

150th Anniversary | 1865 – 2015

FAITH FORWARD



THERE WAS AN AIR OF EXCITEMENT, pride and celebration the morning of March 15, as the members of Asylum Hill Congregational Church gathered to begin the year-long celebration of 150 years of worship and service on “Lord’s Hill.”

Reverend Matthew Laney opened the service welcoming all who came to rejoice in the history and work of the church. Then, lo and behold, “Joseph Twichell” wandered in, saying he had heard there was something big happening in church and thought he would “drop down” to see for himself. He spoke of his days in Hartford as a young man just home from the Civil War. He seemed very impressed with the way things have turned out at the church where he was our first minister.

Our worship service included prayers and hymns from the 50th anniversary worship service, along with special music from the voices of nearly 150 women to commemorate the woman, Maria Metcalf, who began her quest in 1860 to bring Jesus to the children of the neighborhood, or perhaps, to bring the children to Jesus.

And who do you think popped up out of the congregation to speak to the children about her work so long ago? “Maria Metcalf” herself, told the children of her dream to find a way to provide Sunday School for the boys and girls who didn’t have that opportunity.

When Reverend Laney asked the congregation to stand as the name of the minister who served when they joined was called, it appears he stopped too soon, because he walked the one and only “Samuel Clemens,” a close friend of Twichell. Though never a member of AHCC, he rented of a pew near the front of the sanctuary on the pulpit side. Mr. Clemens, pen name Mark Twain, regaled the folks about his life and time in Hartford and would have gone on all day had it not been time to sing, “I Love Your Church, O God.” He sat in his pew for the rest of the service, and joined his friend Joe in the “Twichell Room” after the service.

The reception took place in several of the first floor rooms. In Drew Hall the new 150th Anniversary banner was prominently displayed above the hallway, photographs of AHCC’s nine senior ministers were highlighted on the side wall and balloons decorated the food tables. The ginger snaps were baked by members of the committee and inspired by a recipe in Miss (Catherine) Beecher’s Domestic Receipt Book published in 1846.

The History Hallway, outside Drew Hall, featured a time line with facts

and photos. The Youth Classroom was transformed into an 1865 Sunday School room where vintage desks, toys and games were displayed along with those yummy ginger snaps and cider.

In the Twichell Room, there were more treats, a “photo opp” with hand-painted period costumes, Joseph Twichell and Mark Twain, and the opportunity for members to sign a New Covenant, promising “to grow in faith and love as disciples of Jesus, and to be a light of hope to the Asylum Hill neighborhood, to Hartford, and to the world God loves” for the next 150 years. If you did not have a chance to sign the Covenant and would like to, you are invited to sign it in Drew Hall following worship on Sundays. This New Covenant will be bound in a book at the end of the year-long celebration.