



CHAPTER VI.

Congregational Churches (continued): Second Church, Union Church of Weymouth and Braintree, Union Church of South Weymouth, Church at East Weymouth, Pilgrim Church — Methodist Episcopal: Church at East Weymouth, Church at Lovell's Corner — Universalist: First Church, Second Church, Third Church — Baptist: First Church — Roman Catholic: Parish of St. Francis Xavier, Parish of the Immaculate Conception, Parish of the Sacred Heart, Parish of St. Jerome — Protestant Episcopal: Trinity Parish.

THE SECOND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND PARISH IN SOUTH WEYMOUTH.¹ — The causes that led to the separation of the town into two precincts, and the formation of the Second Church, have been already alluded to. The long distance and poor roads, with other causes of dissatisfaction, gave rise to the determination of the dwellers at the South to separate; while the opposition, steady and persistent, on the part of the old parish and church, served only to solidify the determination, which resulted, in 1723, in an act of the Legislature establishing the Second Precinct, and on the 21st of June the parish met and organized. On the 15th of July a call was given to Mr. James Bayley to settle with them, at a salary of seventy-six pounds, and a settlement of one hundred and thirty pounds. A church, however, was not formed until the following 18th of September. A meeting-house had already been erected, and Mr. Bayley had been preaching there probably for a year or more. He accepted the call, and was ordained Sept. 26, 1723, as pastor over this people,

¹The facts relative to this church and society have been largely furnished by Rev. George F. Stanton, the present pastor.

and remained such until his death, Aug. 22, 1766, a period of forty-three years. He was a native of Roxbury, a graduate of Harvard, of 1719, and served his first and only pastorate in Weymouth. During his extended ministry there were added to the church in all two hundred and seven persons. He seems to have been much beloved by his people, and was held in estimation by the neighboring parishes.

On the 15th of January, 1767, after the death of Mr. Bayley, Mr. Ephraim Briggs received a call from the parish, in concurrence with the church, to become their minister, but with so strong opposition that he declined. Through that season the pulpit was supplied by five different ministers, each preaching several Sabbaths in succession; and in March, 1768, a call was given to a Mr. Fuller, which was declined; after which Mr. Simeon Williams, of Raynham, preached for several months, and then received a call, which he accepted, and was ordained Oct. 26, 1768. Here he remained until May 31, 1819, the date of his death. He was born in Easton, and was a graduate of New Jersey College, of 1765. His ministry extended over a period of more than fifty-one years, the longest ever recorded in the town. In 1784 and 1785, the old meeting-house was torn down, and a new one erected.

Upon the repeated request of Mr. Williams for a junior pastor, the church, on Dec. 14, 1818, called Mr. William Tyler to that position, and on the 24th of February following he was ordained; but the death of Mr. Williams, so soon after, left him sole pastor. Mr. Tyler remained as pastor of this people until Oct. 17, 1831, when he was dismissed, at his own request, after a ministry of nearly thirteen years. For more than a year the church was without a pastor; and on Nov. 8, 1832, a call was extended to Rev. Charles I. Warren, who accepted the invitation, and was installed Jan 1, 1833; but, after a

brief pastorate of little more than a year and a half, he was dismissed Aug. 13, 1834, at his own urgent request, and much to the regret of his people. It was four years after this before the office was again filled, and this period was one of great trouble that nearly proved fatal to the church. The difficulty was so serious that on account of religious differences the church seceded from the parish, worshipping in a hall, and a new society, the Edwards Society, was organized. The breach, however, was healed in 1837, and the church and parish united in the old meeting-house, although an unsuccessful attempt had been made to form another church. During the separation, a call had been extended to Rev. Joshua Emery, Jr., which he declined. In 1836, the society gave Rev. Mr. Biscoe a call, which he also declined. In August, 1838, after the reunion of the church and society, Rev. Wales Lewis received a call, which he accepted, and was installed on the 12th of September. During his ministry there was serious trouble, which increased to such a degree as in the end to cause his dismissal, which took place in June, 1847, after a pastorate of about nine years. During the troubles in the pastorate of Mr. Lewis, in 1842, and as a consequence of them, a strong party drew off and formed the Union Church and Society, which became a permanent organization.

After the dismissal of Mr. Lewis, Rev. Joshua Leavett preached for a time, and an effort was made to give him a call, but without success. There was felt very great discouragement as to their future prospects, which gave way to a feeling of hope when Rev. James P. Terry accepted their call, and was installed July 6, 1848. Matters at once began to assume a more cheering aspect, so much so that in the year of his settlement the present parsonage house was built for the benefit of the parish; and about five years later, in 1853, the

present meeting-house was erected, at a cost of about fifteen thousand dollars, and the church and society stood once more upon firm ground. In February, 1863, Mr. Terry's health gave way, and he was obliged to suspend his ministrations. He was granted leave of absence for six months, during which time the people worshipped with the Union Church, under Rev. S. H. Hayes. In March of the following year, 1869, finding that his health did not improve, Mr. Terry felt obliged to ask to be relieved from his pastoral relation, and his request was reluctantly granted.

About the same time a plan for a union of the two societies and churches was arranged, and an agreement made to adopt it, but it failed to be carried into execution. Rev. Dr. Labaree preached for about a year and a half, when the present pastor, Rev. George F. Stanton, began his work here. He received a call to settle with this people, which he accepted, and was installed 27th October, 1870; and it was in the third year of his ministry that the church and society celebrated their one hundred and fiftieth anniversary, with appropriate services, amid much rejoicing. The church is yet strong and vigorous, notwithstanding the years it has survived and the struggles it has encountered, and bids fair to live far into the future.

THE UNION RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF WEYMOUTH AND BRAINTREE.¹ — This society and the church connected with it, although its meeting-house is located a few rods over the line in Braintree, is comprised so largely of Weymouth people that it fairly deserves a place in this record. Its members were drawn mainly from the first churches of Weymouth and Braintree, who, on account

¹ The sketch of the Union Church of Weymouth and Braintree is compiled mainly from the records of the church and society.

of the considerable distance of those two meeting-houses and the increasing importance of the village of Weymouth Landing, coming from a rapid influx of population and the commencement of business enterprises, desired better accommodations for religious services. The society was formed March 13, 1810, and the Hollis Street Church, Boston, then about to be taken down, was purchased, its material removed by vessel to its present location in East Braintree, where it was rebuilt, and with many alterations, remains still as the house of worship of the people. The society was incorporated 21st February, 1811, and a church organized Aug. 14 of the same year. A call was at once given to Mr. John Frost, who declined it. In the following November, Mr. Daniel A. Clark was invited to a settlement. He accepted the invitation, and was ordained on the following 31st of December. After a short pastorate (less than two years), owing to the disaffection of a few members of the church and congregation, and a difficulty in raising his salary, Mr. Clark resigned, and was dismissed 20th October, 1813. After a year or more of financial distress, during which the pulpit was supplied from Sabbath to Sabbath, in January, 1815, Mr. Jonas Perkins, of Bridgewater, was hired for three months, and before that time had expired he was given a call, which was accepted, and he was ordained June 14 of that year. After a long and prosperous ministry of forty-six years, at the age of seventy, in accordance with long-expressed plans, he resigned his pastorate, and the connection was severed, 15th October, 1860. He remained in the village, taking an active interest in the affairs of his old church, until his death, which occurred June 26, 1874. After the resignation of Mr. Perkins, a call was extended to Rev. E. Porter Dyer, of Hingham, Sept. 28, 1860, which he declined. In the following December, Rev. Lysander

Dickerman, of Gloucester, was invited to the vacant pulpit, which invitation he accepted, and he was installed Jan. 17, 1861. After a very stormy pastorate of about six and a half years, during a part of which a bitter quarrel existed between the pastor and about half of the congregation, which in the end seriously threatened the very existence of the church and society, his official connection with them closed in July, 1867. The results of this quarrel were very disastrous, so that they had no pastor for about two years, when matters began to assume a better aspect, and April 1, 1868, Rev. A. A. Elsworth, of Milford, was hired to supply the pulpit, which he did very acceptably for about three years. After this time, affairs having been somewhat accommodated and extensive alterations made in the meeting-house, a hearty call was extended to Rev. Lucien H. Frary, of Middleton. This call was accepted, and Mr. Frary was installed April 13, 1875. He is now in the tenth year of his ministry, with a united people and a strong and prosperous society, that has, through his exertions, just relieved itself from a heavy debt incurred in the remodelling of the house, and which had seriously crippled it in its work.

UNION CHURCH AND SOCIETY OF SOUTH WEYMOUTH.¹ — As before stated, the organization of this church and society grew out of the trouble in the Second Parish, from which the members of the new organization withdrew. The society was formed June 20, 1842, and the church Nov. 1 of the same year. The meetings were first held in Rogers' Hall, until a meeting-house could be erected, which was effected the same year. On the 3d of July, 1843, a call

¹The materials for this sketch were furnished by O. B. Bates, Esq. from the records of the church and society.

was extended to Rev. George Denham, which he accepted, and he was installed Nov. 1. This connection was held until May, 1847, when he was dismissed. On the following 17th of November, Rev. Willard M. Harding, having accepted a call, was installed, and continued his ministry until 1858, when he resigned, and was dismissed April 8 by a council which installed as his successor Rev. S. H. Hayes, who retained his position as pastor over that people until Nov. 17, 1870, when he asked and received his dismissal. From February, 1871, to September, the pulpit was supplied by Rev. Henry E. Cooley. During the years 1870 and 1871 a new meeting-house was erected at a cost of forty thousand dollars, and a parsonage at a cost of four thousand dollars. A call was extended to Rev. James McLean, which he accepted, and was installed Feb. 27, 1872. He was dismissed May 29, 1876. Rev. George N. Marden followed him as acting pastor, from February, 1877, to August, 1881. On the 1st of September of the latter year, a call was extended to Rev. William H. Bolster, which he accepted, and was installed April 12, 1882. He is the present pastor.

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF EAST WEYMOUTH.¹ — This church was formed from a division in the Methodist Episcopal Church, a majority of the society remaining and forming a new church, called the First Evangelical Methodist Church, the minority retaining the old organization and building a new house of worship. The church was formed March 4, 1843, with ten members. In 1860, Feb. 25, it changed from the Methodist to the Congregational form, and

¹ The data from which this sketch is compiled were gathered from the records by Charles B. Cushing, Esq.

joined the Norfolk Conference of that denomination. It is now, numerically, the strongest church of that order in the town. It has been obliged to enlarge its meeting-house, to accommodate the increased call for sittings. Its congregation is an enterprising and prosperous one, and its list of pastors, notwithstanding its comparatively recent date, is altogether too long to be here enumerated. It has also a large Sabbath school connected with it. When the old society divided, the meeting-house was sold and torn down, and a new one erected upon the same spot, which remains to-day, with the enlargement above mentioned.

THE PILGRIM CHURCH AND SOCIETY OF NORTH WEYMOUTH.¹ — The growing necessities of the prosperous village of Old Spain were the cause of the movement that resulted in these organizations. The society was formed May 14, 1851, and a meeting-house erected the same year. The church was organized March 11, 1852. In May of the same year, Rev. Calvin Terry was called to be the first pastor. He accepted the call, and was installed May 18, 1852. This connection was a very unfortunate one, on account of long-continued and great dissensions with the pastor, who, after much trouble and difficulty, was dismissed Dec. 25, 1856. On Sept. 14, 1857, Rev. Charles E. Reed, of Taunton, was invited to the pastorate, but declined. In the spring of 1858, Rev. Samuel L. Rockwood accepted a call, and was installed March 12. His ministry continued until July 31, 1871, when he was dismissed, at his own request, on account of ill health. He was succeeded by Rev. Louis B. Voorhees, who was ordained Dec. 6, same year, and continued his ministry

¹ These materials were furnished by Herbert A. Newton, Esq., from the official files.

until his resignation was accepted, July 1, 1876. On the 23d of November following, Rev. George Dodson, having accepted a call, was installed, and remained pastor until Dec. 23, 1879, when ill health compelled him to resign the active duties of his office. Rev. A. H. Tyler commenced his services as acting pastor, May 17, 1880, and resigned in the spring of 1884. In 1881 a parsonage was built.

THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF EAST WEYMOUTH.¹—The first movement looking to the formation of a Methodist Church in East Weymouth was made in 1822. The trouble in the old North Church, consequent upon the changes in religious belief of Mr. Norton, the inconvenient distance from meeting, and the fact that a large portion of the people were gradually becoming restive under the severe Calvinistic creed then held by the two churches in town, induced a desire for more freedom in religious thought and belief. The first class was organized in 1823, and the new society erected its first meeting-house in 1825. The rapid growth of the parish necessitated an enlargement of this building, which was made in 1828. During the first ten years of its existence, not far from one hundred members were received from the North Parish. About this time trouble began to show itself, and the desire to be removed from the higher authority of the Methodist Episcopal government and return to the ancient freedom of the Congregational Church, caused a majority of the people to separate from the conference, and continue their organization as a Protestant Methodist Church. The minority, who preferred their original form, withdrew, and formed a new society, retaining the old name. They built their first meeting-

¹ Gathered from the records by John W. Bates, Esq.

house in 1844, and such was the increase, that they were obliged to enlarge the building in 1850. This house was destroyed by fire 13th December, 1851, and with its contents was a total loss. This was a heavy blow, from which, however, it soon rallied, and another house was erected in the following year, dedicated Oct. 12. This becoming too contracted for the growing necessities of the society, was enlarged in 1864. This building was also burned 23d February, 1870. Another and the present house of worship was erected on Broad Street the same year, and dedicated Dec. 23. It has free sittings. The church belongs to the New England Southern Conference. The society has also a fine parsonage, built in 1867. The present membership of the church is about two hundred and sixty. It has been from its organization an energetic church, and the centre of good influences. It has also a large and flourishing Sabbath school.

THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH AT LOVELL'S CORNER.¹ — The initial steps towards the formation of this church were taken in the autumn of 1866, in recognition of a long-felt need of that growing and prosperous village, when Rev. D. W. Waldron, pastor of the Congregational Church at East Weymouth, began there on Sabbath afternoons a preaching service at five o'clock. This was continued as long as he remained pastor of the East Weymouth Church, and for about a year after. During the latter time, the neighboring ministers preached there in turn. After this a regular pulpit supply was obtained, until a Congregational Church was formed, on the last Thursday in October, 1872. Rev. Joseph C. Halliday, the first pastor, commenced his work there on the first Sabbath

¹ Materials furnished by Bradford Hawes, Esq.

of the following December, and held the position until July, 1877, nearly five years. From that time until November of the same year there was no regular minister. In that month Rev. Henry P. Haylett, a student of Boston University (Methodist Episcopal), was engaged. During his pastorate the church changed its denominational connection and united with the New Bedford Methodist Episcopal Conference in April, 1879, and in April, 1882, it was transferred to the New England Southern Conference of the same denomination, where it still remains. Mr. Haylett was succeeded May 1, 1880, by Rev. Charles H. Farnsworth, who in turn gave place, in the following year, to Rev. E. G. Babcock, the present pastor. A Sabbath school was gathered by the efforts of Rev. Mr. Waldron, in the spring of 1867, which has continued an active existence in connection with the work of the church ever since. This church has no meeting-house, but has held its services in a hall.

THE FIRST UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF WEYMOUTH.¹
— This society was organized at Weymouth Landing, July 21, 1836, in consequence of a desire on the part of many of the people of that village, then the largest in the town, for a wider privilege in the interpretation of the Bible than the belief of the Union Church would permit. Rev. Matthew Hale Smith was hired to preach once a fortnight in Wales' Hall. A movement was soon made towards the building of a meeting-house with such success that a house was finished at a cost of six thousand four hundred dollars, including land, bell and furniture, and was dedicated Sept. 13, 1839. Mr. Calvin Gardner preached on the next and three following Sabbaths. Rev. John S. Barry was the pastor

¹ Facts supplied by J. W. Armington, Esq.

from November, 1839, to April, 1841. He was succeeded at once by Rev. John M. Spear, who remained until April, 1845, when he closed his service, and was followed by Rev. Mr. Coffin until November of the same year, when Rev. Mr. Dennis supplied the pulpit. In 1846, Rev. Mr. Barry returned, and remained as minister until Jan. 1, 1850. He was then succeeded by Rev. Mr. Hemphill and others, for about two years, when Rev. D. P. Livermore was hired, and remained about two years. After him Rev. Mr. Davenport preached for a year, whose successor was Rev. Charles Mellen, who remained from April, 1855, to April, 1860, when the pulpit was supplied for a year and a half by Rev. D. T. Goddard. Following him there was no regular minister until April, 1864, when Rev. Miss Olympia Brown was engaged, and held the position until September, 1869. After an interval of two years, Rev. Benjamin H. Davis became pastor, and continued in that position from October, 1871, to April, 1873, — a year and a half. Rev. L. S. Crosley was the next pastor, beginning his service November, 1876, and closing March, 1878. After him came Rev. Anson Titus, Jr., who began his work November, 1878, and ended April, 1883, having charge also for the greater part of the time, first of the church in Old Spain, and then of that in South Weymouth. This society still worships in its original meeting-house, on Washington Street, and its present pastor, recently engaged, is Rev. B. F. Eaton, who has the charge also of the West Scituate Society.

THE SECOND UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF SOUTH WEYMOUTH.¹ — The first services in the Universalist faith in South Weymouth were held in Columbian Hall, in 1835, during the trouble in the Second Congrega-

¹ Material furnished by H. H. Joy, Esq.

tional Church, when Rev. Sylvanus Cobb preached for a time. There was then no organization, the movement meeting with bitter opposition, and it was not until 1848 that an association was formed, known as the "Washington Corporation," out of which grew the Second Universalist Society. Rev. John Parker, the first regularly settled pastor, was installed in 1849, and remained in that service for six years. During his pastorate a chapel was erected, in 1850.

The next pastor, Rev. Elmer E. Hewitt, was installed on Sunday evening, July 8, 1855, and retained his position for more than fourteen years, when he was succeeded by Rev. Jacob Baker, who was installed in 1869. His term of service extended over a period of nine years, to 1878, since which time there have been several pastors,—Revs. E. A. Perry, Anson Titus, B. F. Bowles, the present pastor, and others.

THE THIRD UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF NORTH WEYMOUTH.¹—This society was organized Nov. 19, 1853, and a Sabbath school gathered on the succeeding Fast Day. The first minister was Rev. R. L. Killam, of Scituate, who commenced April 1, 1855, preaching on alternate Sabbaths in Harmonial Hall. His term of service continued for three years. During the next year only evening services were held, conducted by different clergymen, after which Rev. E. H. Hawes, of Stoughton, supplied the pulpit on alternate Sabbaths for one year, beginning May 1, 1859, and Rev. R. L. Killam for the summer following.

During the ten succeeding years the services were conducted by clergymen of Weymouth and the neighboring towns. Rev. G. W. Skinner, of Quincy, was the next preacher his work dating from April 1, 1871,

and continuing one year, when he was followed by Rev. G. W. Whitney, of Quincy, who was pastor from April 1, 1872, to July 1, 1878. During his ministry a chapel was erected, which was dedicated Jan. 16, 1873, and a church of twenty-two members was formed June 28, 1874. Mr. Whitney was succeeded by Rev. Anson Titus, Jr., of Weymouth Landing, who preached from September, 1878, to July 1, 1880, when he resigned his position. Rev. E. A. Perry was pastor from the latter date to April 1, 1882; the present pastor, Rev. R. T. Sawyer, of Quincy, commencing his labors on Sept. 3 of the same year.

THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN WEYMOUTH.¹ — The first movement towards a union of the members of the Baptist denomination and those favoring its belief, for some kind of associated effort on behalf of their special views, in the village of Weymouth Landing, was made in the years 1851-2, in the establishment of a regular weekly prayer-meeting, and, also, of a sewing circle, the proceeds of whose labors were devoted to the renting of Union Hall, where preaching services were held as often as circumstances would permit, by the Baptist ministers of the neighboring towns. After a little more than a year arrangements were made with Messrs. Leander P. Gurney and Noah Fullerton, of the South Abington Church, for regular preaching on the Sabbath; and, on the 13th of March, of the same year, a Sabbath school was commenced. This state of things soon produced the desire for a church, which was formed on Feb. 7, 1854; but it was not until June 21, 1855, that the society was organized and the congregation became fully equipped for its

¹ Compiled mainly from the records of the society and the sermon of Rev. Gideon Cole, pastor, preached Feb. 4, 1866, at the opening of the new house of worship.

work. Rev. H. C. Coombs, of Middleborough, supplied the pulpit for a few weeks, when it was placed under the care of Rev. Henry Fitz, missionary of the State Convention, and its preachers were mainly from the Newton Theological Seminary. The first pastor was Rev. Andrew Dunn, of Bridgewater, who commenced his labors April 1, 1855; and a chapel was erected, which was dedicated on July 12. Mr. Dunn remained as pastor of the church until Jan. 31, 1858, and was succeeded on May 1 by Rev. Levi A. Abbott, of Milford, who continued with the people for five years, until the end of May, 1863. On Nov. 1, 1863, Rev. Gideon Cole, of Sheldonville, having accepted a call, commenced his work in this place. During his pastorate a new meeting-house was built on Washington and Broad Streets, nearly opposite the chapel, and dedicated Jan. 31, 1866. Mr. Cole was succeeded in the spring of 1871 by Rev. C. H. Rowe, who was followed in the autumn of 1874 by Rev. W. C. Wright. He remained in the pastorate about four years, when he was dismissed, and a call extended to Rev. P. A. Nordell was accepted, who began work in the spring of 1878, which he continued until 1882, when he resigned, and was succeeded by Rev. Seth J. Axtell, the present pastor.

ROMAN CATHOLIC.¹ — The Parish of St. Francis Xavier was the first parish of this denomination, and embraced territorially the whole town. The first priests of the parish were Rev. Fathers Roddan and Lynch, who came to the town in 1851, and the first services were held in East Weymouth that same year, in private houses. After a few months the place of worship was changed, and services were held in Tirrell's Hall, at Weymouth Landing. In 1854, Rev. Father Roach took

¹ The facts relative to the Roman Catholic Church in Weymouth were gathered from various sources and carefully verified.

charge of the parish, but it was not until 1859 that the first church was erected, which was located upon Middle Street, not far below the Town Hall. Father Roach was succeeded, in 1866, by Rev. Father Hennigan, who remained until 1869, and in the fall of that year the church was burned. Rev. Father Smyth followed Father Hennigan in 1869, and soon after, the church on Pleasant Street was erected, in 1870. In 1873, the Parish of the Sacred Heart was constituted at the Landing, the tavern property purchased, and services held in the hall of the building. In 1876, a church of brick and stone was begun, which, when completed, will be the costliest church edifice in the vicinity. The basement was soon finished and occupied, and the audience-room of the church itself has been in use for a year or two.

The Parish of the Immaculate Conception, at East Weymouth, was formed, and a church built in 1879, dedicated Nov. 23. In 1881, a parish was constituted in Old Spain, called the Parish of Saint Jerome, and a church erected. Rev. Father Smyth had charge of all these parishes (with one or more assistants) until 1882, when Rev. Father Millerick was placed over the parishes of the Immaculate Conception and Saint Jerome, Father Smyth retaining the other two until 1883, when he was succeeded by Rev. Father Murphy, the present incumbent.

EPISCOPALIAN—THE TRINITY CHURCH AT WEYMOUTH LANDING.¹—This parish was organized Nov. 11, 1867, at the time and in consequence of the trouble in the Union Congregational Church, in connection with the Rev. L. Dickerman. Services had been held in Williams' Hall, as early as July 7 of that year. On Sept. 10, the homestead of the late Atherton W.

¹ Furnished by Samuel W. Reed, Esq.

Tilden, on Front Street, was purchased, and the house reconstructed into a church. These changes were completed, and the first service held there Dec. 8, 1867, but the church was not consecrated until May 21, 1874. From March 4 to July 1 of that year, 1867, Rev. S. R. Slack, of South Boston, was the officiating clergyman, when Rev. Mr. Burroughs was called to the rectorship, which he resigned Oct. 1, 1868, and was succeeded in December by Rev. T. W. Street, who in turn gave way to Rev. F. O. Barstow, December, 1869. He was followed in June, 1870, by Rev. W. F. Lhoyd, who resigned in 1873, and was succeeded by Rev. William C. Winslow, who remained but one year. The next rector was Rev. Samuel R. Slack, in June, 1874, who retained that position until April 12, 1877, when he resigned, and was followed by Rev. John A. Jerome, who occupied the position until March, 1883. In November, of this year, Rev. Charles L. Wells became officiating clergyman, who has since resigned.