

## Key Events – 300 years of our Church

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Comment</b>
1718	State legislature authorized the East Society of Lyme to establish its own church.	Separation of church and state was not a thing yet.
1719	First recorded meeting to select pastor. Rev. George Griswold was called and served as the first minister (1719-1761)	Beginning of a heritage of faith in Society Road.
1722	Started work on a small meeting house. First meeting house built of wood near center of society.	Site is opposite the present Old Stone burial ground.
1726	Set up school for public education – the congregation decided that it was part of the church’s function. 70’ Tax rate set.	6-month sessions. School tax levied to support the school. 1748 – school was kept in three locations 1795 – school was meeting in six places
1739	Meeting house was finally completed.	Congregation persisted during the lean time to finish the meeting house.
1740-43	“Great Awakening” revivals brought in 116 new members.	
1748	Increased dissatisfaction with the Congregational Church; Samuel Smith organized a Baptist Church in East Lyme, drawing away many disenchanting members.	Record showed 25 people read out of the Congregational Church in 1754.
1761	Rev. Griswold died at age 69, buried in the Old Stone Burial Ground.	No new pastor was called because of the ‘broken and divided circumstances’.
1765	Right to tax members of the Baptist Church by the Ancient Society was taken away by the state legislature. Many left to join Baptist Church.	New Baptist pastor was called, Elder Jason Lee was so energetic that many joined the Baptist Church.
1770’s	Membership declined though a few faithful remained to repair meeting house and secure a pastor for the summer months.	Church was down to two elderly ladies who kept the faith.
1793	Membership revived, East Society was reorganized along Congregational lines.	Repaired old meeting house. Secured Rev. Lynde Huntington’s services for the summer. In the next two-plus decades membership went up to 22 (7 men and 15 women).

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1810	Methodist movement began. Class was organized	Only a handful (4 to 5) of members. It was soon disbanded.
1818	Meeting house was extensively repaired.	
	<b>End of the 1<sup>st</sup> 100 years</b>	
1825	Rev. John R. St. John was called. He left in disagreement over rent for the parsonage in 1827 (died in 1828 – buried in the Old Stone Church Cemetery).	5-year contract, \$300 per year. Began building of a parsonage – a 2-story house.
1828	Called Rev. Herman S. Vaill.	5-year contract, \$300 per year plus free use of the parsonage.
1830	Reorganized as – “The Congregational Church of East Lyme”.	New membership – added 16 in July 1830, which was a greater number at one time in 80 years.
1831-2	New stone church was built and dedicated during Rev. Vaill’s ministry.	Building cost \$3000. Size was 40 feet by 45 feet.
1833	Installed Church Bell.	Cast in England. Used to call to worship, warn of fire, and toll the age of the deceased.
1833	Meeting House torn down.	Said to be the oldest building in Connecticut at the time.
1836	Rev. Vaill resigned.	Felt that his salary was inadequate to give better education for his children.
1836	Rev. Frederick Gridley was called in July.	Salary was set at \$400 per year.
1839	Town of East Lyme was incorporated.	
1842	Methodist Church formally organized. Church was built on what is now East Pattagansett Road (completed 1843) – land donated by CAPT Avery Smith.	Cost ~ \$1000 Dedication sermon by Rev. Ralph W. Allen, district presiding elder
1856	Rev. Gridley ended his ministry. He was later buried in the Old Stone Cemetery.	52 new members added to the church.
1856	Rev. Joseph Ayer accepted the call to the Stone Church.	
1858	Rev. G. D. Boynton Parsonage built for the Methodist Church.	Behind the church lot – land donated by CAPT Smith.
1869	Methodist Church was left without a pastor.	Church did not thrive in Niantic at the time
1873	Methodist revival – increased membership. Methodist Episcopal Church built in Niantic.	Rev. D. A. Jordan
1870’s	Town’s population shifted from Society Road area to the coast (Village of Niantic).	Congregation dwindled. Fund drive for new church in the village started in 1874.

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1878	Parsonage and other buildings at Society were auctioned off. Old Stone Church was torn down.	Old church bell remains on site of old stone church (now cemetery).
1879	New church built on Lincoln Street in the village of Niantic.	Used for service for the first time.
1886	Parsonage built on a lot next to the church.	Used until 1946.
1887	Formed Young Peoples Society for Christian Endeavor.	
1890's	Area hit with depression that resulted in loss of population. Fishing fleet sold and boat yards closed. Granite industry had labor problems.	Membership decreased.
1898	Abandoned raising money by conscription or renting of the pews. Adopted the envelope system.	Economic depression hit the region.
1899	Loss of pastor. Presence of military camp caused evil influence – believed to have lessened the spiritual life of the church.	... one of the harmful things of the Spanish American war.
1911	Church was electrified, part of the horse sheds removed for automobiles.	So was the Methodist Church.
1912	Voted for the church to become an incorporated body. New name “The First Congregational Church of Niantic”.	Meeting on 5 APR 1912 (13 total votes: 12 yes, 1 no). Also voted that the lady members should have voting rights for church matters.
1912	Constitution and by-laws accepted unanimously.	30 AUG 1912
1913	Constitution and by-laws amended to include the office of Deaconess and to name her duties.	The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granted American women the right to vote, a right known as women's suffrage, and was ratified on 18 AUG 1920.
1914-18	Congregational and Methodist churches held joint services to save on fuel.	WWI began on Jul 28, 1914 and ended on Nov 11, 1918.
1919	Town and Church celebrated 200 years.	
	<b>End of 200 years</b>	
1920's	Both churches struggled; they began to cooperate more, many records of joint services at Thanksgiving, Christmas, and evening prayer meetings. Summer Evangelistic meetings were held with the Baptist Church.	Due to difficult times, most of the ministers from 1920's to '40's were student pastors from Yale Divinity School.
1933	The suggestion was made to unite the Congregational and Methodist churches	Both congregations' decision was to wait.

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1938	Lofty spire (steeple) of the Congregational Church was blown down during the 21 SEP hurricane.	Funds were raised to restore – the problem was studied for many years but was never resolved. In 1956 the fund was added to the building fund of the current church.
1939	The two churches jointly sponsored an Easter Sunrise service.	
1940	Joint Lenten services.	Many inter-church programs resulted in this era.
1942-1946	Each minister preached at the military camp one Sunday a month. Both churches had part-time ministers.	WWII (U. S. declared war against the axis on 8 DEC 1941) – busy time at the camp. The part time ministers stayed at an apartment over the lecture room.
1945	Women of the church held first Christmas sale and luncheon.	It was a luncheon and sale until mid 1950's and then became Jack Frost Bazaar.
1946	Parsonage was sold for \$6,000. Earnest discussion began on the future of the two churches.	It was used previously as a Sunday School and committee meeting place.
1949	Talks to form union began between the Methodist and Congregational Churches.	Declining memberships of both churches – post WWII slump?
1953	Permanent Terms of the Union was adopted.	Terms - 5 APR 1953
1953	Both churches voted to form union, adopted the constitution and by-laws of the Niantic Community Church.	Accepted – 1 JUN 1953
1953	Planning for new church building in current location.	Lot - \$6000, another \$800 lot for a new parsonage. Methodist Church was torn down in 1954.
1953-1960	Combined congregations used the Lincoln Street church meeting.	Membership grew to 400 and Sunday school attendance reached 225.
1958	Rev. Allen Tinkham began his ministry at Niantic Community Church.	
1958	First Heifer Project held. NCC has raised many Gift Arks since.	A Gift Ark donation includes two water buffalos, two cows, two sheep and two goats, along with bees, chicks, rabbits and more.
1960	Groundbreaking for the current church building.	12 JUN 1960
1961	First worship service held in the new church.	11 JUN 1961

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1966	First summer supper held as a fund raiser for the educational wing.	It is still an annual event at NCC in which many contribute.
1967	Built additional education wing behind the main church building.	Education wing was ready in 1968. The maintenance committee did much of the finishing work.
1967	Rev. Tinkham resigned.	
1968	250-year celebration. Rev. Stuart Brush began his ministry.	500 members - Two church services. 400 children in Sunday school. Budget \$30,139 local and \$4,945 missions.
	<b>End of 250<sup>th</sup> Year</b>	
1971	The Prudential Board replaced the Board of Trustees to handle church affairs	
1971	Started Church playschool.	Forerunner of the Day Care program.
1974	Rev. Brush resigned, replaced by Rev. J. Gordon Allen (interim).	March 1974
1974	Rev. Robert K. Sweet, Jr. became pastor.	01 July 1974. Goal – 50/50 local ops and missions.
1975	Served senior luncheon every Tuesday for \$1.00 per person.	
1976	Resettlement group settled first Laotian refugee family.	
1977	Installed Austin pipe organ. Mortgage for education wing paid off.	
1977	Established memorial committee.	1 <sup>st</sup> education loan granted in 1980. Perpetual fund supports church projects without fund drives.
1978	Church took over care of the Old Stone Church Burial Ground.	
1980	Rev. Laurie Etter began serving as a full-time associate pastor.  Started “Mothers’ in Prison” Project.	1 JAN 1980. Additional duties - Chaplaincy service at Niantic Correctional Center and Seaside Regional Center – paid by CT state. PPRC changed the ‘associate pastor’ title to co-pastor in 1985.
1981	Rev. Sweet Resigned.	Became superintendent of the Southern New England District of the UMC. 1981 - Membership 650, budget \$89,607 local and \$38,354 for outreach.

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1981	Rev. Landon Lindsay began his pastoral duties.	01 JUL 1981
1983	Day Care Program established.	Replaced Church Playschool. Sponsored by the Christian Education Committee. Supported financially through outreach.
1984	Joined with other churches to relocate two refugee families from Cambodia, and a third family in 1985.	Plus many other social justice projects.
1985	Bell Choir was organized.	
1986	Added office wing and basement storage area. Re-modelled kitchen.	
1990	Rev. Landon resigned after 40 years in ministry (30 JUN 1990).	Membership up to 700.
1990	Rev. Jonathan Almond started his ministry.	Started covenant partnership with Habitat for Humanity. Justice Ministries Task Force, Endowment Fund. Increased music and outreach activities.
1994	Rev. Almond resigned (effective 30 JUN). Congregation called Rev. Robert Alan Moore.	
1994	Rev. Moore arrived on 28 AUG to serve as the new pastor.	After serving his pulpit exchange commitment with a pastor in the U.K.
	<b>End of 275<sup>th</sup> Year</b>	
1994	Church facilities are used by many community groups.	Membership: 754, comprised of 270 (UCC), 260 (UMC), 224 (Community)
1996	Rev. Laurie Etter resigned as part-time pastor.	
1999	Rev. Mardie Chapman called to NCC as co-pastor with Rev. Moore	Rev. Chapman (UCC) resigned in 2002
1999	Established covenant with Miracle Temple Church in New London.	
2002	Church adopted principles and practices of Open, Affirming, Reconciling (OAR).	Several church members resigned.
2003	Started labyrinth at McCook Point Beach – “Path to a Holy Place”	
2003	50th anniversary of the merger.	
2005	Rev. Robert Moore called to UMC in MA	

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2005-2007	Interim (or transition) Pastor (Barbara Libby)	UCC Patricia Liberty served from May-Sep 2007
2007	Settled pastor – The search committee called Rev. John Nelson (UCC) to serve at NCC.	Over 300 applications were reviewed by the search community.
2010	First “Soup-er” Bowl food drive.	NCC Middle School Students
2011	Celebration of 50 <sup>th</sup> year at the current location.	11 JUN 2011
2012	Food Pantry provided 100,100 meals to 1000 people.	Operation moved to St. John’s on Main Street in 2013 as it provides more storage space.
2014	Started Power of Together to support local community and social justice groups.	This is an ongoing ministry; first quarterly meeting was in JAN 2014.
2016	Installed energy conservation equipment (26 KW PV system on roof).	NCC’s commitment to environmental stewardship.
2016	Rev. John Nelson resigned to serve a church in MA.	
2016	Search Process began on a settled pastor from the UCC denomination. Rev. Dianne Arakawa would minister the congregation as the transition pastor.	Rev. Dianne Arakawa served the church until OCT 2018.
2016	Installed Air Conditioning in the Sanctuary.	Summer services are more comfortable.
2018	Rev. Stephanie Haskins arrived from Iowa.	Search community concluded its charge.
2019	NCC celebrates 300-year heritage of faith in the East Lyme and surrounding communities.	Membership – 595; UCC (178), UMC (202), Community (215). Inactive members were removed during the past few years to reflect a more representative participation in the church’s missions.