

Congregational Church and in 1860 the name was changed to the Talcott Street Congregational Church.

In 1855, the church extended a call to the Rev. Robert F. Wheeler of Brooklyn, NY to become teacher and pastor and in 1886 he began a ministry which lasted for 30 years. During his ministry here he was successful in merging the ecclesiastical society with the church and having the church incorporated in 1901 according to the laws of the State of Connecticut. The second church building was built in 1906 on the site of the first church. Rev. Wheeler labored long and wrought well and is held in reverent memory by all who knew him.

The Rev. James A. Wright, D.D. began a 44 year ministry here on June 1, 1916, coming from Haverhill, MA, where he served the Zion Congregational Church as a student pastor. Under his leadership the church grew spiritually, numerically, and financially. One of the great accomplishments of his pastorate was the East Side Work which was operated through the Daily Vacation Bible School and the Week Day School carrying the influence of the church into homes. On October 19, 1944 a mortgage burning ceremony was held freeing the second meeting house from indebtedness and on November 19, 1953 the Mother Bethel Methodist church under the leadership of the Rev. Samuel Guilbeau and Talcott Street Congregational Church merged to form the present Faith Congregational Church.

The old Talcott Street Church was sold and the present church was purchased, renovated and dedicated on June 13, 1954. Today, Faith Congregational Church, the successor of Talcott Street Congregational Church, the oldest African-American Church in the City of Hartford still commemorates our beginning gives thanks and praise to them who went before and re-dedicate ourselves to the unfinished work that lies before us.

FAITH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AN HISTORICAL SKETCH

Faith Congregational Church had its beginning in November of the year 1819 when people of colour, worshipping at white churches and tiring of the custom of being assigned seats in the galleries, began worshipping by themselves. They assembled on the Sabbath in the conference room of the First Church of Christ (Center Church) Hartford with the Reverend Asa Goldsborough, a person of colour, serving them as preacher.

In April of the following year, 1820, at the desire of this group of worshipers, a meeting of managers of the Hartford Sunday School Union was held and a vote taken to establish a Sunday School exclusively for the people of colour. A room in a building at the foot of State Street, belonging to the estate of the late Samuel Danforth, was secured and the school was established in May. The Sabbath day service was moved from the First Church of Christ.

Six years later, May 11, 1826, a meeting was held by the coloured people and, at their request several white friends from other societies were present to assist them in the organization of a society according to law. It was voted to build a meeting house and at an adjourned meeting held on June 24, 1826 the building committee was appointed. The first meeting house was erected in the year 1826 and paid for by subscription.

During the seven year period from 1826 - 1832, the church was served by eight ministers who preached on the Sabbath: Rev. Asa Goldsborough, Rev. Peter Eason, Rev. Brims made, Rev. W.F. Turner, Rev. James Haybourn, Rev. Thomas Paul, Rev. Hosa Easton, and Rev. D.T. Kimball. This period was a time when the church charted the course that led ultimately to its recognition as a congregational church in 1833.

A lecture on slavery was held in the African Religious Society's meeting house on March 14, 1833, given by Arnold Buffman, an ex-President of the New England Anti-Slavery Society. The collection taken up in behalf of the Society amounted to \$43.49. This church had been the meeting place for many of the anti-slavery meetings. The intelligence and refinement, coupled with the eloquence of the visiting ministers, was an agreeable surprise to the white friends, resulting in many of them becoming influential friends for the Negro. Rev. Dr. Henry Highland Garner, noted Negro preacher and orator, and a number of abolitionists spoke there in the interest of anti-slavery. Thirty-two men from this church served with the 29th and 31st coloured volunteer Infantry Regiments and were present at Appomattox when General Lee surrendered to General Grant.

The church was duly organized and recognized as a Church of Christ according to the faith of the Congregational Churches on August 28, 1833. Rev. Dr. Joel Hawes of the First Church and the Rev. C.C. Vanarsdalen of the second church officiated. The records state that the members came from the First Church and other churches in the vicinity.

The founders of this church were desirous of obtaining the benefits of Christian civilization, enlarging their sphere of usefulness and transmitting the benefits to posterity. They were somewhat hindered by poverty, race prejudice and meagre facilities in general but animated with a high idea and noble purpose; they went to work with faith and love. They possessed the true New England ideal, a school house and a church. In those early days coloured people were not admitted to the public schools. With the help of friends they maintained a district school here for many years. It was the only place where coloured children could learn to read and write and it was very successful. Slavery still existed in Connecticut, but those engaged in this work were free people and natives of New

England, some of Indian blood. Nearly all could read and write, some were fairly well educated and could fitly and forcibly express their sentiments in public.

In 1839 the name was changed to the First Hartford Coloured Congregational Church. The Rev. E.R. Tyler was pastor. He was succeeded by the Rev. James W.C. Pennington, D.D. who was installed pastor on July 16, 1840. Dr. Pennington was a fugitive slave from Maryland. He escaped and came north by the underground railroad which had a station in Hartford in the vicinity of the Hooker property on Forest Street. He was later bought by Harriet Beecher Stowe's brother-in-law, John Hooker, a pillar of Center Church where the first meetings of this church had been held, who gave him his papers of freedom June 3, 1851. During his ministry here a joint missionary meeting was held in the church on May 5, 1841 from which the first missionaries, five in all, were sent to the interior of Africa. Two of these were coloured and members of this church. They were Mr. and Mrs. William Henry R. Wilson.

Dr. Pennington made three trips to Europe while serving here. On his second trip, having earned a name for himself as an eloquent orator, preacher, and fighter for human rights, the University of Heidelberg, Germany conferred upon him the Honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity, the first time in its history that such an honor was conferred upon a Negro.

In addition to writing a book (The Origin and History of the Coloured People) and publisher of a newspaper (The Clarksonian), Dr. Pennington was instrumental in bringing noted speakers to Hartford including Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison.

The church changed its name on January 12, 1852 from the First Hartford Coloured Congregational Church to the Fifth