ADDRESS.

At the laying of the corner stone of the 1st Congregational Church, Washington, D.C. Thursday, Oct. 4th, 1866.

No. 5, Vol. 11.

SUBJECT.
First Congregational Church.
Pretreat:  Having been selected to present a few facts with reference to our Church, on an occasion of so much interest, I should be pleased to have done so in a more acceptable manner than my time will allow. With reference to the organization of the Church, I will make a few quotations from an able and complete history, furnished to the public last year by one of our most active members.

The present Congregationalist Church seems to have taken (or rather to have been initiated) a visible shape, in 1864. In the words of the historian,

The vast increase of population which has been brought to this city during the war had early turned the inquiries of the people of the Congregational faith to the subject of establishing a church of their own, and in March, 1864, Rev. Mr. Powell, of the State of New York, came to this city, and, after consulting a few earnest friends of the denomination, commenced ministries in Williams's Hall. The place of meeting was changed after one Sunday's service to the Union League Rooms, on Ninth street.
After worshipping here for some months, it was decided to suspend exercises until the autumn; and a committee was appointed to make such arrangements for the resuming services as might, after deliberation and consultation, be deemed best. This committee was unable to frame any satisfactory plan for this purpose; but in May, 1865, they prepared an appeal, addressed to the National Council, then soon to assemble in Boston, which was signed by some sixty persons, presenting the condition of things to Northern Congregational friends. On the 18th of June, 1865, a meeting was held at the office of Geo. W. Woolley, over the Union League Rooms, on Ninth street, the object, as stated, being "to promote the interests of Congregationalism in Washington." Rev. E. W. Robinson was chairman and C. H. Bliss secretary. Rev. B. F. Morris and W. B. Hooper were chosen as a committee to present the condition of this field and its claims to the National Congregational Council, which took place on the 14th of that month. This original meeting consisted of Rev. E. W. Robinson, Rev. B. F. Morris, G. W. Woolley, C. H. Torry, J. W. Sargeant, C. H. Bliss, and J. Walton.

At the second meeting, August 17, Rev. Mr. Morris, who had attended the National Council in Boston, reported verbally that he had cordially received and his mission favorably entertained by the Council, and that all encouragement that could be justly desired was extended by the members to their project. The following resolution was unanimously adopted, on motion of Mr. Hooper:

Resolved, That in our opinion measures should now be adopted to inaugurate a Congregational Church and Society in the city of Washington.

On the motion of C. H. Bliss, a committee of seven members, C. H. Bliss, L. Dossey, W. A. Thompson, D. G. Blakeley, C. H. Torry, B. F. Morris, and E. W. Robinson, was appointed to secure the names of those desirous to embark in the enterprise, and to carry into effect the spirit of the resolution. This meeting consisted of nineteen persons. At the next meeting, August 31, the last-mentioned committee reported favorably to the enterprise, and presented a code of rules for the society which were adopted. Twenty-one persons present. At the next meeting, September 14, Major General O. O. Howard and Hoa. E. H. Hodges were elected members of the committee, in place of Messrs. Torry and Blakeley, who had permanently left the city.
The first sermon was preached by Rev. Charles B. Boyanton, D.D., formerly of Cincinnati, in the Unitarian Church, which, not being occupied by the Unitarian people during the summer, had been rented by the committee for three months, ending with November.

On the 20th of September, pursuant of notice from the pulpit, a public meeting was held in the church for the purpose of perfecting the organization of the society, and of taking measures for permanently supplying the pulpit. On motion of Mr. Daniel Tyler, it was unanimously voted to invite Dr. Boyanton to continue his ministrations. The invitation was accepted, and Dr. Boyanton has continued with great acceptance to preach to a crowded congregation. At this meeting, which completed the organization of the society, the committee was specially authorized to set till January 1st, 1855. Thirty names were added to the rolls of the society, making at that time seventy members in all.

The first meeting for forming a church was held at the Unitarian Church October 11th, 1855, when a committee of Mr. C. B. Boyanton, Rev. B. F. Morris, E. H. Robinson, H. O. Breslauer, and Wm. King were elected as a committee to prepare and report a Covenant, Articles of Faith, and Rules for the Church. Another committee of five viz.: Selden, Hopkiss, Le Deano, W. H. Hooper, Wm. Wheler, and Leonard Westfall was appointed to arrange for a Council of Churches, and make all needful arrangements for the meeting and session of that body. Twenty churches were invited to act in the Council. "The First Congregational Church of Washington" was adopted as the name of the church. Subsequent meetings were held on the 1st and 24th of October; and, after much consideration and discussion on the latter-named meeting, the Articles of Faith, Covenant, and Rules were adopted as we have given them. At a meeting on November 1st the church voted a confirmation of the call of an Ecclesiastical Council, and at the same time invited Dr. Boyanton to occupy its pulpit as their religious teacher for the same period (six months) as had been designated by the articles of the society. At a meeting for that purpose on Sunday evening, November 12th, of the committee to examine the credentials of those proposing to unite in the membership of the church, a list, consisting of nearly one hundred, was reported.

The Council refused to assemble November 15th at ten o'clock in the Unitarian Church, and were organized.

After some discussion of an able and interesting nature in regard to the Creed, Covenant, and Rules, a resolution presented by Dr. Thompson, declaring them as well as the manner of the organization of the church satisfactory, was unanimously adopted by the Council; the same resolution also declaring that the Council would proceed to the public services of recognition this evening.

A full and free discussion of the plans and prospects of the church in the matter of erecting a house of worship and sustaining the ministry succeeded The scheme of building on leased land was not entertained by the Council.

The following preamble and resolution were adopted:
The interesting ceremonies of recognition were held at Wednesday evening November 13th 1885.

Since the organization of the Church its membership has steadily increased and now numbers 160.

The Congregations are large and regular, both at the Sunday services and at the weekly prayer meetings. During the last session of Congress our Pastor officiated as Chaplain of the House of Representatives, and the church attended his ministrations in the morning at the Hall of the House, and in the evening at McGregor Hall. We have a flourishing Sunday School at the same Hall, before the morning service — numbering 20 teachers and 100 scholars as an average.

All our services during the past year have been of a most edifying and satisfactory character.

The members of the Church have been unusually zealous and active in the work of the Master, while our Pastor has been faithful and fearless in proclaiming to us the truth—declaring the whole counsel of God.
Our Church early put itself in cordial communication with the many of the great benevolent organizations of the day; particularly with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the American Missionary Society, and the Congregational Union, and has contributed willingly and generously to the funds of these societies, besides having made special donations to Sabbath School enterprises.
Dr. Grover Hart

Fiscal Council Report

The Fiscal Council has been working on its annual report. It has held several meetings and discussed various financial matters. The council is planning to hold its next meeting next month.

The council has also been working on a report on the financial status of the city. The report is expected to be released in the coming weeks.

The council is made up of members from different areas of the city, including business owners, educators, and community leaders. Each member brings a unique perspective to the council.

The council meets monthly to discuss financial matters and make decisions on behalf of the city.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.
With regard to our contemplated Church edifice, I would be pleased to present to you a detailed history of the work of your Committee, but will let it suffice at this time to give a brief summary.

Our Church and Society decided to construct a building here at the Capital of the Nation, not only to meet their present wants, but owing to our peculiar position, to provide for the numerous Transitory population, that comes and goes at this place, more perhaps than elsewhere, having particular regard to the demands of Congregationalists, who have hitherto had no house of worship of their own in Washington. Our plans have been matured. The site for a Church edifice has been purchased, at a cost of little upwards of twenty thousand dollars ($20,000.00). Towards which the sum of fifteen thousand dollars ($15,000.00) has been paid, and the title secured. The estimated cost of our proposed building is about sixty-five thousand dollars ($65,000.00) towards the entire cost the Treasurer and Finance Committee have received already from various sources, by subscription and contributions, about thirty-five thousand dollars ($35,000.00). The Building Committee have had their plans and specifications completed, the proper excavation and preparation of the ground effected, the stone foundation nearly laid, and
have made all the necessary arrangements to proceed with the work of construction. I need not say to you that we are looking with a steady confidence to our brethren throughout the United States to aid us in finishing what we have begun.—for in the words of the Boston Recorder: "The members of this church are not rich in this world’s goods: They gave the Council assurance of their ability to meet the current expenses of the enterprise out of their own resources, but they must look to wealthier Christians for aid to erect a suitable Meeting House."

We will say to our friends throughout the country—we have been diligent, we have laid the foundation, we have already pledged or collected among ourselves about $16,000. Evidence our unwillingness to be merely passive recipients among the other sons of Christian relationship, and striving to benefit and bless all with whom they come in contact.

We hope to perceive the same fervent spirit of patriotism, that our Congregational brethren elsewhere..."
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To all our friends throughout the country—we have been diligent—we have done what we could—we have laid the foundation of a noble enterprise—we propose to put a suitable church of the Puritans at the Capital of our nation, and we ask from you a generous support. We hope to have continuously what we now have—a living, working, membership, thoroughly loyal to Christ, knit together in the closest ties of Christian relationship, and striving to benefit and bless all with whom they come in contact.

We hope to preserve the same fervent spirit of instruction, that our Congregational brethren elsewhere...
have almost invariably manifested. The look to the Christian Churches in this city for friendly cooperation, and trust we may aid them and they us, in making unceasing inroads upon the territory of our Common enemy, and engage continuously with them, in giving a helping hand to the poor and the lowly. And perchance God may see fit to pour out untold blessings upon Washington and upon the Nation of which it is the Head, in answer to our united and humble petitions.
Remarks made by Ben. Howard at the laying of the corner stone of the first Cong. Church, Thursday, Oct. 14, 1866.