

Moments in Our History

(Excerpts from the Dissenting Church of Christ at St. John's 1775 – 1975)

Worship (Part 2)

Puritan worship was not, however, informal or “free.” There was a recognized order and the various parts of the service were performed with great reverence and dignity. Practice varied from congregation to congregation. Some would repeat the Creed, others not. Most recited the Lord’s Prayer, though strict Dissenters of the old school regarded this as “a vain repetition.”

John Jones’ order was obviously quite simple. In 1775, he wrote “the little Society at first did nothing but sing hymns, pray, read a sermon, and close with prayer”, but by the 1780’s, the service would more closely follow Congregationalist worship of the period. The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was observed the first Sunday of every month.

Children would have a part in the service. In Samuel Greatheed’s *Life of John Jones* we note “The inhabitants, of all religious persuasions, having so high a regard for his character, that they were eager to commit their children to his care. Mr. J. soon found an assistant necessary, and was so happy to meet with persons, in succession, well qualified and disposed to second his benevolent exertions. All the children though many of their parents were Roman Catholics, attended family worship daily, learned the Assembly’s Catechism, which at stated times they repeated before the congregation; and at different periods were publicly examined in branches of common education, greatly to the satisfaction of the principal inhabitants and to the credit of the cause of Christ.” One presumes that after the arrival of the Reverend James O’Donel, the school was less ‘ecumenical’ in character.