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The Second Congregational
Church in Shelburne
(located in the village of
North Shelburne)

The Second Congregational Church in
Lechusford (located in the village of
North Lechusford).

Though Congregational in name,
this church aims to minister to all
Protestants, regardless of creed or sect.
The aim of the church from its early
days up to the present time has been
to keep as true as possible to the prac-
tice and teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ
and not to emphasize denomination.

Indeed the growth of the church in
membership by no means gives a true
indication of its real progress, nor does
the number of its members give a true
means of judging the number of its
worshippers. At least a third of the
professing Christians who are more or
less actively engaged in the church

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work and support are members of churches
in other denominations.

In this brief history of the Second
Congregational Church of Shelburne the
writer is especially indebted for his
material to an article prepared by the
late Rev. H. E. Brown and read before
the Andover Conference of Congregational
Churches in the Eliot Church, Lowell,
Mass., Wednesday, April 26, 1876.

The Second Congregational Church
of Shelburne was organized April 27,
1827 by a council composed of the fol-
lowing clergymen - the Rev. Nathaniel
Lawrence, the Rev. Wilkes Allen, the Rev.
Nathaniel Whitman, and the Rev. Jacob
Loggin. There were thirteen original
members in the church, all of whom
came out from the First Congrega-
tional Church of Shelburne, which is

now popularly known as "the Unitarian Church" of Belhusford Center, but which retains its former, and only, corporate name.

From the time of its organization until Nov. 21, 1827 the church was without a settled pastor; but, during this period, for nearly two years the Rev. Wilkes Allen supplied the pulpit, preaching for the First Congregational Church of Belhusford half of the time and for this church the other half.

On Nov. 21, 1827 the Rev. John A. Albro, who was a graduate of Yale College and of Andover Theological Seminary, was ordained to the ministry and installed as pastor of the church soon after his graduation from the Seminary. He thus became its first pastor.

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His coming to the church was an instance of the appearance of "the right man at the right time." A man of vigorous intellect, strong faith, steadfast adherence to truth, he came at the time when so many of our congregational churches were shaken and even divided by the Unitarian controversy. Under the ministry of Dr. Albro the church, we believe, was established "upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ, himself being the chief corner-stone."

In 1830 because of a decision of the courts of Massachusetts that the pew-holders (unless there was some specific restriction to the contrary) could control the pulpit, the church with its pastor was obliged to leave the church building in Middlesex

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village, for the reason that the greater number of pews had passed into the hands of the Unitarian element. This body of staunch Congregationalists then began to worship in a hall near the church building known as Wood's Hall. Mr. Albro continued to be pastor of the church, conducting the services in the hall, until 1832 when he was dismissed to accept a call to Fitchburg, Mass. From Fitchburg Mr. Albro went to the First Congregational Church of Cambridge, where he remained until his death. During his ministry twenty-eight persons united with the church - fifteen of these came by letter and thirteen joined on profession of their faith.

The church continued to worship in Wood's Hall for nearly four years after the dismissal of Mr. Albro. The Rev.

Mr. Jones of Dedham preached for two years as a stated supply and other clergymen and theological students supplied irregularly.

In 1836 the church and the society connected with it began to worship in the "old red school-house" in the village of North Lechford. Here the pulpit was filled for a time by students from Andover Theological Seminary. Well might it have been said at this time of the prospects of the church that "the morning cometh; also the night"; the morning, in that there was a probability that a house of worship would soon be built; the night, in that the church was reduced by death and dismission to less than twenty members! With no regular house of worship, no sabbath school, no prayer-meeting the church had

much from within to discourage her; but from without, as well, there was little to cheer and sustain. Very little money could be raised for the support of religious worship, Sabbath desecration was common, and the railing and blaspheming disciples of Thomas Paine and Abner Kneeland multiplied. The few sheep, however, were not left without a keeper. "He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand and walketh in the midst of the seven candlesticks" watched over them.

In the spring of 1838 one young man was converted and soon a weekly prayer meeting was started. Though small at this time, often with only two or three present at the prayer-meetings, the church seemed endued with "the power of an endless life." The two or three never ew-

tertained even the shadow of a doubt that their numbers and the general interest would increase through the blessing of God. And the blessing came. The church grew in numbers and in grace. And in September of that year a house of worship was completed from which the Orthodox Congregational denomination could not be excluded.

Aug. 1, 1839 Mr. B. F. Clark was ordained to the ministry and installed as pastor of the church. He was a graduate of Miami College in Ohio. He studied theology at Lane Seminary where he enjoyed the instruction of Synan Beecher and he supplemented this with six or seven months study at Andover from which place he came to North Chelmsford. After the settlement of Mr. Clark, the prayer-

meeting which had been started and sustained by the faithful few was adopted as the regular church prayer-meeting. This has ever continued to be an efficient help to the work of the pastor.

Like his predecessor sound in faith, Mr. Clark, the second pastor was an able and faithful man with much practical good sense and a good knowledge of human nature. He soon saw the condition and wants of his people and set himself to bring about the desired results. There were representatives of seven different denominations attendant on his ministry, since there was no other place of worship in the village. Yet without the sacrifice of any principle or the compromise of any doctrine or

practice maintained by the churches of our denomination, he labored wisely and successfully in uniting persons of various denominations in the work and service of our common Master.

In the spring of 1840, the first year of Mr. Clark's ministry the church was blessed with a most interesting and powerful revival of religion, the first general revival ever enjoyed by the church. The converts were chiefly men and women in middle life. The methods employed were - 1st, earnest preaching of the truth of God by the pastor and, 2nd, believing, persevering prayer and strenuous efforts on the part of the Christians. In 1842 the church experienced another revival of religious interest which, in its general features, was much like

the first. The years 1854, 1857, and 1866-67 were characterized also by special interest among the Christians and by a marked increase in the church membership, especially from the members of the Sunday-School.

On January 31, 1869 Rev. Clark was regularly dismissed and recommended by council, and thus terminated his pastorate. During his ministry of twenty-nine and a half years one hundred and five persons joined themselves to the church in profession of their faith; seventy-seven united with the church by letter; thus making a total of one hundred and eighty-two.

The third pastor of the church was the Rev. Daniel Phillips who was born in Swansea, South Wales, England. His religious activity dates from his

early years. When only twelve or thirteen years old he united with the Independent church and at the age of sixteen he began to preach in Dunmowthelive, England. Coming to America in 1843 he preached among the Welsh in Pittsburgh until 1851. In 1856 he was graduated from Amherst College and in 1859 he completed the course of study at Andover Theological Seminary. Ten years later, in 1869, Mr. Phillips began preaching in North Chelmsford and in June 1870 he was installed as pastor of the church. "The ministry of Mr. Phillips, though brief, was eminently successful. He excelled as a close and pungent preacher, presenting divine truth with uncommon clearness and distinction, and enforcing it with power upon the conscience and heart of

the hearer. The fruit of his labors appeared in additions to the membership of the church and with marked growth in spirituality and efficiency in Christian work.

In May 1874 Mr. Phillips resigned because of ill health and in February 1876 he was ecclesiastically dismissed and recommended to the churches by the council that installed his successor.

The fourth pastor of the church was the Rev. James Lewis Merrill who came to his duties in North Belchamps from South Royalston, Mass. He began comparatively late in life to gain his education, having reached nearly his twentieth birthday with only rudimentary instruction. After a years service in the army, during

the Civil War, in the Summer of 1863 he entered Hebron Academy and remained two years. His college course was taken at Waterville (now led by University) and Hartmouth colleges. After three years spent in teaching, he studied six months at Andover Theological Seminary, when he was ordained in 1874 in South Royalton as an evangelist. He was installed pastor of the Second Congregational Church in Shelburne Feb. 2, 1876.

Under Dr. Merrill's leadership the church increased in efficiency and interest. The congregations were good-sized and interested; the church building was altered and improved; and the work seemed only well started when he resigned his position as pastor of this church to ac-

left a parson in Arlington.

The spirit of the church, both in its inner condition and in its attitude towards its pastor may be seen from the resolutions which were presented to Mr. Merrill when he retired from the pastorate of the church. They felt that they "were becoming more interested in the sacred scriptures... that his fervent, tender way of conducting the weekly church prayer-meeting made (them) love it more and more, and by his manly example of our holy religion before this community, thoughts and feelings were roused that will not easily be forgotten."

The pastoral relation was dissolved by a council called for that purpose Dec. 19, 1877.

From 1877 to 1899 the church

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and society chose to engage acting pastors year by year rather than have installed pastors. This method, however, gave opportunity for continued service as the acting pastor for one year was the usual choice of the church for the next year. During this period there have been four acting pastors, - the Rev. William P. Alcott, who served the church from 1878 to 1880; the Rev. J. H. Vincent, who served from 1881 to 1883; the Rev. Henry L. Hutchins who was pastor from 1884 to 1889; and the Rev. S. Ingersoll Briant who preached from 1889 to 1898.

Mr. Alcott first preached for the church March 17, 1878. His ministry showed the usual church growth and life. A very genial, christian man, he imparted a cheerful,

light social coloring to the church and
 maintained a spirit of true worship.
 During his ministry the Rev. Benj. F.
 Clark, whom Mr. Clott, in the funeral
 address characterized as the min-
 ister of this church, passed away, after
 having served and supported her for
 many years both as pastor and pa-
 rishoner.

Mr. Clott's ministry terminated
 in 1880.

During Mr. Vincent's pastorate,
 special attention was paid to sing-
 ing in the social services. The spiri-
 tual growth of the church was not
 great. From North Belhusford he
 went to the congregational church
 at Belhusford Center. During his
 pastorate the membership of the
 church was eighty, - with twenty-

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three male, and fifty-seven female
members.

The successor to Rev. Vincent, the
Rev. Henry L. Hutchins, who came
to the church recommended as a man
"of a deep, christian character, and
earnest, devoted, and self-sacrificing
in his work." That he maintained
with this people his high christi'an
standard is shown by the resolutions
which were drawn up when his fac-
torate closed. These said that we
reluctantly accept his resignation
and feel that in parting with him
we part with one who, during the
five years he has been with us has
been uniting in his efforts to up-
build the cause of Christ in this
place." The church, during his fac-
torate, paid special attention to evan-

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gelistical work, holding meetings on the outskirts of the village and holding many cottage prayer-meetings. These, however, did not lessen the usual church activity. The number of members remained about the same. During this pastorate the Y. P. S. C. E. was started in the church.

Sept 24, 1889 it was voted "to authorize Mr. George Hyde to recommend to the Society to extend a call to the Rev. S. D. Briant to become acting pastor of this church." The most important events during Mr. Briant's pastorate were the hiring of the meeting-house, which had been used for fifty-five years, and the erection soon after of a beautiful house of worship to take its place.

The "old church" stood on the

South-west side of Main Street about half-way up the rise of ground in front of Mr. George E. Davis's mill and from the railroad tracks. The fire caught from an overturned oil lamp which had been set on the floor of the store, located under the church, for heating purposes. Almost everything was lost, except the Bible, hymn-book, pulpit furniture, and a number of cushions and hymn-books which were in the pews.

The new church stands as a monument to Mr. Briant's perseverance, good judgment, and fine taste. It is difficult to think that the work could have been carried on more successfully than under his direction. Elected chairman of the building committee he took steps

to raise the necessary money and personally superintended the building of the church. Great praise is also due to the Society and all interested in the church for the unselfish and enterprising work put forth in raising the necessary money and to all the friends who so generously contributed. The building committee consisted of the Rev. S. I. Briant, Stewart Mackay, George Hyde, A. Du. Greene, and Royal S. Ripley.

At the annual meeting of the Society January 1898 Mr. Briant decided to have his name presented so the pastorate was again made vacant.

Although not appearing often in the church records the Ladies Social Circle, or Ladies Aid Society flourished.

for twenty-five years from 1869. This society was a true support to the church especially in social and financial matters. Thousands of dollars were raised and expended by these ladies. The first president was Mrs. H. H. B. Wightman. Other presidents, besides the wives of some of the ministers, have been Mrs. William Tuck, Mrs. J. Hastings, and Mrs. Arthur H. Sheldon, who, with Mrs. George Stetson, today stands before the community as a leader in the Ladies' Social Circle.

Since 1895 the Ladies of the parish have united their efforts in the "Church Aid Society," which was started by Miss Charlotte Briggs, daughter of the pastor, and Mrs. Fred. Ripley. The special tasks

which this society takes to itself is the payment of the church debt. Seven hundred dollars have already been raised for this, leaving only six hundred yet remaining. Besides paying money on the church debt, however, the Ladies have given money for Insurance and coal, dishes have been bought, and, mainly through the generous help of friends, a piano has been purchased.

Miss Charlotte Friauf was the first president, retaining the office until Jan. 1, 1898, when she was succeeded by Mrs. C. Howard Whittmore, who served during the year 1898. The present officers are, — Mrs. George Sweet, president; Mrs. George H. Merrill, vice-president; Mrs. C. Howard Whittmore, Sec.; Mrs. F. E.

Farney, treasurer.

In April 1898 the present pastor, the Rev. Robert H. Humbar, then a student in the senior class of Andover Theological Seminary preached a few Sundays and was invited by the Supply committee to preach until the seminary closed. In June a meeting of the Society was held and Dr. Humbar was invited to supply the pulpit for the ensuing year, and at the end of that time he was called by the church and Society to be its pastor. He was ordained and installed Feb. 8, 1899. June 21, 1899 he was married to Miss Selma A. Cook of Portland, Maine, Dr. Humbar's native city.

At present the deacons in the church are, - Arthur H. Sheldon,

Charles H. Holt, and Otis P. Wheeler.

The church membership is sixty-eight.

The number in Sunday-School is ninety-seven.

The Young People's Society of Christians and Endeavor (including the Junior Society) has ninety-eight members.

Written; to be placed under the corner-stone of the School-house to be erected on the corner of School and Gay Streets in the year of our Lord Eighteen hundred ninety-nine; by Robert H. Hubbard, pastor of the Second Congregational Church of Chelmsford.
