

**COMMUNITY CHURCH OF PEPPERELL**  
**Commemorating 100 Years**  
**Historical Moment**

**The Foundations of the Community Church of Pepperell**  
**Historical Highlights Through 1919**

Today's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Moment summarizes the roots of our church. It's actually been quite a convoluted path to arrive at our present church family and building. We can trace the beginnings of our church back to the mid 1700's, January 17, 1742 to be precise, when the first meeting was held to establish a church in what was then Groton West Parish. The First Parish was officially organized on February 9, 1747.

All was well with the young church family for about 55 years, until May 11, 1831 when the town of Pepperell voted to allow other ministers to preach at the First Parish Unitarian Church six times per year. The pastor at that time, Rev James Howe, viewed this action as an expulsion from the pulpit. Along with a majority of the members of the church, he peaceably withdrew and formed the Evangelical Congregational Church, in January 1832. The church members were known as the "Congregationalists". On October 31, 1832, the Evangelical Congregational Church dedicated its first house of worship on the site of a former tavern and the present site of the Community Church, across the road from the Unitarian church and the "Unitarians".

But that building is not the one we worship in today, as that first building was destroyed by fire in July 1859. On January 29, 1861, the Evangelical Congregational Church dedicated their new building which is the present Community Church. So our present church building is now 158 years old (funny, doesn't look a day over 140 to me).

The next key event in our church's history came in 1917. On a bitterly cold day on December 30, the Unitarian Church was destroyed by fire – 150 years to the day after its first timbers were laid. The Congregationalists offered their building to the Unitarians to hold services for both church families. Undoubtedly the common roots of the two churches, not to mention proximity of the two buildings, had a lot to do with this decision. A year later, on December 31, 1918, the two churches entered into an era of fellowship as the Unitarians decided not to rebuild. On that date the Unitarians and Congregationalists joined to become a federated church.

Ultimately, on September 16, 1919, desiring to be a more inclusive church, the congregation voted to incorporate and become the Community Church, recombining after 87 years. The bylaws of the Community Church were agreed to and signed by 61 church members – this original document is downstairs. It is that September 16, 1919 date, nearly 100 years ago, that we commemorate as the beginning of our Community Church of Pepperell.

*Presented 3/10/19*