

[Friendship, Cattaraugus Co. New York]

Former Universalist Church is Sold; Assembly of God Are New Owners  
Church Again Opens Doors After Eighteen Years; Edifice Is Old Landmark

After nearly eighteen years of silence, the church bell in the familiar old landmark on Friendship's Main Street, the historic Universalist Church of Friendship, will again peal forth in the near future, it is announced today. The church will again open its doors to the public, but under a new denominational title, "The Assembly of God Church."

Negotiations were completed only late last week by the congregation and the Rev. Robert D. Campbell for the purchase of the old landmark by the Assembly of God parishioners, who heretofore have met in private homes of the congregation. Extensive repairs are underway in the interior of the building and it is expected that the stately old edifice will be enhanced by a coat of paint early next summer.

The Universalist church was built in the year 1856, ninety-two years ago, being one of the oldest remaining buildings along Friendship's Main Street. Draftsmen and carpenters responsible for its construction built the edifice with such precision and simplicity of design that the structure is still in keeping with established architectural designs associated with its being a house of worship.

The first pastor of the Universalist church was the Rev. F. M. [Francis Milton] Alvord, grandfather of the present supervisor, . M. Alvord of Friendship. At the opening of the church the congregation was of sizeable proportions. Later, as other denominations came into prominence in the area, the congregation became more and more scattered as the general trend of church affiliation began its decline. After several years of struggle, the support of the church became so meagre that it was with regret that the members decided to close its doors.

The last pastor to occupy the pulpit was the Rev. Otis Alvord, an uncle of the present supervisor, who presided at services until the time of its closing in early 1930.

During the past summer the few remaining members, numbering 10, decided to turn over the building to the State Convention of the Universalist Church. It was the latter group that decided the property should be offered for sale. It was following this action that the members of the Assembly of God faith purchased the building as their new home.

Thus with the re-opening of the little church on Main Street, another chapter in the annals of local history will unfold. Friendship can well be proud of the efforts of the new owners and their pastor in keeping alive the faith of its original founders.

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