

THE LEGACY OF FIRST CHURCH

Rev. Jonathan Dickinson, pastor from 1709 to 1747, was a seminal influence on higher education and theology. He was a prolific author and recognized scholar who conducted classic studies in the manse. In 1746 he received a royal charter and established The College of New Jersey. After his death it moved and became Princeton University. He is considered one of the two theologians who most influenced Protestantism in the Eighteenth century. The other was Jonathan Edwards, who often preached here, as did the famous evangelist of the Great Awakening, George Whitefield.

Along with the theological contribution of Dickinson, and the political leadership of many of its early members, the church attracted strong pastors. Several had prominent roles in the denomination, heading national and foreign mission agencies. Two were moderators of the General Assembly. Lawyer and financier, Elias Boudinot, was elected the first president of the General Assembly Corporation which he helped establish.

First church remains a commanding physical presence. Its 220 ft. spire with the town clock dominated the skyline. Its bell called the Colonial militia to arms



Many grave markers are from the 1700's. The oldest, now in the rear wall of the church, is dated 1667.

on the Common beside the church. The steeple of today was dedicated in 2008, replacing one destroyed by fire in 1946, still sounding the hour and commemorating important events. The church left its mark on the city in other ways. Five streets are named after its clergy, and eleven for prominent members. Today, the buildings and graveyard are reminders that our history is literally in sight and underfoot.

We revere the past, the thousands who have gone before us, and treasure our rich heritage, but we do not worship it. We are pledged to preserve it, and just as determined to serve the human needs all around us as our forebears did.



The Parish House occupies the site of the historic Academy, a pre-Revolutionary War school run by the church. Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr were students, long before their fateful duel.

Today this 1916 building houses the church offices, and is the center of our urban ministry. Over 12,000 meals are served to the hungry and homeless every year.

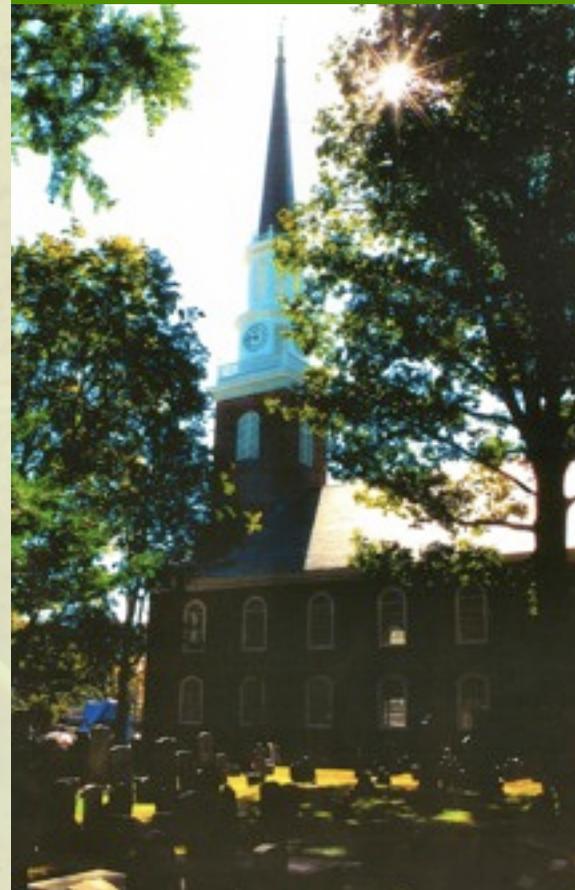
We endeavor to help people at our doorstep in a variety of ways. For ten years that has included the Red Ribbon Fellowship, a healing ministry for those infected and affected by HIV and Aids, through counseling, testing, and worship. New immigrants to the area (now over 50% Latino) are welcomed, with services in both Spanish and English.

We invite you to help us Preserve and Serve, by becoming a "Friend of First." Contributions and volunteers are welcome. Please make your check payable to First Presbyterian Church and send it to the address below. We're located right next to the courthouse.

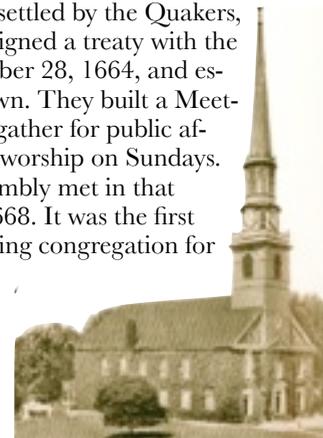


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A BRIEF HISTORY



Less than fifty years after the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, and twenty years before Philadelphia was settled by the Quakers, a small group of men signed a treaty with the native Indians on October 28, 1664, and established Elizabeth Town. They built a Meeting House in which to gather for public affairs on weekdays, and worship on Sundays. The first Colonial Assembly met in that building on May 26, 1668. It was the first and only English speaking congregation for many years in what is now New Jersey. Almost three and a half centuries later, this church, parish house, and burial ground still occupy that site, a witness to the faith, and our continuing commitment in the heart of the city. First Presbyterian has a unique and significant place in the development of the city, state, and new nation.



Those original members build a town in the wilderness that became the first capital of the state. They formed a government, served as mayors, judges, and members of the Provincial and New Jersey Assemblies, which met here. Three were governors. They represented the state in both houses of

the U.S. Congress. One, Abraham Clark, risked his life by signing the Declaration of Independence. Another was the famous "Fighting Parson" during the Revolution, James Caldwell. He and several hundred members who served in that war — from privates to generals — are now resting in the graveyard next to the church they built.

The original Meeting House (1664-65) was enlarged several times, and burned by the British on January 28, 1780. They also burned Pastor Caldwell's manse and the Academy, the site of the parish house today.

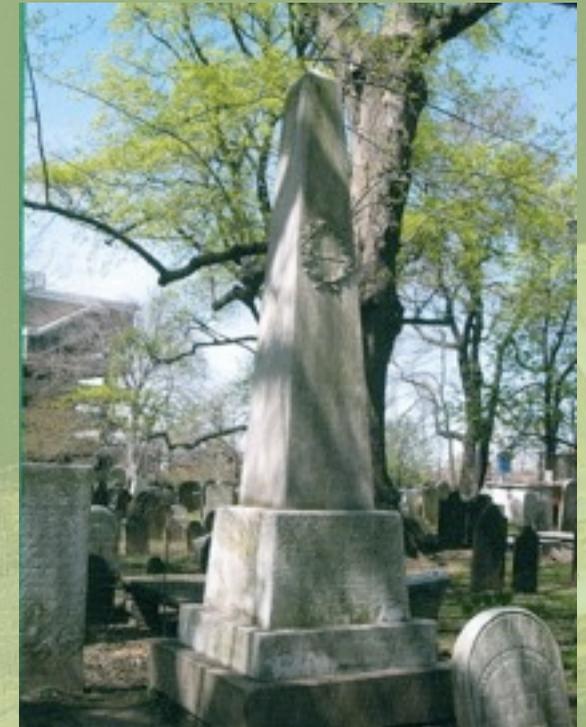
WHERE FAITH WAS PUT INTO ACTION



(left) A new stone building was begun in 1783, and despite another disastrous fire in 1946, the old walls survived, and today's sanctuary is within those historic walls

(below left) The Pulpit today. Reading of the Bible and preaching are central to Presbyterian worship. Twenty-seven pastors have served here in 340 years.

(below) Interior of the sanctuary. The magnificent French chandeliers are replicas of those given by Elias Boudinot in 1800, which were lost in the fire of 1946. One of the original three was restored and now hangs in the Narthex.



(above right) Monument to Rev. James Caldwell, the "Fighting Parson." He and his wife Hanna were killed in the Revolutionary War.



(right) Elias Boudinot, a devout member and Trustee, was an eminent patriot. Elected tenth president of the Continental Congress in 1782, served three terms in the first U.S. House of Representatives Superintendent of the U.S. Mint, founder and president of the American Bible Society

