaiah 41:10, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." And "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." Jeremiah 33:3 then "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." I John 5:11,12. His love for the children was evident in all he did. This same kind of love is still evident today in the many dedicated leaders and teachers who faithfully give their time to the children.

Singing was used to help the children learn the books of the Bible. Many may recall "Uncle" Eldridge Carpenter's and Jules Loxsom's work with the children in this area. It was a very successful approach. We are still using music today to teach the children of God's love.

A children's choir that ranges from first through seventh grade helps the children learn of God's love for them and is still effective in teaching truth to the little ones.



*Sunday School, 1939*



*Rev. William C. Carson  
Minister of Education • 1974-1984*



*Midget Basketball team at Westfield Youth Center, Bridgport, CT*

Black Rock has remained faithful in its desire to teach the children about God's unfathomable love and the way of salvation which He provided through the death and resurrection of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **Christian Education**

It is our goal at Black Rock to present a Biblically oriented program for each age group. We strive to consider the whole person in our attempt to meet their spiritual needs. Children make up the majority of participants in the Christian Education program but there are also many adult ministries. Our Christian Education program for adults has as its base the Adult Fellowship classes which run concurrently with our worship services.

Other Christian Education programs include Pioneer Girls, Christian Service Brigade, Nursery School, Vacation Bible School, Tadpoles, Summer Adventure, Royal Family Kids' Camp and Confident Kids.

## **Pioneer Girls**

Pioneer Girls is celebrating 43 years at Black Rock Church this year. This has been a ministry to the young girls of the church as well as an outreach ministry. Approximately 50 percent of the girls do not attend Black Rock and many aren't regular attendees at any church.

This ministry was begun in 1956 out of Ruth Carpenter's desire for a class for young girls to help them learn verses from the Bible. She asked Vi Flug if she would work with her in listening to the girls recite their verses. Pioneer Girls had just begun in a church in Wheaton, Illinois, with great success and Pastor Allaby asked the ladies if they would lead a group here at Black Rock. There have been many faithful leaders. Ruth and Vi asked Betty Camp to give the girls a child care demonstration and then to help with the third and fourth grade girls. Betty Camp eventually took over leadership in 1961 and has continued in leadership these 38 years.

Pioneer Girls meets every Monday night at the church. There are grade level divisions to keep everyone's interest: Voyagers for grades 1&2, Pathfinders for grades 3&4, Trail Blazers for

grades 5&6 and Challengers for grades 7,8&9. If the girls want to continue in Pioneer Girls after that, they are given a chance to participate in leadership training and many of the girls take advantage of this level of participation.

Pioneer Girls is involved in a camp program during the summer for one week. This camp week is held at Camp Cherith, Maine. Camping has been one of the highlights of the program. A scholarship fund has been established to help needy or deserving girls attend, in the name of the Virginia Brackett Memorial Fund.

Pioneer Girls reaches girls for Christ, training them in Christian growth and leadership skills. They have a monthly mission emphasis and many other fun activities for the girls. The girls earn badges, do crafts, play games and participate in civic activities. One such activity is making a float to participate in the annual Memorial Day parade. The float usually has a Christian message and has taken first place honors for many years. Another program that has been very successful and rewarding for participants is the PAL program. This program pairs Christian women of the church as a mentor for each girl. The women provide Christian influence and friendship that in some cases has continued as the girls have grown to maturity. Janet Neeley Kimball is just one of the girls who has gone through this program and had her life impacted by her mission exposure and involvement. She has since entered into God's service on the mission field.

## **Christian Service Brigade**

Christian Service Brigade began in Wheaton, Illinois, also. Its success sparked the development of the Pioneer Girls ministry. CSB was and is run like a military program for boys to teach them discipline and leadership, with male Christian role models. This ministry is also broken down into various groups: Battalion, grades 7-12; Stockade, grades 3-6; and Tree Climbers, first and second grades.

The goal is to give the boys a chance to learn leadership skills and help them develop spiritually, to let them work on projects, and have outdoor activities, such as hiking, camping and games.



*Pop Warner Football Team, West End Youth Center, Bridgeport, CT*



*Pioneer Girls visiting the then SIM headquarters in 1965. 1999 will mark 45 years that BRCC has sponsored Pioneer Girls*



*Pioneer Girls' Memorial Day Float won 1st Prize in 1992*

## *Outreach Ministries*



*Left: Pathfinders, Queenie Mims Night, November '98 making "God's Eye" crafts*



*Jon and Randy Danenberg, father/son Tree Climbers team*

There have been many dedicated men involved in this program. Doug Christgau was very instrumental in expanding this ministry when he came to Black Rock in 1985. Many others who were involved in early leadership were Ken MacKenzie, Fred Reichert, George Smith, Swan Swanson and Ron Carlson, just to name a few. We have been blessed with many Black Rock men who have given of their time unselfishly to make this program a success here at Black Rock.

## **Nursery School**

Black Rock first began a Nursery School on September 6, 1969, under the leadership of Ann Lowell, Mary Avery and Linda Lauchlan. The Nursery School not only accepted enrollment from children from Black Rock but also from outside the church and continues to do so today. It has always been an objective to provide a high quality program for the children. Integrated into the whole of the curriculum are basic truths combined with the best possible programming in a safe, nurturing environment. Field trips to the firehouse, a farm, and other points of interest are also offered. The early program included ages 3 and 4. The Nursery School has since been expanded, by adding a Pre-Kindergarten class in 1982 and a two-year old program in 1996.

The Nursery School had such an impact on the children that many mothers expressed interest in a Bible class. Marion Allaby began the first one in 1972 once a week on Friday mornings.

Lunch Bunch, an optional activity which extends the school day by one and a half hours three times a week, was initiated in 1993 and continues with great success.

## **Tadpoles**

Another outreach ministry from the Nursery School program is a group called Tadpoles. This group is for boys and girls ages 4 and 5 and their dads. The program began in 1989 and is open to Nursery School children as well as other 4 and 5 year-olds. This continues to be a wonderfully successful program.

## **Royal Family Kids' Camp**

This ministry began in 1995. Its thrust is to reach children in crisis. Most are, or have been, in the foster care program of the state. The goal of Royal Family Kids' Camp is to give these children



*RFKC Camper Andrew McClain  
with counselor Pete Borgman*

one-on-one interaction during their week-long stay at the camp. Counselors demonstrate God's love through their interaction with the children and one-on-one opportunities of sharing. This camp is sponsored through private and corporate donations and is staffed by many volunteers from the church.

## **Confident Kids**

This program ministers to the children of divorced or separated parents. Through Black Rock's Divorce Recovery program a need was recognized and this ministry was first begun in 1995. It has run concurrent with the Divorce Recovery program in the spring and is open to the children of attendees.

## **Vacation Bible School**

Vacation Bible School is conducted one week in the summer. It is staffed by many volunteers. It reaches into the community to share the good news of Jesus through a pre-established theme program. Arts, crafts, stories, and day trips can make up the activities. It has been tremendously successful in reaching out to over 400 children each year.

## **Summer Adventure**

Summer Adventure, launched in 1976 under the leadership of Milca Costas, is a day camp run for seven weeks. Arts and crafts, stories, music and day trips are a part of this ministry. It is open to children from the church but is also an outreach to the community reaching many children who don't regularly attend a church. It is staffed by college students and young adults. ❖



*Ron Bloom,  
Current Director of Children's Ministries*



*Left: Pathfinders, October '98  
game night*

## *Children's Ministries*



*Vacation Bible School*



*Summer Adventure*



*Carol Danenberg (Camp Director), Judy Nesbitt (Placement Coordinator) and Renee Wilmot (not pictured) formed the steering committee responsible for bringing RFKC to Black Rock Congregational Church*



*Rock climbing was added to RFKC in 1998, supervised by David Danenberg and Carole Parrs*



*Summer Adventure*

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# Chapter Eight

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## BLACK ROCK IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Looking back over the 150 years of Black Rock Congregational Church, one is impressed with the many, many changes. Our history is a kaleidoscope of developing ministries, evolving approaches, expanding facilities and, of course, changing faces.

After all, Black Rock Congregational is not a place—it is a people. We are thousands of God’s people spread over a period of time going on two centuries. There is no one living today who can claim to be part of Black Rock’s beginning and no one who can say exactly what Black Rock will look like in the future.

And that is exciting!

We have grown up to the stage where Black Rock is bigger than any of us. Perhaps more than younger fellowships, we have a deeper understanding of the truth that it is only Jesus Christ who is the Head of the Church. And although Black Rock has progressed through many changes along with the ever-shifting sands of time, we follow the One who does not fluctuate, vacillate, or alter. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

As followers of Jesus Christ, we must grow and mature. That means change. And as Black Rock Congregational Church moves into the 21st century the need to change will be constant and it is impossible to predict the ways God will change us.

But as we are changed, God does not change. And as we have served our unchanging God over our 150 years, we have discovered that in the midst of our ever-shifting forms and approaches, there are several core-aspects of Black Rock’s character which cannot change.

Let’s examine these unalterable core-aspects

which together sketch at least a rough picture of Black Rock in the 21st Century.

### **Our Commitment to the Authority of God’s Word**

Our doctrinal statement begins,

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*“We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be inspired by God and inerrant in their original writings.”*

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As a top priority, the Black Rock of the 21st Century must maintain its core-commitment to the authority of Scripture. As contemporary life becomes more and more complex, complicated and confused, it becomes more and more important for us to hold tightly to the truths of God’s Word.

Biblical preaching and teaching will always be an important centerpiece in our worship services, but as our church attendance keeps increasing, the small group Bible study settings of our Adult Fellowships, A&E Groups, and mid-week Bible studies take on greater and greater significance. These small group settings are important because they allow for the in-depth study and personal accountability to the Scriptures that we all need in order to mature as disciples of Jesus Christ.

### **The Importance of Spirit-Led Lay People**

Although we count on God to bless Black Rock in the future with the same high-quality pastoral leadership as He has provided in the past, the pastoral staff has not been the cornerstone of Black Rock’s greatness. What has set Black Rock apart in the past has not been the quality of its shepherds as much as the quality of its sheep.

# 1999 Pastoral Staff & Business Administrator



*L to R standing: Tim Popadic, Director of Student Ministries; Kevin Butterfield, Director of Middle School Ministries; Ron Bloom, Director of Children's Ministries; Rev. Jim Marshall, Minister of Music and Care; Matthew Gammon, Missions Intern; Rev. Larry Fullerton, Minister of Missions & Discipleship.  
Seated: Dr. Steve Treash, Senior Pastor; Mrs. Sally Sulik, Business Administrator*

Many of Black Rock's most effective and enduring ministries began as lay-led innovations. The teen student ministry, our missions conferences, the Black Rock Nursery School, Divorce Recovery Workshop, Men's and Women's Weekends were all inspired by spirit-led lay people—and the list could go on and on!

The church programs and ministries started and staffed by creative and dedicated Black Rock people, have saved souls, healed families and changed lives. We have seen how powerfully God works through the people He calls, leads and gifts for service. And when we all use our gifts and follow our Spirit-inspired passions for ministry, God does amazing things through us!

Without a doubt, Black Rock's past and present distinction for Spirit-led lay people will also be the basis for our future greatness.

## **The Urgency of Our Purpose**

The Black Rock Congregational Church purpose statement reads:

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*"We seek to know Jesus Christ and make Him known by making mature disciples who are equipped to glorify God through membership in His family, ministry in the church and mission to our community and beyond."*

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This statement is important because it summarizes the Biblical purpose for our church. We are not just a social club. We are not just an affinity group. We are not a theological debating society. These identities fall far short of Christ's urgent purpose for Black Rock.

Jesus calls us to glorify God by devoting ourselves to the life-transforming power of the Gospel.

Life-transformation—this is our grand purpose! First we are called to devote ourselves to following Christ by faith and then we are commissioned to live transformed lives which transform others. And because eternity hangs in the balance, the lives we touch are changed forever. Our purpose is high and it is urgent!

Over Black Rock's 150 years, thousands of men, women, boys and girls have been transformed. By God's power in the Gospel, thousands have been brought to Christ, renewed by the Holy Spirit, and sent out shining to the glory of the Father.

For Jesus commands, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

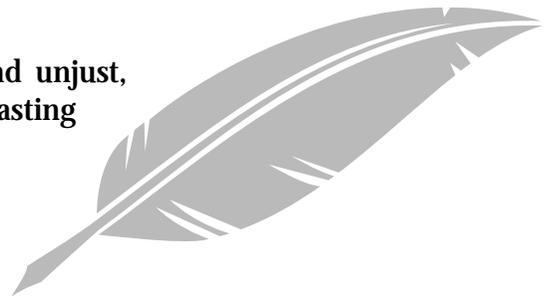
There is a bright light shining out from Black Rock and it isn't just the glow of 150 birthday candles.

No, the light of the world is Jesus. And as we hold tightly to our commitment to God's Word, follow the lead of God's Spirit and remain faithful to God's purpose for us, we will, with Him, beam brightly into the 21st Century!

Pastor Steve ❖

# Doctrinal Statement

- 1** We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as inspired by God and inerrant in the original writings, and that they are of supreme and final authority in faith and life.  
*II Timothy 3:16,17; II Peter 1:21*
- 2** We believe in one God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
*Matthew 28:19; John 14:10,13,16-17,26; II Corinthians 13:14*
- 3** We believe that Jesus Christ was begotten by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, and is true God and true man.  
*Matthew 1:18,23; Luke 1:35; John 17:11,21*
- 4** We believe that man was created in the image of God; that he sinned, and thereby incurred, not only physical death, but, also, that spiritual death which is separation from God; and that all human beings are born with a sinful nature, and, in the case of those who reach moral responsibility, become sinners in thought, word and deed.  
*Gen. 1:26-27; Jer. 17:9; Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 3:23, 5:12; Eph. 2:3*
- 5** We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice; and that all who believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood.  
*Isaiah 53:6; John 3:16; Romans 5:9,12; 6:23; I Corinthians 15:3, 21; I Peter 2:24*
- 6** We believe in the resurrection of the crucified body of our Lord, in His ascension into Heaven, and in His present life there for us, as High Priest and Advocate.  
*Luke 24:6; Acts 1:9; Hebrews 4:14; Hebrews 10:12*
- 7** We believe in "that blessed hope," the personal return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.  
*John 14: 3; Acts 1:11; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; Titus 2:13; Rev. 1: 7*
- 8** We believe that all who receive by faith the Lord Jesus Christ are born again of the Holy Spirit, and, thereby, become children of God.  
*John 1: 12; John 3:3; I Peter 1:23*
- 9** We believe that those who have been born again have everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation but are passed from death unto life; and that the Lord Jesus Christ gives unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of God's hand.  
*John 5:24; John 1:28,29*
- 10** We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and unjust, the everlasting blessedness of the saved, and the everlasting punishment of the lost.  
*Matthew 25:46; John 3: 36; Romans 14:10; Revelation 20:12,15*



# *Personal Notes and Memories*