

## **Moments in Our History**

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

#### **Worship (Part 1)**

If it were possible for us to worship at the Meeting House, what would be our impressions of the service?

Puritan worship is perhaps best understood as a reaction to the more formal worship of the Church of England.

Anglican clergymen wore gowns, Puritans did not. Anglicans chanted the psalms, Puritans preferred to sing them. Anglicans read the Scriptures without note or comment, Puritans expounded a chapter of the Bible and dismissed the Anglican practice as "dumb reading." In contrast to the Anglican liturgy, Puritan worship was simpler. In place of short, set, general collects, Puritan prayers were long, "by the inspiration of the Spirit" and very pertinent. At this time, read prayers were frowned upon by the congregation. Anglican sermons were usually homilies, Puritan sermons very theological and wide-sweeping.

Our forefathers believed strongly in the Christian Sabbath and a great part the Lord's Day was spent in church with a morning, afternoon and evening service. The services were seldom less than 2 hours in length, frequently longer. The sermon would usually reach "a good way into the second hour" and the Long Prayer, originally a quarter of a hour, tended to grow longer. An American Congregationalist minister of this period, Jonas Clark, who was a pastor at Lexington 1768-1805 was known to have prayed for two hours! A common practice of the time was the passing of notes to the preacher called "a remembrance in the publick prayers on their special occasions." Deacons and others in the congregation often prayed aloud, although this was usually reserved for weekly prayer meeting.