

ANDOVER NEWTON THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

EARLY HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF CUMMINGTON

AND

THE WEST CUMMINGTON CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY FROM THE COLONIAL PERIOD TO THE

PRESENT

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Researching the early history of the West Cummington Congregational Church was difficult because there are few surviving records and perhaps there were no really detailed records kept in the first place. There are records of the Church from 1840-1948. These contain mainly membership records, reports of annual meetings after 1913, and some records pertaining to the calling and dismissing of pastors. There are also a few descriptions of ordinations that occurred at the church. There are records of the Society that governed the church from 1840-1913; the Society was dissolved in 1914. These contain mainly the reports of annual meetings. Unfortunately the annual meeting reports have very little detail of the church life.

Various details of the life of the church are found in multiple articles at the Town of Cummington Historical Commission.¹ None of these articles are referenced; one article lacks the name of the author. Some of the information in these articles can be verified by comparing with either the church or society records, but much cannot. Only one of these authors is still living. It is probable that much of the information in these articles is the written record of a collection of oral stories gathered by the authors. The most complete information about the pastors of the West Cummington Congregational Church and when they served came from *Only One Cummington*. Some of this information cannot be verified with church records.

This history is offered as a beginning. Much work remains to verify further what is here and to fill in the details of the life of the church and the people who loved it and kept it going despite daunting odds for 169 years.

¹ The Town of Cummington Historical Commission consists of seven unpaid members appointed by the Selectmen for the purpose of preserving, promoting, and developing the historical assets of the town of Cummington. Records of the Historical Commission are located at the Town of Cummington Community House on Main Street in Cummington, Massachusetts and can be seen by appointment.

The Founding of the Town of Cummington and the Congregational Churches

As early as 1761 Samuel Brewer, the first known settler, built a home for himself within the boundaries of what is now known as Cummington. In 1762 this tract of land was sold by government auction to Colonel John Cummings of Concord, Massachusetts. Other settlers soon followed Mr. Brewer. Before an area could be incorporated as a town it was required to have sixty residents. Sale of lots began in 1762 and the area reached the requirement of sixty residents in 1779. The town was also required to have a church and a learned Protestant minister. In 1765 a committee was formed to choose a location for the meetinghouse.

The area of Cummington is located in western Massachusetts in the foothills of the Berkshire Mountains. It lies along an 8 mile stretch of the Westfield River and is approximately 3 miles wide. The topography is characterized by high hills and deep valleys. Most of the earliest settlers occupied the hill tops and were spread throughout the area. This led to a considerable amount of debate about where to locate the meetinghouse.

There are conflicting reports over exactly when the First Congregational Church was organized and when the meetinghouse was built. Initially the people of Cummington worshiped in each others homes. The first framed meeting house was probably built in 1782 near the four corners at the top of Bryant Hill on the homestead of William Cullen Bryant.² There may have been a log house built prior to this framed building. This

² Perhaps Cummington's most famous resident, William Cullen Bryant was a newspaper writer and editor, including becoming editor-in-chief of the New York Evening Post in 1829 at the age of 35 and the first American poet to be recognized both abroad and at home. William Cullen Bryant attended the West Cummington Congregational Church whenever he was in Cummington.

meeting house was moved to “Meeting House Hill” at the top of Potash Hill in 1792 and was the only congregational church in town for many years.

The Rev. James Briggs was ordained in Cummington and served as the first Pastor of the First Congregational Church from 1779-1825. It appears other ministers served the area before the meeting house was built. Rev. Briggs was apparently well respected, some sources say “beloved,” and was active in all parts of town life including opening town meetings, officiating at weddings and funerals, and acting as the school committee. He died shortly after retiring in 1828. There is some known about other pastors of this church but names and years of service vary among sources.

Cummington grew steadily. In 1830 it reached its highest recorded population of 1261 residents. Initially Cummington settlers relied on farming, but as the population grew settlers began to take advantage of the water power of the river. Dams were built providing employment and four distinct villages formed along the river valley: West Cummington, Lightning Bug, Cummington Village also referred to as the East Village, and Swift River. At this time the First Congregational Church building was in need of major repairs but its members who lived in the valleys were getting restless. It was a long, cold walk or ride up the hill to church. They wanted a church closer to home; a church that would allow them to go home at noon to warm up and have a hot meal before going back for the afternoon sermon.

Consequently, in July of 1838 members from the East Village raised a second meeting house. For a year, Cummington had one church with two meetinghouses. When this did not work out The Village Congregational Church (also referred to as the Second Congregational Church or the Village Church) was organized in July of 1839 with 71

members (some sources say 47 members). In the same year the West Cummington Village settled a church with 7 members from the First Church. This church became known as the West Cummington Congregational Church. This left 47 members (or perhaps 71) in the First Congregational Church which reorganized and was then sometimes referred to as the Third Congregational Church. The First Church disbanded in 1869. Both the Village Church and the West Cummington Congregational Church remain active churches to the present day.

West Cummington Village

The west village of Cummington, the source of the Westfield River, was settled around the turn of the century. This little valley became the center of a larger territory extending up two river courses toward the towns of Windsor and Savoy and down the Westfield River to Lightning Bug.³ Several businesses sprang up along these rivers. Two men are credited with founding the West Cummington Congregational Church, William Hubbard and Elisha Mitchell.

William Hubbard established a tannery in West Cummington in 1805 that employed about 20 men for 40 years. He also owned a grist mill, a store, and he built a hotel. William Hubbard was not a member of the First Congregational Church and he never joined the West Cummington Church, although he did join the Society responsible for the care and finances of the church. Nevertheless, it seems he wanted a church to complete the community and was an active supporter.

³ "West Cummington Church," Author unknown, 1914. Town of Cummington Historical Commission.

Elisha Mitchell, also a businessman, was a member of the First Congregational Church and he wanted a church in West Cummington. Hubbard and Mitchell, acting alone, purchased the land for the church and had the meetinghouse built. Some sources suggest Elisha Mitchell actually donated the land. The meetinghouse was built in three months by Hiram Crandall of Adams and dedicated in August 1839. The building was paid for by selling pews that ranged in cost from \$35 - \$100. Some homes were bought and sold for \$100 in that time so buying a pew was quite an investment.⁴

In spite of the presence of a meetinghouse, people did not think a congregation could exist in this little village. How could seven members provide the funds to support a church? A year went by without any organization although perhaps a small group did meet in the building. Then in 1840 thirty two members of the closed Second Congregational Church of Windsor moved to join the West Cummington Congregational Church. It is reasonable to suspect that the founders may have been aware of this desire from Windsor to move to West Cummington and this may have encouraged them in their planning.

West Cummington Congregational Church—The Beginning

In these early days churches did not own property or undertake any financial responsibilities. “The church was regarded as a purely spiritual body with only spiritual

⁴ There are written records of who owned each pew, what they paid for the pew as well as a diagram of the pews in “Records of West Cummington, Massachusetts Congregational Church 1840-1930,” compiled in 1952 by Deacons R. R. Mason and John I. May.

responsibilities.”⁵ Initially the town held the church property, in 1840 a “Society” was organized to hold the property and assume the material and financial responsibilities.

Cummington 3. Sept 1840

To Eliphalet Packard Esq.

We the subscribers request you to issue a warrant for calling a meeting of the inhabitants of this vicinity. Males of twenty one years of age and legal voters in Town affairs And desirous of forming a West Cummington Congregational Society for the purpose of the religious worship of God in the new Meeting house in said westerly part of Said Town on Monday the 14 inst at four oclock in the afternoon to act on the following Articles. –

Viz. Art 1st To choose a moderator
" 2nd " organize a West Cummington Congregational Society for the purpose of sustaining public religious worship of God.
" 3rd " Choose all necessary Society officers
" 4th " determin the manner of receiving members
" 5th " determin the manner of calling future meetings

Charles W. Parker	Saml A. Ford
Ja. W. Briggs	Benj. W. Richardson
John Bisbee	Josiah Allen
Jacob A. Bates	Henry Richardson
Elisha Mitchell	Saml P. Hubbard
W.M.Hubbard	Jared Bisbee
Jacob Whitmarsh ⁶	

The requested meeting was held at C. N. Parker’s Tavern in Cummington at 4 o’clock in the afternoon on the fourteenth day of September 1840 resulting in the birth of the West Cummington Congregational Society. At this organizational meeting the following were elected as Parish officers:

Clerk—Charles N. Parker
Moderator—Ja. W. Briggs

⁵ “West Cummington Church,” Author unknown, 1914. Town of Cummington Historical Commission.

⁶ “Records of West Cummington, Massachusetts Congregational Church and Society 1840- 1868,” compiled in 1952 by Deacons R. R. Mason and John I. May. 1. West Cummington Congregational Church, Cummington, MA.

Assessors—Ja. W. Briggs, Josiah Allen, John Bisbee
Treasurer—Elisha Mitchell
Collector—Charles N. Parker

It was decided the assessors would call future meetings by issuing a warrant to the collector and the warrant would be posted in the West Cummington Congregational Church Meetinghouse. An annual meeting would be held on the third Monday of March and five Parish officers would serve as a standing committee to procure preaching.⁷

On September 21, 1840 the officers met and voted to change the name of the Society to “Hubbardville Society.” It remained the Hubbardville Society until 1851 when the name returned to the West Cummington Congregational Society. This Society was responsible for the church until April 1914 when the Church and Parish House of West Cummington were incorporated by the Massachusetts legislature.

Annual meetings were held by members of the church on the third Monday of March until 1892 when the annual meetings were moved to the first week of January. Annual meetings were held consistently, although not very well attended with as few as five members and at best ten to twelve, occasionally a few more. Notes of the meetings lack detail; some years it is not even possible to tell who the Pastor was of if there was a settled Pastor. The business of the annual meeting was: to choose a moderator for the meeting, to choose the society officers for the ensuing year, to hear the treasurer’s report, to decide how to raise the minister’s salary, to decide how to provide for firewood for the meetinghouse and minister, and occasionally to act on other business. The Parish offices remained consistent until January 1908 when the assessors were replaced by trustees.

⁷ “Records of West Cummington, Massachusetts Congregational Church and Society 1840- 1868,” compiled in 1952 by Deacons R. R. Mason and John I. May. 3. West Cummington Congregational Church, Cummington, MA.

Membership

Members, men and women, were voted into the church after the church received a letter of recommendation from another church or through a personal profession of faith which included relating one's Christian experience. Members who left the church in good standing received letters of dismissal which allowed them to join another church. Members were excommunicated by vote. In the first 100 years only two people were excommunicated. Initially the church membership was described as "robust." However, Cummington's population was actually beginning to drop around the same time as the founding of the two new churches. West Cummington Congregational Church membership declined and for much of its first 150 years there was an average of thirty to forty five members.⁸

Although approximately two thirds of the church members were women, membership to the Society that governed the church was open to men only until Jan 4, 1913 when Article 5 of the annual meeting asked, "to see if the Society will permit ladies to become members of said society."⁹ The vote was answered in the affirmative and the following five women were voted in that day: Mrs. Clara E. Allen, Mrs. Leonora Allen, Mrs. M. L. Benjamin, Mrs. Antoinette Tirrell, and Mrs. Flora L. Torrey. That same year Clara Allen became a Parish officer when she was voted treasurer, collector, and solicitor. As we will see later, the women were active in supporting the church long before they were allowed to become members of the Society.

⁸ "West Cummington Congregational Church 150th Anniversary Celebration." October 22, 1989. Transcript given by Daphne Morris, clerk WCCC. Town of Cummington Historical Commission.

⁹ "Records of West Cummington, Massachusetts Congregational Society 1869-1913," compiled in 1952 by Deacons R. R. Mason and John I. May. West Cummington Congregational Church, Cummington, MA.

The First Pastor—Rev. Joseph B. Baldwin

The first pastor of the church was the Rev. Joseph B. Baldwin. On June 26, 1841 “the church were unanimous in requesting Rev. Mr. Baldwin to settle with them in gospel ministry.”¹⁰ Rev. Baldwin was apparently very active in helping found the church. Before being called as its first pastor and teacher he served as moderator and scribe. His annual salary was \$340, the use of a house that was rented for \$30 annually, a garden, and fire wood. Rev. Baldwin served for sixteen and a half years, by far the longest serving minister until the Rev. Michael Sangree who served from 1921-1924 and 1929-1945 for a total of twenty one years.

There are conflicting accounts as to why Rev. Baldwin left West Cummington. According to church records Rev. Baldwin resigned because of illness in his family. From the minutes of an ecclesiastical council meeting held on April 20, 1857:

Therefore it appeared, that sickness in the Pastor’s family, had led him to ask the dissolution of the relation, in the hope that a residence in some milder region would be beneficial. In this request of the Pastor, the Church & Society unanimously concurred.

Wherefore Council voted, that it is expedient that the relation be & it is hereby dissolved.

In coming to this result the Council would express their confidence in Bro Baldwin as a well accredited & faithful preacher of the Gospel, & recommend him to the Churches wherever Providence may direct him, praying that the health of his companion may be restored & that a field of labour may be opened to him in some part of the Master’s vineyard.

The Council would also express their sympathy with the Church & Society now bereft of the faithful labours of him who has been in & out before them for the past sixteen years & a half, & would exhort them to strengthen the things that remain, & to make the most strenuous exertions

¹⁰ “Records of West Cummington, Massachusetts Congregational Church 1840-1930,” compiled in 1952 by Deacons R. R. Mason and John I. May. West Cummington Congregational Church, Cummington, MA.

to sustain the Gospel. And may the Great Head of the Church soon send them one to break unto them the bread of life.¹¹

However, from a transcript of a speech given of the history of the church on the occasion of the 150th anniversary another story is told. In this recounting the church, having struggled year after year to raise the minister's salary, found itself \$135 in arrears and asked the minister to resign. Apparently the minister did not want to leave but agreed to resign using the excuse to take his sick wife to a warmer climate. Rev. Baldwin and his wife moved to Plainfield, a town just northeast of Cummington actually sharing a border, where his wife later died of tuberculosis.¹² Rev. Baldwin did return as pastor in 1865 for an additional three years.

Struggles

The West Cummington Congregational Church with its tiny membership struggled financially throughout its existence. Prior to 1833 the minister of the town was supported by a tax assessed to every adult male of the town. The Massachusetts Constitution was changed in 1833 and this tax was ended. Shortly thereafter Cummington had three churches to support and no tax money. Each church and minister had to be supported only by church members. There was no precedent for how to do this.

In West Cummington subscription papers were passed and men signed up for what they were willing to give. This frequently led to a deficit so it was voted to tax

¹¹ "Records of West Cummington, Massachusetts Congregational Church 1840-1930," compiled in 1952 by Deacons R. R. Mason and John I. May. West Cummington Congregational Church, Cummington, MA.

¹² "Records of West Cummington, Massachusetts Congregational Church 1840-1930," compiled in 1952 by Deacons R. R. Mason and John I. May. West Cummington Congregational Church, Cummington, MA.

members of the society. This did not go over well and the subscription method was readopted. Some years the papers were passed multiple times. The records note years when members present at the annual meeting personally made up the deficit to avoid taxing and multiple years when Rev. Baldwin agreed to receive less than his negotiated salary. Collections during worship did not begin until 1909.

Creative methods were adopted in an attempt to lower expenses. One year each member of the society was to supply ¼ cord of firewood for use by the minister and at the meetinghouse. Another year a firewood contract was given to the lowest bidder at auction. In 1878 the care of the meetinghouse, building the fire and the ringing of the bell was also sold at auction to the lowest bidder; selling for eighteen dollars.

When Rev. Baldwin left in 1857, perhaps of his own volition but perhaps because he was asked to leave (one local historian suggests the minister was blamed for the financial difficulties,) the situation only got worse. From that point on ministers seldom stayed for more than a year or two, possibly because they were not paid as expected, and the society was nearly always in dept.¹³ Perhaps West Cummington was also seen as a “starter church for ministers.” Many men were ordained in this church and then would leave shortly after. In a letter of resignation from Rev. John Herbert Owen (September 1926 – March 1928) West Cummington is referred to as a “little church” and he states he has accepted a call to a church “which offers a larger field of service.”¹⁴

From the limited detail in the annual meeting notes it seems the business of each meeting was devoted to how to raise the money to care for the meetinghouse and pay the

¹³ See Appendix C for a list of pastors and years served.

¹⁴ “Records of West Cummington, Massachusetts Congregational Church 1840-1930,” compiled in 1952 by Deacons R. R. Mason and John I. May. West Cummington Congregational Church, Cummington, MA.

minister, including beginning in 1866 frequent mention of necessary repairs needed for the meetinghouse and how to raise these funds. Very little of any other type of business is ever mentioned.

The Ladies

As early as March 1848 the Society “voted the Ladies lend their aid in the support of the gospel.”¹⁵ This vote was repeated in 1849. In 1851 the society ordered Rev. Baldwin to “furnish the ladies with papers to circulate.”¹⁶ The records do not indicate what the results of these actions were. The first mention of funds received by the “Ladies Society” was April 1873.

Three local historical articles cite 1877 as the year the ladies society was officially formed under the name Ladies Centennial Benevolent Society. The object of the society was “mutual improvement and the accumulation of funds for religious purposes and the repair of the church.”¹⁷ The ladies met in homes and worked on quilts and other pieces of handwork to be sold. Any lady who wanted to be excused from sewing had to pay three cents. Later suppers were organized with the ladies inviting their husbands and families. One was expected to bring food for the meal or pay ten cents.

In 1907 the Ladies Society had accumulated \$250 and purchased the closed Universalist Church building which was deeded to the Society and named the Parish house of the Church. This then became the meeting place for many of the social

¹⁵ “Records of West Cummington, Massachusetts Congregational Church and Society 1840-1868,” compiled in 1952 by Deacons R. R. Mason and John I. May. West Cummington Congregational Church, Cummington, MA.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ “West Cummington Congregational Church 150th Anniversary Celebration.” Transcript of speech given by Daphne Morris, clerk WCCC, October 22, 1989. Town of Cummington Historical Commission, Cummington, MA.

activities of the church. In the annual meeting report of January 1917 it was reported that the Ladies Society purchased a tract of land with a well and a barn. Records do not indicate what this land was purchased for and it is no longer owned by the church. Presumably it was sold without developing it.

Sharing Resources with Other Churches

The first mention of sharing expenses with another church comes in an annual meeting note in 1877. Apparently there was a plan presented by Dr. Wm Barrows “for the more permanent support of preaching in this parish and Windsor.”¹⁸ Dr. Barrows was appointed a committee to investigate the plan but the plan is never detailed.

Something did occur because in the annual meeting note in January 1948 there is a motion made to withdraw from the Cummington-Windsor union. The best guess is that the churches shared winter services at least part of the time.

Unable to pay for a minister of their own, the West Cummington Congregational Church was officially yoked with the Village Congregational Church in the east village probably in 1891 although some sources state 1894. From this time on they shared a minister until this union was dissolved in 1994. The first pastor under this arrangement was the Rev. Parmalee. The Village Church was the larger church and paid a much larger share of the pastor’s salary. The salary differential is noted with Rev. Andrew Vance McCracken who served from August 1924 – January 1926. His salary was \$1500; \$1200 by the Village Church, \$300 by West Cummington. In 1948 the Village Church

¹⁸ “Records of West Cummington, Massachusetts Congregational Society 1869-1913,” compiled in 1952 by Deacons R. R. Mason and John I. May. West Cummington Congregational Church, Cummington, MA.

invited West Cummington to combine services for the winters. The combined winter services also continued until 1994.

The Massachusetts Home Missionary Society

The January 1905 annual meeting notes cite a vote to ask for financial aid from the Massachusetts Home Missionary Society. This is the first mention of MHMS in church records. Multiple other sources, not able to be verified at this time, indicate the church had been receiving financial assistance from the MHMS since 1865. It is obvious that much has been left out of the church records and it seems reasonable considering the financial difficulties of this church that assistance may have been requested and received prior to 1905. Despite when the financial aid began, the assistance was invaluable and may have allowed the church to survive.¹⁹

Sunday School

There is very little known about the Sunday School. The first mention of the Sunday School was in a May 1845 annual meeting note when J. F. Bisbee is instructed to furnish a trunk for the Sunday School book (perhaps books is meant.) The next mention is in the annual meeting note of March 1856 when Rev. Baldwin and Ethan Clark are appointed as a committee to organize a Sabbath School. Nothing more is mentioned until 1893 when

¹⁹ The Massachusetts Missionary Society was organized in 1799 in Boston, Massachusetts with the intention to spread “knowledge of the glorious Gospel of Christ among the poor Heathen and in those remote parts of our country in which the inhabitants had not enjoyed the benefits of a Christian ministry and Christian ordinances,” i.e. outside Massachusetts. In 1827 the Massachusetts Missionary Society merged with the Domestic Missionary Society of Massachusetts (founded in 1818) under the name of the Massachusetts Missionary Society. From this point the missionary work became concentrated in Massachusetts. One of their major goals was to assist small struggling churches in rural areas of the state. The name changed to the Massachusetts Home Missionary Society in 1844 to emphasize that the work of the Society was specifically for Massachusetts. (From the Congregational Library website at <http://www.congregationallibrary.org/resources/efg/efg-mcucc>)

A. N. Hubbard is made Sabbath School superintendent. After this there is a regular election of Sabbath School officers but there is no detail of the school activities.

A “Young People’s Society” was started during the pastorate of The Rev. J. W. Strout, pastor from August 1894 – January 1899, one of the longer pastorates. This Young People’s Society was apparently fairly active with approximately thirty members. Again there are no details of the activities.

Interesting Tidbits and/or Areas for Further Research

December 2, 1840- First recorded meeting at the new Meetinghouse in West Cummington.

1871- During the latter half of this year the church was closed for six months following an illness that resulted in the death of eight of its members including Deacon and Clerk J. C. Allen.

November 1872- A series of meetings were held to seek the special blessings of God upon the Congregation. The attendance was reported to be good and “about 30 Manifested Special interest in their personal salvation; but there was no general breaking up of the Sinful foundations.”²⁰

March 1875- the church borrowed \$1500 to purchase Mr. C. M. Babbitt’s place for use as a parsonage. The parsonage was sold after the union with the Village Church.

August 1, 1914- The Church celebrates its 75th anniversary.

November 25, 1938- The Church receives a grant of \$200 from the Massachusetts Congregational Conference and Missionary Society to assist in meeting emergency expenses related to repairs following a hurricane.

²⁰ “Records of West Cummington, Massachusetts Congregational Church 1840-1930,” compiled in 1952 by Deacons R. R. Mason and John I. May. 28. West Cummington Congregational Church, Cummington, MA.

August 2, 1939- The Church celebrates its 100th anniversary.

1940- The Church becomes involved in the Massachusetts Refugee Hostel in Cummington, Massachusetts under the pastorate of Rev. Carl Michael Sangree.

December 21, 1941- First mention of the Christmas Community Candlelight Service with 61 in attendance.

January 5, 1947- The Pilgrim Hymnals were purchased and dedicated “for God’s work in the West Cummington Church.”²¹

November 30, 1947- Dedication of electricity and lights installed in the Church building.

Fall 1988- The church had a series of work bees to repair a disintegrating sill and damaged walls. They worked together because they could not afford to have the repairs done professionally.

When the last wall was ready to be closed in, an account of what had happened and the names of the workers was enclosed in a bottle and sealed with wax. Then the bottle was passed around our Communion circle and blessed by each one of us before being put on a timber in the wall. It symbolized the unbroken chain of 149 years, and our hope and trust in whoever found it to continue the love and care of the building that means so much to us.²²

October 22, 1989- The Church celebrates its 150th anniversary.

The Future

The West Cummington Congregational Church dissolved the union with the Village Church in 1994. At the time the church had approximately twenty members, no

²¹ “Records of West Cummington Massachusetts Congregational Church 1931-1948,” compiled in 1952 by Deacons R. R. Mason and John I. May. West Cummington Congregational Church, Cummington, MA.

²² “History of the West Cummington Church,” Daphne Morris, clerk WCCC, October 1995. Town of Cummington Historical Commission, Cummington, MA.

pastor, and no money. Members of the church took turns providing worship until they called one of their own, Stephen Philbrick, as their pastor. Mr. Philbrick was licensed as a local pastor by the United Church of Christ in 1997. Under his leadership and with the help of dedicated members, the church has grown to a membership of approximately seventy and is finally, for the first time in its existence, relatively financially secure. The Church and the Parish House have both been recently renovated and in 2007 both buildings were made handicapped accessible.

The West Cummington Congregational Church enjoys wide community support. An annual auction, which always sells out is held each fall. This auction raises money for the maintenance of the Parish House, allowing the church to offer the Parish House to the community for community use free of charge.

The church continues the tradition of lay involvement. Much of the work done during the recent renovations was done by church members. In the past lay members often led worship when there was no pastor available. In 2006 the church designated each third Sunday as a Lay Sunday. On these Sundays the pastor sits in the congregation while a member or friend of the church leads worship. The West Cummington Congregational Church's future, after years of struggle, appears bright.

Appendix A—Articles of Faith

The following Articles of Faith were adopted at a regular meeting of the West Cummington Congregational Church on March 12, 1869.

We believe that there is but one God the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the universe; a Being of perfect and adorable attributes.

That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and are the only perfect and sufficient rule of faith and practice.

That the Godhead is revealed in the Scriptures as the Father the Son and the Holy Ghost, and that these three, equal in all divine attributes are our God.

We believe that all events are embraced within the wise and holy providence of God who maketh all things after the counsel of his own will; yet so as in nowise to interfere with the perfect freedom of the creator.

That man was originally holy; but that by sinning against God he fell from that state and that in consequence of the fall all mankind are by nature entirely destitute of holiness and disposed of sin.

That Jesus Christ by his humiliation, sufferings, and death, has made an atonement sufficient for the redemption of all mankind, and that pardon and eternal life are through him freely offered to all.

That Repentance and Faith in Christ are the only conditions on which any can avail themselves of the offers thus graciously made, and that all without the influence of the Holy Spirit do refuse to comply with these conditions.

We believe in the resurrection of the dead and in a day of judgment; when all mankind are to receive a sentence of retribution according to what they have done, and that the righteous will then enter into life and the wicked will go away with punishment both of which will be without end.

Moreover we believe that in this world the Lord Jesus Christ has a visible church the terms of admission to which are a public profession of faith in Christ sustained credible evidence.

That Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances to be observed in the Church to the end of the world.²³

²³ West Cummington Congregational Church, Cummington, MA., "Records of West Cummington, Massachusetts Congregational Church 1840-1930," compiled in 1952 by Deacons R. R. Mason and John I. May. 120-121.

Appendix B—Covenant of Church Membership 1869

You do now in humble dependence on the Divine Spirit whose help is promised to all who seek it – publicly consecrate yourself to the worship and service of Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sincerely giving up yourself to him to be his forever; and you covenant and promise to obey the commands and walk in the ordinances of the gospel, to submit yourself to the government of this Church, and to love and watch over its members in Christian kindness; to attend its worship, to uphold its discipline and to promote its purity and prosperity.

This you covenant with this church.

(We the members of this church will now covenant by rising and remain standing till the close.)

We then the members of this church cordially receive you into its membership; we promise to love and watch over you and in Christian fidelity to seek your advancement in the life of him whose name we bare.

To us and to you this should be a day to be remembered with gratitude for that mercy and grace in Jesus Christ in which we trust and for which we bless the Lord. Let us remember that the Lord has heard our vows and covenant; and that the record and the result will be manifested at the great day of his appeasing.

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.²⁴

Covenant of Church Membership 1892

Dearly beloved, called of God to be his children through Jesus Christ our Lord, you are here that, in the presence of God and His people, you may enter into the fellowship and communion of His Church. You do truly repent of your sins; you heartily receive Jesus Christ as your crucified Saviour and risen Lord. You consecrate yourself onto God, and your life to His service. You accept His Word as your law and His Spirit as your comfort and your guide; and trusting in His Grace to confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, you promise to do God's holy will, and to walk with this church in the truth, and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. You accept according to your measure of understanding of it, the system of Christian truth held by the church of our faith and order, and by this church into whose fellowship you now enter.²⁵

²⁴ West Cummington Congregational Church, Cummington, MA., "Records of West Cummington, Massachusetts Congregational Church 1840-1930," compiled in 1952 by Deacons R. R. Mason and John I. May. 122-123.

²⁵ "West Cummington Church," Author unknown, 1914. Town of Cummington Historical Commission, Cummington, MA.

Appendix C—Pastors from 1840-1891

Year Started

1840	Rev. Joseph Baldwin	16.5 years
1856	Rev. Josiah Pomeroy	1 year 4 mos.
()	Rev. Sardis Morley	3 mos.
()	Mr. Brown	1 year
()	Rev. David Rood	6 mos.
1865	Rev. Henry Matson	1.5 years
1865	Rev. Joseph Baldwin	3 years
1868	Rev. Charles Scott	1.5 years
1871	Rev. Robert Samuels	1 year 3 mos
1872	Rev. Rev. J. U. Parsons	1 year
1873	Rev. Roberts	()
1873	Rev. O. S. Morris	8 years
1881	Rev. Samuel Amsden	2 years
1883	Rev. Henry Whalen	5 mos.
1884	Rev. Artemus Murch	1.5 years
1885	Rev. Joseph Flint	10 mos.
1886	Rev. F. S. Huntington	6 mos.
1887	Rev. Spalding	7 mos.
1887	Rev. Wilbur Rand	2 years
1890	Student Lyman Paddock	3 mos.
1891	Yoked with the Village Congregational Church ²⁶	

Note: This is the most complete record of pastorates of the church, however not all of these pastorates can be confirmed with the church records which frequently do not note who the pastor is. There is an apparent error in this record in 1865. Church records indicate Rev. Henry Matson started in 1862, not 1865.

²⁶ Helen H. Foster and William W. Streeter, *Only One Cummington*, Printed by Connecticut Printers of Bloomfield, CT. for Town of Cummington Historical Commission, Cummington, MA., 1974, 400.

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