

Church of Our Father Votes to Close Doors After 98 Years Decrease in Membership Prompts Action by Universalist Congregation

By Esther Coster

Trustees of the Universalist Church of Our Father, 415 Clinton Ave., have at last decided to close the door and liquidate the property, not because of financial troubles, which have been less pressing than in many other churches of Brooklyn, but because of the decrease in active membership and the lack of young people to carry on the traditions of the church. All attempts to keep up a Sunday School were abandoned years ago because of the lack of children among the parishioners.

After liquidation of the property, which is situated in one of the finest residential sections of Brooklyn, three special gifts are to be made: \$1,000 to the Universalist Church at Floral Park, \$1,000 to the Chapin Home for the Aged at Jamaica, sponsored by the Universalists, and \$500 to the Parsonage Fund of All Souls Universalist Church, Flatbush. The disposal of the balance of the fund, the amount of which was not disclosed, has not yet been announced.

The Church of Our Father, the first Brooklyn Universalist society, was established in April, 1842 on Adams St., later erecting a new building in June, 1843 at Fulton and Pineapple Sts. The first Sunday School was organized in October, 1843. After a destructive fire [in 1848] a new edifice was erected in September, 1848, at Clark St. and Monroe Place, and dedicated July 2, 1850. This church is now used by the Swedenborgians. In 1868 the church united with another society at Greene Ave. near Adelphi St. (now a Catholic church), and sold the downtown building. In 1869 a new chapel was built on Clermont Ave. near Atlantic Ave. In 1881 the church on Grand Ave. and Lefferts Place was erected and on March 22, 1903, Dr. Thomas Edward Potterton became pastor and remained thus until his death on Dec. 8, 1933.

During his pastorate the present Clinton Ave. property was acquired in 1927 and altered to fit the needs of a church and parsonage combined.

In 1935 the Grand Ave. property was sold to a Negro congregation. The Rev. Gordon Chilson Reardon became the pastor in 1934, but since his resignation in 1937 the church has had supply preachers, but no regular pastor.

Several offers of mergers have been made to the church in the past few years, but all have been refused, the congregation hoping to keep its status as an independent body.

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