

Shall we gather at the cornerstone?

After the sermon at Stamford Baptist Church tomorrow, the congregation will gather at the cornerstone. There the Baptists will wind up a month-long celebration of their first 25 years at 602 High Ridge Rd.

Theodore Studwell will read a poem he wrote for this occasion. The choir will sing a song that Vera M. Wanamaker wrote 25 years ago for the laying of the cornerstone. Mrs. Wanamaker is church organist and choir director.

Studwell and Mrs. Wanamaker and others on hand will remember that Thanksgiving Day in 1955 when the cornerstone was put in place. (Members pitched in with paint brushes, then, to get the new church ready in time.) Old-timers will also remember worshipping in the building that was home to Stamford Baptist Church for 95 years, before the new church was built.

The old building stood at Atlantic and Broad Streets, where the Landmark complex stands now. Its 130-foot steeple was noted on navigation charts, a landmark to ships on the Sound.

The downtown church was demolished in December of 1954. While their new church was being built on High Ridge Road, members met at the Odd Fellows' Hall on Suburban Avenue. Stained glass memorial windows and the bell from the old church were salvaged and put into the new church.

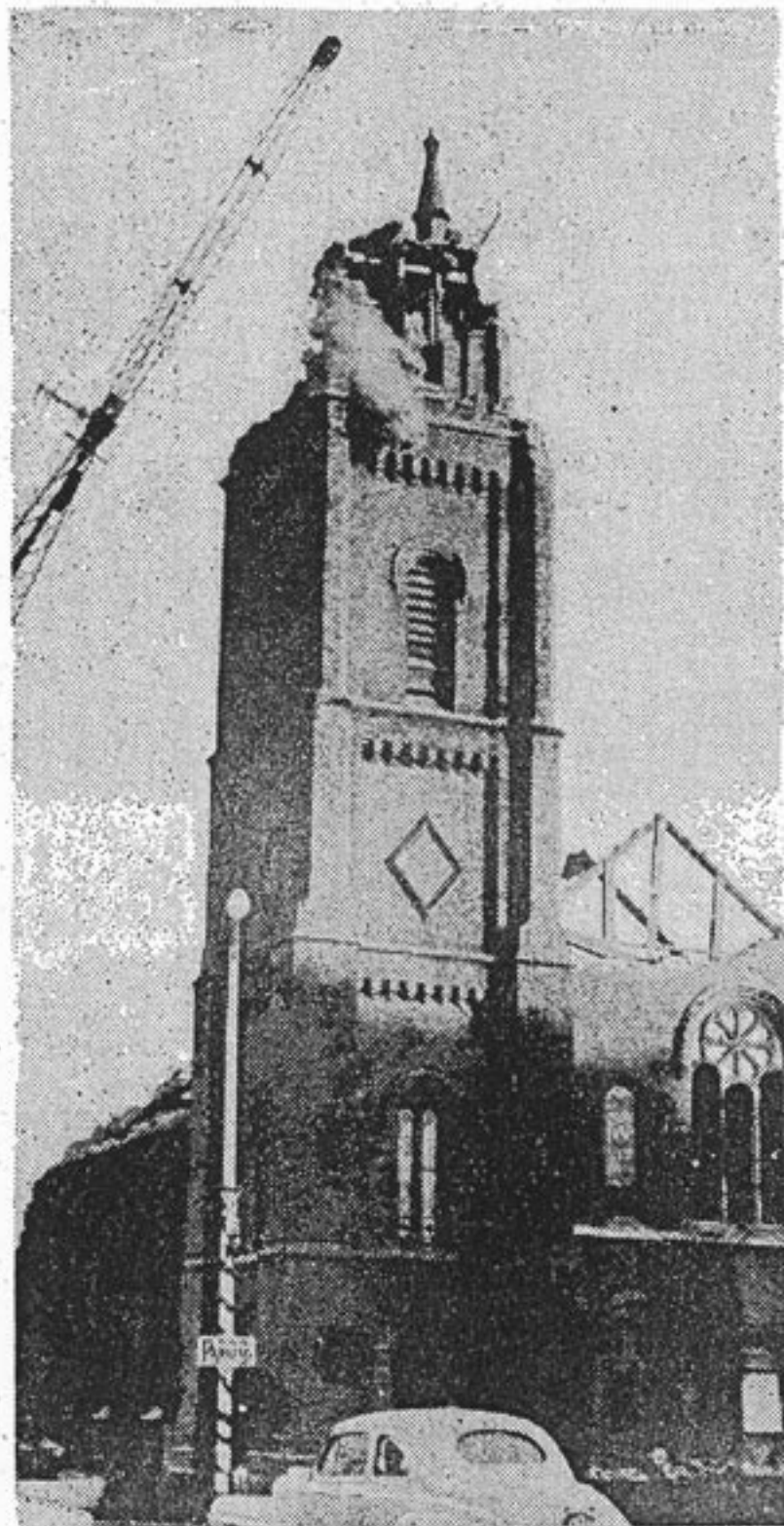
And the old cornerstone was opened. First out of the box was a copy of *The Advocate*, dated Aug. 16, 1859. Beneath, were a leather-bound "History of the Baptists", a hand-written history of Stamford Baptists and other mementos of a church that was founded here in 1773. Some of the relics were put in the cornerstone of the new church.

Before the gathering at the cornerstone tomorrow, the Rev. Herbert J. Murray Jr., pastor, will preach on "The House of God." This will be the last of the four Sunday "Celebrations of the Christian Church" honoring the 25th anniversary.

The building on High Ridge Road (which the pastor says is all paid for) is the fourth home of the 207-year-old church. Stamford Baptist Church is one of three churches that date back to Stamford's colonial days.

One old story is that George Washington was baptised in the early-day Stamford Baptist Church, while he was fighting the British in White Plains.

The Rev. Mr. Murray, checking out the story, ran into a dead end. Early Fairfield Association records had been destroyed by the widow of an official.



Old makes way for new — wrecking ball swings against the downtown Baptist building in 1954.