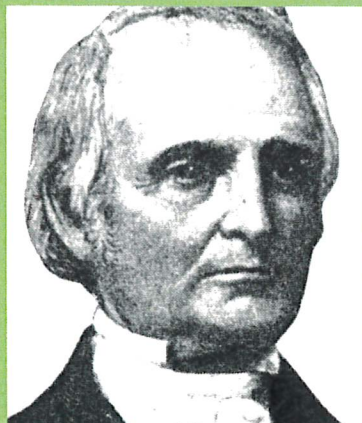
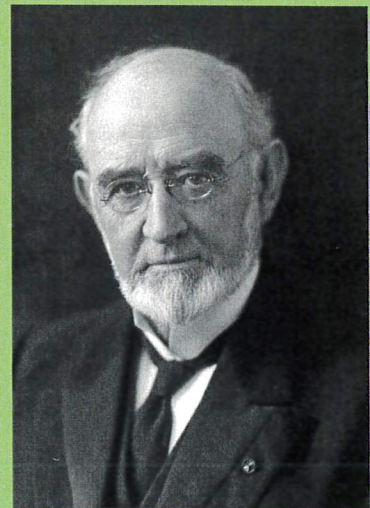
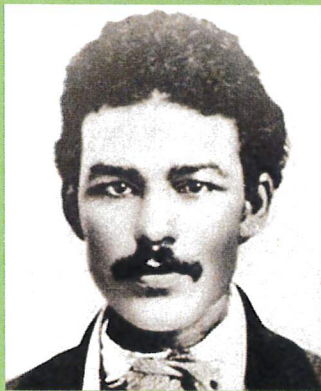
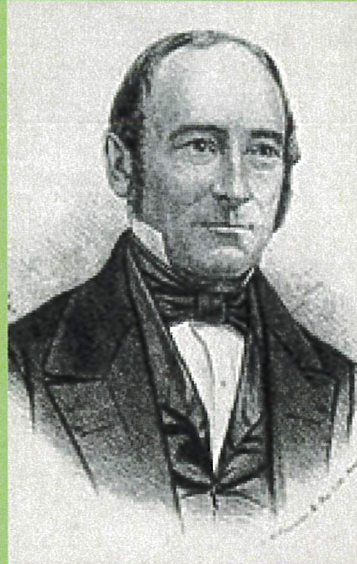


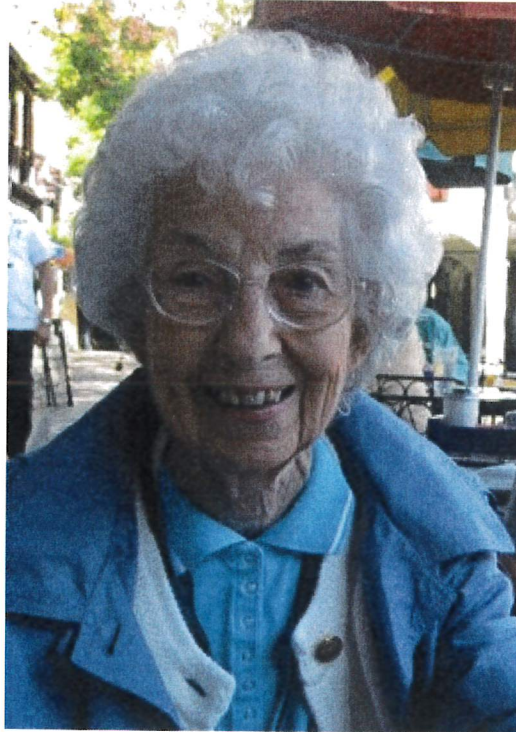
# 1821-2021 Cranston Memorial Presbyterian Church

Bicentennial History Lectures by Greg Roberts









***I dedicate this to Mrs. Aileen Miller Whitt, a friend and mentor to whom myself and future generations will be forever indebted for her passion for and meticulous documentation of local history and Cranston Memorial Presbyterian Church***

- Greg Roberts

**Dr. John G. Rogers**



*J. G. Rogers M.D.*

*I'll start by quoting a statement from Cranstonchurch.org: "At the core of Presbyterian identity is a secure hope in the grace of God in Jesus Christ, a hope that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, empowers us to live lives of gratitude: "In affirming with the earliest Christians that Jesus is Lord, the Church confesses that he is its hope, and that the Church, as Christ's body, is bound to his authority and thus free to live in the lively, joyous reality of the grace of God."*

I've promised David to limit my remarks to about 20 minutes. Please relax and we will see if I deliver on that promise!

Bob Lees has asked me to talk a little about Dr. John George Rogers, the man who delivered President Grant on April 27<sup>th</sup> 1822, a little less than a year after the founding of this church. For this talk I rely heavily on a wonderful biography of Dr. Rogers written by another prominent New



Richmond doctor—Dr. Philip Greene that was published in the Ohio State Medical Journal in 1963.

Dr. Rogers was born near Camden, New Jersey on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1797. His father, Dr. Levi Rogers was also a Methodist preacher as well as a lawyer. (Those three professions could stand for some interesting one-stop shopping!) In 1804 the Rogers family moved to Williamsburg, then County Seat of Clermont County and later to Bethel in 1813. Young John studied as an apprentice under his father up until Levi's untimely death just before his son's 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. He continued to study under other doctors until he established his own practice in New Richmond in June of 1818. At that time, he was in partnership with Dr. James T. Johnston. In 1823 they published an ad in the *New Richmond Luminary* announcing that they would "accept country produce in payment for their services to be delivered to New Richmond or Point Pleasant at market prices." Dr. Rogers built his home and office on the riverside corner of Front and Quarry Streets in May of 1822. (Perhaps he may have received a windfall from Jesse Grant for delivering the future President a month earlier!)

When New Richmond and Susanna merged in 1828 to form current New Richmond, Dr. Rogers was appointed Health Officer, a position he held for 10 years. Later in 1846, Village Council asked him to lead a committee to draw up an ordinance "to prevent conduct caused by retailing ardent spirits contrary to law." (Not only was New Richmond and this church on the forefront of the abolitionist movement, they were also on the forefront of the temperance movement which lead to Prohibition.)

During their days in Williamsburg and Bethel the Rogers family was close to the Morris family and Levi Rogers and Thomas Morris were together in many enterprises. Thomas Morris became U.S. Senator

from Ohio and was the first Senator in U.S. history to call for the immediate end to slavery from the floor of the Senate in 1835. (An anti-slavery Democrat at the time, Tom Morris was a one-term U.S. Senator that switched his allegiance to the newly formed Liberty Party and ran as their Vice-President candidate beside James G. Birney for President in 1840 .)

At this point, before I go into Dr. Rogers experience with this church and his abolitionist background, I would like to share a quote from another great American, Robert F. Kennedy:

**“There are people in every time and every land who want to stop history in its tracks. They fear the future, mistrust the present, and invoke the security of a comfortable past which, in fact, never existed.”**

I reference this quote to point out the fact that Dr. Rogers’ time on this earth was not much different than ours today. He was a man that did more than just speak out against injustice but one that put his life and livelihood on the line for the cause of doing right as did Thomas Morris and James G. Birney.

The friendship between the Rogers and Morris family lead to Tom Morris’s daughter, Julia Morris, becoming Mrs. John G. Rogers on October 19, 1820. It was a large wedding at the bride’s home in Bethel. Dr. Roger’s neighbor in New Richmond, Rev. George Light of the Methodist Episcopal Church conducted the ceremony. Jacob Light was a witness. Hannah Simpson, future mother of U.S. Grant was a bridesmaid. After bearing 5 children, Julia died in 1828. 5 years later Dr. Rogers married Sarah Ann Mollyneaux. The Mollyneaux family, of French Huguenot descent, emigrated from the north of Ireland to Clermont County in 1820 settling at Pt. Pleasant. Sarah is described as a “beautiful, cultured, and able woman” and “the most distinguished



woman of New Richmond.” She started a private school for young ladies in New Richmond which was respected as the best of its kind in the county. Several Parker children from Clermontville attended Sarah Mollyneaux’s school prior to the founding of the Clermont Academy. Sarah was 28 years old when she married Dr. Rogers. Although she had no children of her own, she was a wonderful mother to her stepchildren.

Not surprisingly Sarah Mollyneaux was a member of the New Richmond Presbyterian Church now known as Cranston Memorial Presbyterian Church. On April 18, 1841, Dr. John G. Rogers also joined this church.

Dr. Rogers, like Thomas Morris, in politics was a rarity at the time--an anti-slavery Democrat. When the Democratic Party failed to condemn slavery, he joined the Republican Party and remained there for the rest of his life. Dr. Greene writes “ It is easy for us to forget those earlier days and to be unaware of the hazards people like Dr. Rogers were exposed to in helping runaway slaves, or the more appropriate term-- freedom seekers. In 1829 the Village of New Richmond, following suit with an Ohio ordinance, passed its own ordinance reading “any person employing , harbouring or concealing any Negro or mulatto will be fined \$100, one half to be paid to the informant, one half to be paid into the poor fund. By 1850 the fine for assisting a slave to escape had risen to \$1000. Again Dr. Greene writes - “but there were those whose love of their fellow men was such that they found the courage and the means to expose the system.”



**James G. Birney** was one such person. A former slave-owner himself, he became so convinced of the evil of the system that he set his slaves free and dedicated his life to removing the stain of slavery from our

country. He hoped to publish an anti-slavery newspaper in his hometown of Danville, Kentucky and then Cincinnati. He was met with credible death threats from both communities. It was likely Senator Tom

Morris that suggested he “see the good people in New Richmond and who introduced him to Dr. Rogers. After arranging two meetings for Birney to explain to the citizen’s of New Richmond the purpose of his paper, Dr. Rogers joined 77 other citizens pledging to keep his printing press from being molested by “outside trouble makers.” Rogers not only took his turn guarding the press he also contributed generously towards the expenses of the paper. Others made it clear that they were not anti-slavery but believed in freedom of speech and the press and felt Birney had the fundamental right under the First Amendment to publish an anti-slavery newspaper.

Thanks to a few courageous men, and the women who supported them, *The Philanthropist* brought out its first edition on January 1, 1836 in New Richmond.





**John Anthony Copeland , Jr.**

Nat Turner was an enslaved African American preacher who led a rebellion of slaves and free blacks in Southampton County, Virginia (west of Chesapeake Bay) on August 21, 1831, that resulted in the killing of 55 to 65 white people. In retaliation, enraged white militias and mobs killed more than 200 black people in the course of putting down the rebellion. In the aftermath, the state quickly arrested and executed 57 blacks accused of being part of Turner's slave rebellion. Turner hid successfully for two months. When found, he was quickly tried, convicted, sentenced to death, and hanged. The Southampton county seat at the time was Jerusalem and the name was later changed to Courtland. Across Virginia and other southern states, state legislators passed new laws to control slaves and free blacks. They prohibited education of slaves and free blacks, restricted rights of assembly for free blacks, withdrew their right to bear arms (in some

states), and to vote (in North Carolina, for instance), and required white ministers to be present at all black worship services.

1833 Great Britain abolished slavery in the British Empire including Canada. Slavery had already been abolished in Mexico leaving only one large nation in the Northern hemisphere supporting the institution of slavery – the one that Abraham Lincoln later said was “conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.”

**John Anthony Copeland, Jr.** was born in Raleigh, North Carolina on August 15, 1834. He was the son of free blacks John Sr. and Delilah Copeland. By virtue of the laws enacted subsequent to the Nat Turner rebellion, the Copelands like other free blacks in the South living without basic civil rights were no more than slaves without masters. Free black people in the south typically existed under the protection of white overseers and without that protection would be subject to being kidnapped into slavery. The Copeland family lived in constant fear of this. The colored school in Raleigh had been burned down repeatedly by vigilantes. So in 1843, the year John Anthony turned nine years old, the Copelands decided to leave the South with no particular destination in mind. They secured the permission of their white overseers with a warning that “abolitionists in the North were accustomed to capturing colored men and selling them into slavery”. With safety in numbers they began their 600 mile journey north in the company of two other free black families (the Lanes and Jones, totaling 14) seeking a better life for themselves and their children in the North.

Their first stop on free soil was Cincinnati “which had a reputation of treating colored people no better than in Carolina.” They were advised that New Richmond might be a safer and more welcoming place. They were greeted by a farmer named Tibbets before entering New



Richmond. It was a Saturday and Tibbets invited the group to stay overnight and rest at his home. He later invited them to attend an anti-slavery meeting at the Presbyterian Church that Sunday evening. Recalling the warning they received back in Carolina they reluctantly agreed to go to the meeting but took seats at the back of the church where they could easily escape if danger appeared. To their relief they realized that they had been misled by their overseers and soon made friends with those in attendance at the meeting. This was young John Anthony Copeland's first exposure to abolitionism.



The minister for this church at the time was **Amos Dresser**. One of the Lane Seminary rebels, Dresser left Lane in 1835 and while traveling in Nashville, Tennessee was accused of the crime of "circulating incendiary periodicals among the free colored people, and trying to excite the slaves to insurrection." He was convicted of possessing

abolitionist pamphlets by a vigilante court and sentenced to 20 lashes. Afterwards Dresser joined his fellow rebels and graduated from Oberlin College in 1839. He spent two years as a missionary in Jamaica before coming to New Richmond. He advised the Copelands to consider locating to Oberlin "where the slave catchers would not kidnap their children as they were in a habit of doing along the Ohio River." A devout pacifist Amos Dresser could not have imagined what this advice would ultimately lead to. Leaving their families and their wagons behind in New Richmond the three men set off for Oberlin. Arriving on a Sunday they were surprised to see a young white man and a young black man walking arm in arm to church. They were given a tour of the town by a prominent white citizen. Word was sent back by Mr. Jones to New Richmond that "he had found paradise and was going to stay." Copeland Sr. and Lane returned to New Richmond to retrieve the

women and children while Jones stayed in Oberlin to make arrangements for their resettlement.

John Anthony attended Oberlin College but left school to join his father and train as a carpenter. He became active in the local abolitionist movement and participated in the famous Oberlin-Wellington Slave rescue in 1858. Around this time he had become acquainted with and recruited by the radical abolitionist John Brown.

In the 28 years since Nat Turner, Virginia was prepared to thwart any and all attempts to incite rebellion amongst the enslaved. The supporters of slavery in both the North and South had been largely successful in controlling the Federal Government to enact laws that supported slavery. Frustrated with the lack of progress and apathy towards ending slavery, John Brown at the New England Anti-slavery Convention in May of 1859 said of other abolitionists: "These men are all talk; What is needed is action — action!"

Frederick Douglass on John Brown: "His zeal in the cause of freedom was infinitely superior to mine. Mine was as the taper light, his was as the burning sun. Mine was bounded by time. His stretched away to the silent shores of eternity. I could speak for the slave. John Brown could fight for the slave. I could live for the slave. John Brown could die for the slave."

John Brown devised a plan to raid the federal arsenal in Harpers Ferry, Virginia to seize the guns housed there and arm the local slaves in a massive rebellion. On October 16, 1859 with twenty-one followers Brown attacked and occupied the federal arsenal in Harpers Ferry. Quickly surrounded by militia commanded by Col. Robert E. Lee, Brown's position was overrun, ten of his followers including his five sons were killed, and Brown himself was wounded and captured. Charged with treason against the Commonwealth of Virginia, John



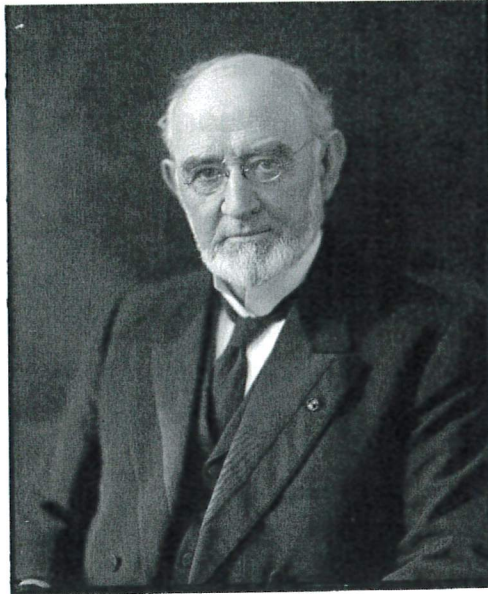
Brown was put on trial, convicted and summarily hung. Historians rarely mention the 5 African Americans amongst Brown's followers including John Anthony Copeland, Jr. Like Brown, Copeland was captured and put on trial and convicted of treason. From his lonely jail cell waiting for the gallows 25-year-old John Anthony wrote a final letter to his family back in Oberlin.

*Dear parents, brothers and sisters, it is true that I am now in a few hours to start on a journey from which no traveler returns. Yes, long before this reaches you, I shall as I sincerely hope, have met our brother and sister who have for years been worshiping God around his throne-singing praises to him, and thanking him that he gave his Son to die that they might have eternal life. I pray daily and hourly that I may be fitted to have my home with them, and that you, one and all, may prepare your souls to meet your God, that so, in the end, though we meet no more on earth, we shall meet in Heaven, where we shall not be parted by the demands of the cruel and unjust monster Slavery.*

*..... And now dear ones I must bid you that last, long, sad farewell. Good-day, Father, Mother, Henry, William, and Freddy, Sarah and Mary, serve your God and meet me in heaven.*

*Your Son and Brother to eternity,*

*John A. Copeland.*



### **Bishop Earl Cranston**

Straight from Wikipedia and the internet---"Christianity is an Abrahamic monotheistic religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. It is the world's largest religion, with over 2.4 billion followers. Its adherents, known as Christians, make up a majority of the population in 157 countries and territories, and believe that Jesus is the Christ, whose coming as the Messiah was prophesied in the Hebrew Bible, called the Old Testament in Christianity, and chronicled in the New Testament."

There are approximately 41,000 Christian denominations generally divided into Catholics (1.3 billion) and Protestants (900 million). Amongst the Protestants are Anglicans, Baptists, Anabaptists, Lutherans, Quakers, Mormons, 7th Day Adventists, Methodists, and Presbyterians to mention just a few. These denominations divide amongst themselves even further.

This is a brief history talk and I do not intend to review and elaborate on the diversity and division within a religion that worships one God based on the teachings of his only Son, Jesus Christ whose principle



commandment was “to love one another”. I’m going to talk about one man who did his part to address division amongst his fellow Christians who just happens to be the namesake for this Church.

Earl Cranston was born in Athens, Ohio on June 27th, 1840. He was the posthumous son of Earl Cranston, a young land-surveyor, and Jane Montgomery, his wife. The father, dying of yellow fever, left the mother of his unborn son a widow at sixteen.

He graduated from Ohio University in 1861 and acquired a Master’s degree also from O.U. in 1865. Earl entered the Union Army during the American Civil War as a Private. He progressed through the ranks, first as a First Sergeant, then as a commissioned officer, as a First Lieutenant, Adjutant and finally as a Captain. He left the U.S. Army in 1864. He entered the ministry in 1867 serving as pastor in Methodist churches in Portsmouth, Columbus, Cincinnati as well as churches in Illinois, Indiana and Colorado. While in Denver, he was instrumental in the founding of the University of Denver.

He was elected Bishop by the Methodist Episcopal General Conference in 1896 and took residence in Washington D.C. As Bishop he traveled widely to various missions around the world. During his visit to Methodist churches in China, Korea, and Japan from 1896 to 1898, Bishop Cranston preached at Sangdong Church in Seoul in October 1898. His topic was the power of the Holy Spirit. “I heard here that there are many people who are afraid of evil spirits. I have never seen the evil doings of evil spirits, but those of evil persons.” He continued, “Why do people do evil things? The devil lets people do those things. What is the Holy Spirit according to the Scriptures? He is the spirit who gives us love and peace and empowers us to do good things”. Notably successful was his guidance of the negotiations for uniting the

competitive Methodist bodies in Japan into one autonomous Methodist Church, for which he wrote much of the constitution.

Bishop Cranston, in an address delivered in Foundry Methodist Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C., March 13, 1910, made the following observation:-

"Suppose this were to be declared a Christian nation by a Constitutional interpretation to that effect. What would that mean? Which of the two contending definitions of Christianity would the word Christian indicate? - The Protestant idea, of course, for under our system majorities rule, and the majority of Americans are Protestants. Very well. But suppose that by the addition of certain contiguous territory with twelve or more millions of Roman Catholics, the annexation of a few more islands with half as many more, and the same rate of immigration as now, the majority some years hence should be Roman Catholics, - who doubts for a moment that the reigning Pope would assume control of legislation and government? He would say, with all confidence and consistency, 'This is a Christian nation. It was so claimed from the beginning and so declared many years ago. A majority defined then what Christianity was, the majority will define now what Christianity now is and is to be.' That 'majority' would be the Pope."

In 1916 Bishop Cranston retired from his responsibilities in Washington, D.C., and came to live on a farm in New Richmond (Penmaen) with his third wife Lucie Mason Parker, great grand-daughter of Daniel and Priscilla Parker, founders of the Clermont Academy. His previous wives died in 1872 and 1903. Lucie and Bishop Cranston were married in 1905.

Upon his retirement he was the guest of honor at a banquet in Washington, at which President Woodrow Wilson paid an impressive



tribute to his fine spirit and thorough work and to their value to the nation.

Bishop Cranston was greatly interested in church unity and hoped to see all the Protestant churches in New Richmond combine to form one strong, influential church. In January, 1929 the Methodist and Presbyterian churches appointed members to serve on a committee to consider affiliation. Bishop Cranston had also worked tirelessly to reunite the Methodist Church that had split over slavery.

Bishop Cranston did not live to see his dreams fulfilled. He died in 1932. But the flood of 1937 forced the decision. Many families lost their personal possessions, some lost their homes. The Presbyterian Church was badly damaged. The Methodist Church was ruined. The whole community was crippled.

“The first meeting of Session after the flood” was held on the 6th of June, 1937. The plan had been perfected in advance. The Session met and all the Elders tendered their resignations. Then a joint meeting of both congregations was held. There was a sermon by the Methodist Bishop. The Moderator was a Presbyterian.

The church adopted the name of the Cranston Memorial Presbyterian Church, in honor of Bishop Cranston. Members on the rolls of the Methodist Church were duly admitted and a minister of the Methodist Church was named to fill the pulpit until Conference convened. Officers were elected from both groups. The Elders coming from the Methodist Church were ordained as Presbyterian Elders. And so began the new era.

His dream of re-uniting the Southern and Northern factions of the Methodist Church was not fulfilled until 1939. Those that ultimately accomplished that goal declared that they had gained inspiration from

Bishop Cranston's courage and faith. His dream of unifying all the churches in New Richmond is still a work in progress.

Bishop Cranston was initially buried under a large buckeye tree at Penmaen. His remains were later reinterred in Arlington National Cemetery.

In a time when division and divisiveness seems to be spreading and calls for unity falling on deaf ears, let us remember as we celebrate this 200th year of existence the men and women connected with a little church on Union Street who strived for unity, not only in this community, but for our nation and the world.



## Truth, Love and Forgiveness

As a church we are celebrating and commemorating 200 years, so it is both fitting and proper to call attention to a time when this church, its pastors and most importantly the members were in both words and deeds activists to the cause of freedom and the abolition of slavery. It is a heritage to be very proud of. Last week Rev. Chris Torrey in discussing “truth in love” in Ephesians 4:15 set the stage for my talk this morning. I believe this might be the second time that Chris has unintentionally and unknowingly stolen a little of my thunder for my lecture. I forgive him and please forgive me for even bringing this up! I will be sharing several uncomfortable truths in our history as a community in stark contrast to my other talks. I share this history completely in the spirit of speaking the “truth in love”. As I have outlined in my four previous and most memorable talks, this congregation and other righteous members of the New Richmond community was for a bright shining moment on the right side of history and were correct in their interpretations of scripture and the U.S. Constitution. A quick recap of the previous lectures: Dr. John Rogers, the abolitionist doctor that co-wrote a letter demanding that the Cincinnati Presbytery disassociate themselves with all churches that either condoned or supported slavery; Rev. Amos Dresser, former pastor and Lane Seminary rebel who In 1836 was stripped naked and suffered 40 lashes In Nashville TN after anti-slavery pamphlets were found in his carriage; John Anthony Copeland, as a nine year old black boy heard his first anti-slavery sermon in this

church. Copeland later as a young man joined John Brown's raid of Harper's Ferry and suffered the same fate as John Brown; and Bishop Earl Cranston, our church's namesake who diligently worked towards uniting Methodists and other Christians after the American Civil War. Rev. Fischer has also spoken of George Beecher and other members of the Beecher family. They were courageous, if not heroic, in their actions in the face of opposition and derision for boldly stating and acting on their beliefs. Dr. David Torbett in his recent talk at the New Richmond branch library about Daniel Parker, shared that - to be called an "abolitionist" before and in the immediate years after the Civil War - was a derogatory term that very few individuals would label themselves as. To boldly declare that you were an abolitionist took guts as there would undoubtedly be severe repercussions, social and otherwise, for doing so. Dr. Torbett could not think of an equivalent example of a label applied to individuals today intended to demean, demonize and ostracize a person. I will warn you that some of the stories that I am about to share are indeed uncomfortable and many may find them disturbing. I have purposely "softened" most of the graphic details as some are too gruesome for any audience. You may recall from my first talk about Dr. John Rogers that the Village of New Richmond passed ordinances with more severe fines than the state or federal government for people caught aiding freedom seekers. (I prefer the term "freedom seeker" over the traditional "fugitive slave" as a more appropriate description of those "passengers" on the Underground Railroad. These true heroes were actively seeking freedom for themselves and were not just passively "along for a ride".) Before the Civil War it was common for farmers and businessmen in New Richmond to employ enslaved people from Kentucky to assist in various manual labor activities including harvesting crops and constructing dry-stacked stone walls. I call this practice "rent-a-slave". Any notion that

this community was innocent and void of the stain of slavery is simply not true. New Richmond was not unique in this regard. In July of 1876, George Mangrum, sat in a jail cell for two days just a short block away from this sanctuary, before a mob of 300 to 400 people gathered and broke into the jail. They put a rope around George Mangrum's neck and drug him up what is now Bethel-New Richmond Road and hung him from a large elm tree. Witnesses had indicated to the constable that Mangrum had lured away two young women separately out of the village on successive days under the false pretense of needing domestic help at his non-existent farm in the countryside beyond the village. Mangrum had allegedly raped and murdered one of those young women near Pond Run. The second victim he allegedly raped and left for dead near Boat Run Creek above Clermontville. Fortunately, the second victim survived and became one of those witnesses. I use the word "allegedly" because George Mangrum was not provided his Constitutional right to a trial due to the violent actions of the mob. In late August of 1895 Noah Anderson was removed from that same jail cell down the street by another mob. This mob was much more expeditious in dispensing "justice". They hung Noah Anderson from a tree at what is known as Adamson Point just off Washington Street within 4 hours after his arrest. Anderson had allegedly strangled to death the richest man in Clermont County, New Richmond businessman, 80 plus year old Franklin Fridman. There are similarities between these incidents but two key differences. 1. The Mangrum case had witnesses. The Anderson case did not. And 2. George Mangrum was a white man and was not a member of this community. Noah Anderson was a black man and an active member of this community. Newspapers of the day reported falsely that he was a no-account drifter. Not true and we have documented proof. Fast-forwarding to the year 1943. 13 year-old Eddie Platt, a black boy, was shot at close



range with a shot gun by a 15 year old white boy on the playground of the Market Street School. Authorities at the time ruled the death as an "accident". Over the past three years I have had the honor and privilege to meet and correspond with Reverend Tom Castlen, a former member of this church . Tom sent me a copy of his life story- a self-published book titled "An Activist in the Civil Rights Movement". In the book Tom tells of his experiences growing up in New Richmond during the 1940's and 50's, a time of dramatic change in the village. The old families that had been here since before the Civil War, like the Castlens, were being outnumbered and replaced by an influx of people with slightly different values. Tom was caught in the middle of this change and suffered as a result. He refers to New Richmond as "Hazard North". Besides the sad tragic story of Eddie Platt, Tom recalls the story of little Johnny Shropshire, a 4 year-old black boy who was hit by a large white car and drug three blocks down Market Street before he fell out. The car never stopped. Johnny survived. The car that hit him was never identified. There was only one large white car known to frequent village streets. That was the Mayor's Cadillac. Later while Tom was working in the family restaurant on Front Street the dead body of a large black man washed up on the riverbank below the wall. A crowd gathered and Tom took note of what some said. The racist comments and crude jokes led Tom to recall, "I was more stunned than surprised by the racism. I thought, so this is the way New Richmond is. I gotta get out of here." Fast forward again to 1983. The Clermont Courier covered the story of a crossburning in the yard of a black family that had just moved into a house on Birney Lane—yes Birney --the abolitionist newspaper guy. Just this June a swastika was painted on John Hale's mailbox. I received this report while at my desk writing a Juneteenth proclamation for the village. The "cross" on Birney Lane was actually a wooden clothesline pole. The swastika was painted with black spray paint onto a black

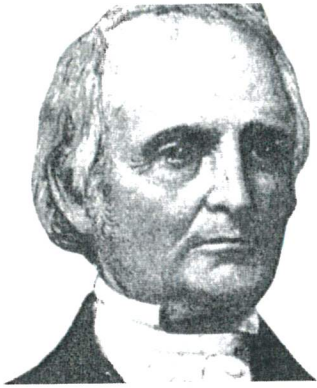
mailbox. The effect was there but the contrast was a bit lacking. There is still an “interesting” display on a porch in Mt. Pisgah, minus the Afro wigs. I encourage you to check out the explanation for that display by its designers. Channel 19 interviewed the creative duo a couple years ago. The story was later featured on Comedy Central. Google it. There is a saying: Forgive and forget. There are multiple verses in the Bible calling on us to forgive. There are no such callings to forget. We can, we must, we will -- forgive the sins and indiscretions of the past--we cannot change history. We should not; however, forget. For those who continue to practice and proliferate racism, hate and intolerance, we must forgive them also, for as our Savior said on the Cross. “They know not what they do.” Two hundred years from now when the next chapter of the history of this church and community is written, will future generations be proud to tell stories of what we do?

I’ll close with a prayer, a version of the Franciscan Blessing:

*May God bless you with a restless discomfort about easy answers, half-truths and superficial relationships, so that you may seek truth boldly and love deep within your heart. May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may tirelessly work for justice, freedom, and peace for all people. May God bless you with the gift of tears to shed with those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, or the loss of all that they cherish, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and transform their pain into joy. May God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you really can make a difference in this world, to do, with God’s grace, what others claim cannot be done.*

*Amen*





**John Rankin** was born on February 5, 1793 in Dandridge, Jefferson County, Tennessee. He is a Presbyterian minister, educator and abolitionist. Upon moving to Ripley, Ohio, in 1822, he became known as one of Ohio's first and most active "conductors" on the Underground Railroad. He and his family are credited with assisting over 2000 former slaves reach freedom in Canada. Prominent pre-Civil War abolitionists William Lloyd Garrison, Theodore Weld, Henry Ward Beecher, and Harriet Beecher Stowe were influenced by Rankin's writings and work in the anti-slavery movement.

Opposition within his own congregation, spurred by Rankin's attempts to expel slave-owners from the church, finally led him to resign in 1846 after 24 years as minister of the Ripley Presbyterian Church. Over one-third of the church's members left with him and helped Rankin establish what eventually came to be the Free Presbyterian Church, which had as many as 72 congregations before the coming of the Civil War. After the war, Rankin welcomed the reunion of the Presbyterian churches in Ripley. In 1866, he moved to New Richmond and became pastor of this church where he preached from this pulpit.

When Henry Ward Beecher was asked after the end of the Civil War, "Who abolished slavery?," he answered, "Reverend John Rankin and his sons did."

**Rev. John Rankin Abolitionist Sermon**



This morning I will share one of my most effective anti-slavery sermons. I preached this sermon frequently, both in the East and in the West. As it was not written but preached extemporaneously, it was somewhat varied in different places, and it was generally well received. The impression produced was that the abolitionists were not so reckless and unreasonable as they had been represented. The battle was fairly begun on the one side by argument and appeals to the plain teaching of the Scriptures, and on the other by misrepresentation, vituperation and persecution. My stand made me especially obnoxious to the defenders of the peculiar institution. Many false and slanderous reports were circulated concerning me, and large rewards were offered for taking my life in Kentucky. After the great mob in Cincinnati against the negroes and Mr. Birney's newspaper, a number of men came to my house one night at Ripley, with the purpose of taking my life. My sons had taken the precaution to prepare themselves for such visits, and though a good deal of shooting was done, no serious consequences resulted. The Keeper of Israel preserved me for further work in his vineyard.

Some background behind my sermon -- This question of slavery now became the great question, not only in the State but also in the Church, nor could it be excluded from the large benevolent societies in the land. The slavery propagandists obtained complete control in national affairs, and used their power to crush out, as far as possible, every aspiration of our citizens seeking the equal rights of men. Abolitionists were branded as infidels and charged with trampling under their feet the plainest teachings of Scripture. The Fugitive Slave bill was enacted into a law, and the entire North thereby made slave hunting ground, and our citizens liable at any moment to be made slave catchers under the severest penalties. Finally, the Missouri Compromise was repealed with the avowed purpose of extending the accursed system into our heretofore free Territories.

No man who dared oppose the behests of the slave power at this period could hope for advancement either in Church or State, and the charitable associations that dared to speak against slavery were allowed to starve. And such was the influence of this determined spirit that nearly all bowed before the power and allowed the seal of silence to be placed on their lips. Brother Amos Dresser, Dr. John Rogers, John Anthony Copeland, James Gillespie Birney, Rev. George Beecher, and other leaders and associates of this magnificent church, as well as myself, chose NOT to be silent. Now my sermon:

“If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any vowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

This is one of the most touching appeals ever made. It was addressed to a people that had been brought up in a state of heathenism, the tendency of which is to do away with all the finer feelings of our nature. Hence the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. It is truly affirmed that the heathen are destitute of natural affection. Infidels tell us that Christians ought to go to China to learn morals, and yet in one city of that empire not less than ten thousand infants were annually thrown into the streets to perish! In the most enlightened periods of heathen Rome there were laws prescribing the manner in which weak and diseased infants should be put to death. We who live in this Christian country, where the term “mother” is significant of tenderness and love, cannot fully feel the full force of this appeal.

In all ages of the world there has been in our fallen nature a tendency to division. This tendency was felt in the early apostolic churches. The design of the apostle Paul in this appeal was that of urging the church of Philippi to Christian unity. If they had experienced any comfort in union with Christ, that ought to inspire them to exercise love to their Christian brethren. And what in this sad world is so comforting as an awareness of union with Christ so as to be justified by his righteousness, and sanctified by the spirit he has procured by his merits? He who is in Christ has that hope which is both sure and steadfast. He is an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. He has solace having fled for shelter and refuge to the court of the Savior's righteousness, under which no one ever perished.

If they had felt any comfort of love, that ought to be a strong motive to Christian unity. And what is there this side of heaven that gives so much comfort as love? Supreme love to God and appropriate love to our fellow beings can make us truly happy. If love were banished from this world there could be no rational enjoyment; miserable would be the condition of all rational beings. It is love that constitutes the happiness of heaven. Without love there could be no heaven. Angels deprived of love would be devils.

If they enjoyed the fellowship of the Spirit, that ought to lead them to live in holy union. All true Christians are born of the Spirit and have a common interest in the Holy Ghost. He lives in all who have union with the Savior and therefore they ought to be united in love.

If any grace or mercies had resulted from union with Christ, that ought to compell them to exercise that holy love of the brethren which secures the unity that ought to exist among the followers of the Savior. The tendency of the religion of Christ is to implant benevolence in the human heart and purify and soften our nature. The wisdom, that is



from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. Pure religion undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. These passages describe Christianity as a system of true benevolence and moral purity. The man who has no compassion for his fellowmen has no just claim to being united to the benevolent Son of God.

The church of Philippi was gathered by Paul out of heathenism and was transformed into Christian life by divine influences. This glorious change filled the apostle with joyful anticipations. He urged them to fulfill his joy, being like-minded, having the same love, being of one mind.' This unity was essential both to their happiness and prosperity. In order to secure this unity, there must be —

1. The exercise of humility. "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves." From pride only comes contention. All pride is sinful and never tends to good. Some parents teach their children that they ought to have so much pride as to keep them out of bad company and from low and mean conduct; pride has no such tendency; it is itself one of the meanest things in the universe. The proudest men on earth are the men we may expect to and do the meanest things. The Devil is the proudest being in the universe, and he does the meanest things. It was pride that prompted his revolt in heaven. If pride could now enter heaven, it would produce turmoil and ruin there as it does here on earth; all the lower orders would envy the higher, and there would be war in heaven. While we should not abandon a good cause because it will cause conflict if we adhere to it, yet we should not advocate a good cause for the purpose of creating conflict, nor should we do anything for self-aggrandizement. If we will carefully notice the evil thoughts

and propensities of our own hearts, we may more readily respect others better than ourselves.

2. To secure unity, there must be the exercise of benevolence. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others," We must not look so much upon our own interests as to neglect the interests of others. We must aim to promote the welfare of all our fellow-beings so far as opportunity offers. This is in accordance with the moral law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This does not mean that we must feel toward our neighbor that warmth of passion which we feel toward our wives and children, relatives, and intimate friends. We feel no such passion toward ourselves. We feel a constant desire for our own welfare and happiness, and to fulfill the law of love we must feel the same constant desire for the welfare and happiness of our neighbor. "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." This is the law of the prophets. No man can love his neighbor as himself and speak those things with respect to his neighbor that he would not have spoken with respect to himself. The exercise of this love would prevent all slander, and thus abolish a prominent source of human misery. No man can love his neighbor as himself, and take advantage of him in a bargain. The exercise of this love would banish all dishonest dealing from the world and save millions from poverty and want. This would not harm the commerce of the world. It would not prevent the dealer from receiving a reasonable percentage on his goods. No man can love his neighbor as himself and hold him in a position in which he would not be held himself. The exercise of this love would banish all slavery and oppression from the world. Enslaving men and holding them as property is wholly inconsistent with the laws of love. No man is willing to be a slave, and therefore no man can rightfully hold another man as a slave.

What he would not have done to himself, he cannot rightfully do to another. The law of love written upon every heart so that it would be obeyed, would banish from the world slavery and oppression, murder and theft, bloodshed and war, and every other type of crime. Under the universal influence of this love the whole world would become as the paradise of God, and sorrow and misery would forever pass away.

3. Christ is presented as the great example of humility and benevolence. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." To understand what the mind of Christ is, we must view him in his wonderful condescension. He was exalted above the heavens, and he being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man; and being formed as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death on the cross. To be in the form of God is to be in his nature. If he had not been in the nature of God, he could not have taken upon him the nature of a servant. He is the express image of the Father's person. An express image is an exact likeness. To be the exact likeness of the Father's person he must possess all divine perfections as fully as they are possessed by the Father's person. The Father is eternal, and if the Son were not eternal he would be infinitely un-like the Father. He is the Father's equal, and in him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily. He is the Almighty God, the everlasting Father. Let us in imagination rise to the world of light and glory, and there behold the Son of God lighting up heaven in all its magnificence and grandeur. The highest intelligences around the throne of God veil their faces in his presence, and ascribe into him glory, honor, power, and dominion for ever and ever.

Let us go back to the morning of creation and behold him throwing from his hand all the massy- worlds that revolve on high, and by his



word lighting up the vast universe; and now let us go to Bethlehem and see him a helpless babe in a stable, lying in a manger, out of which beasts had been fed. All heaven is filled with wonders. What infinite condescension! He who was infinitely higher than the heavens, took our nature into connection with his divine nature, to unite the two natures in one person forever. Here is the grandest truth in the universe. Angels never saw so much of God before. Never did they before or after strike so high a note of praise.

“Glory to God in the highest, on Earth peace, good will to men,” was their song when the Savior was born. He who created and owned the whole universe, became poorer than foxes of the mountains, and the birds of the air. The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has no where to lay his head." The stable was his birthplace, and the manger was his cradle! His companions were poor fishermen, and to the poor he preached the gospel. He girded himself with a rag and washed his disciples' feet.

Come, ye who despise your fellowmen, because they were born in a foreign country, or because they are poor or un-educated, or have a colored skin, and view the wonderful condescension of the Son of God! He condescended to take the nature you despise in your fellowmen, and to wear it forever. He never despised a human being. He will permit the lowest and darkest of our race, redeemed by his blood, to sit with him in his own throne. Hear his declaration. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. You will not permit the colored man to sit with you at your table, or in the house of God; but he, who is Lord of lords and King of kings, will permit him to sit with himself on his own throne! Now if any man has not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. You cannot get to heaven with a proud heart that leads you to despise your fellow men. There is no such pride in

heaven. The holy angels, of higher nature than we are, condescend to attend to the lowest of our race. The beggar Lazarus was as loathsome as a human being could be. He was full of sores and had nothing to cover them. He lay neglected and starving at the rich man's gate. The holy angels came from heaven and took care of this poor beggar; and when he died, they carried his spirit on wings of love to Abraham's bosom. Oh! how lovely is such benevolence! Such you must have, or you cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

It was benevolence that caused the Son of God to assume our nature, and endure the shameful death of the cross, and all the sufferings necessary to meet the demands of justice. He is our great example of humility and benevolence. Let us follow him in doing good to our fellow men. Let us be willing to go down and do the lowest service in Christ's kingdom, and labor to elevate the lowest of our race, that they may become the sons and daughters of the Almighty!