

# Northampton:

A Case Study of a Revitalized Church

# What is an “Awakening”?

- **General:** A religious revival in which many people, (church, town, nation) come to faith and personal conversion, resulting in lasting life change, on a large scale.
- **Synonyms:** Awakening, Harvest, Revival
- **Biblical:** Josiah, 2 Kings 22. Nineveh, Jonah 4. Pentecost, Acts 2.
- **In History:** Early Christianity, Reformation (1500’s), Two in America. Wales. Wheaton College Revival (1995). Etc.



# Northampton



# Northampton Church Information

**80 + years since founding**

**Three pastors:**

- **Eleazar Mather (1637 - 1669). Served 1661 - 1669. (Son of Richard Mather)**
- **Solomon Stoddard (1643 - 1729). Served 1672 - 1729. (JE's Maternal Grandfather).**
- **Jonathan Edwards (1703 - 1758). Served 1727 - 1750.**

*A Faithful Narrative, 144-147*



# Northampton Under Solomon Stoddard

- 1670. Succeeds Eleazer Mather. Takes both pulpit and widow!
- Stoddard supports Half-Way Covenant. (Baptize children of baptized non-communicants).
- Lord's Supper a “converting ordinance.”
- Five “Harvests” during 60 years of ministry!
  - 1680, \*1684, \*1697, \*1713, 1719
- “Connecticut River Gods,” “Pope of Connecticut Valley”
- Died the same day as the last ruling elder of the church.

# The Hampshire Association

- **Founded by Solomon Stoddard (1714)**
- **Met April and October each year**
- **Proto-Presbytery (advisory only)**
- **Hampshire County - Northampton, Suffield, Springfield, Sunderland, Hatfield, Westfield, Hadley, Deerfield, Enfield, Longmeadow, Northfield**
- **Clergy unity; Reformed orthodoxy; Evangelism among Heathen**
- **1732 Subscription to WCF or equivalent required (controversy!)**

# Hampshire Association



# Northampton Church Under Jonathan Edwards

- Stoddard and Edwards together (1727-1729). Pastor and Associate.
- Earthquake Awakening of October 29th, 1727. (WJE 13:84-85).
- Edwards becomes Pastor at Stoddard's death.
- 1735 - Local Revival (The Sixth Harvest)
- 1740-42 - "Great Awakening" (The Seventh Harvest)
- 1744 - "Young Folks Bible" (The Bad Book Case)
- 1750 - Edwards Fired as Pastor over Communion Controversy

# Edwards's Description of the Church

- Sober. Orderly. “Not the most happy temper”
- “High spirited, difficult, turbulent”
- Two warring factions - Court and Country
- Company keeping, bundling, frolicking, tavern-keeping
- The “fistfight” (During time of Solomon Stoddard).
- Seated in church by age, position, wealth.

- *A Faithful Narrative*, WJE 4:144-146



# A Faithful Narrative

(1737)

# Sixth Harvest - the 1734/35 Regional Revival

- Sudden deaths (single man; young married woman). JE preaches Psalm 90:5-6 on brevity of life.
- Edwards preaches series on justification.
- Church swells to 600 members. 300 saved.
- No illnesses for “many sabbaths”
- Edwards writes, *A Faithful Narrative*
- Edwards becomes an “expert” on revivalism internationally.
- Ends with death of Joseph Hawley (uncle, suicide)

**There was scarcely a single person in the town, either old or young, that was left unconcerned about the great things of the eternal world. Those that were wont to be the vainest and loosest, and those that had been most disposed to think and speak slightly of vital and experimental religion, were now generally subject to great awakenings. And the work of conversion was carried on in a most astonishing manner, and increased more and more; souls did as it were come by flocks to Jesus Christ. From day to day, for many months together, might be seen evident instances of sinners brought out of darkness into marvellous light, and delivered out of an horrible pit, and from the miry clay, and set upon a rock with a new song of praise to God in their mouths [cf. *1 Peter 2:9* and *Psalms 40:2–3*].**

*- A Faithful Narrative, WJE 4:150–15*

This work of God, as it was carried on, and the number of true saints multiplied, soon made a glorious alteration in the town; so that in the spring and summer following, *anno* 1735, the town seemed to be full of the presence of God: it never was so full of love, nor so full of joy; and yet so full of distress, as it was then. There were remarkable tokens of God's presence in almost every house. It was a time of joy in families on the account of salvation's being brought unto them; parents rejoicing over their children as newborn, and husbands over their wives, and wives over their husbands. The goings of God were then seen in his sanctuary [*Psalms* 68:24], God's day was a delight, and his tabernacles were amiable [*Psalms* 84:1]. Our public assemblies were then beautiful; the congregation was alive in God's service, everyone earnestly intent on the public worship, every hearer eager to drink in the words of the minister as they came from his mouth; the assembly in general were, from time to time, in tears while the Word was preached; some weeping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbors.

Our public praises were then greatly enlivened; God was then served in our psalmody, in some measure, in the beauty of holiness [Psalms 96:9]. It has been observable that there has been scarce any part of divine worship, wherein good men amongst us have had grace so drawn forth and their hearts so lifted up in the ways of God, as in singing his praises. Our congregation excelled all that ever I knew in the external part of the duty before, generally carrying regularly and well three parts of music, and the women a part by themselves.<sup>10</sup> But now they were evidently wont to sing with unusual elevation of heart and voice, which made the duty pleasant indeed.

- *A Faithful Narrative*, WJE 4:151.

# **Morphology: Responses Among the “Awakened”**

- **Conviction**
- **Dread**
- **Legal Terrors**
- **Light**
- **Freedom**
- **Joy**
- **Ecstasy**

## Two Notable Converts: Abigail Hutchinson (Dying)

The same week that she died, when she was in distressing circumstances as to her body, some of the neighbors that came to see her asked if she was willing to die. She replied that she was quite willing either to live or die; she was willing to be in pain; she was willing to be so always as she was then, if that was the will of God. She willed what God willed. They asked her whether she was willing to die that night. She answered, "Yes, if it be God's will." And [she] seemed to speak all with that perfect composure of spirit, and with such a cheerful and pleasant countenance that it filled them with admiration.

- *A Faithful Narrative*, WJE 4:198

## **Two Notable Converts: Phoebe Bartlett (3-Year-Old)**

**Then the child spoke again, and said, "I love God!" Her mother asked her how well she loved God, whether she loved God better than her father and mother; she said, "Yes." Then she asked her whether she loved God better than her little sister Rachel. She answered, "Yes, better than anything!" Then her elder sister, referring to her saying she could find God now, asked her where she could find God. She answered, "In heaven." "Why," said she, "have you been in heaven?" "No," said the child. By this it seems not to have been any imagination of anything seen with bodily eyes, that she called God, when she said, "I can find God now."**

*- A Faithful Narrative, WJE 4:201*

# Conclusion of the Sixth Harvest

In the latter part of May, it began to be very sensible that the Spirit of God was gradually withdrawing from us, and after this time Satan seemed to be more let loose, and raged in a dreadful manner. The first instance wherein it appeared was a person's putting an end to his own life, by cutting his throat.

- *A Faithful Narrative*, WJE 4.206

God has so ordered the manner of the work in many respects, as very signally and remarkably to shew it to be his own peculiar and immediate work, and to secure the glory of it wholly to his almighty power and sovereign grace.

- *A Faithful Narrative*, WJE 4.209-210.

# A Dreadful End - The Suicide of Joseph Hawley

After this, multitudes in this and other towns seemed to have it strongly suggested to 'em, and pressed upon 'em, to do as this person had done. And many that seemed to be under no melancholy, some pious persons that had no special darkness, or doubts about the goodness of their state, nor were under any special trouble or concern of mind about anything spiritual or temporal, yet had it urged upon 'em, as if somebody had spoke to 'em, "Cut your own throat, now is good opportunity: now, NOW!" So that they were obliged to fight with all their might to resist it, and yet no reason suggested to 'em why they should do it.

- *A Faithful Narrative*, WJE 4:204-205

# Between the Revivals

- Winter 1737 - Edwards's ecstasy of Christ in the woods "about an hour"
- March 13, 1737 - the Gallery of Northampton Church Collapses. Not one bone was broken, "one of the most amazing instance of divine preservation that was perhaps ever known in the land."

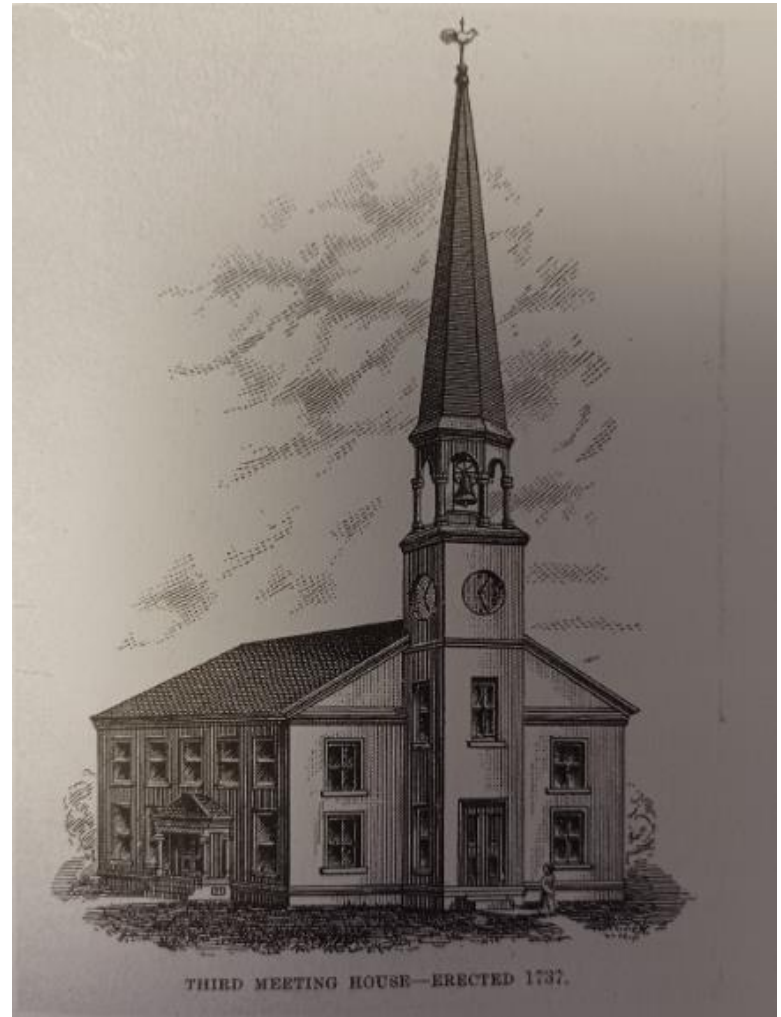
# The New Meetinghouse 1737

Reorders seating:

1) Wealth

2) Age

3) Men's Usefulness



[break]

# The Seventh Harvest: Why was this one “Great”?

1740-1742

- **Extent: All of the Colonies; affected nearly every Christian church**
- **Every Protestant Denomination**
- **Influence in England, Scotland, Ireland etc.**

**Two Major Characters:**

- **Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758). Theologian and pastor.**
- **George Whitefield (1714-1770). Itinerant Anglican revival preacher.**

# Whitefield's Visit to Northampton - October 1740

- [Edwards's letter of invitation](#) (WJE 16:79).
- Sermons - Edwards weeps
- Family devotions - Children “savingsly wrought upon”
- Whitefield deeply impressed by Edwards's family
- Later tensions related to “impressions”

# Preachers on Fire

A number of preachers have appeared among us, to whom God has given such a large measure of his Spirit, that we are ready sometimes to apply to them the character given of Barnabas, that "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith" (Acts 11:24). They preach the Gospel of the grace of God from place to place with uncommon zeal and assiduity. The doctrines they insist on, are the doctrines of the Reformation, under the influence whereof the power of godliness so flourished in the last century. The points on which their preaching mainly turns, are those important ones of man's guilt, corruption, and impotence; supernatural regeneration by the Spirit of God, and free justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ; and the marks of the new birth. The manner of their preaching is not with the enticing words of man's wisdom: howbeit, they speak wisdom among them that are perfect [1 Corinthians 2:4, 1 Corinthians 2:6]. An ardent love to Christ and souls warms their breasts and animates their labors. God has made these his ministers active spirits, a flame of fire in his service: and his word in their mouths has been as a fire...

- William Cooper, Preface to *Distinguishing Marks*, WJE 4:218.

# Distinguishing Marks

(1741)

# **Nine Uncertain Signs of a Work of God**

- 1. Extraordinary Events**
- 2. Bodily Effects – Paul, Philippian jailer, etc.**
- 3. Great Ado**
- 4. “Impressions” Upon the Imagination**
- 5. Social Pressure to Imitate**

# Nine Uncertain Signs of a Work of God

6. Irregularities

7. Delusions of Satan

8. Error & Scandal

9. Fiery Preaching

—*Distinguishing Marks*, WJE 4:228–248

# Edwards's Five "Distinguishing Marks," 1741

Certain Signs: From 1 John 4

1. Love Christ
2. Hate Sin
3. Love Scripture
4. Love Truth
5. Love God and Man

# Pride: Revitalization Killer

Pride is the worst viper that is in the heart; it is the first sin that ever entered into the universe, and it lies lowest of all in the foundation of the whole building of sin, and is the most secret, deceitful and unsearchable in its ways of working, of any lusts whatsoever: it is ready to mix with everything; and nothing is so hateful to God, and contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, or of so dangerous consequence; and there is no one sin that does so much let in the Devil into the hearts of the saints, and expose them to his delusions. I have seen it in many instances, and that in eminent saints. The Devil has come in at this door presently after some eminent experience and extraordinary communion with God, and has woefully deluded and led 'em astray, till God has mercifully opened their eyes and delivered them; and they themselves have afterwards been made sensible that it was pride that betrayed them.

- *Distinguishing Marks*, WJE 4:277-278

# Conclusion: The Revival was Real

From what has been said, I will venture to draw this inference, viz. that that extraordinary influence that has lately appeared on the minds of the people abroad in this land, causing in them an uncommon concern and engagedness of mind about the things of religion, is undoubtedly, in the general, from the Spirit of God.

- *Distinguishing Marks*, WJE 4:260.