

- (7) The single lily plant: the symbol of life over death, as the lilies are one of the first flowers to emerge from winter's death.
- (8) The open Holy Bible: the importance of spreading the gospel message of the church, and also represents the promise of life to all that listen and believe. The lily again represents life after death.

The Griswold Room located downstairs was dedicated for Christian education and community use in the year 1955. The money for that project was donated by the Griswold family of Oregon whose ancestors were original founders of the church.

The first church bell, which hung in the chapel, was purchased by the ladies of the church in 1851. In 1871, after 20 years of service, the bell was sold to the first Vermontville school, for \$70.00. A new and much larger bell was purchased for about \$475.00 to be hung in the new bell tower. In the year 1888 on the church's 50th anniversary while tolling out the celebration, the bell cracked. It was later replaced by the company from whom the bell was purchased for an additional \$100.00.

The early church had some customs that we might consider oddities today. For example, the pews were originally rented to members of the church. They actually paid for the privilege of sitting on them. Another was the rule that every January 1st, each family was required to bring one pound of candles, or pay one shilling each to supply light for the church. Investigation committees were also set up to investigate charges against members of the church for such things as drinking, lying, and family disputes. On a more serious vein the church has also been noted for its stand against slavery in 1849, and their stand against liquor in 1897.

In 140 years the church has had 37 ministers. Reverend David Fleming, the minister of today, is the 37th. Seven ministers have been ordained in the church. Reverend David Fleming is the latest, being ordained September 14th, 1975. The longest term of a minister was that of Reverend Leonard Maunder, who served the church for twelve years, from 1963 until 1975. The shortest terms were those of Reverend David Beaton in 1887, and Reverend N. M. Pritchard in 1912, both of them served for less than one year. One of the 37 was a woman, Doctor of Divinity Edith Dorrell who served from 1945 until 1946.

One last very interesting fact is that the First Congregational Church of Vermontville is in direct descent from the oldest Union Church in America, which was founded in 1780 in Poultney, Vermont. The founders of this church in the year 1838 came directly from that church in Poultney. The First Congregational Church is truly one of the important beginnings of our great country.

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April, 1978