

Roll Call of Ministers and Interims: First Congregational Church of St. Albans

(called and Installed – * **BOLD**)

Rev. Benjamin Wooster (Interim)

Rev. Publicus Virgilius Bogue (Interim)

Rev. Elijah Hedding (Interim) – 1794 – The first man to hold a “Public divine service_ in St. Albans. He came as a missionary, but remained only a few months.

Rev. Ebenezer Hibbard (Interim) p 1794 – 1796 – Organized and taught a school during the week and preached at the private houses on the Sabbath.

* **Rev. Joel Foster** – 1802 – Organized the church membership. He was called by the town and paid by the town.

* **Rev. Jonathan Nye** – January 20, 1805 – Resigned, May 21, 1809

* **Rev. Mr. Hazen** – Engaged to preach for 6 months but the society did not concur so his term ceased with the expiration of 6 months

(Rev. William Dunlap – A call was extended but he declined in March of 1811.)

Rev. Benjamin Wooster of Fairfield – (Interim), affectionately called “Father Wooster.”

* **Rev. Willard Preston** – January 7, 1812 – August 2, 1815 – offered his resignation due to poor health on June 9, 1815 which “was accomplished” on August 2nd, but he remained preaching until September.

* **Rev. Henry P. Strong** – January 22, 1817 – October 3, 1821 – Dismissed because “he was not true to the principles of Congregationalism and more in the keeping with Presbyterianism.

* **Rev. Worthington Smith** – June 4, 1823 – December 11, 1849 – ministry was marked as the most harmonious between pastorate and people, and the most lengthy ministry of the church of over a quarter of a century. He left to take a position as President of the University of Vermont.

= = Meeting House of the first church completed and dedicated on June 6, 1827.

* **Rev. Ebenezer Cutler** – March 6, 1850 – July 10, 1855 – dismissed to accept a call to a larger church in Worcester, MA.

* **Rev. David Dobie** – October 1, 1856 – died, February 18, 1857

* **Rev. Jeremiah E. Rankin** – Was the supply since the death of Reverend Dobie. He was given a call and accepted, beginning his duties on June 24, 1857. The membership increased

significantly, during his ministry. Remembered for composing the hymn “God Be With You ‘Til We Meet Again.” – resigned in 1889, leaving to receive a degree of Doctor of Divinity and accept the position of President of a college in Washington, D.C.

= = 1862 – *Decision was made to destroy the first church building and build a larger church structure. Second building completed in 1863 and dedicated on March 7, 1869.*

(Rev. G. B. Spaulding of Vergennes – was called, but declined.)

* **Rev. Ezra Byington** engaged as acting pastor on April 5, 1863 – October 1863

* **Rev. J. Q. Bittenger** of Yarmouth, ME – December 29, 1864 – August 18, 1867 – resigned due to ill health.

* **Rev. H. C. Riggs** – was visiting friends in St. Albans and consented to preach one Sunday. He was so well liked that he was asked to become acting pastor. He began his duties on February 25, 1869 – September 17, 1871 – resigned

* **Rev. Charles Van Norden** of Beverly, MA – June 25, 1873 – May 2, 1883 – resigned to accept call of North Congregational Church – Springfield, MA. His leave was said to be heartbreaking for the St. Albans church. He accepted the position of President of Elmira College at Elmira, New York.

(Rev. G. E. Hall of Vergennes – was called but declined)

* **Rev. J. Augustus MacColl** of Saylesville, R.I. – began ministry December 9, 1883, but was not installed until May 14, 1884. He saw the church through a great deal of repair and work. – December 4, 1889 – accepted a call of North Congregational Church of New Bedford, MA

* **Rev. D. Sage Mackay** newly here from Glasgow Scotland. It is noted that he appealed to young and old and attendance grew substantially. On one Sabbath, 51 were united with the church. Average attendance at mid-week service was 80. The Sabbath morning service averaged 450 and the evening meeting was from 375 to 400 in attendance. – February 26, 1890 – resigned on October 4, 1894, after everything possible was done, by the membership, to induce him to remain.

= = *Church building destroyed by fire on November 26, 1891. Church rebuilt and completed in 1894 – first service held March 11, 1894 – dedicated June 20, 1894.*

* **Rev. Andrew Gillison** – January 31, 1895 – Described as a good thinker, preaching acceptably, until “the ties of his fatherland proved stronger than his love for the new country.” November 24, 1896 – resigned and sailed back to Scotland.

* **Rev. J. Romeyn Danforth** of Mystic, CT – December 1897 – 1901 resigned.

* **Rev. John L. Sewall** of North Brookfield, Ma.– 1901 – Resigned 1904 – Because of his large family, the church purchased a house at 53 High Street for a Parsonage. The parsonage was later sold. One of his daughters, Caroline Sewall became a missionary, serving in China. The other daughter, Katherine Sewall Austin became one of the most active members of the church and Director of Religious Education.

* **Rev. William Parkyn Jackson** – 1904 – 1911 – Known for outstanding work with young people, both girls and boys. Mrs. Stewart Stranahan established a fund, enabling Rev. Jackson to organize and supervise the “Stranahan Club,” for young people, located on North Main Street. Also during his pastorate, music became an important part of worship, which featured a choir and musicians.

* **Rev. Silas W. Anthony** of Nova Scotia – 1912 – 1919 – accepted a call to serve his country, during his pastorate, during the Great World War. In his absence, the pulpit was filled from various places. Finally the Rev. Ferrin came for approximately 6 months. Rev. Anthony returned after his military service, remaining for a short time before he served his resignation, believing that he “could do greater work for his God elsewhere.”

(Rev. Ferrin – 1918 – called but declined)

* **Rev. Stanley Cummings** – 1920 – 1925 – was a young and energetic worker who married a St. Albans girl, Miss Louise Greene, further endearing him to the congregation, who regretted to accept his resignation. During his pastorate, the church was reorganized.

= = First Congregational Church and Society became one entity in 1922, as “The First Congregational Church of St. Albans, Vermont, Incorporated.”

* **Rev. Graydon Brown** from Unadilla, NY – October 1925 – June 1930 – considered a friend to one and all, young and old, regardless of creed or social standing. Church attendance greatly increased, as did the budget. Benevolence giving increased and a double quartet of signers was engaged. An endowment fund was established in connection with it. He accepted a call from the larger, Grace Congregational Church, in Rutland.

* **Rev. Duncan Livingston** from Essex Junction, VT– 1930 – January 1952 – accepted a call from a church in Lake Park, Florida. – A house was purchased at 14 Barlow Street for a parsonage for Rev. Livingston. His pastorate of 21 years, was the second longest in the history of the church. His tenure was considered as one of general good feeling and steady progress. The church building, fallen into disrepair during the depression was put into good condition. The pulpit platform was rearranged and a new memorial pulpit was funded by Messrs. Leo Wilson and Charles Fonda. The brass cross in memory of Mr. W. D. Chandler, who had been a trustee for 25 years was given by his daughter Miss Alice Chandler. A pair of Russian brass candlesticks was given by Deacon E.A. Hyatt. A group of men supplied the silk United States and Christian flags. The maroon drapes were also given. The house and land located adjacently, on Bank Street, were purchased, and the house was “finely refurbished” as a parsonage. The Barlow Street Parsonage was sold and the endowment fund was done away with, by a change in the by-

laws. Due to ill health, Rev. Livingston was forced to retire from this church and minister in Florida.

Rev. John T. Theodore – (Interim) – Jan to Oct 1952 -during this time, five additional classrooms were completed in the basement.

* **Rev. Robert J. Bills** from Uxbridge, MA– 1952 – 1957 – Known and admired for his dedication to Bible studies and support of the congregations social Groups, or Women’s Fellowship. Homer Burnell Club, Fireside Club, Pilgrim Youth Fellowship and Sunday School.

Rev. John T. Theodore – (Interim) – 1957 – 1959

* **Rev. Richard F. Beyor** – 1959 – 1962 – Thought of as a benevolent Minister and a friend to everyone, encouraging Sunday School and youth Bible Study. Gave Bibles to all youth, upon joining the church. During his pastorate, the parsonage home was deconstructed. The new, and current, parsonage and church addition of Sunday School classrooms were built.

Rev. K. Y. Jacob – (Interim) – Sept to Dec 1963

* **Rev. Gerald E. Yost** – 1963 – dismissed 1975 – a difference of religious view between the Minister and many of the congregation, became evident during Rev. Yost’s tenure. Newer church members, desiring to link the church with the CCCC, drafted and sent a letter of resignation to the Champlain Association of UCC. The UCC tabled the letter and did not act upon it. The church became critically divided on the basic issues of religious beliefs and doctrine. In 1975, an opposition was organized and new officers elected and installed. Following a meeting and vote of the church members, the minister and followers withdrew to begin the Community Covenant Church in St. Albans.

Rev. Theodore B. Hadley – (Interim) – 1975 – 1976

Deacon and Lay Minister, Harris Leavitt – occasional services – 1975 – 1976

* **Rev. R. Ward Wilson** – June 1, 1976 to 1990. Rev. Wilson was successful in rebuilding a broken church membership over his pastorate. The Sunday School grew from a handful to close to 100 youngsters. The membership seemed to increase with each church service. Rev. Wilson and his wife Jane Cotton Wilson were very energetic in the dedication to church stability and youth participation. Mrs. Wilson continued with her education to become an ordained Minister, preaching in a neighboring town. When Reverend Wilson retired and the family moved to Wells River, Vermont, Reverend Mrs. Wilson continued her work with Vermont, women’s affairs and with the Vermont Conference.

* **Rev. Thomas Wesley Wright** from Malone, New York – 1991 – 1995 – Bringing high energy to the pulpit and to the church, many repairs and projects were undertaken, during his tenure. Some of the members enjoyed the enthusiasm that Rev. Wright brought, and others thought it too much. Rev. and Mrs. Wright’s hearts remained with the Adirondack mountains. Adirondack retreats at the Wright home, for the congregation families, were refreshing and

invigorating. Mrs. Wright eventually left St. Albans, returning to live in their mountain home, with Rev. Wright trying to commute between his home there and St. Albans, to fulfill his pastoral commitments. Rev. Wright submitted his resignation, returning to his family and to his prison pastorate.

Rev. Cindy Hafer-Robinson – (Interim)

* **Rev. Linda Kay Stone** – 1996 – 1999

Rev. Howard K. Stearns – (Interim) – 1999

Mary Beth Hutchinson – (Interim) – 1999 – 2000

* **Rev. Mark Kennedy** – 2000 – 2003

* **Rev. Judith S. Kennedy** – 2000 – July, 2014 – Rev. Kennedy ministered to the church, bringing a sense of youth and family to the church, as her two children grew and became active in youth activities and in teaching Sunday School. Reverend Kennedy was active, ministering at the Vermont National Guard and supporting the families of deployed soldiers. She resigned her ministry, June 30, 2014, to return to her home in Illinois, to care for her medically ailing parents.

Rev. Charles M. Purinton, Jr. – (Interim) – July 20, 2014 to August 28, 2016.

* **Rev. Russell Duncan** – September 1, 2016 to May 31, 2018. Following discussions of leadership, community involvement, general direction of the church, and declining membership, Rev. Duncan submitted his resignation, moving closer to family.

Pastor Gary O’Gorman – (Interim) – September 1, 2018 and continuing as of Spring 2020

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This list was initially compiled, in 2011, by referencing “A Centennial History of St. Albans, Vermont” by Henry K. Adams, “Gathered Sketches,” by Edmund Steele, “First Congregational Church of St. Albans, Vermont, Sesqui-Centennial celebration service bulletin, “Memorial of the First Congregational Church,” by Frank L. Greene, excerpts from the St. Albans Messenger, by Clare Sheppard, and other various church documents, notes and minutes, compiled, updated, and submitted here, by Linda D. and Wade A. Smith, church Co-Historians.