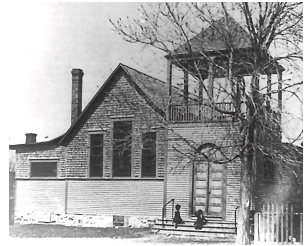


*A brief history of  
The First Presbyterian Church  
of Newport, Rhode Island*

*A friendly place to grow in Christ and serve with joy.*

In 1884, a group of earnest people in the United Congregational Church began a movement to establish a Sunday School and other Christian work in the southern part of the city. They made a start in a building on Thames Street not far above Wellington Ave. This became known as Grace Chapel.



Soon worship services and other activities were added. In time, the United Congregational Church recognized the fact that the chapel had grown to a size and power sufficient to warrant separate organization and maintenance. Because of this and the fact that the chapel attendants wanted to make this a Presbyterian body, the Congregational Church decided to withdraw its assistance and support, with the full consent of the chapel congregation.

On June 19, 1888, the organization of the First Presbyterian Church was accomplished by a commission from the Boston Presbytery. Forty-seven persons were accepted into membership at the meeting. Thus the church came into being through the determination of a small group of men and women, largely of Scottish background, who desired to follow the form of worship, model of government, and theological convictions in the heritage of John Calvin and John Knox, in which they had been nurtured. The cornerstone of the present church building was laid on its current site in 1892. The land was given to the congregation as a gift in memory of Nathaniel and Elizabeth Mumford Hammett.



A stipulation in this gift was the following: "In the matter of sittings or renting of sittings, no section of the church or block of sittings shall be set aside for the use of the poor, but they shall be provided for anywhere throughout the church by selecting any unleased sittings." The building was purposefully designed with no balcony, and no provision was made for a future balcony, in order to provide equal seating for all parishioners.

The building was raised stone by stone by the original members of the congregation, as a sign of their personal commitment to God, and to the mission of the Church in spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ. As a result of their dedicated efforts, in spite of trial and great difficulty, the first preaching service was held in the church Vestry (Fellowship Hall) on March 24, 1894. On April 5, 1896, Easter Sunday, the first worship service was held in the sanctuary. What great joy that must have been for the congregation, now numbering one hundred and eighty-four and for the many guests present for the occasion!

The sanctuary's strikingly beautiful stained glass windows, included "banner" windows on the north and south sides of the church. These windows were inspired by banner decorations used at the Second Council of the Alliance of Reformed Churches, held in Philadelphia in 1880. They indicate the vast heritage we have in our Presbyterian and Reformed churches, a heritage that has come to us through the ages and from many countries all over the world. Every Sunday, these windows remind us that "we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses." (Hebrews 12:1 NIV)

As utilization of the church building by the congregation and outside community service groups increased in frequency and population, other changes and additions occurred. A kitchen was installed in the basement in 1920 to provide a new social capability for the congregation.

The aging, groaning original organ was replaced in 1968 by a Casavant Frères 27-rank instrument, but the original façade pipes were retained to preserve the appearance of the sanctuary.

Through the years, many other additions and modifications have been made. These include the addition of the Manse at 6 Everett Street in 1913,



a three-story education building erected in 1959-1960, a major work of restoration and refurbishment in the sanctuary completed in 2000, and a movement of the church offices to the Manse in the same year.

Mission work and community outreach has always been important at First Presbyterian, both locally and worldwide. We contribute to the local food bank, support Salvation Army and many other local efforts, and we have active missionaries in many dangerous areas of the world.

Since its official organization in 1888, countless members and friends of the First Presbyterian Church have given faithful witness to Jesus Christ, and today the congregation continues that faithful witness in fulfilling its Statement of Purpose, unanimously approved by the Session in 1998, our centennial year.



**We at First Presbyterian Church love the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and believe in the authority of Scripture  
and the power of prayer.**

**We seek to glorify God, serving Him with hearts of love  
and hands of fellowship, proclaiming the Good News to all.**

We invite you to participate in our worship, work and witness.

Military, visitors and newcomers will find a warm welcome at First Presbyterian Church of Newport.