

Telling Our Story

Skit Presented 5/07/17

Cast: Allene Kussin, Andrew Thut, Mary Lou Esposito, Tussie Williams, Bob Lawson, Matt Boger

I Love to tell The Story (refrain only)

Enter Allene and two “children” (Mary Lou and Andrew)

Andrew: Mom, she punched me!

Allene: Mary Lou, don’t pick on your little brother.

(Andrew sticks out tongue, M.L. rolls eyes behind mother’s back)

M.L.: Is that a storybook?.

Allene: This is the story of our church –it’s Our Story.

Andrew: How does it start?

Allene: It started in 1635 when the first settlers came to Concord. Very soon, they voted to build a meeting house. All church business was voted on by the Town Meeting even the purchase of a church bell rope.

Allene: After the Revolutionary War, all over New England, there was a shift in theological thinking as many churches drifted towards Unitarianism.

Tableau 1

Tussie, I am very fond of Rev. Ripley but I can’t go along with his new Unitarianism leanings

Bob: Yes, he says he still believes that Jesus was the son of God but now he considers him less than God

Matt: Leaving out of the Trinity is unacceptable.

Tussie: I am proud that nine of us have decided to form our own religious society.

Bob – I hear that other town folk are ready to join with us. What does your nephew Henry David think of our intentions?

Tussie: Henry worships in the woods –but his mother, Cynthia is considering joining us.

Matt: Ebenezer Hubbard is giving us land to build a meeting house.

Tussie: I am so glad that we will cross the brook and keep our precious faith!

Matt: Too bad that the Unitarians are keeping the silver

Andrew: What happened next?

Allene: Work started on a new meeting house and on June 5, 1826, 16 members took the formal step of organization. Rev. Lyman Beecher preached and his sermon was "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.". One of the first things they did was establish Sabbath schools with 4 branches in the town to instruct the young people in the ways of Christian behavior

M.L. Andrew needs a school for Christian behavior!

Andrew: So do you! M.L.: Do not!

In 1829, 25 persons from Carlisle connected with the society and in 1833, a resolution was adopted making abstinence from ardent spirits, except for medicinal purposes, a condition of membership

Mission was an early focus as the Ladies Missionary Society and other church groups did missionary work such as sewing and knitting items for the poor.

In the nation, divisions between North and South over the slavery question became more pronounced.

Tableau 2

Matt: I am so proud of our church for taking an early stand against slavery

Bob: Yes, it was 1836 when we passed a resolution "no person claiming property in another human being shall be eligible for membership in this church and that no one involved in slave holding may preach the gospel or perform any ministerial duties."

Tussie: Our Ladies Emancipation Society meets regularly for the relief of those held in cruel and unrighteous bondage and we regularly send money and clothing to escaped slaves in Canada.

Bob: Our Rev. Foster was so brave going to Boston and despite the ban, praying loudly for the escaped slave who was being sent back to the South.

Tussie: Henry Thoreau said that he was proud that it was a Concord man.

Matt: But Emerson said, it should have been a Unitarian!

Allene: In the years following the Civil War, repairs to the property were undertaken adding furnaces, a slate roof and stained glass windows.

An agreement with the Town altered the church's property lines so that a public highway, named Hubbard St. could be laid out.

The church celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1876. Ms. Maria Thoreau, the only surviving member of the original 9 gave a reflection.

About that time, the church purchased back the last remaining private pews. It used to be the custom for families to buy a pew and pass it down for generations.

Tableau 3

Matt: Our church has certainly seen a lot of changes since our 50th anniversary.

Bob: Having the manse right on the church lawn must be a great convenience for the minister.

Tussie: Yes but the minister's wife told me that she never knows when her front door will open and a parishioner will walk in to show visitors "our parsonage."

Bob: The fountain in front of the church is a wonderful tribute to Rev. Grout.

Matt: You know before his unexpected death, he had said that such a fountain could be a "perpetual preacher" bearing the words - Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.

Tussie: Our church looks so different after the 1898 renovation with the large steeple on the side. They say the new bell weighs more than 2000 lbs.

Bob: And now we have a new organ and circular oak pews said to easily seat six hundred.

Matt: Whoever said that must think we sit on each other's laps!

Allene: Concord was shocked when the Unitarian church was leveled by fire in 1900. Our church promptly sent condolences and an offer of the use of our meeting house. The offer was acknowledged with great appreciation but declined as they chose to use the Town House.

1901 was the 75th anniversary of our church. Membership then was 199.

In 1920 the Norwegian branch of our church decided to leave and establish their own church. For over 20 years, this Scandinavian group had been members but conducting separate services on Wednesday evenings in their native language.

Then in 1924, tragedy came to our congregation.

Tableau 4

Bob: When I heard the fire bell, I hurried here and was dismayed to see our church was ablaze.

Tussie: I got there just in time to hear the great bell fall with a resounding last peal.

Matt: I am so glad that Rev. Cleland was able to save the church records but how upsetting to learn that the fire was caused by arson.

Tussie: We ladies went immediately to the parsonage to prepare a luncheon and we were still serving when Rev. MacDonald, pastor of the Unitarian Church came to offer use of their meeting house.

Bob: When we took up their offer to have our services in a separate room at their church, no one could have foreseen the unexpected death of Rev. MacDonald just a few weeks later.

Matt: Then it was only natural that our Rev. Cleland led joint services for about six months.

Tussie: Many of us thought that reestablishment as one church would be the next step but it was not to be. The Unitarians voted first and rejected the proposal so there was no need for us to vote.

Matt: Perhaps they were concerned because we out-numbered them!

M.L.: What happened then?

A building committee was formed and Harry Little was hired as the architect. Rebuilding our church became a labor of love for him and he put more time into the project than he billed for as he was struck by the faith and determination of our congregation.

Attendance at church increased after WWII as Concord saw a great housing boom with returning GI's moving in with their growing families. A popular couples club at the church met for monthly social events.

Tableau 5

Tussie: We are in dire need of a classroom wing. We even have classes meeting in the manse.
Bob: That was quite a meeting last month when we heard the bids and realized that the funds raised were only enough to construct the first story.

Matt: And when it was moved to take out a mortgage to complete the second story, that vote was a tie.

Bob: The Moderator could have broken the tie but he wanted the church to have broad consensus.

Tussie: I was delighted when at the meeting a month later, it was unanimously decided to take the mortgage and complete the wing.

Matt: Not as delighted as the minister's wife is that she will no longer have to clear the breakfast dishes so the fifth graders can meet in her kitchen.

Allene closes the book

Andrew: Is that the end of the story?

Allene: No, Our story doesn't have an end; it goes on and on....

Forward Thru the Ages – (verse 1)