SERMON IN STONE

Packer Memorial Church

An Historical Essay

By W. Ross Yates

Lehigh University
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
This history of Packer Memorial Church is a story of generosity – in this case by Mary Packer Cummings with Lehigh University as the recipient. The 100th anniversary of the completion of our beautiful Lehigh chapel was observed during the 1987-88 academic year with a number of special events. This centennial affords an appropriate opportunity to recognize the generosity of the university founder’s daughter and to take time to reflect on what this superb building meant to so many of us as students.

I sincerely hope you will enjoy learning more about this magnificent campus landmark and the kind woman whose gift made it possible. We are also indebted to author W. Ross Yates for shedding light on facts that might have been lost forever without this special undertaking.

Harold S. Mohler
chairman, Asa Packer Society

© 1988 W. Ross Yates
SERMON IN STONE
Packer Memorial Church
An Historical Essay
By W. Ross Yates
Stand with me at the entrance of the Lehigh campus, as it was before the onset of the computer age, and look upward at the Packer Memorial Church, built in mid-Victorian times in imitation of the Gothic structures of twelfth and thirteenth century Europe, expressing for believers the miracles of the resurrection of Christ, the permanence of faith, and the hopes of both the healthy and the infirm, the joyful and the sorrowing, the saints and the sinners.

Shall we compare this edifice with the rude churches of the early Scotch-Irish and Pennsylvania-German pioneers who settled here, or with the architectural marvels of St. Peter’s in Rome, Santa Sophia in Constantinople, or the great cathedrals of Chartres, Rheims, Amiens, Cologne, York, and others of an age when bishops ruled over kings, and priests subjected all life to a devotion to the Trinity and the Virgin Mary? We cannot make these comparisons. We have lost the knowledge and never learned the art. (But see Henry Adams, Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres, for examples of both.) Suffice it to say that the Packer Memorial Church lacks the simplicity of frontier cabins and the intricate workmanship of masterpieces of the Middles Ages. “The ‘Packer Memorial Chapel,’” wrote a Lehigh chaplain, the Rev. Elwood Worcester, “in spite of its windows (poor stained-glass windows have done more harm to true religion in America than all our atheists), was and is one of the most beautiful college churches in America.” The judgment is meaningful to an American who saw the structure with its original windows, an American enamoured of the splendors of medieval Europe and hoping to find them duplicated in North America. We admire the sophistication of the Rev. Worcester, but are not of his company.

We must look elsewhere for standards. We intuitively know that the Packer Memorial Church is admirable. The infinite is capable of infinite variations; and the saying, “There are five and twenty ways of singing tribal lays, and every single one of them is right,” has a counterpart in the differing styles of church buildings. The Packer Memorial Church represents a European religion Americanized, the ideas of brotherly love, hope, faith, and salvation conveyed in terms meaningful and reverential for late nineteenth-century American entrepreneurs who cast somewhat contemptuous looks at a symbol of European civilization left behind while resolutely imposing much of that civilization on a large and thinly inhabited continent, American conquerors who read their Bibles and nonetheless believed in the superiority of the natural reason of science and engineering to help them in all they set out to do. We must find our standards in their lives, or at least in those of the trustees, faculty, and students who made the Lehigh University and the Packer Church what they are.

Church or Chapel?

And what is this edifice - church or chapel? A church puts religion above all. This is not necessarily true for a chapel, which may by word or deed subordinate religion to other concerns. Lehigh seems from the beginning to have been a more suitable place for a chapel than a church. Students and faculty were pursuing secular learning. The motto of the university is from Bacon, not from Scripture: Homo minister et interpres naturae. The Rev. Worcester summed up the situation thus. “One reason why Christianity has not flourished in colleges is that Christianity is primarily a religion of life. College is not life in any large sense, it is only a preparation for life. The college and university have a religion of their own which is not Christianity; it is faith in science and the study of old texts.... At Lehigh most of our students were technical men in one or the other of our great schools of engineering. They possessed little intellectual curiosity or literary culture.” But the Rev. Worcester to the contrary notwithstanding, poor stained glass is not a barrier to faith and intellectual curiosity is not necessary to deep religious feeling.

Lehigh students referred to the Packer Memorial Church as a chapel from the time they first heard about it. The university had other chapels for twenty-one years before
the church appeared. By a strange irony the trustees, all devout Episcopalians, took over a Moravian Church containing rooms suitable for educational purposes and made of it a college building with space suitable for worship. This was Christmas Hall. Symbolic inversion of purposes! That the buyers were Episcopalian and the sellers, Moravian, must not lead us to irrelevant thoughts. The inversion is that of a secular education in applied science over religion. Nor should the presence of a classical course at the new Lehigh University disturb our thinking. The classical course in the School of General Literature was little attended and was in any event concerned with the study of old texts. The mainstream of education was and was to remain science and its applications, especially in engineering. The chapel in Christmas Hall expressed, incarnated, could not exist apart from the subjection of religion to the reason of science, just as surely as the reverse, the rule of religion over science and its uses, belongs to the mission of any Christian church.

The chapel in Christmas Hall occupied a room on the first floor, near the chemical laboratory and the library and convenient to the president's office and the classrooms on the floor above. The windows of the chapel were church-like, thanks to the Moravian builders; the trustees brought a portable organ from Boston; and we may suppose from comments later made by alumni that the students formed a choir. Services were from 8:45 to 9:00 in the morning six days a week. President Coppee conducted them, although the Rev. Eliphalet Nott Potter, rector of the Church of the Nativity in nearby Fountain Hill, was professor of mental and moral philosophy and of Christian evidences. Sunday services were not held at all in the chapel. No matter. The idea of a chapel for students does not necessarily include Sunday services. Students must be present at exercises on weekdays. They were assigned seats in alphabetical order. On Sundays, according to the first rules of the university, the students were supposed to march in a body to the Nativity unless excused at the request of parents to attend some other church. Required attendance at Sunday services remained for several decades, although "marching in a body" was soon ended.

Possibly during the first few years of the Lehigh University a majority of the student body was Episcopalian, although even then Episcopalians may have been among the few rather than the many, as they later were. Neither chapel nor church ever pretended to have a monopoly over the religion of students. But the university, that scientific and literary establishment located in Christmas Hall, did insist on a monopoly over chapel services; and when these were finished for the day, the room in which they had been held was available for classes, meetings, study, and whatever else might be wanting for education and orderly living.

In 1868 Packer Hall was occupied. The arrangements improvised in Christmas became definitive in Packer. The architect, Edward Tuckerman Potter, brother of Eliphalet Nott Potter, had followed instructions given him by several people: Asa Packer, the founder; the Rt. Rev. William Bacon Stevens, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania and president of the Board of Trustees; and the bishop's brother-in-law, Henry Coppee, president of the university. Potter designed Packer Hall as three interconnected buildings: an imposing tower not unlike the steeple of a church on the west, containing the president's office; a central portion with a chapel, a museum, and an engineering drawing room; and a four-story block on the east for classrooms, offices, laboratories, and for a time, dormitory rooms and even - within a few years - a small place for exercising with Indian clubs and dumbbells. The chapel occupied the top floor in the central part. The room was high-ceilinged, lighted through stained-glass windows, and sufficiently commodious to provide for activities to which the public might be invited, such as opening exercises in September and the commencement ceremony in June. It had no door of its own leading to the outside but must be entered by going up the stairs and through the corridors of the university; the tower was the university's advertisement of its presence to all comers and not a steeple intended to lead one's thoughts upward to God; the bell in the tower was more for tolling the hours of the day than for calling students to worship, although it did that too.

This chapel with its compulsory daily services can be easily and superficially explained by saying that in the nineteenth century every college and university, public and
private, had one; that a chapel formed part of the pattern of life justified by a belief that it helped make undisciplined students into responsible citizens; and that with inevitable changes in manners and fashions the belief was exposed as a fiction and the requirements for attending chapel abolished. This may be true, but the explanation passes over the intensity of longing which the nineteenth-century student felt for that satisfaction which religion can give. If the trustees had not provided a chapel, the students would have demanded one with the same sincerity they later felt in sustaining obligatory attendance. By the 1880s chapel began at 7:45 a.m., when Jim Myers, the janitor, closed and locked the door. Kenneth Frazier, 1887, has left us a cartoon of this frantic last-minute rush of students up the stairs of Packer Hall to beat the deadline. Students might use the fifteen minutes set aside for devotion to review the assignments on which they would be required to recite a few hours hence. But they would not do without the assurance that the communal activity of daily chapel gives, that God is with his university and that the faculty and students are one in His presence. Chapel was the exercise which brought them all together, put classicals on a level with technicals, made freshmen the equals of seniors, commanded the heads of faculty - or those who attended - to bow as low as those of students, in short created unity where diversity elsewhere prevailed. Daily life was a grind of recitations, laboratory work, field trips, conferences with professors, reading, working problems, drawing and designing by natural light of day and by gas light at night. Ambition and a fear of failure kept the boys at work. Secular learning dominated all. Chapel, the tavern, and the playing field were the havens for relief from the pressures of studying. Some with a taste for sports broke away for an hour or two in late afternoon to play baseball, football, or lacrosse or to take a run along the towpath of the Lehigh Canal. Some with a few pennies of spending money gathered for beer at Rennig's Brewery up the mountainside, a resort of which Price Hall is the only remaining building; and more than a few indulged of a Saturday night at taverns in places as distant as Easton and Allentown. But beer and games were not officially part of college life and could not be formally scheduled; and they were not equally available to all. Only chapel came with the regularity of the proverbial death and taxes for however long a boy remained a student, four years for the lucky and industrious, five for mechanicals electing to stay on and work for a coveted degree in mining engineering. Whatever of joy or misery a day might hold, chapel came first and was welcome.

For about twenty years after the founding, the trustees placed requests for a separate building to serve as a chapel on a back shelf. Students wanted better living quarters; the trustees responded with Saucon Hall (1872). All needed more educational facilities, and as the opportunities for getting these appeared, the trustees provided them, first in the form of a library given by Asa Packer (1878) and then a chemical laboratory (1884). Both were at the time of building among the finest structures of their kind in the United States and did much to raise the level of education and to enhance the prestige of the university. Students with help from alumni and faculty financed and built playing fields; and even as stones for the chemical laboratory were being laid, the trustees opened a gymnasium (1883, now Coppee Hall), also one of the best of its kind, modelled after the famous Hemenway Gymnasium at Harvard. During these years, the successive presidents of the university asked the trustees for a chapel, but without result, yet the request was soon to be granted, although probably not in the form anticipated. For, the university was soon to get a church; and it was to come not by the initiative of the trustees, but as a gift from the Founder's daughter, Mary Packer Cummings.

Now, a church is not the same as a chapel. We understand by the word "church" a structure formally dedicated to the worship of God by believers who constitute in their own eyes an association called a church. (Thus the Quakers, preferring to be known as a society, called their places of worship "meeting houses".) For Lehigh, a church could exist only through action taken by a clergyman accepted for the purpose by the Board of Trustees.

With this in mind, let us take notice that the first step toward obtaining a church
occurred in 1871, sixteen years before the structure was consecrated, and had nothing to do with outfitting a room as a chapel. In 1871 the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania was divided, leaving Lehigh within the newly formed Diocese of Central Pennsylvania. Bishop Stevens took the occasion to obtain formal affiliation of Lehigh with the new diocese. In this he had the warm support of Coppee, Packer, and the trustees in general. Stevens hailed the move in his official report for 1872 as a great gain for church and religion: "As this is the first University of the kind given to the Church and placed under its sole control, ... and as it was the outgrowth of Christian love, opening the heart of one, to whom God had entrusted a large stewardship, - it deserves to be noted as one of the signs and evidences of growth, both in liberality and in Church feeling and extension." Practically, the affiliation changed nothing in the courses of study or, indeed, in any other aspect of campus life. Not even persons closely associated with the work of the university paid much attention to the affiliation until it had to be dissolved in 1897 in order that the financially depressed university might qualify for aid from the commonwealth. But in a religious sense the affiliation had meaning. It certainly supported an argument that an Episcopalian university ought to have an Episcopalian church of its own.

Two children of Asa and Sarah Packer, Mary and Harry, took the next step. Asa died in 1879 and his wife followed in 1882. Mary, soon to marry a man named Cummings, and Harry, trustee and graduate of Lehigh, planned a church as a memorial to their mother. In 1884 Harry died. The third and definitive step was left to Mary Packer. She carried through on the project, giving it a dedication to her parents and adding later the names of other members of the family. Mary and the building committee of the Board selected a site. Robert H. Sayre, Jr., wrote in his diary for June 29, 1884: "Walked over to the University with Dr. Linderman to look at site of the new chapel [sic] which Mary Packer proposes to build on the grounds in memory of her parents." In those days colleges and universities had no special crews charged with building; they were literally scarcely more than gatherings of students, faculty, and a janitor with a synod or a board of trustees somewhere close by. Lehigh was no different from the others. Mary selected the architect, Addison Hutton of Philadelphia, who had designed the gymnasium and the library, arranged the details with him, supervised construction, and paid the bills; and when the church was finished, she turned it over to the trustees as its future owners and to the Episcopal Diocese of Central Pennsylvania for consecration.

The students did not fully understand all this. They wanted more dormitories, and if given a choice would have preferred these to either church or chapel. Their response came in the form of a mock groundbreaking - a response which went awry, as was reported in a news story in the Lehigh Burr of June, 1885:

On the morning of Thursday, May 28, the students assembled at the Eagle Hotel armed with picks and shovels, and preceded by the Keystone Band, marched to the University Park, displaying a banner on which was inscribed -

Ours at Last,

i.e.

The Chapel

The intention was to break ground for the new chapel, and hold mock services in honor of the occasion. After marching around the campus the procession was met by Dr. Lamberton [Dr. Robert A. Lamberton, president of the university, 1880 - 1894] upon whose suggestion the students adjourned to the chapel, where the usual morning prayers were conducted. The procession was then reformed with Dr. Lamberton, Rev. Prof. Bird [Rev. Frederic M. Bird, chaplain and professor of psychology and Christian evidences, 1880 - 1886], and other members of the faculty in the lead, and followed by the whole body of students. Arriving at the
site of the new chapel, the doxology was sung, followed by the creed and appropriate prayers by the Rev. Bird. Dr. Lamberton then addressed the students in a few well-chosen remarks. A.H. Heikes [Irving Andrew Heikes, a student completing work for a degree in mining engineering] then delivered the oration. After a selection by the choir, Dr. Lamberton broke the sod, followed by Mrs. Lamberton, the members of the faculty, the presidents of the classes and the whole body of students, each of whom turned a piece of sod. Through the ready tact of Dr. Lamberton, what was to have been a burlesque was changed to a very appropriate and pleasing service. Work was begun on the chapel immediately after the exercise. The foundation will be completed by October 15, and allowed to settle during the winter. The church will be located between the main carriage road and the new laboratory, and south of the gardener's lodge. [the present Philosophy Building, constructed in 1879]. It will be Gothic in style, ...

As the news story suggests, students were quickly reconciled to the new building. Still, they and the faculty looked on it only as a better place for holding chapel services. It was otherwise with the dignitaries who gathered on Founder's Day four and a half months later to celebrate the laying of the cornerstone. Two ceremonies were planned. The first was that of the Masonic Order. Asa Packer had been a Mason, as were several of the trustees and President Lamberton. The Masonic ceremony was conducted "by the Right Worshipful Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania and Masonic jurisdiction thereunto belonging: Edward Coppee Mitchell, LL.D., Right Worshipful Grand Master." Mitchell was a leading lawyer and jurist of Philadelphia, a nephew of both Henry Coppee and Bishop Stevens, and a sometime sojourner in Bethlehem during the summer. The second ceremony, which immediately followed the Masonic, was that of the Episcopal Church. Officiating were the Rt. Rev. Mark Anthony de Wolfe Howe, D.D., bishop of Central Pennsylvania and president of the Lehigh Board of Trustees (succeeding Stevens); the Rt. Rev. Cortlandt Whitehead, D.D., bishop of Pittsburgh, grand chaplain of the Masons, and former rector of the Church of the Nativity; and the Rt. Rev. Nelson S. Rulison, assistant bishop of the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania and the person most directly responsible for using the Packer Memorial Church. 4

Although the day was cold and drizzly, a large crowd joined faculty and students in the open-air exercises. At 11:15 a.m. a procession consisting of trustees, faculty, instructors, alumni, students, clergy, other invited guests, the university choir, and Hassler's Band left the library and proceeded to a platform laid upon the foundation walls to the accompaniment of a hymn sung by the audience, "The Church's One Foundation Is Jesus Christ Her Lord." Then the Masonic ceremony began.

The Right Worshipful Grand Master Mitchell introduced President Lamberton, who read the official proceedings recognizing Mary Packer Cummings' gift. Grand Chaplain Whitehead delivered an invocation. The Right Worshipful Grand Treasurer read the list of things being placed in the cornerstone. A dialogue followed, in which the cornerstone was determined to be "Plumb, Level and Square." It was then lowered and placed in a proper position. Another short dialogue, interspersed with band music, ended with an address by Bishop Whitehead, who talked of the church about to rise on the cornerstone:

When Jacob was starting out on his career as a patriarch, first he set up a stone as a pillar and poured oil upon it, and called it Beth-el - the House of God - saying: 'The Lord shall be my God, and this stone shall be God's House... This stone is a witness of what God has done... This [corner]stone is a witness of a more general truth concerning the past. It is the corner-stone of a church; and we lay it as a symbol of the fact that
the Church was for many centuries the Conservator of science, the 
Preserver of manuscripts, the Teacher of teachers, the Founder of 
universities, as she is always and ought to be, the aider and the abettor of 
human progress, the Lover of good men, the glad helper in every work, 
the guardian of the Light.

If any doubts remained concerning the clergy's conviction that Mary Packer 
Cummings' gift was a church and not merely a chapel, the Episcopal ceremony surely 
removed them. Bishop Howe in giving the opening prayer said, "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to 
grant that these walls now begun may be built up an holy temple unto Thee; may they be 
kept from all common and profane uses; may the prayers and praises of Thy Holy Catholic 
and Apostolic Church be here offered up, and ascend to Thy throne an incense of a sweet-
smelling savour; may Thy true and lively word be set forth, the glad tidings of reconciliation 
in Thy gospel diligently preached, and Thy holy Sacraments rightly and duly administered."

The clergy chanted parts of Psalms 127 and 84:

Except the LORD build the house,
Their labor is but lost that build it;
Except the Lord keep the city,
The watchman waketh but in vain.
O how amiable are Thy dwellings,
Thou LORD of hosts!
My soul hath a desire and longing
To enter into the Courts of the Lord;
My heart and my flesh rejoice
In the living God.
Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house;
They will be always praising Thee.
For one day in Thy Courts is better than a thousand.
I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
Than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness.
For the LORD GOD is a light and defence;
The Lord will give grace and worship;
And no good thing shall He withhold
From them that live a godly life.
O LORD GOD of hosts,
Blessed is the man that putteth his trust in Thee.

Following these opening remarks bishops Rulison and Howe delivered major 
addresses, which elaborated on the theme of the church as the promoter and guardian of 
knowledge.

The printed account of the ceremonies of laying the cornerstone concluded with 
a description of the edifice. The details as they appeared here were generally followed. As 
part of the landscaping the trustees planted fifteen small red Japanese maples near the 
southeastern corner, these being, the Lehigh Burr informed its readers (Nov. 1, 1888), 
among "only fifty... in this country."

Two years after the laying of the cornerstone, on Founder's Day, October 13, 
1887, The Episcopal clergy held the service of consecration. A procession of clergy headed 
by Bishop Howe and the Rt. Rev. Henry Codman Potter, bishop of New York (brother of 
Eliphalet Nott and Edward Tuckerman Potter), were met at the door of the church by 
President Lamberton and the trustees in attendance and conducted up the main aisle to 
the sanctuary. In the simple ceremony which followed, Howe pronounced the words, 
"we..., having been sufficiently certified that there is no mortgage, lien, or other incum­
brance upon the property, whereby it might possibly be alienated and employed for secular 
or profane purposes, do by these presents consecrate this edifice, under the style and name
of 'The Packer Memorial Church of The Lehigh University,' separating it henceforth from all unhallowed, worldly and common uses; and dedicating it to the service of Almighty God, according to the Doctrine, Discipline and Worship of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, for the reading and preaching of God's Holy Word, for celebrating His Blessed Sacraments, for offering to His Glorious Majesty the Sacrifices of Prayer and Thanksgiving, for blessing His people in His name, for the administration of such other Holy Offices as are or hereafter may be set forth under due authority of the church of God, and for such other uses as may be necessary to the due administration of the Lehigh University, not inconsistent with the purposes hereinbefore specified."

Bishop Potter gave the principal address, elaborating on the words of Howe:

And this is the meaning and office of that sanctuary which we consecrate today. Not to meet the requirements of any mere conventionalism, however venerable; not to erect a tribune where any merely human eloquence, however commanding, may display itself; not to recognize what someone has called the "value of the religious sentiment as a conservator of social order," but to make a place for the vision of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, in His Church, in His Word, in His Sacraments, for this, unless I have mistaken utterly the aim of that beneficence which has been busy here, has this building been reared.

Howe and Rulison did not allow these intentions for the Packer Memorial Church to be empty words. In the spring of 1886, before the edifice was completed, the Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Central Pennsylvania placed the university on the same footing as a parish. The trustees then requested and received the resignation of Chaplain Bird and asked Rulison "to take the immediate oversight of the spiritual concerns and religious services of the University." He accepted the assignment, was named rector of the university, and appointed an assistant, the Rev. Albert W. Snyder, at a salary of $1800 and with a house in the university park, to conduct all services, to take over the pastoral care of students, and to have a place on the faculty as professor of psychology and Christian evidences.

A church was born. What was it to be in practice?

Chapel

A chapel, of course. How shall we call it? A real, living, popular church? A church in vulgar disguise? A normal worship for the uncultured who were studying engineering? However one chooses, I suppose.

The intentions of Howe and Rulison to use the gift of Mary Packer Cummings as a church in the accepted sense of the word could not be maintained. Although the trustees were willing to supply a handsome residence and an excellent salary for an ordained clergyman who would be both pastor (or assistant pastor) and chaplain, other circumstances made this impossible. Episcopalians among the faculty and students were few. Bishop Rulison was too busy with diocesan affairs to give much personal attention to the university parish. Maintenance of a university parish inevitably drew communicants from other parishes, contributing to bad community relations. When in 1889 the Rev. Snyder resigned because of ill health, Rulison had no one to replace him who could also teach the course in Christian evidences required of all students. Rulison resigned as rector. For the year 1889 - 1890, the Rev. J.W. Kaye was called in from Philadelphia as acting chaplain, and President Lamberton delivered some of the lectures on Christian evidences. A young deacon, soon to be ordained as a priest, Elwood Worcester, replaced Kaye. Worcester, as we have seen, referred to the church as "the Packer Memorial Chapel."

No dissent marred the precipitous replacement of church by chapel services as
dominating the uses of the Packer Memorial Church. Episcopalian doctrine does not dwell on the possibility of discord between these services, and the clergy and laymen who cared for the Packer Church were as good as the doctrine. They and the public in general agreed that spectacles such as dances, fairs, exhibitions, vaudeville shows, and exhortations to belief in false doctrines were out of place in a church, although some of them might be allowed in any other sort of room used as a chapel. They also insisted on a stricter decorum in dress and conduct for a church than was permissible in a chapel. Still, the usual chapel exercises at Lehigh did not exceed allowable limits for a church. The fifteen minutes included prayer, the singing of hymns, organ music, scripture readings, reciting of the creed, and short readings or declamations by students, faculty, and invited guests. The clergy were for the times exceedingly tolerant in interpreting what constituted a "common and profane use." Certainly the phrase did not exclude a wide range of secular activities. Especially, some concerts and university exercises could be solemnized with religious overtones and thereby given a deeper meaning than they otherwise might have. A few honorary fraternities used the church for pledging ceremonies. The chaplain, or the president of the university if no chaplain existed, made decisions governing uses. I have found no instance of the responsible Episcopalian clergy objecting to those decisions, although conceivably some differences of opinion may have characterized discussions leading up to some of them.

In the years immediately following consecration, the Packer Memorial Church was used as the occasion arose for Sunday services, funerals, memorial services of other sorts, and administration of the sacraments of baptism and marriage using whatever clergy might be available. A grave is also there, in the south wall, calling to mind a practice of medieval European churches. It is not the tomb of a statesman or a poet but of a professor of engineering and his wife, Joseph William Richards (1864 - 1921) and Arna-Marie. Now almost forgotten, Richards was once a mainstay of the university. "He was a colorful figure as he crossed the campus, slight of build, but immaculately attired in frock coat, striped trousers, and wing collar, accompanied by a huge Newfoundland dog, which often slept beside the rostrum as he lectured," wrote Professor Allison Butts. Richards - "Plug" as students and colleagues affectionately called him - had pioneered in exploring the chemistry of aluminum, helped found the national Electrochemical Society, brought international fame to Lehigh through his *Metallurgical Calculations* and other works, and left with his students the satisfaction of having studied under a great teacher. And, seated in the choir of the church with a hundred or so others, Richards had sung the *Mass in B-Minor* and other great works of Johann Sebastian Bach. The placing of his cremated ashes and those of his wife in the south wall, and marking the spot with a plaque, met with no serious objection.

The interplay of lively students and more serious faculty in chapel exercises set the tone for the Packer Church from 1887 until a few years before the Second World War. The spirit of the classroom invaded nave, transepts, and choir. Comedy and tragedy and a wide range of emotions made informal appearances such as might have been censored if occurring in a church service but were tolerated or overlooked in the daily religious life of Lehigh students. As the church became identified with daily chapel, several fanciful stories concerning it appeared. One untrue anecdote was that student pranksters took a cow into the tower, and that it had to be slaughtered there because it could not be taken out alive. Another false story was that an unnamed chaplain, having asked for a year's leave of absence and received it and his pay in advance, went to France and was not heard from again. But the spirit of legend, whether the stories be true or false, is a mark of regard. In a manner of speaking, the Lehigh community took the Packer Memorial Church to its bosom and refashioned it in its image.

A tangible reminder of this lies in the brass plaques containing the names of graduating seniors. These take up the space at eye level on the walls. Students of the post-consecration years were not content to see only themselves and their successors memorialized in this way. Someone reasoned that the names of all graduates ought to be there, and
plaques were added for the early graduating classes, going back to 1869, when the first students were graduated. All in the period ending in 1930 (excepting those in the years 1896-1898) had been in daily chapel, each in his assigned seat; and those from 1930 until compulsory chapel was discontinued had either attended or taken an approved course in ethics. The practice of plastering the walls with plaques containing the names of graduating seniors outlasted the institution of chapel by twenty-five years and was discontinued only after 1964, so the story goes, because the graduating classes had become too large and space had run out.

For a number of years after the consecration of the Packer Church regular Sunday morning services were held, and students not released for attendance at other churches in Bethlehem were required to attend. This presented the chaplain with the problem of getting a message across to an interdenominational and captive audience of restless young men. The difficulty of solving this problem greatly vexed Chaplain Worcester, who in an autobiography, *Life's Adventure*, contrasted his experiences as a teacher with those as a preacher. He wrote:

My first year at Lehigh [1890-1891] was a strenuous one. I had been in colleges and universities long enough to know how tenacious are their traditions and how important it is to establish a good reputation as a teacher at the very beginning. I therefore prepared my courses in psychology, the history of philosophy, and the evidences of Christianity with the greatest care. A year or two later, at the request of the University, I added a fourth course, on physical anthropology. I was so familiar with the first three subjects that I did not feel it necessary to use notes but spoke freely, giving the students permission to interrupt me at any time, to ask questions and to discuss problems. By using my utmost endeavors to make my courses interesting and profitable I was able from the beginning to command the good-will and the co-operation of my pupils.

To this gratifying experience as a teacher the Rev. Worcester contrasted his difficulty with Sunday sermons:

I may truly say that the most difficult work I ever engaged in was the preparation of these college sermons. They haunted me so that I would try to get started on a new one on Monday morning and would work on my sermon several hours a day throughout the week. If I had completed a discourse that I dared think of preaching by two or three o'clock on Sunday morning, I felt very happy.

His sermons were not all that bad, wrote J.H. Pennington, '97, and went on to describe a practice which would have surely made the young Rev. Worcester wince: "All the devout chapeleers from '90 to '97 gratefully recall the happy Sunday morning pastime of dropping a dime (if they had one) into the hat, together with a slip of paper containing the figure denoting their guess of the length of the sermon, in minutes. The lucky dog who guessed (not bet) seventeen minutes usually took the pot, amounting to as much as $1.60 at times."

The Rev. Worcester, a bachelor when he arrived at Lehigh, was married in 1894 to one of Bishop Rulison's daughters and asked for and received a year's leave of absence to go to Germany. Before departing, he arranged an exchange of pulpits for the year with the Rev. Dr. Tolafero F. Caskey, rector of the American Church in Dresden. By the time the Rev. Caskey's term as acting chaplain had expired, the university was in financial difficulties and contemplating asking the commonwealth for aid. The governor and the legislature would not allow state money to go to a sectarian institution. When on July 27, 1896, the Rev. Worcester presented his resignation in order to become rector of St. Stephen's
Church in Philadelphia, the trustees made no move to fill the vacancy. At the same time, the students in a fin-de-siècle resistance to constituted authority asked for and received an end to compulsory chapel. A year later the trustees renounced affiliation with the Protestant Episcopal Church and went on record as asserting that the university had never been under its control. For two years the chaplaincy was vacant, chapel was voluntary, and regular Sunday services in the Packer Church were not held.

Then the mood changed. Students voted to restore compulsory chapel. For the year beginning in the autumn of 1898 the trustees obtained the services of Dr. Langdon C. Stewardson as chaplain and professor of philosophy and psychology. He remained at Lehigh for five years, and during that time had an impact equalled by few other professors. In his first year he gave the principal address on Founder's Day. Three years later he had the Lehigh University Christian Association (L.U.C.A.), a campus chapter of the Y.M.C.A., reorganized and revitalized and put under the control of a general secretary. He restored regular Sunday services to the church, while countenancing an end to compulsory attendance. Unlike the Rev. Worcester, he had no trouble with his sermons. Catherine Drinker Bowen wrote that he "was very popular both on and off the campus, and the townspeople came in large numbers to hear him preach." He left Lehigh in 1903 to be president of Hobart College. The following year, when President Drown died, a weak move was made to bring Stewardson back to Lehigh as president. After his death and that of his wife, one hundred thousand dollars came to Lehigh from his estate to establish the Stewardson Chair in Philosophy.

His sermons were too popular. Mrs. Bowen wrote that after Stewardson departed, Sunday services in the church were "abolished, on the ground that it would be wiser to distribute the congregation among the many churches in the neighborhood. The Y.M.C.A. meeting in Drown Hall at six o'clock in the afternoon remains the only form of Sunday worship on the campus." That was the situation from the time of the departure of Stewardson until the coming of the Rev. George M. Bean in 1946. President Drinker (1905 -1920) was no churchgoer and took few measures to counter a growing secular spirit. Yet he arranged for repairing and modernizing the church, which by its twenty-first year badly needed some attention. The "poor stained-glass windows" which had so disturbed the Rev. Worcester were now a scandal. Alfred Goëwin of Philadelphia replaced all of them in 1909 except the two rose windows in the transept and the three small panels in the baptistry. A year later C.S. Haskell of Philadelphia rebuilt the pipe organ. While these improvements were underway the exterior stones were repointed and the interior repainted, rewired for electricity, and fitted with new lighting fixtures. Pews, woodwork, and plaster were repaired. Again, Mary Packer Cummings paid the bills, which were by modern standards low ($9,500 for seventeen stained-glass windows).

Students and chaplains appreciated the renovated structure. From 1905 to 1931 the chaplain was invariably a divine from the Cathedral Church of the Nativity who appeared for daily services or sent a replacement. The Rev. Stewart U. Mitman filled the position from 1905 to 1912, when he became minister in charge of the Nativity. In his first year, reciting of the creed was ended. The Rev. Mitman's immediate successors served for short periods: the Rev. Melborne H. Birckhead (several months, 1912 -1913); the Rev. Brayton Byron (1913 -1916); the Rev. Samuel Neal Kent (1916 -1918); the Rev. Arthur Murray (1918 -1921); and the Rev. J.I. Blair Larned (1921 -1922). From 1922 until 1931 the Very Rev. D. Wilmot Gateson, Dean at Nativity, was chaplain. No layman served as chaplain as Coppee had done during the early years; and the clergy were no longer needed to teach courses. Stewardson had replaced Christian evidences with philosophy of religion. This was at first required of all students but was later made optional with the department. By 1905 all departments had dropped it. A layman, Percy Hughes, replaced Stewardson as professor of philosophy and psychology and took over the teaching of religion as part of the work of the department of philosophy, psychology, and education. Some of the spiritual advising of students passed to the general secretary of the L.U.C.A.
In spite of the national trend toward secularism leading to intellectual explosions following World War I, compulsory chapel at Lehigh remained a respected institution. Although some of the faculty and student body would gladly have dispensed with it, the majority desired it, whether from motives of religion or a sentiment for tradition is hard to say.

But what college chapel has ever been free of secular overtones? For that matter, what church has never known sacrilege? Both chapel and church are of and for the world. The surprising thing about the Packer Memorial Church is that, even when serving as a chapel, it experienced nothing but the mildest sort of non-religious intrusions. An example of this is found in the placing of a bas-relief of Asa Packer in a position usually reserved for religious ornament.

The bas-relief and the placing of it came about in this way. When Asa Packer died, students, faculty, and trustees joined in establishing the annual Founder's Day in his honor. The ceremony was originally held in the chapel in Packer Hall but was in 1887 moved to the new church. The high point of the morning ceremony was an address by some dignitary, usually on a scientific topic not obviously of a religious nature, although in some way connected with the person, accomplishments, or aims of Packer. Thus the propriety of honoring Packer within a church dedicated to his memory was early established in the minds of members of the university community.

For a number of years after Packer's death the alumni discussed other ways of honoring him. About the time that the university began to feel the pinch of the depression of the 1890s, a committee of the Alumni Association decided on a statue, to be placed in a prominent location on the campus, and started raising money for it. Almost immediately some faculty and alumni said "no" and asked, would it not be more appropriate to honor the founder by contributing to operating expenses? A few student leaders also objected, wanting to remember Packer with a building having space for activities and studying. Money for a statue trickled in, and in the period of the university's financial crisis the stream dried up entirely. When after the turn of the century prosperity returned, another generation of alumni was emerging. The "statue fund" was revived, but the sentiment for it was about gone. Finally in 1911 the Alumni Association decided to put an end to the project by using the fund, a little over $2,500, for a bas-relief. J. Massey Rhind of New York City executed it. Where was it to be placed? In Packer Hall? In the library, where in 1879 the portrait of Packer by D.W.C. Boutelle had been displayed? No, in the "chapel"; and there it was put and dedicated on Founder's Day, 1911.

Or, since we are treating of a church operating as a chapel, shall we pass over antics involving musicians? During the period in which the church served principally for daily chapel, it had in succession two leading organists and choir directors of Bethlehem, J. Fred Wolle to 1905 and after that, T. Edgar Shields. Wolle played for Sunday services at both the Packer and the Central Moravian churches as well as for daily chapel. Henry C. Quigley, '95, wrote of an incident occurring in the Packer Church: "Just after the Spanish War, 'Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight' was a popular lilting tune. During chapel [sic] one Sunday morning he improvised this tune, making of it one moment a lively hymn and the next the largo movement of a dirge." Would Wolle have played variations on "A Hot Time" on a Sunday at Central Moravian? We doubt it. Shields as a youngster was substituting for Wolle at chapel one Monday morning in 1893 and ran into trouble with the washerwomen of South Bethlehem. The account printed in the Lehigh Alumni Bulletin reads as follows: "Magnificent, bewhiskered [Acting] President Coppee was conducting the devotions. The time came for a hymn and the timid newcomer started to play. At that moment all of the women on Packer Avenue drew water for their weekly wash and the water-powered motor of the organ succumbed. The music faded with the groan of a tired phonograph, revived, then died in even more agony. Dr. Coppee pointed his finger at Edgar Shields. 'Young man,' he said imperiously, 'stop it.'"

The revolution in literature against conventional morality and religion of the 1920s had little immediate effect on intellectual life at Lehigh. Certainly students went
along with their generation in requesting greater freedom in sexual relationships and in
crowding religion more and more into a smaller compartment of life. But literary figures
such as H.L. Mencken, Edmund Wilson, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound, Sinclair Lewis,
Gertrude Stein, and Dorothy Thompson as well as Sigmund Freud had to wait until after
the Second World War for much recognition. A quite different spirit was at work among
the majority of students. This was animated by an idea promoted by reformers in profes­
sional engineering societies that the engineer has social responsibilities imposing on him a
duty to perfect his judgment in matters involving human relationships in order to use with
competence his right to leadership in social, economic, and political undertakings.
Herbert Hoover, humanitarian and engineer, exemplified the idea. Lehigh students,
three-fourths of whom were still specializing in some branch of engineering or other
applied science, inspired by idealists such as Bradley Stoughton, head of the College of
Engineering, and Charles Russ Richards, president of the university, responded positively to
the call to self-education in morality and social ethics as preparation for leadership in
industrial, business, or professional life.

This emphasis on the social responsibilities of engineers possibly reinforced a
respect among students for chapel exercises, but on condition that the content of the
exercises be changed. Students should be schooled in social ethics. Chapel was not the
only way of doing this; it could be done in the classroom or in actively working with people
— might even be done better there. Fred Trafford, minister and social worker and
secretary of a reorganized L.U.C.A. known as the Lehigh Union, made of that organization
an agency of social betterment and Christian devotion involving the energy of a large
number of students. In the late 1920s the faculty responded to a growing sentiment to
abolish compulsory chapel by accepting Professor Hughes’ plan for adding a one-hour
course in ethics and the philosophy of religion as an alternative. Then in rapid succession
(1930-1931) Trafford left to become chief of police with orders from the mayor to rid
Bethlehem of vice and crime, Rev. Gateson resigned as chaplain, and the trustees acceded
to the request of Philip M. Palmer, head of the college of arts and science, to create a
department of moral and religious philosophy and appoint a full-time professor to head it.
The person chosen for the position was Dr. Claude Gillette Beardslee, B.A. Yale, B.D. and
S.T.M. Hartford Seminary, M.A. Southern California, and Ph.D. Brown. Succeeding
chaplains continued the tradition of teaching, particularly Biblical courses, in a growing
religious studies department. In addition, Chaplain Hubert L. Flesher introduced several
courses on religion and the arts, including a particular favorite of the students, the course
"Religious Themes in Science Fiction and Fantasy."

Beardslee was a Congregationalist and the last chaplain to conduct regularly
scheduled chapel exercises at Lehigh. He probably extended the life of chapel much
beyond what it would have been without his efforts. He worked assiduously and endeared
himself to students. Faculty respected him for his intellectual polish, wit, and courage.
More than anyone on the campus in the 1930s, he advertised the need for education in the
conditions for peaceful and fruitful social intercourse.

Beardslee worked without much reference to the traditional purposes of the
Packer Memorial Church. He spent a great deal of time counseling students, and he taught
his courses in conventional rooms. These courses by 1934 numbered seven. Each was
divided into discussion sections of about nine students, who met for an hour or so a week
around a table. Chapel was held in the church five days a week at the traditional time and
consisted of readings from the literature of ethics and religion, short talks, prayers, and
organ selections from the classics. Chapel was for students who wanted devotions in
addition to an intellectual inquiry. Such students were becoming few in number.
Beardslee was doing what many another minister with a social conscience was attempting,
translating Christianity into a way of daily life. This meant for him turning one’s back on
denominational differences and separating morality and ethics from any necessary depend­
ence on ceremonies, dogmas, and devotions. To put the matter bluntly, it took religion out
of the churches, including the Packer Memorial Church.
Beardslee succeeded only too well in promoting the academic study of religion. In the deepening of the economic depression of the 1930s, the reformers within the engineering professional societies disappeared. President Clement C. Williams, who in 1935 succeeded Richards, had nothing of his predecessor's idealism. The study of religion as a social science was gaining favor and still is popular. But in 1937-1938 compulsory chapel was abolished, and a year later all regular chapel was terminated for lack of attendance.

An era in the life of the Packer Memorial Church had ended. Although people still called it Packer Chapel, the designation was an automatic response to a past whose true nature was being rapidly forgotten. Chapel was gone. Could the church survive?

**Church**

A building consecrated to the worship of God belongs to Him, a spiritual ownership which has not prevented temporal owners from acts of deconsecration. Abandoned churches have turned up as homes, warehouses, museums, universities (e.g., Christmas Hall), or simply as ruins. A traveller along country roads may find a little brown church in the wildwood with nothing standing but the walls. When the pastors are gone, the congregations scattered, and prayers no longer heard, God it seems also leaves.

Although the Packer Memorial Church did not suffer this fate, the possibility is worth considering. After the chapeleers were no more, the Packer Church could not be a university chapel, unless the remembrance of past use is equated with present reality. We will not admit this, for it is illusive. Packer Church might be a chapel in the sense of a place set aside for contemplation and prayer, much as rooms are sometimes fitted with religious ornament for this purpose in airport terminals; or it might be a chapel such as one finds at a military post, a building unconnected with any particular denomination and used for Sunday services by ministers. But the Packer Memorial Church could never again be a chapel after the manner of its use to 1938.

Could it even be a church? It no longer had a congregation or a formal connection with any denomination. The trustees of the university had in 1897 repudiated the alliance with the Protestant Episcopal convention; and by 1903 the convention had dropped Lehigh from the list of parishes, though the church remained on the rolls of the diocese. The Packer Church was under the unique control of a secular university. The words of the Rev. Worcester come again to mind: “College and university have a religion of their own, ... faith in science and the study of old texts.” Science and old texts use classrooms, libraries, and laboratories as churches; textbooks are their bibles; mathematics and logic their theologies. The university in its post-1938 existence strengthened a commitment to science, pushing it even into the studies of society and its modes of expression. Religion, freed from a connection with worship such as the Rev. Beardslee had wanted to give it, became an academic discipline competing with history, political science, economics, social psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology, philosophy, fine arts, music, and English and foreign languages and literatures for funds and the attention of students. New buildings served chemical and metallurgical engineering, physics, chemistry, the arts and sciences, business administration, student activities, and sports. Higher standards of scholarship, more research, a firmer commitment to graduate study, a drive to pioneer in computerizing learning - these and many related developments tightened the screws which clamped a bubble of devotion-to-science on the persons inhabiting the Lehigh campus. By 1985 the worship of science was well symbolized by a new main entrance to the university, opening onto the E. W. Fairchild-Martindale Library and Computing Center. What room was left for revealed religion? For Christianity? For Judaism? For other beliefs? And if no room existed, what was to become of the Packer Memorial Church? Must its religious character exist only as a remembrance, like that of chapel?

Some thought this was the case and looked on the church as an anachronism.
Not only atheists, but many devout Christians and Jews saw no common meeting ground for science and revealed religion and wondered at a structure which, retaining its former architectural magnificence (but again badly in need of repair), stood at the geographical center of the instructional campus, a largely unused building amid others daily resounding to the sound of thousands of feet. How might the church be used? Should money needed for faculty salaries and laboratories be spent repairing it? The church had long since become too small for the university's larger gatherings. In 1929 the university's architects, T.C. Visscher, '99, and J.L. Burley, '94, had determined the structural possibility of galleries which would provide more seating and better acoustics. "If the galleries are placed on either end of the transept and the west end of the nave, it is estimated that seats for 582 persons can be provided," read the minutes of the Board of Trustees for October 2, 1929. With the onset of the depression the building of galleries became financially impossible; and with the opening of Grace Hall in 1941 they became unnecessary. Even Founder's Day was for a time transferred to Grace Hall. Then came the Stabler Athletic and Convocation Center, supplementing Grace and making reliance on the Packer Church for holding large audiences less than ever necessary. In 1967 students proposed a coffee house for the basement; it came into being on February 1, 1969, as "The Catacombs"—a fitting name, for it soon became tomblike from disuse. A little over a decade later a meeting place for graduate students replaced the coffee house.

Still, to repeat once more, a church is not a chapel. It may be used for the same purposes as a chapel. Nevertheless, a church is different. It is more difficult to bring into being, and it is more difficult to destroy. As long as a spiritual connection remains with an established religion, and as long as the structure is used for communal worship, it is yet a church, irrespective of the amount of use or the form of services.

This idea of a church permits an ecumenical application, which at Lehigh came to be. The trustees had introduced the ecumenical idea with the appointment of the Congregationalist Beardslee. They continued it by means of a policy defined to replace that for chapel exercises. President Williams announced to the faculty on January 3, 1938, that any group of students who were members or adherents of "any recognized Christian faith" might arrange for exercises in Packer Memorial Church for themselves and others. This policy could have reduced the Packer Church to a chapel in the military sense if it had been accompanied by a repudiation of the traditional reliance on the Protestant Episcopal Church and by a formal recognition of all ministers of religion who chose to use the building. This change was not to be. The trustees continued to favor the Episcopal persuasion. Not again did they elect as chaplain anyone professing some other faith. George M. Bean (1946 - 1953), Raymond A. Fuesse (1954 - 1971), and Hubert L. Flesher (1971 - present) were ordained Episcopalian ministers.

The Rev. Bean resumed the practice of holding Sunday services, using the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer. He reorganized the university choir, borrowing most of the members from the glee club, and practiced ecumenism in bringing in distinguished preachers, not all of whom were Episcopalians. Bean interested William Paul Starkey, '00, and his son of the same name, '28, of Galena, Maryland, in providing money for the support of religion. In 1949 the elder Starkey offered $25,000 for an altar on the assumption that the Packer Church was to remain Episcopal. The board appointed a committee consisting of trustees Stewart J. Cort (chairman), George R. Brothers, Dr. William L. Estes, Jr., and the Rt. Rev. Frank W. Sterrett, to consider the offer. Difficulties arising from the negotiations between the committee and the Starkeys emphasize the attachment to Episcopalism: The Starkeys wanted more formality in divine worship than had been customarily observed in the Packer Memorial Church; and they viewed ecumenism through the narrow window of a union of all Protestants and Roman Catholics around the Episcopal banner in a common worship and fight against communism, socialism, and welfarism. Eventually the Starkeys gave approximately $70,000 for a new altar and organ (the third in the history of the church) and various improvements, including construction of a presidential box and the removal of an ornate rood screen obscuring the choir. All
alterations conformed to styles approved by Episcopalians in Pennsylvania. The organ was dedicated April 27, 1952, with the Rev. Sterrett conducting the service. On April 19, 1956, the trustees granted a request from the Cathedral Church of the Nativity to use the Packer Memorial Church on Sundays during July and August while the Nativity was undergoing repairs.

This adherence to a tradition of Episcopalianism meant that the initiative in promoting ecumenical use would rest with the Episcopal chaplain. He must be relied on to define it in ways acceptable to the university community; and he must understand that it would work only if other denominations cooperated. That is to say, the use by other Christians, announced by President Williams and later extended by common consent to include non-Christians, made a responsibility for the success of ecumenism the business of everybody. Would the other faiths accept the invitation to use the Packer Church? They were reluctant to do so. Jews could worship at a community center adjoining the campus. Moravians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans, other Protestant denominations, even ultra-liberal Unitarians, had churches nearby whose pulpits were filled by energetic ministers. Roman Catholics, too, faced obstacles to the use of the Packer Church, not the least of which was the hostility of the hierarchy in Philadelphia to Catholics attending non-Catholic institutions of higher education. Hindus, Moslems, and other religions had too few adherents to be relied on. Until Jews, Roman Catholics, or some other Protestant churches cooperated in using the Packer Church, the Episcopal chaplain would have to keep it sanctified and used for the purposes intended by the Founder's daughter.

Ecumenism slowly made progress. The most notable response came from Roman Catholics. Although laws to prevent discrimination have made formal religious censuses illegal, anyone mingling daily with Lehigh students can easily ascertain that large numbers of them have come from Roman Catholic families. A Newman Club has long existed with a faculty member as an advisor. With the formation of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Allentown, formal steps were taken to provide for the spiritual welfare of Catholic students. In 1964 the Rev. Francis J. Sullivan became their full-time advisor and was accepted by the Lehigh administration as their chaplain. The following year Roman Catholic Mass was celebrated in the Packer Memorial Church for the first time. From that day to the present, Roman Catholic chaplains have used the church for services on Sundays and holy days, excepting times when it has been reserved for purposes more directly connected with the work of the university. In recent years, weekday masses at noon attract many students. Father Stephen Flynn came as Newman Foundation chaplain in 1970; he was succeeded by Robert Cofenas in 1973. During 1977 - 1978 the Newman Club under the guidance of Father Cofenas and through the support of the Diocese of Allentown obtained a house between Taylor Gymnasium and Grace Hall and renovated it to contain a club room, a chapel, and a residence for the Catholic chaplain. The present chaplain, the Rev. Richard A. Schware, arrived in 1979.

Ecumenism received an even stronger push in 1971 with the appointment of the current chaplain, Hubert L. Flesher. Although an ordained Episcopalian, Flesher saw his task to reassert the importance of religion in the life of a modern university, both in the formal aspects related to the church and also among a wide variety of student religious groups. Ecumenism has not depended thus on the Packer Church, although the church has been important to it. In addition to the uses made by Roman Catholics, some other non-Episcopal students, alumni, and faculty have employed it for weddings and brought in for the purpose their own clergy. Deceased of various faiths have been the subjects of memorial services. In the 1980s the Nobel Prize winner Bishop Tutu gave a lecture in the chapel and the Greek Orthodox Archbishop of North and South America Iakovos and the Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel gave baccalaureate addresses. Wiesel’s appearance as baccalaureate speaker marked his first participation in a Christian church service.

But Jewish students, organized in a Hillel Society, have continued to attend services in town and in 1982 opened their own center on Summit Street. In August, 1984, the Lehigh Valley Center for Jewish Studies was established at Lehigh University. The
Other Protestant students have also chosen to continue utilizing the existing churches in Bethlehem and Fountain Hill. Moslem and Hindu students may on occasion be seen meeting in other buildings or out of doors. A chaplain’s council, consisting of representatives from campus religious groups of all faiths, has operated apart from the church. As was true at the time of its consecration, the Packer Church embraces only a part of the religious life of the campus.

Other sorts of activity have supplemented this participation in the ecumenical movement. As in former years, the Packer Church has imparted a devotional tone to university ceremonies. Some of these have been traditional, such as baccalaureate and Founder’s Day exercises. Others are of more recent origin; for example, an annual honors convocation in the spring and a convocation for entering freshmen in August. Especially, attention has been given to religious music whose aesthetic quality may equal or surpass the devotional. Folk music as well as classical has resounded from the choir. The university choir sings for at least three major vestry services as well as for a parents’ day concert and Christmas and spring vespers. Sometimes choirs from other campuses have joined it for these performances. The university choir has sung such works as Mozart’s *Mass in C Minor* and Bach’s *St. John Passion* and, with the Lehigh University Choral Union, Rossini’s *Stabat Mater* and Verdi’s *Requiem*. Every Christmas season the Choral Society of the Cathedral Church of the Nativity performs Handel’s *Messiah*. Organists have appeared in concert, especially during the years when Robert B. Cutler, former chairman of the department of music, was university organist and director of the choir. The Bach Choir of Bethlehem has for over seventy-five years held its spring festival in the church.

The Bach Choir is the oldest of the musical groups that have looked upon the Packer Memorial Church as home. The choir is an independent organization, yet has always had a close connection with the university. The founder and director to 1933 was J. Fred Wolle. He recruited choristers throughout the Lehigh Valley who wanted to sing the works of Johann Sebastian Bach. Before the turn of the century Wolle had them performing the *St. John Passion* and the *St. Matthew Passion*. In 1900 he directed them in the *Mass in B-Minor* for the first full performance of that work in the United States. From 1900 to 1905, Wolle used the Central Moravian Church. Then he went to Berkeley, California, to take charge of the music department at the university there. For the next six years the choir did not exist. The industrialist Charles M. Schwab, himself an organist, music lover, and a Lehigh trustee, was instrumental in persuading Wolle to return and reorganize the Bach Choir. This was powerful support, but it was not enough. The Moravians refused Wolle the use of their church for performances. An admissions charge had become necessary, and the Moravians argued that this was commercialism unbefitting the sanctity of a church. President Drinker stepped in and offered Wolle the use of the Packer Church free. Subsequently Drinker accepted the presidency of the Bach Choir. Thus Wolle’s ensemble came to be established in the Packer Church, in which he had long served as an organist. J. Edgar Shields was now organist for both the church and the choir. Then and later, several faculty and students sang, and one or more faculty or administrators have always served on the choir’s governing bodies.

Bach festivals from that time to the present have usually been held on two Fridays and Saturdays in May. Francis Wolle’s unpublished “A Moravian Heritage” describes the scene:

“When the festivals were instituted, the session on the first day started at four o’clock. A little after three people begin gathering on the campus. The members of the orchestra and choir appear and go in by the choir door, but only a few of the auditors enter. They stand around, chatting in groups, meeting friends of former years; for it is a mecca that draws them back from year to year, and all become friends under the sway of the tremendous music. But that is not why they come so early nor why...
they wait outside. Promptly at three-thirty the expected happens. From high up in the belfry of the steeple and out over the greensward among the trees now float the first notes of the Moravian trombone choir, composed of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass trombones. On this beautiful May afternoon they are playing old hymn tunes which the Moravians brought with them from Germany, and which were well known to Bach and made use of by him. These old, familiar chorales create a mood, set the atmosphere of dedication to the great sacred music soon to be heard within. ... During the half hour preceding the session five chorales are played by the trombones. After the third one many people go inside; after the fourth all go inside and are seated. The choir and the orchestra are in place; and as the notes of the fifth chorale float down, beautifully softened by distance and by the thick stone walls of the church, Dr. Wolle glides in unobtrusively. There is no applause, no announcement of any kind; just the hymn of the trombone choir, the last note of which is arranged to be the first note of the opening chorus. And what a mood, what a sharpness of attack, what a thrill and suddenness of emotional effect this evokes. From then on we live with Bach's impressive, glorious music.

With the exception of the use made of a chorale to begin the Mass, the scene today differs unessentially from that depicted above.

Bach regarded his cantatas and other choral works as forms of worship. Conductors of the Bach Choir have agreed that a church is the proper place for performing this music. Yet the propriety of playing it in the Packer Church has not gone unchallenged. The elder Starkey maintained that the music was unsuitable for divine service; he would have excluded the choir from the church as a condition of giving money for an altar. It probably took all the diplomatic skill of Dr. Estes - trustee and president of the Bach Choir - to persuade Starkey not to insist on the condition. Starkey's opinion represents a minority. The prevailing sentiment favors the performance of Bach's music within a church, even though conductors might have acoustically better halls at their disposal and need no longer depend upon churches for suitable organs. The choir has in turn honored the sanctity of the edifice in which it performs. In 1985 the board of the Bach Choir, facing repeated requests to allow audiences to applaud, said "no", the church deserved the respect traditionally associated with silence. Even so, those members of the board who would have allowed applause did not intend disrespect. They took the view that, if a chaplain could legitimately evoke laughter by a joke, a choir ought surely to be allowed to evoke a clap of hands by a more reverent performance. Other audiences have been less concerned. Those attending a concert by Leontyne Price on October 10, 1987, applauded without restraint.

The arrival of Chaplain Hugh Flesher marked also a concerted effort to improve the fabric of Packer Church itself. After eight years of careful lobbying with administration and trustees, changes were begun. In February, 1980, the church was listed with the National Register of Historic Places. Dr. Deming Lewis was then president of the university. Harold S. Mohler, '48, was president (the title was changed in 1984 to that of chairman) of the Board of Trustees. With him on the board was the Rt. Rev. Dean T. Stevenson, '37, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Central Pennsylvania, carrying on a tradition going back to the time of Asa Packer and the Rt. Rev. William Bacon Stevens, that at least one distinguished Episcopal clergyman should participate as a member of the board in the governance of the university. In the same academic year, 1979-1980, the church began a period characterized by extensive repairs. The J. Howard Pew Freedom Trust provided $540,000 for renovations which eventually cost more than one million dollars. For the better part of two summers passersby watched workmen on scaffolding cleaning and repainting stone, restoring windows, and repairing the red slate roof. Inside, ceiling tiles which prevented good acoustics were being stripped away, redecorating was going on, and a
modern sound system was being installed. Several years later masons built in front of the main entrance a bluestone plaza decorated with four light standards resembling those used on the campus in the 1880s. The addition was made possible by a gift from Mr. and Mrs. Milton W. Wood. Talk circulated about the possibility of replacing the uncomfortable old oaken pews with cathedral chairs and providing a new organ for the one given by the Starkeys, which for many years had performed unsatisfactorily.

A handful of dedicated alumni and friends were restoring a church building worthy of the reputation of an institution dedicated to excellent education in science, engineering, business, and the arts. Paradoxically, the devotion to science and to the study of old texts was partly responsible for both the physical repairs to the church and the strengthening of it as a House of God. As faculty and administrators became ever less concerned with religion in their support of learning, those who care for religion were correspondingly freer to advance it.

They did well. In spite of all rationalizations to the contrary, religion was the heart of the Packer Memorial Church. Whatever might be the uses - vestry services, weddings, baptisms, funerals, concerts, lectures, dramatic performances, convocations, initiation ceremonies - the sanctity imparted by the interest of the Protestant Episcopal Church extended to all of them a spiritual quality making them more effective, deepening their meaning, and uniting them to that respect for religion which is among the oldest and most fundamental traditions of Lehigh University.

The Rev. Beardslee had emphasized the need for religion: "Science, engineering, and business simply cannot handle the personal and intimate problems of purposes and preferences... Democracy makes every person a moral executive.... Moral freedom implies moral responsibility."

Bishop Howe in his speech at the laying of the cornerstone had insisted on Lehigh’s responsibility to promote religion: "This University, in the intent of its illustrious Founder and in the massive monuments planned on these grounds, proclaims its recognition of the truth, that no scheme of education is complete which does not contemplate the culture of man in all the components of his being - his physical, intellectual and spiritual nature. ... It claims that men accord to sacred science no less respect than they pay to their supposed discoveries in the arcana of nature."

Bishop Rulison at the same ceremony had pointed to the Packer Memorial Church as the principal means on the campus for fulfilling the objective: "Standing as it will in the forefront of these noble halls of learning and at the gate of these beautiful College gardens, it will proclaim to every young man who shall come here seeking truth, the message of Him who said ‘I am the Truth.’ It will tell every man thirsting for knowledge that the ‘fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,’ and it will offer a welcome and a home to every weary heart that is seeking rest. Built with nave and transepts, in the form of a cross, it will be through ages, a sermon in stone, of that divine love which is as high as heaven, as deep as hell, as broad as the world, and as long as eternity, and which beggars all language to describe."

Professor W. Ross Yates is known to many as a Lehigh professor of political science for many years, with a turn at being Dean of the College of Arts and Science. Dr. Yates is, however, already a historian of Bethlehem, publishing with local groups a two-volume history of the city. Since retirement to his native Oregon, he is at work on a history of Lehigh University.

The Rev. Hubert L. Flesher, current university chaplain and professor of religion studies, provided minor editing regarding current developments associated with Packer Memorial Church.
End Notes

4. For a verbatim report of the ceremonies, see *Exercises at the Celebration of the Founder's Day, Thursday, October 8, 1885, with the Addresses,* copy in Linderman Library, Lehigh U.
5. For a verbatim report of the ceremony, see *The Service at the Consecration of the Packer Memorial Church of the Lehigh University, Founder's Day, October 13, 1887,* copy in the Linderman Library, Lehigh U.