

Invocation

June 28, 1970

We have come together here today to celebrate the twohundredth anniversary of the day when in June 1770 the Reverend Peter Powers first gathered the men and women of this town of Norwich into the first Church of Christ.

Seven generations, under the guidance of their ministers, have worshipped God in Norwich since this event took place, and have brought their joys and their sorrows before God in the name of our Lord Christ.

Every one of these men and women lived in three^e generations. They were the heirs of their fore^s fathers, of the past. Also, full of expectati^e ons, they shaped their own world, their reality, their present. And they were the ancestors of a new generation, of the future. By this trinitarian process, this procession of people through time, God has created us as the people we are today. What to us seems

past now, once beckoned these people as their future. Where a believed-in and hoped-for future enters reality it becomes a lasting element called past. In our lives the future precedes the past. Our future, beckoning us, vaults the horizons of our life. Man in his full stature belongs to three generations always, to the latest future, to the oldest past, and to ~~the~~ full present.

Faith, hope and love connect us with these three, from the day of Creation to Judgement Day. Faith looks towards the unknown future of tomorrow, love we have for those who must be loved right now as they are present in our life today. Hope derives from our experiences, from our gratitude for the past. Hope stems from our minds' good memories only.

Thus it is hope that connects us today with the ~~fa~~thers of this church in Norwich. Giving

thanks today for the blessings of this church in the past twohundred years we hope that they may endure. Faith will enable us ^{to live!} through the dark seed time of the grain in deep ground which is ahead of us. The future is embedded in our hearts by faith.

Our church today is not the same church it was 200 years ago when it first became a member of the great visible Church of Christ on earth. We have been changed; we have become different people. And we, gathered again here today, do not know what will become of our church in 200 years to come. We need faith to trust that God will continue his Creation, and that there will be to the end the invisible Church of Christ in which people will get together to bear the cross of their century, or of their age, or of the human race.

So, today, celebrating this 200th anniver-

sary, let us rejoice in hope, live together by love, and pray for the future of our Church with faith. Thanks to hope, love and faith we too then may become members of the whole length of history from beginning to end, is now and ever shall be.