



Danby Church News

“Adding to and Building up the Kingdom of God”

September 2021
The 200th Anniversary Edition





From Our Pastor!

We are going to celebrate our 200 and 1st anniversary on September 18-19, 2021!

Two hundred years is a long time to be doing God’s work from a solid foundation in Jesus Christ, scripture, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Praise God we have a history of devotion and service to celebrate!

It is humbling to think of all the people and activities that have transpired as this fellowship moved through time. There have been countless changes, big and small, to get us from the original building with box pews and no heat to where we are today with indoor plumbing and automatic thermostats.

Buildings can be remodeled, floors raised, and pulpits and pews installed with effort and money. What remains the same is generation after generation of people seeking Christ and finding a community of caring people, waiting to support them on Sunday and throughout the week.

Think of all the prayers spoken and unspoken that have resounded from our sanctuary. It is awe inspiring to think of all the baggage that’s been placed before God in this sanctuary. I sometimes wonder in the peace and silence of this place how much comfort, grace, forgiveness, and joy have emanated from the Spirit’s presence over two centuries.

We are blessed to have a physical center of refuge and comfort that has stood for so long. It is certainly appropriate that we celebrate all the goodness that God has poured out on so many.

As we acknowledge the past, it is necessary to understand that the past is always prologue to the future. There is no benefit to being stuck in 1820 as entertaining as that may have been. There is much good that needs doing in 2021.

All too soon, our place in history will be a memory, just like so many who have gone before us. The Church of Jesus Christ will survive long after we’re gone from this world and so too, I pray, will our congregation and building. Our legacy of service to the Kingdom of God will continue born of the devotion we express today. Let us continue to build the Kingdom, joyfully proclaim God’s goodness and mercy, and live out our stewardship as God gives us direction, for His glory and honor. May our sanctuary remain a vibrant, significant place of worship and proclamation of the Gospel and may our fellowship stand in service to Christ for centuries to come.



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Our Cover picture: 200 Plus One Anniversary

No Administrative Council Meeting for August 2021.

Spiritual Development Update *from Sheila Enstine*

Adult Small Groups:

The Sunday morning group will complete the study of the Later Minor Prophets in mid-September. The next quarter's study is the Gospel of John. The class meets from 8:45 – 9:45 am. Those who are not able to attend the Sunday morning in-person session are welcome to attend a Zoom session on Tuesday evenings at 7:00 pm. Please contact Sheila Enstine at ssenstine@gmail.com or 229-4135 if you're interested in either meeting.

Nursery and Youth Church: The nursery is available every Sunday for babies and children through age five. Youth Church is on break during September. We are re-evaluating the structure and resources for youth ministry and we'll announce changes in a future newsletter.

Print Resources:

The following print resources are provided by the church.

- CareNotes, brochures that address life challenges, on display in the Fellowship Hall
- Today's Christian Living, a monthly periodical that looks at how contemporary Christians live out their faith, on display outside of the secretary's office
- The Upper Room, a daily devotional tool on display in the hallway and outside of the secretary's office
- Good News Tracts, brief introductions to Christ and Christian living, designed to help you share the Gospel. These are also outside of the secretary's office.
- Read the Bible in One Year, an outline for reading through the entire Bible in one year; fits neatly in side your Bible. They're in the hallway and outside of the secretary's office.

We're open to suggestions for other print resources with a Christian world view. Please contact Sheila if you know of any that would benefit our fellowship.

Ed Talks: Pastor Ed produces "Ed Talks," brief versions (eight to ten minutes) of his Sunday sermons. They are available on the Church's website, www.danbychurch.org (click on Ed Talks on the green banner) and on the Church's Facebook page.

Prayer Opportunities: Contact Judy Cuyle at gmatcat87@yahoo.com or call 279-5089 if you would like to participate in the prayer chain or if you have a prayer request. In-person prayer meetings are held Saturday mornings at 8:00 am. Pastor Ed is available for prayer and conversation in the Sanctuary on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 5:00 pm.

Congregational Care: Thank you everyone for sending cards, calling, and visiting one another. You are putting into practice what it says in I Corinthians 12:25-26, "But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it."

Do you have a question you would like to ask Pastor Ed? It can be about God, Jesus, the Bible, faith, the church, religion. Send your questions to Janet Gray at jsg4@cornell.edu and your question (and answer) may appear in the next Danby Church News



200-Plus One Anniversary Celebration Planned Events

On September 18th and 19th, 2021, the Danby Community Church will celebrate the 200th anniversary of the completion of our sanctuary. The actual date of completion was May 1st, 1820, but as we're all aware, we couldn't celebrate in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The planned events for our 200-Plus One Anniversary Celebration are as follows:

Saturday, September 18th – the Church will host a concert and ice-cream social for the community. The Ithaca Concert Band will perform from 1:00 PM until about 2:30 PM. Then, for about one hour – from 2:30 PM to 3:30 PM – we will conduct tours of the sanctuary.

A second musical group is tentatively scheduled to perform at around 3:30 PM.

We hope to take a group photo to be included with other contemporary items in a time capsule. You are all invited to contribute items for the time capsule, such as news articles about the pandemic, your experience during the 2020 – 2021 pandemic, or your testimony of your spiritual journey and how the sanctuary has been a part of that.

Sunday, September 19th – the Church will conduct a rededication worship service at the usual time, 10:00 AM. Following the service, we will hold an all-church picnic. The time capsule will be placed in its resting spot that afternoon.

Preparations – To prepare for the celebration, we are targeting several areas in the church and grounds for sprucing up. The areas are the choir loft and balcony, the nursery, the education rooms, and outdoor weeding, trimming, and plantings. A great big thank you goes to all who have already volunteered to help out.

If you would like to be involved in the preparations, please contact anyone on the planning team – Diana Benson, Ed Enstine, Sheila Enstine, Janet Gray, the Ever Ready Bunny – aka David McDermitt, Katy Prince, and Charlene Testut.

Did you know we are now on Facebook? You can access us from your Facebook page (just search for Danby Community Church) or press the Facebook link on our church website: WWW.DANBYCHURCH.ORG. You don't need to have a Facebook account to see our Facebook page, but you will need a Facebook account if you would want to "like" our page or post a comment.



The Sanctuary of our Danby Community Church, 1820 – 2021

by Dave McDermitt

The history of our sanctuary begins on June 4, 1807 (or before, counting prayer time), when 17 “Articles of Faith and Covenant” were ‘assented to’ by 11 founding members: Hezekiah Clark, Jesse Hyatt, Philo Hawes, Lewis Beardsley, Silas Meacham, Thomas Hyatt, Sabry Hyatt, Abigail Hyatt, Sabry Ford, Hannah Clark, and Nancy Hawes. The Reverend Calvin Ingalls of the Missionary Society of Connecticut led the group in the selection of Hezekiah Clark as moderator of the church and Philo Hawes was chosen as scribe. Nine of these members (and at least 2 subsequent pastors) are buried in the small cemetery off Bald Hill road near the old town barn – roughly across the street from the church and behind the first row of houses there on Danby rd. From 1815 – 1867, the church was part of the Cayuga Presbytery and so this graveyard is labelled on some maps as the ‘Presbyterian church cemetery.’ Notably missing from this group of 11 are the first settlers of Danby (1801), the Dumonds and Yaples, who had been involved in Bible reading and prayer at the Ithaca log cabin of a “pious Presbyterian” woman, Mrs. McDowell – herself among the first three families to settle in Ithaca in 1788 (Smith).

These 11 ‘charter’ individuals, many from New England, practiced their faith deeply. For instance, the Sabbath began on Saturday at sundown and ended at sunset on Sunday. “No needless work was done during this time - even the food was prepared before. Sunday was a day for church – some services lasted two hours or more, and then it was rest or visiting with relatives or neighbors.” (Smith). So, while the congregation had met in members’ homes, the schoolhouse, and eventually a barn, there was an obvious need and desire for a dedicated place of worship.

The church was built from 1817-1820 in the federal style by an unknown architect, much of it by donated labor from church members and consisting of two rectangular spaces: the vestibule (narthex/west porch) and the sanctuary space. The frame is mostly oak with ten and twelve-inch (or greater) square timbers secured by massive wood spike-like pegs. It is said to have taken all the ‘able-bodied’ men in the town one week to raise the frame with the pastor offering prayer before the labor commenced each morning. A bell rung by pull rope was installed, which cracked and was recast in 1835. Three entrance doors were constructed so that single men would enter on one side, single women on the other side, and married couples would enter through the center door. Other accents include fanlights over the entryways, arched windows above the choir loft, sanctuary windows in which the top center panes have been replaced by a yellow glass memorial pane, and a weathervane atop the spire (since removed). Additionally, two stained glass windows are at the eastern end of the sanctuary (date not listed).

There have been many small improvements over the years with several significant renovations described here. First, in 1856, with Oscar Jennings as architect, the sanctuary floor was raised three feet above ground level to make room for a furnace in the basement; previously, in the early years, each family brought their own ‘foot warmer’ – a metal box in a wooden frame holding live coals - before 2 large round ‘oak stoves’ were installed at the north and south sides of the sanctuary. During the renovation, the original high pulpit was also removed, and the original high-box pews and ‘slips’ were replaced with the current pews. A few years later, in 1867, the congregation voted to join the Susquehanna Association and become a Congregational church.

Towards the end of Pastor B.F. Tobey’s pastorate in the 1920s and ‘30s, the exterior was painted and reroofed and the interior was redecorated and re-carpeted. Presumably electric lighting was installed by this point (a 1907 picture of the altar shows hanging kerosene lamps). In 1947, the steeple was removed as unsafe and a Hammond organ was installed.

In 1954, the Congregational and the Methodist (aka North Danby Methodist or Methodist-Episcopal) Churches began a three-year ‘trial’ merger, with the first services held in the Methodist Church, which was located near the corner of East Miller and Danby Roads. Meanwhile, a total of \$4,000 was spent on renovations and redecorating at the Congregational Church, which became the Danby Federated Church and the home of the combined congregations after the three-year merger was complete.

Despite these various updates, renovations, and expenses over the years, including the removal of a sanctuary chimney and window shutters, and installation of aluminum storm windows to all sanctuary windows in 1958 among many other things (horse sheds, hymnals, wind insurance for the steeple for example), by 1973 the congregation began to question the longevity of the now 153-year old sanctuary and to ask aloud whether the old structure should be preserved! At the January 1974 annual church meeting a local architect-engineer, Ray DiPasquale, reported his critical finding: the sanctuary could be preserved and was worth doing so! Therefore, funds were raised and a team of church volunteers began work on a series of critical repairs: re-enforcing the foundation and floor of the sanctuary, closing up the three inner sanctuary doors into one central double door, laying down a new sub-floor on top of the old re-enforced floor, and a new carpet was installed. Some significant additional work was completed by the firm, Novarr & Mackesay, who had worked on the restoration of the Clinton House downtown. Some of this work included opening up the second-floor choir loft with a new ceiling installed above the three historic arched windows there, installing new ceilings under the balconies, and completely repainting the sanctuary from blue to golden yellow while keeping the trim white. Other work included installing ‘Glory to God in the Highest’ over the pulpit, reprinting the lettering in the memorial windowpanes, moving the organ to the 2nd floor, a revamped P.A. system, and new light fixtures and spotlights. This was likely the time that steel plates were added to reinforce the timber framing in the attic.

In 1976, the church steeple and roof were rebuilt, and lightning rods were installed along the roofline. In 1978, a handicapped access elevator was installed to improve access to the sanctuary. Vinyl siding was added around 1990 to save on the expense of painting while preserving the look of the building. In 1992, the sanctuary's Hammond organ was replaced by a new Allen organ.

Despite the passage of time, the roughly 35 regular pastors that have led the congregation and services in the sanctuary, the thousands of individuals who have come to worship, and the denominations the sanctuary has been linked to, we are united through the past 200 years by our Lord Jesus Christ. With the church's recent name change to the "Danby Community Church", after the dissolution of its affiliation with the Methodist and Congregational denominations, the church looks ahead to new opportunities to revitalize the sanctuary, other church buildings, and our membership, with an eye upwards toward Christ in whom we recall these words from the Apostle Paul: "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22)."

We may never fully appreciate the physical hardships and inner strength necessary to complete this unique structure in 1820, but we are the spiritual descendants of this brave group. Let's celebrate this and take pride in practicing our faith here as they did in this wonderful, oldest in the county, house of God.

References.

1. "History of Religion in the Danby Highlands 1806 – 1990." Clayton W. Smith. Published by the Danby Federated Church.
2. "Congregational Church of Danby Appropriately Celebrates Centennial". William H. Baker. Ithaca Chronicle and Democrat. June 27, 1907. (Baker was a deacon at the church and Danby town supervisor)
3. "The 200th Year Celebration of the Congregation of the Danby Federated Church 1807 – 2007". Published by the Danby Federated Church.



Welcome HOME

a place where you belong

Sunday Worship Celebration @ 10 am
Sunday Adult Education Class @ 8:45am
Youth Church @ 10:30am
Tuesdays and Thursdays, Communion, Conversation and Prayer 5-6pm
Wednesdays, Live Music & Conversation @ 7pm
Sweet Hour of Prayer, Saturday, 8am
Women's Bible Study, Fridays @ 1pm

This month's issue of the Danby Church News is on the web at <https://www.danbychurch.org/news.html>!

Envisioning a Post-Pandemic Gospel Culture *By Sheila Enstine*

“The pandemic revealed cracks in our systems and flaws in our characters.” So said a presenter on a Serge video conference I attended a month ago.

Serge is an international mission agency that the Danby Community Church has supported in the past. Their conference “(Re)Start: Gospel-Centered Discipleship after the Pandemic” identified cracks in North American church culture that the COVID crisis revealed. The cracks exposed deeper character flaws, and chief among the flaws is western Christianity’s dismissal of the need to die to self. Evidence of this failure is in a program-centered church culture rather than a Gospel-centered church culture.

I’d like to think that Danby Community Church is different from the typical program-centered church. We do have lots of programs, but aren’t they centered on the Gospel? Reflecting on this idea, I realized that our programs are often gospel-centered, but just as often they are not.

Take a hard look at some of the busyness the church has indulged in. We’ve invested huge amounts of energy and resources in programs, but how often did we include discipleship or evangelism in them? Even some of the trappings of Sunday morning worship have focused on form, style, and habits rather than the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Please don’t misunderstand. I am not devaluing the heartfelt service people have put into our programs. The problem lies in the temptation to hide our light under a bushel while propping up “traditions of men.”

How do we hide our light? Well, how often do we mention Christ to the recipients of food or clothing or invite them into our lives? I don’t mean inviting them to church; I mean inviting them into relationship. We’re often reluctant to do so because we’re afraid of rejection or accusations of intolerance. Or we think we don’t know how to share the Gospel.

Jesus shows us that invitation into His Kingdom begins with relationship. As they say in the Closer Walk retreat movement, “Make a friend, be a friend, and lead your friend to Christ.”

Neglecting Jesus’ Great Commission is evidence of systemic cracks, which reveal deeper character flaws. If our main concerns are insulating ourselves from change or winning a popularity contest with the world, we have dismissed the need to die to self.

The post-pandemic era is the time for emphasizing gospel culture over programs and relationships over ministry methods. Serge offers the following advice:

- Each of us needs to get a handle on our own fears and frustrations with the post-pandemic world. [For DCC, each of us needs to address our pining for the old days and fear of change.] What does this reveal about what you believe or don’t believe about the Gospel? Ask yourself “why am I afraid” to get to the roots of your fears.
- Remember that in the New Testament the Gospel enters non-Christian cultures all the time.
- Remember that God used weak ministers to effectively proclaim the gospel and build his church [Peter, Paul, Thomas, etc].
- The churches that reached the world were flawed, but God used them anyway.

No one is saying our church or the individuals in it have to be perfect. Despite any flaws, God can use us and we can improve along the way.

“God is bringing His Kingdom, regardless of the condition of the North American Church,” Serge pointed out, and I’ll add that God will do this regardless of the condition of the Danby church. However, I think we’d all like to see our church play a part in bringing that Kingdom.

That means letting go of old habits, meaningless traditions, and exhausting programs that bear no fruit. The change that’s needed is at the root level – in our hearts—which leads to deeper obedience to Christ and increased love of neighbor.

Next month, I’ll review the second day of the Serge conference, which focused on spiritual renewal and mentoring in building gospel-centered discipleship.



Danby Community Church
1859 Danby Road
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www.danbychurch.org
Welcome Home!!



Saturday, September 18th and Sunday, September 19th, 2021.

Saturday, September 18: concert and ice-cream social

Sunday, September 19: dedication of the sanctuary, all church picnic
and bury our time capsule

SEE INSIDE FOR DETAILS