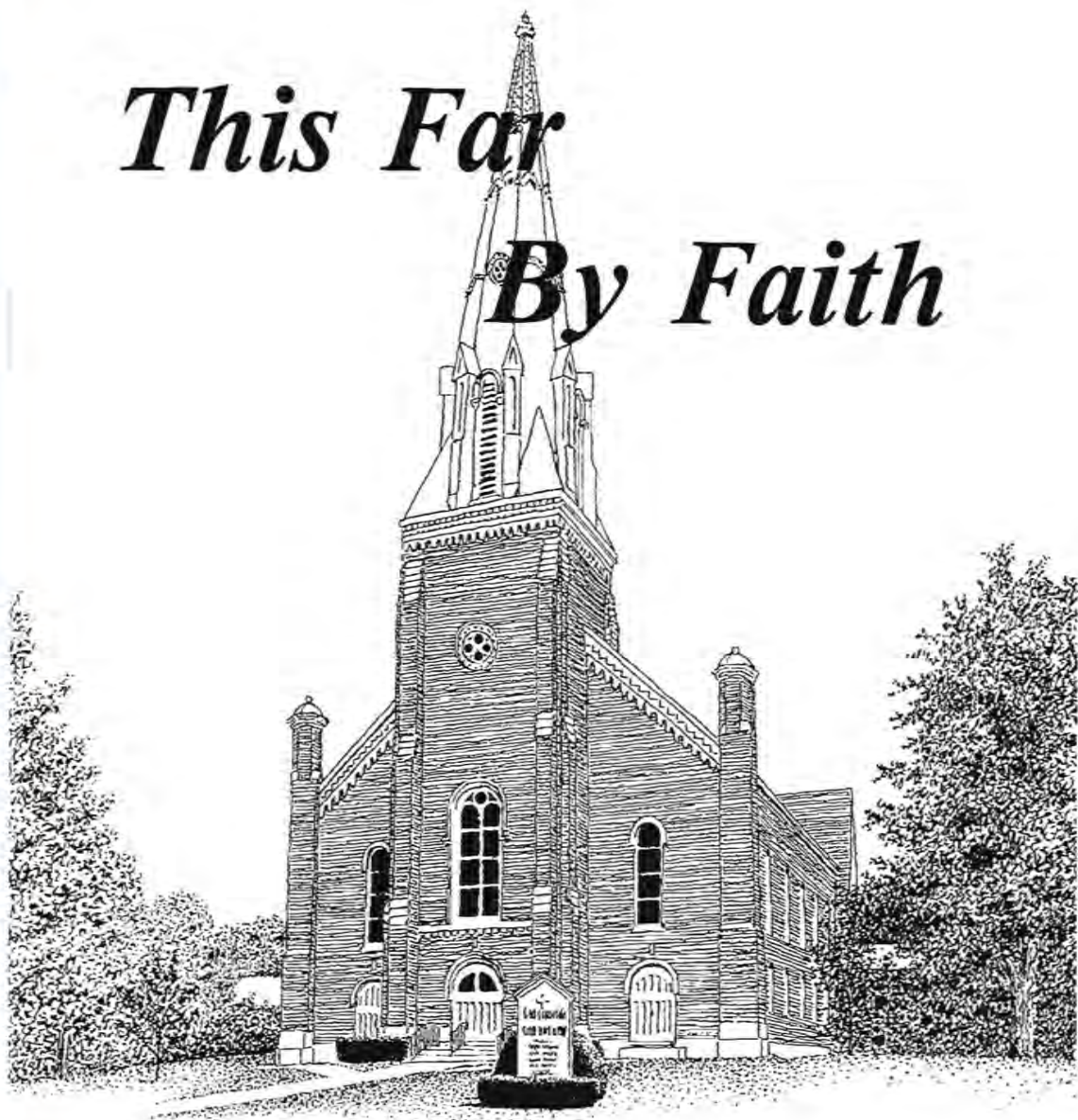


# *This Far By Faith*



*... One Century Ago ...*  
*The Sanctuary*  
*of*  
*Grace Congregational*  
*United Church of Christ*  
*1892-1992*



## The Sanctuary As We Know It

Great churches are places that dominate the landscape, often visible at great distance. As such, they are a pervading influence giving meaning and shape to the life of the people. That influence comes through beauty of design that is a reflection of the grace of God, through worship, music, and the arts in which the soul is touched and lifted, and through program and ministry in which the hard realities of life are faced and responded to in meaningful ways.

Grace Congregational United Church of Christ is truly a vital and relevant church and has the potential for becoming a great church.



*Rev. David J. Dean, M.Div.*  
1972-

The Sanctuary is a living memorial to the people of vision and generosity who have gone before us in developing our place of worship.

In our centennial year of meeting in the "sanctuary as we know it", the vision remains incomplete. That is our task and our calling to make the Sanctuary truly a meeting place of the holy and the world in which we live.

As we prepare for the future, I commend this booklet compiled by G. Robert Kenney to your understanding of the rich history of Grace Church.

THE REV. DAVID J. DEAN  
*Senior Minister*  
January, 1992

## **Grace Church Sanctuary . . . . One Century Ago . . . .**

It was the year 1890, only thirty years since this Sanctuary was completed and dedicated. However, in order to reflect changing times, the Church Fathers, representing the opinion of many parishioners, felt the need to have the interior redesigned. The project would also mean a general redecorating throughout, including the Chapel, then located beyond the Sanctuary above the main floor.



*Governor John Mead*

Led by Governor John Mead and the Honorable Henry Field, a committee of fourteen church officials was appointed to draw-up plans for the extensive renovation aimed to modernize the building for their generation and generations to come.



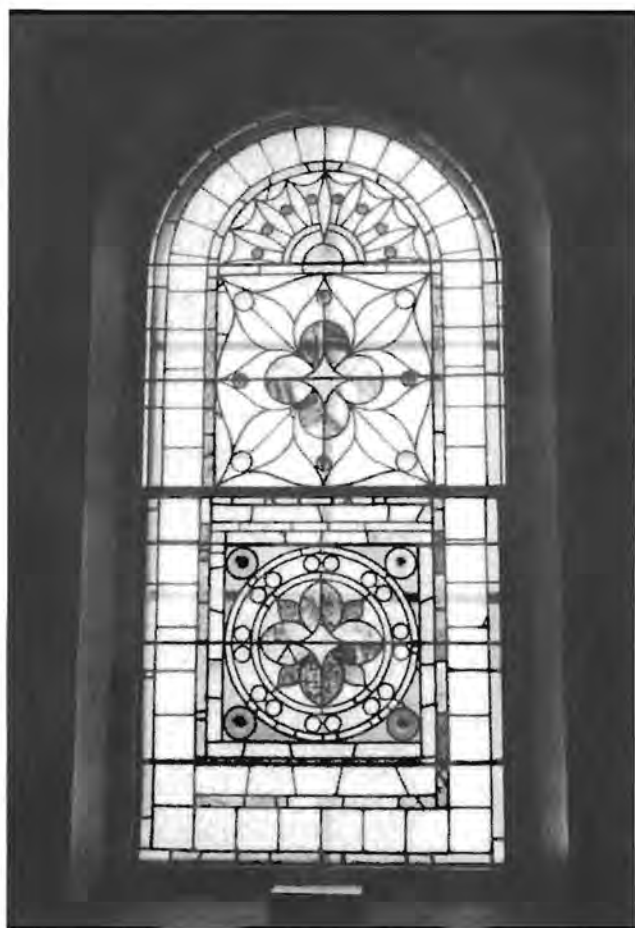
*Honorable Henry Field*



*Brigadier General Milo Lyman*

By April 1891, the substantial sum of \$10,000 had been pledged and the big reconstruction job was about to begin. The committee members were fortunate to have their own churchman, Brigadier General Milo Lyman, Retired (Civil War), take charge of the entire project. It proved to be more than a fortuitous choice.

All during the summer and fall of 1891, the Sanctuary was in disarray. Every clear glass window in the Sanctuary and Chapel was removed, to be replaced with stained glass as we see them today, designed by one George Bennett of Manchester, Vermont. Appointed committees made several trips (by train) to witness Bennett's style of work at the Elliott Church in Newton, Massachusetts, before signing a contract with Redding Baird & Co. of Boston for the new leaded glass windows.





Better lighting was imperative, so the old gas chandelier was taken down from the center of the ceiling in the Sanctuary. It was replaced with the latest technology: the electric light. The contract was awarded to the Rutland Electric Light Co. for fixtures, wiring and electric power.

Meanwhile, the new balconies, front and rear, were being built. They required many board feet of new lumber which created sawdust and wood shavings throughout the whole area. Carpenters and their helpers swarmed over the church interior, together with cabinet-makers who applied their skills to create the reverse curves of the new front balcony, which provided a sloping loft big enough to seat a thirty-six voice choir and the quartet.







Imagine the calculations required to match the existing decor of the side balconies to bring them into perfect alignment behind the new pulpit bench.

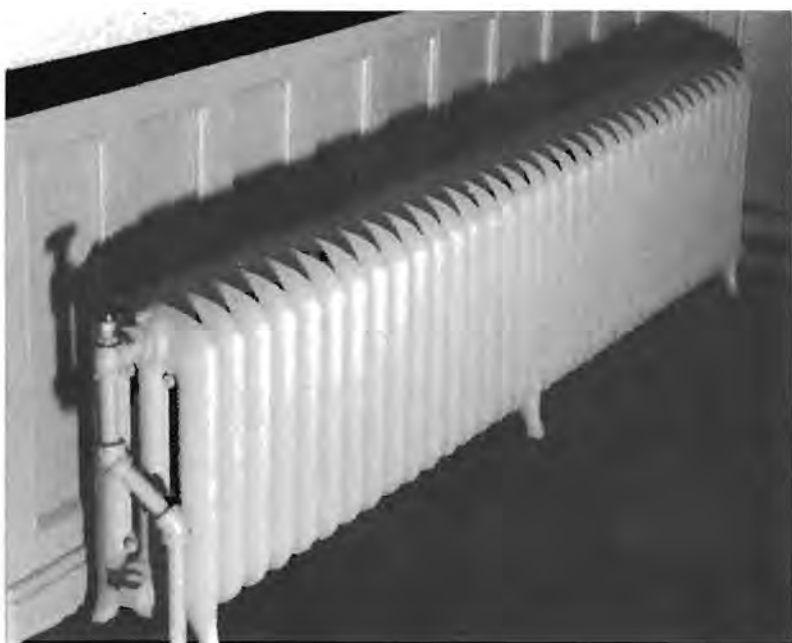


About mid-summer of 1891, the Chapel roof was being completely rebuilt, as the church parlor, the dining-room, kitchen and rest-rooms were being redecorated.

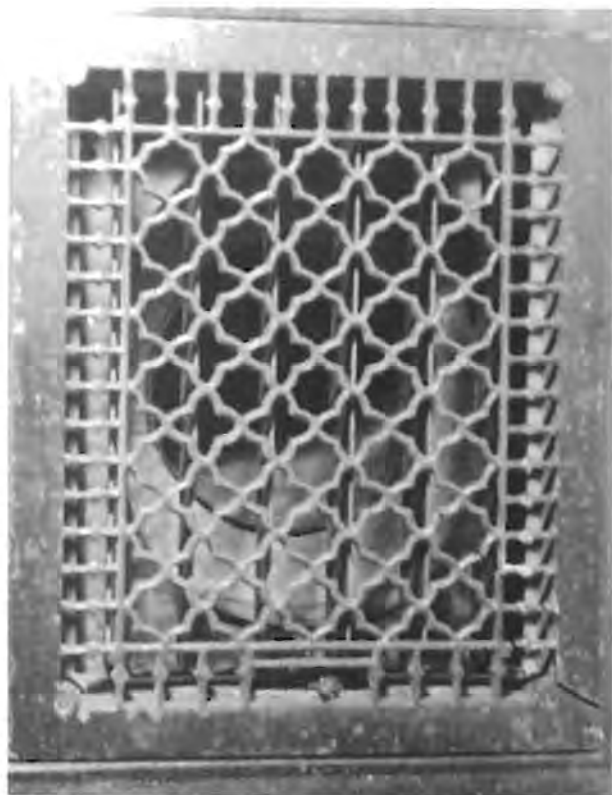
The next item on the agenda was a new heating system. Adding to the dust, dirt and confusion was the removal of nine small chimneys from the roofs of both the Sanctuary and Chapel, which, when used with woodburning space heaters and badly rusted stove pipes, created the worst fire hazard in the city. Fortunately, the steeple bell was also the city fire alarm.



Two new big chimneys were then built between the Sanctuary and Chapel to take care of three new coal-fired, hot water furnaces. Cast-iron radiators and a labyrinth of piping were installed for both the Sanctuary and Chapel.



Seven hot-air registers, no longer needed, were removed from the aisles of the Sanctuary and the big square holes in the floor were sealed off. By the next year (1892) this spacious spiritual home could be warmed to 80° when, outside, the temperature could drop to zero.





The steeple, swaying dangerously in high winds, with anchors at the base loose and shifting, demanded immediate attention. Strong and expensive staging had to be built, ascending to the steeple base where forty-eight marble cap stones, each weighing 300 pounds, had to be removed and relaid with new mortar. Then, custom-made steel anchor bolts were added to secure the steeple base. With this repair work completed, greater challenges were waiting.

Like most repair jobs, there are always obstacles standing in the way. Before the bracing timbers could be passed up through the base of the steeple, the entire organ, which occupied the big room behind the present Memorial Window, had to be dismantled pipe by pipe and moved out of the way, together with its bellows, wind-chests, and its beautiful organ case. The original builders of this organ, E. G. Hook & Co. of Worcester, Massachusetts, sent a qualified crew to Rutland by train to handle this major relocation of the organ.





Next on the agenda was the necessary bracing of the one hundred eighty-nine foot-high steeple. Massive timbers had to be sawed to specific sizes, then hauled from the railroad, up Washington Street to the church by several spans of horses, pulling large-wheeled wagons. These hard-working steeds had to be fed, watered and rubbed-down near the church, while other spans of horses and wagons went to haul more timbers.



The cacophony of sounds in 1891 was different from today. Coupled with the banging of hammers, the whiz of saws and the shouts of workmen at the church, were the raucous whistles from the steam locomotives down the hill at the new railroad.

By now the organ had been removed from the upper room under the steeple; the big front window (facing Court Street) had also been taken out. Then the real work began. Ropes, pulleys, horsepower and manpower were employed to pass each huge timber  $8'' \times 12'' \times 35'$  long, up through the big open window case, to be anchored to the inside of the steeple. When each one of the new timbers had been set in place, it was bolted to the timbers already there, thus providing this high steeple with double vertical bracing, which is still sturdy and solid 100 years later.



During the steeple repair many workmen were simultaneously finishing up both the front and rear balconies, wiring the church for electric lights and installing radiators, plumbing and furnaces for the new heating system. The gracefully-shaped rostrum below the choir loft was almost completed; the new organ chamber behind the choir loft was nearly ready for the return of the organ builders.



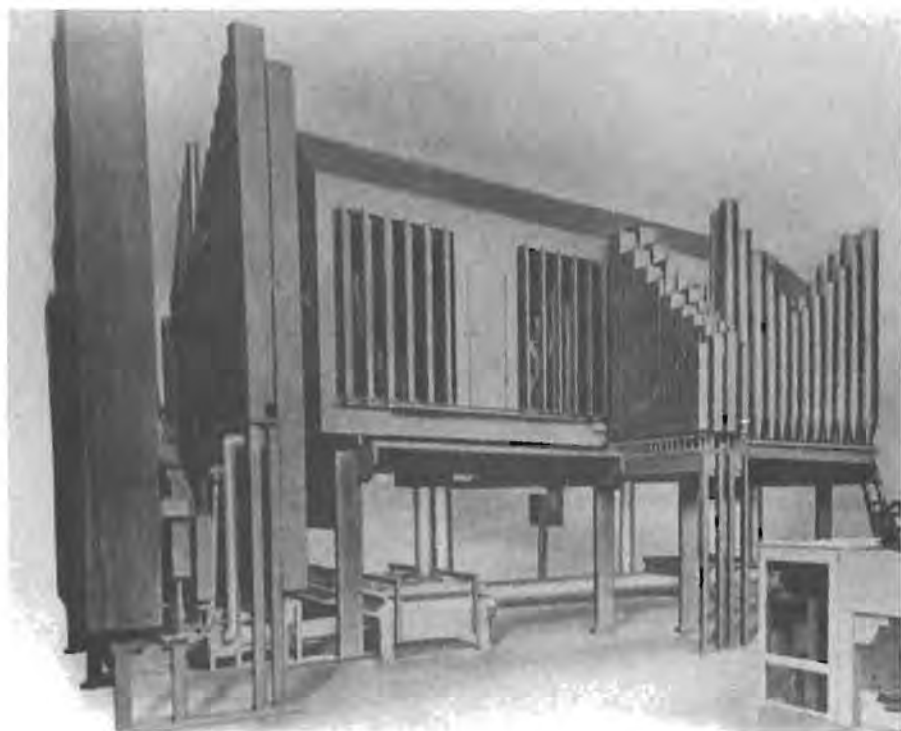
With the fall of 1891 fast approaching, the new windows were being installed in the Sanctuary and Chapel . . . fifty awesomely beautiful and inspiring stained glass windows.



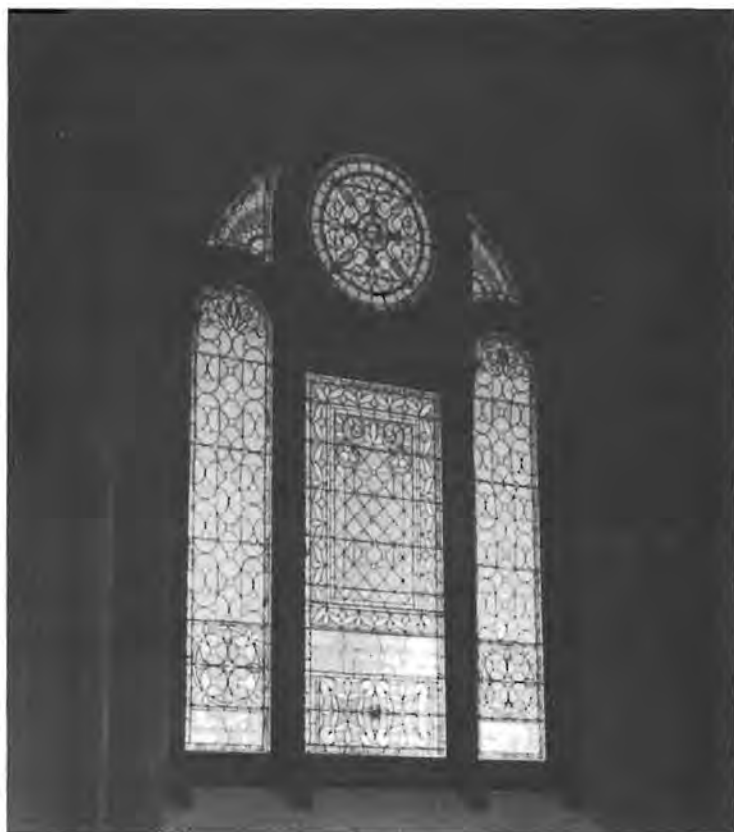


Once again the crew of organ builders arrived by train from Worcester, Massachusetts, to begin the installation of the organ into its new chamber. The original casework fit perfectly into the existing front arch, just above the choir loft. The organ was now in a modern location within the Sanctuary. Bellows and windchests were re-assembled behind the casework, just as if it were a new instrument.

The several thousand pipes had to be cleaned and tuned to perfect pitch but not until all the dirt and dust had been cleared from the Sanctuary. Only at this point could the painting and decorative ornamentation of the Sanctuary begin.



Finally, the stained glass Memorial Window, a generous and inspired gift from the women's societies of the church, was installed at the west end of the Sanctuary to seal-off the old organ chamber. This window remains as a tribute to the first five ministers: The Reverend Samuel Williams, The Reverend Heman Ball, The Reverend Charles Walker, The Reverend William Mitchell and The Reverend Silas Aiken. Their ministries cover a span of years from 1788 to 1863.



With Christmas 1891 close at hand, Chief Engineer, General Milo Lyman, saw that no one should slow down until every detail was taken care of: the placement of the newly-built Bible stand, the new pulpit, the flower stands, the pulpit benches, the Baptismal font and new carpets in the Sanctuary.

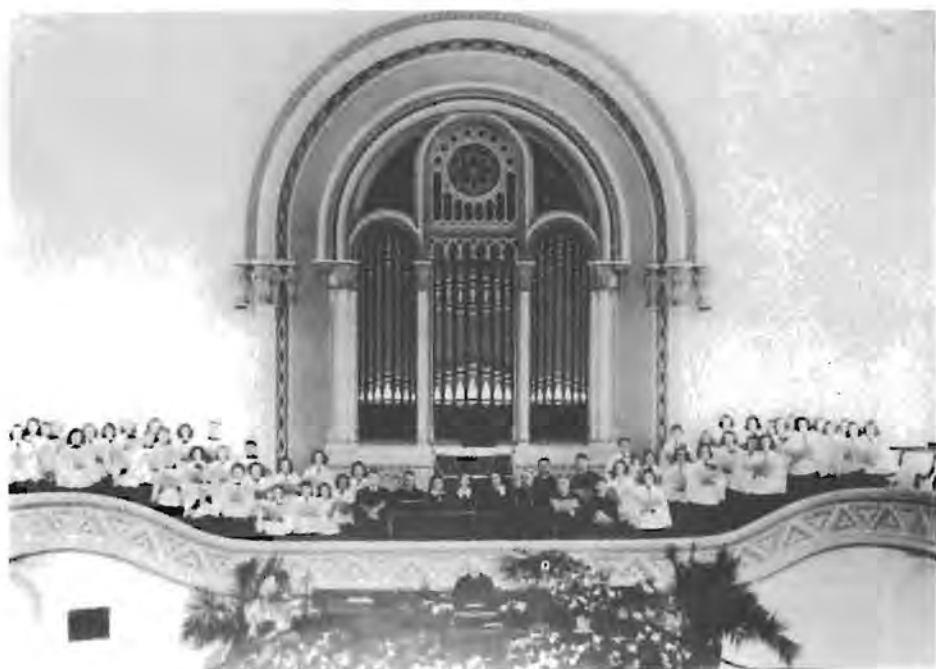


The eight-month renovation of the Sanctuary and Chapel was completed in December of 1891 at a total cost of \$13,600, with only a \$2000 remaining debt. Committees of the church promptly raised funds to retire the balance.

On Wednesday evening January 13, 1892, the Church Family returned with excitement and pleasure to view and worship in their beautifully refurbished Sanctuary and Chapel.







The re-dedication service took place with The Reverend George Phillips at the new pulpit. The Director of Music, J. Harry Engalls, presided at the organ directing the voices filling the new choir loft.



As the church members of this century have maintained and glorified this House of Worship, they are surely "Keeping the Faith" with all those who have gone before. This church structure clearly reflects the needs of our time and prepares the way for the generations of the approaching twenty-first century.



*Grace Church Sanctuary in 1991*

*Research and photographs provided by G. Robert Kenney*

***On This  
100th Anniversary  
“Praise God  
From Whom  
All Blessings Flow”***