Transcription of the Covenant

Gather my Saints together unto me that have made a Covenant with me by sacrifice. psa: 50:5

Wee whose names are here under written, members of the present Church of Christ in Salem, having found by sad experience how dangerous it is to sitt loose to the Covenant wee make with our God: and how apt wee are to wander into by pathes, even to the looseing of our first aimes in entring into Church fellowship: Doe therefore, solemnly in the presence of the Eternall God both for our owne comforts and those which shall or maye be joyned unto us renewe that...
Pedigree of Robert (Bob) Stokes

JOHN SIBLEY, SR., MARRIED RACHEL LEACH
JOHN SIBLEY, JR., MARRIED RACHEL PICKWORTH
JOHN SIBLEY III MARRIED MARY
John Sibley IV married Martha before 1742 (questionable ancestry)
Isaac Sibley married Avis Ann Atherton 1774
Robert Flint Sibley married Avarilla Albritton 25 January 1816
David Washington Self married Elizabeth Lutitia Sibley 1818
Dr. Robert Lansford Self married Lelia Aramentha Tatum 6 November 1879
Howell Lee Stokes married Ollie Virginia Self 28 September 1916
Robert Cecil Stokes married Patricia Ellen Vestal 30 June 1953

Church covenant we find this Church bound unto at their first beginning, vizt: That we Covenant with the Lord and one with another, and doe bind our selves in the presence of God, to walke together in all his waies, according as he is pleased to reveale him selve unto us in his Blessed word of truth. And doe more explicitly in the name and feare of God, profess and protest to walke as followeth through the power and grace of our Lord Jesus.

1. first wee avowe the Lord to be our God, and our selves his people in the truth and simplicitie of our Spirits

2. Wee give our selves to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the word of his grace, fore the teaching, ruling and sanctifying of us in matters of worship, and conversation resoluinge to cleave to him alone for life and glorie; and oppose all contrarie wayes, cannons and constitutions of men in his worship.

3. Wee promise to walk with our brethren and sisters in the Congregation with all watch fullness, and tendernis avoyding all jalousies, suspitions, backbyteings, con jurings, provokings, secrete risings of spirit against them, but in all offences to follow the rule of the Lord Jesus, and to beare and forbear, give and forgive as he hath taught us.

4. In publick or private, we will willingly doe nothing to the offence of the Church but will be willing to take ad vise for ourselves and ours as occasion shall be presented.

5. Wee will not in the Congregation be forward eyther to show our owne gifts or parts in speaking or scrupuling or there discover the fayling of our brethren or sisters butt attend an orderly cale there unto; knowing how much the Lord may be dishonoured, and his Gospell in the profession of it, sleighted by our distempers, and weaknesses in publyck.

6. Wee bynd ourselves to studdy the advancment of the Gospell in all truth and peace, both in regard of those that are within, or without, noe waye sleighting our sister Churches, but useing their Counsell as need shalbe; nor laying a stumbling block, before any, noe not the Indians, whose good we desire to promote, and soe to converse, as wee may avoyd the verry appearance of evill,

7. Wee hereby promise to carrye ourselves in all law full obedience, to those that are over us in Church or Common weale, knowing how
well pleasing it wilbe to the Lord, that they should have incouragement in theire places, by our not greiveing theyre spirites through our iregulareties.

8. Wee resolve to prove our selves to the Lord in our particular calings, shunning ydlenes as the bane of any state, nor will wee deale hardly, or opressingly with Any, wherein wee are the Lords stewards: alsoe

9. promyseing to our best abilitie to teach our children and servants, the knowledge of God and his will, that they may serve him alsoe and all this, not by any strength of our owne, but by the Lord Christ, whose bloud we desire may sprinkel this our Covenant made in his name.

This Covenant was renewed by the church on a solemne day of Humiliation 6 of 1 month 1660. When also considering the hower of Temptation among us by reason of the Quakers doctrine to the leavening of some in the place where we are, and Endangering of others, I doe see cause to remember the Admonition of our Saviour Christ to his disciples Math 16. Take heed and beware of, the Leaven of the doctrine of the Pharisees and doe judge so farre as we understand it that the Quaker doctrine is as bad or worse than that of the Pharisees. Therefore we doe covenant by the help of Jesus Christ to take heed and beware of the leaven of the doctrine of the Quakers.²

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1 helpe and power of the Lord Jesus in Fiske Ms.
2 This entire paragraph in the hand of Rev. John Higginson.
3 The words dead, removed, excommunicated, etc., were added at various times in different hands.
4 or Bound in Fiske Ms.
A Short, Short, History of the First Church in Salem, Unitarian

(The following is from “A 'Short' History of the First Church in Salem” by the Rev. Jeffrey Barz-Snell, Minister)

“The First Church in Salem is one of the oldest churches founded in North America. Its 377-year history began when thirty of the newly arrived Puritan settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony gathered together to form a church on August 6, 1629. Among the members present were Roger Conant, the founder of Salem, and John Endicott, the first Governor of the Colony. On that day, the church called two Puritan ministers who had made the voyage from England with the other colonists. The Rev. Samuel Skelton became the church's first Pastor and the Rev. Francis Higginson was called as the church's first Teacher. It was Rev. Higginson who composed the now famous Salem Covenant at its founding, the very same covenant that has been used by each generation of church members down through the centuries and is recited even today during the weekly Sunday services:

'We Covenant with the Lord and one with another,
And doe bynd our selues together in the presence of God,
To walke to together in all His waies,
According as he is pleased to reveale him self unto us,
In his Blessed word of truth.'"

 Ministers of the First Church in Salem included:

Francis Higginson 1629-1630
Samuel Skelton 1629-1634
Roger Williams 1633-1636
Hugh Peter 1636-1641
Edward Norris 1640-1658
John Higginson 1660-1708
Charles Nicolet 1672-1674
Nicholas Noyes 1683-1717
George Curwen 1714-1717
Samuel Fiske 1718-1735
John Sparhawk 1736-1755
Thomas Barnard 1755-1776
Asa Dunbar 1772-1779
John Prince 1779-1836
Charles Wentworth Upham 1824-1844
Thomas Treadwell Stone 1846-1852
George Ware Briggs 1853-1867
James Tracy Hewes 1868-1875
Fielder Israel 1877-1889
George Cresswell Cressy 1890-1896
Elvin James Prescott 1897-1902
Peter Hair Goldsmith 1903-1910
Edward Dunbar Johnson 1911-1921
Theodore Davenport Bacon 1923-1924

The Records of the First Church in Salem lists by year and date the names of every person who “joyned in full Comunyon” from August 1629 to September 1740.

Submitted by R. C. (Bob) Stokes