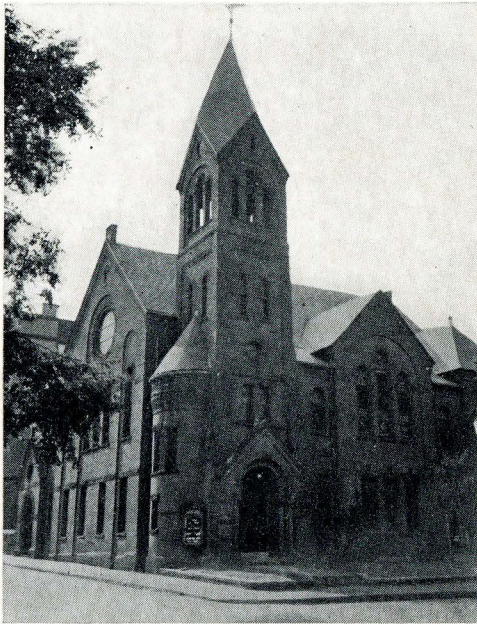


The History
OF
Pleasant Street Baptist Church



One Hundredth Anniversary

WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

1941



REV. HERMAN A. SPINNEY

The History
of
Pleasant Street Baptist Church
by
RALPH R. KENDALL

In the year 1812, a group of Christian people formed and organized the First Baptist Church of Worcester. This church at once became an influence in the community and prospered beyond the hopes of its founders.

About 1837 there was a movement to form a second Baptist Church but an unfortunate fire destroyed the first church and the members who had contemplated forming a new church thought it was an inappropriate time to separate themselves from the First Church. Accordingly the forming of the Second Baptist Church was postponed until after the rebuilding of the old church. In 1841, when the church had regained its former prosperity, and the attendance had increased to such an extent that there was not seating capacity for all who wished to attend Baptist services, the pastor, Rev. S. B. Swain, suggested the forming of a new Baptist interest.

At a meeting held in the First Church, November 9, 1841, it was voted expedient to attempt to sustain a Second Baptist Church in Worcester and to appoint a committee to devise the best means to effect this object.

This was the first step toward organizing the Second Baptist Church which later was known as the Pleasant Street Baptist Church.

The men appointed to serve on the committee were: Stephen Bartlett, Daniel Goddard, Jeremiah Bond, William Whipple Patch, Austin G. Fitch, Richard Noyes and Thomas Rice. They lost no time in organizing, meeting at the home of Stephen Bartlett on November 12. After a long discussion on the sub-

ject it was agreed that the first step was to find certain men who were willing to commence this enterprise and become responsible for its continuance one year or more. Five of the original committee agreed to accept this responsibility.

On November 16, 1841 another meeting of the church was held to hear the report of the committee. Their report was accepted and adopted. Thus during the week of November 9 to 16, 1841, the Pleasant Street Baptist Church was born.

On November 23, 1841, twenty-five members of Baptist Churches met at Deacon Goddard's home and all twenty-five agreed to request dismissal from the several churches to which they belonged, in order to unite in the formation of a second Baptist Church in Worcester. Among the number was Lyman Howe, the father of Mrs. Frank H. Howe, a present member of our church. Those present formed themselves into a conference to make arrangements for the constitution of the new church and they voted to commence to hold meetings in the Town Hall on the second Sabbath of December, 1841.

Another meeting was held November 29 at Deacon Goddard's home for the purpose of preparing a letter requesting dismissal from the First Church. Sixty-five attended, twenty-nine men and thirty-six women, and all signed. The letter was presented December 1, 1841 and the church voted to grant their request.

Rev. John Jennings, who had served the Grafton Church for the previous six years, was called to be the first pastor. On December 20 at 10:00 a.m. the Conference met at the Town Hall, the right hand of fellowship was extended by the Rev. S. B. Swain, and the Second Baptist Church became a reality with ninety-eight members. At the first public religious meeting held December 12, 1841, Rev. John Jennings preached from Psalms 20:5, "In the name of our God we will set up our banners." Under the guidance of Rev. Jennings the church prospered, and in August 1842 there were 198 members, of which seventy were converts.

Naturally there was talk of building a new church and much discussion as to the site. After months of debate, a site on the north side of Pleasant Street was chosen, the present location of the Olympia Theatre. In March 1843 a real beginning was made to raise \$7,000 for the purpose of building.

This sum was later changed to \$8,500, exclusive of land which had previously been purchased. The erection of the new building progressed so rapidly that the first service was held in the vestry January 6, 1844. The records of July 1844 show that \$2,500 was borrowed from the Quinsigamond National Bank, \$7,467 from individuals, and \$3,665.94 from subscriptions, making a total of \$13,632.94 for the new church. The cost amounted to \$13,504.53 leaving a balance of \$128.41. The budget for 1845 called for \$1,685 of which \$550, nearly one-third, was for interest.

In these early days church membership was taken very seriously and the church body disciplined the members on many occasions for attending places of amusement, playing cards, dancing and other violations of the Church Covenant.

For many years the rent of pews was the chief income and in 1845 the price of pews varied from \$3.00 to \$4.50 quarterly, depending upon the location. By this method \$1,100 was raised toward the budget. The budget had increased to \$1,800 in 1848, and the pastor's salary had been raised from \$700 to \$1,000. After eight years of service Rev. Mr. Jennings tendered his resignation, to be effective January 1, 1850.

These were history making years with many discussions on the slavery question. There were many disagreements over local questions, and in church matters such as renting pews, and the proper conduct of its members, but in spite of this the church prospered and Rev. John Jennings left beloved by all.

It was in March 1850 that Rev. Charles K. Colver of Watertown, Mass., was called as pastor to be effective May 3, 1850. It was during his time that the parsonage was sold and the church first heated with a furnace. Rev. Mr. Colver was pastor for four years, and the records would indicate that these were years of trial and trouble with a constant struggle to meet expenses and seemingly many disagreements over church matters.

Rev. Mr. Colver resigned in April 1854, and in July of the same year Rev. Daniel W. Faunce, of Somerville, Mass., was called. During Rev. Faunce's pastorate the church was altered and repaired, the membership increased, and the spiritual activities of the church advanced. Rev. Faunce was called to the First Baptist Church in Malden and resigned in April 1860.

Rev. Mr. Faunce was the father of Dr. Daniel Faunce, a president of Brown University.

In June 1860, Rev. J. J. Tucker of Rochester, N. Y., was called. He accepted the call but remained only about fifteen months.

Rev. David Weston was called in June 1862 and he continued as pastor until December 1870. This was the Civil War period and a time of anxiety with much discussion of religious and civil matters. They were, however, years of growth and prosperity for the church and in 1867 the church debt was paid. The free pew system was tried out, but in 1875 the church voted to return to the old method of renting pews.

During the year 1869, the question of purchasing another site or the advisability of a thorough renovation of the interior of the meeting house was first discussed. Before this was decided, however, the Rev. Mr. Weston resigned. He was beloved by the church people and the whole community.

In June 1871, both Rev. W. T. Chase of Dover, N. H., and Rev. D. C. Townley were called but declined. The church was without a pastor for about a year and a half, but in June 1872 Rev. Isaac R. Wheelock of Newton Center was called and accepted. During this time the organizing of the Dewey Street Baptist Church was discussed but was not approved by the church. Rev. Mr. Wheelock resigned in December 1874 after serving about two and one-half years. He was asked to remain until March 1875 and then accepted a call to the First Baptist Church of Fitchburg.

In April 1875, Rev. Sullivan C. Holman of Millerton, N. Y., became pastor. It was voted not to sell the property but to proceed to remodel the meeting house.

As early as August 1875, the holding of services in the north end of the city was discussed, the north end at that time meaning Lincoln Square. In March 1876, those interested met at 1 Main Street, Lincoln Square, to consider the advisability of forming a church in that vicinity. March 29, 1881, twenty-one members asked to be dismissed to form the church at the north end. This had the approval of the church as it was thought a house of God was needed in this section to accommodate the growing population. This was the beginning of the

Lincoln Square Baptist Church, which has grown in membership to exceed the mother church.

Rev. Mr. Holman resigned in March 1882 and moved to Pueblo, Col.

Rev. Henry F. Lane of Kingston, Mass., became pastor in January 1883, and in December of the same year the new audience room of the church was dedicated. All the Baptist ministers in the community took part in the dedication service. Apparently the members were not satisfied with the church, as the question of building a new church was always being agitated. Some even wanted to build again on land south of the church, but finally this was voted down.

In January 1885, some members were dismissed to form the John Street Baptist Church. This was the second church sponsored by the Pleasant Street Church.

Pastor Lane resigned in November 1887 and in June 1888, Rev. H. Jerome White commenced his duties as pastor. His term of service was one of the most successful in the history of the church. The question of a new church was ever before the members until in May 1889 it was "Resolved that in our opinion the time has fully come when it would be for the best interest of this church and the promotion of our usefulness in the Master's work to dispose of this property and erect a house of worship in another and more desirable location provided that the same can be accomplished without incurring a debt or any serious loss of numbers and we recommend that the church take immediate action to accomplish the same" signed by: R. F. Comstock, J. P. Cheney, George F. Brooks, Joel Howe, C. A. Goddard, M. A. Maynard and John Davidson. This resolve was unanimously adopted and the trustees were authorized to sell the church and buy a lot. Furthermore a building committee of five was appointed as follows: J. P. Cheney, R. F. Comstock, F. H. Pelton, George F. Brooks and C. A. Goddard. Later on C. A. Goddard resigned owing to ill health and M. F. Simester was elected. Many of the names of these two committees are familiar to some of the present members. In 1890 the committee recommended the purchase of the lot corner of Pleasant and Ashland Streets at \$2.00 a foot and this was unanimously

adopted after some had expressed the opinion, "it is too far out." Plans for the church rapidly matured and definite plans were adopted in March 1890.

Many gifts were received and the people of Ashland Street donated \$3,000 "providing the church be erected twenty feet from Ashland Street." This the church agreed to do. The last service in the old church was May 2, 1890, a covenant meeting and roll call. After selling the old church the people met in the Y. M. C. A. Hall until the new church was opened in January 1891. The plans for the new church were changed in order to reduce the cost.

The church property sold for \$48,000 and as the building was torn down this represented the value of the land that originally cost \$1,600 for 6,400 square feet. There was a mortgage on the church of \$6,515 leaving \$41,485 with which to start the building fund; \$3,200 was received for part of the new lot sold — \$3,000 from Ashland Street residents — \$18,996.95 the amount given by members and friends — a total of \$66,681.95. The new church and furnishings cost \$66,507 leaving a balance of \$174.95. The cornerstone of the new edifice was laid August 4, 1890 and the first service was held January 18, 1891. The dedication service took place April 21, 1891 with much rejoicing and praise to God.

In December 1896, Rev. H. Jerome White terminated a successful pastorate of over eight years against the wishes of the church. He left beloved by all to accept a call to the Southbridge Central Baptist Church. At about this time Oak Hill Mission was made a branch of the church and so remained until 1913.

For some reason it has never been easy for the church to choose a pastor and after this successful and harmonious relationship between pastor and people, it was more difficult than usual, so it was not until March 1897 that a call was extended to Rev. Woodman Bradbury of Laconia, N. H. Mr. Bradbury was a man of culture and great ability and his pastorate was marked by success and a happy fellowship. Individual communion cups were adopted at Rev. Mr. Bradbury's suggestion but with considerable opposition. Dr. Bradbury resigned in February 1901 to accept a call to the Old Cambridge Baptist Church.

Rev. George B. Lawson of Bennington, Vt., was called June 5, 1901 and it was during his time that the question of uniting with the First Baptist Church was taken up. It was proposed to build a new church that would seat eight hundred and the matter went so far that both churches appointed committees. The committees recommended that the two churches unite but our church voted against the plan. Rev. Lawson resigned in September 1902 to accept a call to the Baptist Church in Brattleboro, Vt.

Rev. Simeon Spidle served the church as pastor from March 1903 to June 1908 and resigned to enter Clark University to work for a Ph.D. degree. While at college he served the Holden Baptist Church. The church prospered under his leadership and his ability was recognized by his appointment to a professorship at Acadia College, Wolfville, Nova Scotia.

Rev. Thomas J. Cross of Philadelphia accepted a call to become pastor and successfully served for three years. He was a faithful pastor.

Soon after the departure of Rev. Mr. Cross, Rev. William Arthur Lee of Watertown was called and began his pastorate in February 1912. Mr. Lee was a young man of marked ability and a brilliant preacher. He remained only four years and resigned to accept a call to a large Congregational Church in Atlanta, Ga. After Rev. Mr. Lee left, the church was without a minister for nearly a year, then Rev. Charles J. Jones of East Boston was called and accepted, effective December 1916. Rev. Mr. Jones was a large, jovial man, a good preacher, an excellent pastor, kind and considerate and beloved by all who knew him. He left us to accept a call to Lakeport, Laconia, N. H., where he now resides. He was pastor for five and one-half years, leaving in June 1922. In Rev. Mr. Jones' pastorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the church was celebrated with appropriate exercises. Failing health prevents his presence at this celebration.

In January 1923 Rev. Crawford O. Smith became our pastor and ministered to us until May 1924. During this time the union with the Newton Square Baptist Church was proposed and after several meetings and much discussion the plan was rejected. The Rev. Mr. Smith is at present the pastor of a flourishing Baptist Church in Lexington, Mass.

Soon after Rev. Mr. Smith left us, Dr. Clifton H. Mix, a Congregational minister, was invited to supply our pulpit for a few Sundays. He remained as acting pastor for seven years from September 1924 to September 1931. During his time with us the church was put in first class repair throughout. His pastorate was marked by the addition of a large number of members. He was a scholarly man and a brilliant preacher.

The Rev. Lester C. Holmes of Dover, N. H., was called after several months and began his pastorate July 1, 1932, serving us until July 1939. During this time the church attendance increased nearly eighty per cent. The Sunday School also enjoyed great prosperity and all departments of the church took on new life with increased activity. He was greatly loved by the young people as evidenced by the large number at all services. He left to accept a call to the Broadway Baptist Church, Cambridge, Mass.

Rev. Herman A. Spinney of the Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church of Providence, R. I., accepted the call to become our pastor in March 1940. Rev. Mr. Spinney left a church he had served very successfully for ten years, beloved by all its members. His work among us has been carried on in a kindly, loving way that is endearing him to all. The church is in good condition spiritually and financially, with increasing interest in the work of the kingdom.

The Pleasant Street Baptist Church has been essentially a family church from the beginning. It has never been a large church in membership. It had a steady growth for many years but about 1920 its membership decreased to a point where many thought it should unite with some other church. However, the loyal members with courage and faith in God continued under discouraging conditions and it was not long before the membership commenced to increase and it has shown a slow but steady increase through the years, until today the membership is the largest in its history.

It has always been a missionary church giving to foreign and home missions and has a record of always meeting its missionary obligations. Today it is giving more than at any other period of its life.

The church has not only given of its money, but its men and women, to both foreign and home work.

Those having served on the foreign field have been Elizabeth Lawrence, Mrs. Gus Holm, Ann Blair, Hazel Barney, Ruth Prentice and Arthur Tylee, who with his little daughter, were martyred by the Indians in South America. Arthur C. Wentworth and Donald MacKay have gone out into the Christian ministry; while George Badger, who is at present preparing for the Master's work, has been granted license to preach.

These have represented our church, and our Christ, in this and other countries. They have been obedient to the great command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel."

The Sunday School has always been active, being first known as the Second Baptist Sabbath School Society. Its leaders were elected as "Presidents" until 1869, then they were called Superintendents, and the name changed to the Pleasant Street Baptist Bible School. The Presidents who served from 1841 to 1869 were: Russell Shepard, Charles Ballard, Charles J. Pickford, Joseph C. Chamberlain and M. W. Maynard.

The Superintendents were: Rev. David Weston, A. N. Chase, H. H. Rich, Joseph P. Cheney, George F. Brooks, Charles N. Smedley, Frank A. Perkins, Fred Foster, John Partridge, Arthur Metcalf, Wright E. Burnham, Ralph R. Kendall and Charles L. Petrie. Mr. Petrie is the present superintendent who has faithfully served since 1930.

Space will not permit the naming of the forty-eight men who have served as deacons. We should mention, however, such names as Daniel Goddard, deacon for forty-three years; Robert F. Comstock, deacon for forty-one years; Jonas Hartshorn, deacon for twenty-five years; Martin Jacobs, deacon for twenty-seven years; Joseph P. Cheney, deacon for forty-seven years; George F. Brooks, deacon for twenty-eight years; Frank H. Howe, deacon for twenty-seven years and Benjamin F. Porter, deacon for twenty-eight years. These men had much to do with the life of the church.

Two interim pastors should be mentioned: the Rev. Charles Page, who served the church faithfully and well in 1931 and 1932, during the months preceding the calling of Rev. Lester C. Holmes and the Rev. Eben Francis, who so graciously acted as pastor for some months before the coming of Rev. Herman A. Spinney. These two men who have since been taken by death,

rendered wise and efficient pastorate duties and by their wisdom and council united the church in harmonious fellowship that proved of great assistance to the incoming pastors.

The Sunday School, the Young Peoples Societies, the Ladies' Organizations, the Missionary Societies and all other organizations connected with the church have labored through the years for the interest of the church and the Kingdom of God. Who can measure the good they have accomplished. We only know that Worcester has been made a better place in which to live through the influence of the Pleasant Street Baptist Church. May she have the blessing of the Almighty God in all her future life.

We know not to what sphere the loved who leave us go,
Nor why we're left to wonder still, nor why we do not know.

But this we know; our loved and dead, if they should come this day—
Should come and ask us, "What is life?" — not one of us could say.
Life is a mystery as deep as ever death can be:
Yet, oh, how sweet it is to us, this life we live and see!

"Then might they say these vanished ones — and blessed is the thought
So death is sweet to us, beloved! though we may tell you naught.
We may not tell it to the quick — this mystery of death—
Ye may not tell us, if ye would, the mystery of breath.

"The child who enters life comes not with knowledge or intent,
So those who enter death must go as little children sent.
Nothing is known. But I believe the God is overhead:
And as life is to the living, so death is to the dead."

AUTHOR UNKNOWN.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

The present organ was installed in 1890, costing \$2,000 paid for by four women of the church.

A new boiler was installed in 1925 and extensive changes made in the heating system in 1938.

Electric lights were installed in 1909.

The church was closed for four weeks during the influenza epidemic in 1918.

Joseph P. Cheney served the longest time as clerk of the church — forty-three years.

George F. Brooks served the longest as Sunday School Superintendent.

Mrs. Annie M. Winn joined the church in May 1872 and has been a member longer than any other living member.

Mrs. Mary Cushman	joined the church in	June 1873
Mrs. Frank H. Howe	" "	May 1877
Mrs. Flora Sisson	" "	June 1877
Miss Minnie Gibson	" "	December 1883
Miss Flora Thompson	" "	December 1883
Miss Miriam A. Skinner	" "	January 1885
Mrs. Mary P. Pearson	" "	June 1887
Mrs. Clara Call	" "	November 1888
Mrs. Belle Porteous	" "	April 1889
Miss Sadie Saunders	" "	February 1890
Myron F. Converse	" "	April 1898

The present pulpit set was purchased in March 1891.

The Free Pew System was adopted in 1869 and continued for a time and then returned to renting pews until the pledge system was adopted in 1914.

An attempt was made to burn the church January 17, 1932.

Mr. Park Stearns was janitor of the church for twenty-one years.

The first and only mortgage February 18, 1925—\$6,000. This was burned November 16, 1941.

The three names most frequently mentioned in the records: Joseph P. Cheney, George F. Brooks, Ralph R. Kendall.

Sandy L. Harpell is the present Church Clerk.

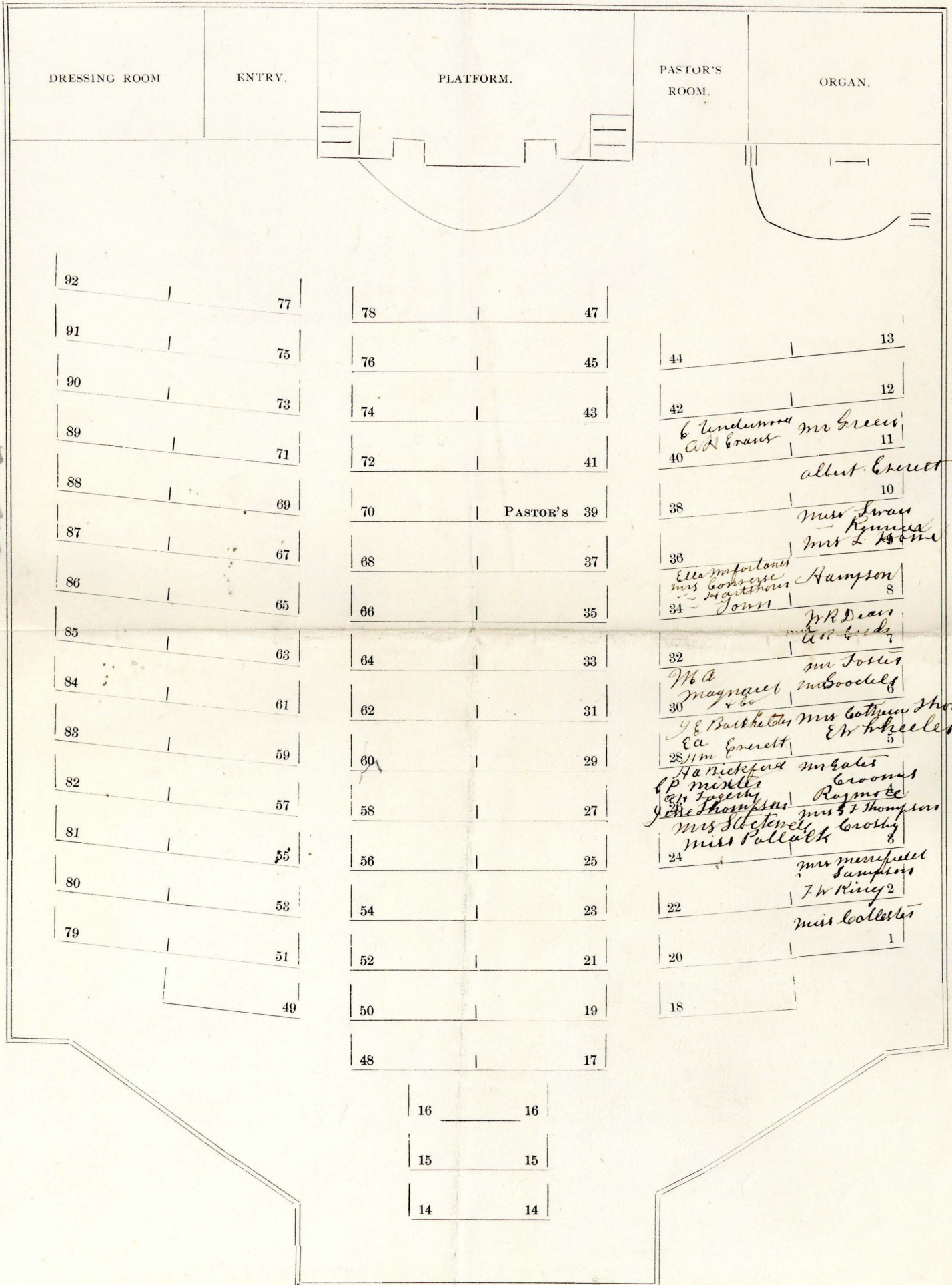
The Board of Deacons at present consists of John F. Seeley (Honorary), Ralph R. Kendall, Charles L. Petric, Laurie W. DeLong, Frederick W. Campbell, Alfred Robinson, B. Clyde Spinney, Chester M. Delf.



P L A N

OF THE

PLEASANT STREET BAPTIST CHURCH.



W.B.
 C.B.P.
 Church