Prayer
Scripture: I Peter 2:11-17
Hymn: 636 "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee"

The first church planted in the middle colonies was the Dutch Reformed Church from the Netherlands. It was the first church with a Presbyterian form of government in the colonies. In America the Dutch church developed its own characteristics and in time declared its independence from the church in its motherland. The colonies of New York and New Jersey where this church developed manifested something of the tolerance in religion for which Holland was known in the Reformation period. These two colonies came to be two of the most diverse in nationalities making up their populations, in the variety of languages spoken, and in the variety of religious groups represented. This variety and tolerance was not what the Dutch Calvinists really wanted; it was something they came to accept.

The long, bitter wars of the Netherlands with Spain resulted in the division of the Netherlands into the southern Catholic section that came to be known as Belgium and the northern section that became Calvinist Protestant Holland. At times the Calvinists of Holland could be fiercely intolerant but in the end they found it economically expedient and prudent to show tolerance to a needed work force that was quite diverse in religious affiliations. Also Holland tended to take a certain pride in its reputation for being one of the most tolerant and enlightened parts of Europe.

Out of long warring with Spain and preying on the Spanish shipping and empire in the New World, the Dutch had gained quite a reputation for seamanship. For twenty years before the Dutch began trading posts in the middle colonies the Dutch East India Company with great daring and success was trading in the Indian and Pacific Oceans and had established a Dutch empire in Malaysia. Willem Usselinx wrote to arouse his fellow-countrymen to the economic possibilities of trade in America. In 1609 the Dutch East India Company employed the Englishman, Henry Hudson, to seek for a better route to the East Indies. Henry Hudson discovered and sailed his ship, "Half Moon", up the river that would later bear his name. In April, 1524, Giovanni Verrazano, in the employ of Francis I of France, had discovered the river while searching for a strait that would lead to the Indies. He had decided the river was not the strait he was looking for and had sailed on to Narragansett bay and to Newfoundland. Henry Hudson sailed up the river until he was turned back by the rapids near Albany. He had discovered for the Dutch the richest fur trading territory south of the St. Lawrence. It was territory that the English would claim—they would never admit that the Dutch had any claim on this territory.

Dutch, French and English all began colonies only a few hundred miles from each other. In July of 1609 Champlain battled the Iroquois near the lake that bears his name and made them fierce enemies of the French. John Smith established friendly relations with Indians in what would be the English colony of Virginia a little later that year. It was in September, 1609 that Henry Hudson sailed up the Hudson River. He made friends with the Mohawks and gave them their first taste of hard liquor.
By 1613 the Dutch had established trading posts along the Hudson River. They built a few houses for fur traders on Manhattan Island. They established a trading post and built a fort for protection on Castle Island that was called Fort Nassau (later it was called Orange). In 1617 it was moved to the present site of Albany. Adrien Block and Cornelis May were two of the sea captains who led in establishing these trading posts.

In 1621 the Dutch organized the Dutch West India Company and gave it a monopoly of fur trading and colonizing in the territory that was called New Netherland. The Dutch West India Company claimed the Hudson River Valley, the Delaware Bay area, Long Island and soon had trading posts in the Connecticut River Valley.

THE PERIOD OF DUTCH DOMINATION (1624-1664)

In 1624 Cornelis May was made director of the projected colonization of this territory. Thirty Dutch and Walloon families were brought over and settled—some at Fort Orange (Albany) and some on the Delaware at the present site of Camden, New Jersey and opposite Philadelphia. Among the colonists were mechanics, traders, and farmers. The company provided implements and cattle. The goal was to provide for the needs of the fur traders.

When the Pilgrims of Plymouth attempted to set up trading posts in the Connecticut Valley (near Hartford) in 1625, they found the Dutch had already set up trading posts, claiming a monopoly on the fur trade. For a time friendly relations prevailed and the Dutch taught the English the use of wampum, the Algonquian shell money for trading with the natives. In time the English protested the presence of the Dutch and drove them from the Connecticut Valley.

In 1626 Peter Minuit was sent over to be the first governor of the colony. He purchased Manhattan Island from the Indians with trading trinkets estimated to be worth about $24.00. He built a fort on the southern tip of the island and named it New Amsterdam. By the end of 1626 some two hundred people had settled in New Amsterdam and some thirty houses had been built—mostly out of bark.

The Dutch West India Company declared the Dutch Reformed Church the established religion of the colony. In 1626 two "comforters of the sick," Sebastian Crol and Jan Huyck, were sent over to New Amsterdam by the company. They were lay workers who were to visit among the colonists, ministering to their religious needs, holding worship services, and conducting education. The Comforters of the sick conducted worship according to the rights of the Church of Holland, reading the Scriptures and the Creeds to the people on Sunday. Religious services were conducted in a large room above the horse mill, built that year by Francois Molemacker. The mill had a tower in which were placed bells captured from the Spanish in Porto Rico (later Puerto Rico). The Classis of Amsterdam was made the religious authority over the colony. The Classis continued to exercise this authority until the Dutch Reformed Church in America declared its independence toward the end of the colonial period.

Vast quantities of furs were shipped back to Holland. The Company was much more interested in furs and profits than in building a colony. The
Classis of Amsterdam took little interest in the colony and neglected both religion and education. The company sent incompetent governors. The Classis failed to send an adequate supply of ministers and teachers. The colonists had to improvise and manage for themselves. Enough people from Holland did not come to found a strong colony. The wars with Spain had greatly reduced the population of Holland. The Dutch did not have to leave Holland for the New World to find toleration in religion. Holland was the most tolerant country in Europe at the time.

For the Dutch in the seventeenth century the Spice Islands and the Caribbean offered much greater promise of profits than New Netherland. In 1628 Admiral Piet Hein of the Dutch navy, lying in wait off Matanzas in northern Cuba, was able to capture an entire Spanish treasure fleet. He took nine galleons laden with hides, ginger, cocoa, and cochineal. He took eight treasure ships with 200,000 pounds of silver. The Dutch West Indian Company netted $9.7 million, not counting the prize money given to the sailors. The Hudson River did not offer such wealth. In 1630 the Dutch took St. Martins and established a big salt business. In 1632 they took Tobago but the Spanish recruited Caribs and massacred every Dutchman. The West India Company sent four ships in 1634 to take Curacao, Aruba and Bonaire off the coast of Venezuela. They seemed to attach little importance to New Netherland.

In 1628 the Company and the Classis sent Jonas Michaelius to organize the first Dutch Reformed Church in America and to serve as its first minister (the Dutch title for a minister was "Domine"). Michaelius found two hundred-seventy people on Manhattan Island, whom he described as "free, somewhat rough, and loose." In April, 1628 he organized the first church of New Amsterdam with fifty active communicants or members. They made a confession of faith and some showed their church certificates. Some had forgotten to bring certificates. Some reported that theirs had been lost or burned, but they were admitted upon satisfactory testimony from others to whom they were well known. Michaelius in his report to the Classis declared that "one cannot observe strictly all the usual formalities in making a beginning under such circumstances." He found it necessary to conduct one service in Dutch and another in French for the Walloons. He had written out and read the French sermon because he was not able to speak extemporaneously in French. The Lord's Supper was observed with great joy. Governor Minuit and the comforters of the sick, Sebastian Crol and Jan Huyck, were appointed to serve as elders. After this first celebration the Lord's Supper was held once every four months.

Michaelius reported to the Classis that there was little hope for the conversion of the Indians. They were a wicked and godless people, given to witchcraft, divination, sorcery, and wicked arts. They were thievish and treacherous, crueler and more inhuman and barbarous than the Africans. He declared that the only way to make any improvement would be to take the children away from their parents and to place them under Christian teachers to be trained in the faith. His proposal was never carried out.

In 1633 Michaelius was replaced by Domine Evarus Bogardus, who arrived on the same ship with a new Governor, Wouter Van Twiller (1633-1638). The new governor erected a small wooden church for the congregation. In 1638 Bogardus married his second wife, Anneke Jans. In 1636 Van Twiller had granted her first husband a sixty-two acres of land. After Bogardus
married the widow the land became known as the Domine's farm (bouwerie). Later it became the site of Trinity Church.

Van Twiller soon proved to be one of the worst of the governors and almost from the first he and the Domine clashed. Bogardus denounced Van Twiller from the pulpit and called him "a child of the devil, a consummate villain." Reports of Van Twiller's inept handling of the government were sent to Amsterdam and he was recalled and replaced by William Van Kieft (1638-1647).

The time of Bogardus and the early years of Van Kieft were the most prosperous years for the Dutch West India Company. In 1640 the Company issued its "Charter of Freedoms and Exemptions" declaring

"No other religion shall be publicly admitted to New Netherland except the Reformed, as it is at present preached and practiced by public authority in the United Netherlands; and for this purpose the Company shall provide and maintain good and suitable preachers, schoolmasters, and Comforters of the sick."

However, national self-interest and the desire for a strong and profitable colony made the religious complexion of the settlers a secondary matter. Very few people were coming from Holland. In 1641 intolerance in New England caused a number of Englishmen and their minister, Francis Doughty, to request permission to settle in New Netherland. Permission was granted and an ordinance was passed assuring them free exercise of their religion. They settled Newtown. Doughty also ministered to Englishmen in Manhattan. Anne Hutchinson was allowed to settle in Westchester. Roger Williams also settled in New Netherland for a time.

Kiliaen Van Rensselaer, an Amsterdam jeweler and stockholder in the Company decided that fur trading alone could not make a strong colony. In 1629 he persuaded the Company to issue the "Charter of Privileges to Patroons" to encourage settlement and farming. A "patroon" was one who could bring fifty people to the colony. He was granted a feudal domain of fifteen miles of river front on the Hudson with exclusive fishing and hunting privileges, civil and criminal jurisdiction, right to share with the Company in the fur trade and was promised an adequate supply of Blacks. Rensselaer did not come to New Netherland but his sons did. Patroonships were granted to a number of Dutchmen. Among them were Courtland, Melyn, Philipse, Van der Donck and others. Some of the patroons were from outside Holland, such as Martinus Hoffman of Reval, son of an officer of Gustavus Adolphus. He founded Esopus. Some Dutch and Walloon families like the Roosevelts and Van Wycks started as farmers, clerks and shopkeepers but rose to merchant status and then became patroons. The patroons provided material for houses and barns, and farming equipment. They received one third of the tenant's crop. They maintained monopolies on the grinding of grain at their mills and received the income from hunting licenses. As the large estates multiplied there was less inducement for Dutch settlers who wanted small independent farms. The Patroons had to appeal to the poor and persecuted of Europe. The patroons steadily increased rents and fees and the rich tended to grow richer and the poor poorer.

Soon after Van Kieft became governor, Captain De Vries suggested
to him that he should replace the wooden church with a fine stone church. The suggestion appealed to the vanity of Van Kieff who wanted to leave a worthy monument of his administration. The governor and the captain took advantage of the marriage of the daughter of Domine Bogardus to launch their plan. When the people were light-headed from the drinking of the wedding celebration, Governor Van Kieff announced that he was donating a thousand guilders from the company to build the new church. Captain Vries subscribed one hundred guilders and asked all the wedding guests to follow his example. With light heads they subscribed handsomely vying with one another in liberality. When they had sobered up many repented but they were held to their subscriptions and the church was built. It cost twenty-five hundred guilders. It was seventy-two feet long and fifty feet wide. It had a pulpit high above the congregation to emphasize the authority of the minister. The vorlesser or clerk had a small pulpit under the high one for reading the Scriptures and leading the singing. Deacons took the offering in velvet bags suspended from the end of long poles, while the domine extolled the virtues of giving. The sermon usually lasted an hour. The vorlesser read out prayer requests and the congregation sang another psalm and then dispersed.

Bogardus and Kiefft clashed bitterly. Kiefft did not maintain good relations with the Indians. Indians from New Jersey raided Staten Island massacring the citizens. When Kiefft conducted an unprovoked massacre of the peaceful Wecquaecegik tribe of Indians in 1643 a fierce war broke out that so endangered every white inhabitant of the colony that they had to seek protection at the forts. The Dutch won by importing Captain John Underhill of New England to lead the Dutch militia. Bogardus strongly denounced the actions of the governor. The governor refused to attend church and charged the Domine with entering his pulpit in a state of intoxication. The clash became so bitter that both governor and Domine were recalled to report to the Company and Classis. Both lost their lives when the ship taking them back to Holland was wrecked off the coast of Wales.

By the end of the terms of service of Bogardus and Van Kiefft the affairs of the Dutch West India Company had taken a turn for the worst and the company even faced bankruptcy. The Company tried to turn its assets and debts to the East India Company but was refused. The West India Company's charter was renewed.

The affairs of the company improved when Peter Stuyvesant was brought in to replace Van Kiefft as governor in 1647. Stuyvesant was a man of great energy and went to work at once to set the religious affairs of New Netherland in good order. He was an elder in the Reformed Church. One of his first acts was an ordinance in 1648 for better observance of the Sabbath (Sunday). He ordered two Sunday services instead of one. John Backerus was temporarily as minister of the church of Manhattan (1674-49). A Sunday afternoon service was begun. All were required to attend. Sunday drinking was to be allowed only after two o'clock in the afternoon, except in the case of travelers and home consumers. Citizens were to refrain from gainful employment or amusement during public worship.

Under Stuyvesant's vigorous administration the company began to revive. Trade increased and more people came to New Netherland from the surrounding
colonies--especially from New England. They were promised "liberty of conscience according to the custom and manner of Holland."

Stuyvesant's Puritanical leanings soon provoked the citizens to demand a voice in the government. Stuyvesant's poor judgment and extreme measures made matters more urgent. Stringent regulations on the gin shops and high customs duties that kept traders away brought stagnation to New Amsterdam. He drove from the colony one of its two Protestant ministers. The people became so urgent in their demands for a voice in the government that Stuyvesant had to yield.

One bright spot in his administration was the establishing of co-existence with the surviving Indians and with the New England Confederation. In 1650 a treaty with Connecticut made at Hartford established the boundary between New Netherland and Connecticut.

Another bright spot was the colorful ministry of Domine John Van Mekelenburg (better known by his Hellenized name, Megapolensis). Kiliaen Van Rensselaer was the wealthy patron of Rensselaerwyck near Albany. For ten years he avoided his responsibility to provide a minister and school teacher. Finally in 1642 he agreed to provide support for the scholarly Domine Megapolensis. For six years Megapolensis conducted services in Rensselaer's home. He preached to the Indians, having learned the Mohawk language. He was more successful with the Indians than with the Dutch. He found the colonists indifferent to religion. They slept through his sermons and spent the rest of the day drinking and carousing. The patron had agreed to build him a church. His term ended and the patron had not kept his promise. Megapolensis refused to remain and started back to Holland. When he arrived at New Amsterdam on his way home the officials persuaded him to minister to New Amsterdam. He finally agreed to stay but found little enthusiasm for religion. One fourth of the town consisted of places for the sale of tobacco and liquor. Megapolensis continued to serve the congregation of about 170 until his death in 1670. He was a strong supporter of Governor Stuyvesant--especially in his growing policy of intolerance.

In spite of strong feelings that both the governor and Domine had against the Catholics, on two different occasions Megapolensis was able to prove a friend to Catholics in need. Early in his stay in Albany he helped the French Jesuit, Isaac Jogues, escape from Indians who had captured him. Jogues was working among the Mohawks. When the French defeated the Mohawks in a war, the Indians imprisoned the missionary and he expected them to kill him. Megapolensis arranged his escape to New Amsterdam where the people treated him with kindness. Jogues later wrote, "No religion is publicly exercised but the Calvinist, and orders are to admit none but Calvinists, but this is not observed; for besides the Calvinists there are in the colony Catholics, English Puritans, Lutherans, Anabaptists, here called Mnistes (Mennonites) ...."

In 1657-58, Father Le Moyne, a Jesuit from Canada, was allowed to spend a winter in New Amsterdam where a number of Catholics were living. He and Megapolensis became good friends.

Governor Stuyvesant became concerned as the policy of toleration attracted more and more religious groups to New Netherland. He revived a policy of religious tyranny. His government made illegal all "Conventicles
and meetings whether public or private" which differed from the doctrine and practice of the establishment. The Lutheran population of the colony had grown. The governor forbade the Lutherans to call a minister of their faith. The Company ordered him to treat the Lutherans mildly. In April, 1663, it sent him the following message:

"Although it is our cordial desire that similar and other sectarians might not be found there, yet as the contrary seems to be the fact, we doubt very much if vigorous proceedings against them ought not to be discontinued, except you intend to check and destroy your population; which, however, in the youth of your existence ought rather to be encouraged by all possible means; Wherefore, it is our opinion, that some connivance would be useful; that the consciences of men, at least, ought ever to remain free and unshackled. Let everyone be unmolested, as long as he is modest; as long as his conduct in a political sense is irreproachable; as long as he does not disturb others, or oppose the government. This maxim of moderation has always been the guide of the magistrates of this city, and the consequence has been that, from every land, people have flocked to this asylum. Tread then in their steps, and, we doubt not, you will be blessed."

Stuyvesant embarked on a campaign of persecution against the Quakers, fining and imprisoning them especially but also other non-conformists. He was backed by Domine Megapolensis and most of the Dutch Reformed. The first Quaker missionaries arrived in New Amsterdam in 1657. Two of them, women, were arrested and imprisoned for preaching unauthorized doctrines on the streets. Some who went to Long Island were arrested and deported to Rhode Island. In 1663 Stuyvesant sent the leader of the Quakers on Long Island, John Bowne, to stand trial in Holland. He was acquitted on the charge of illegal action. The Company warned that religious bigotry could seriously cripple colonization and ordered Stuyvesant to follow a more liberal course. Bowne was allowed to return to New Netherland.

When Jews began arriving in New Amsterdam the governor and Domine were determined to deport them. Sephardic Jews from Spain and Portugal had fled from European persecution and settled in Northern Brazil that was owned by the Dutch. When Portugal retook the territory in 1654 the Jews fled to New Amsterdam. When the Governor tried to deport them the Company intervened and granted the Jews the right to settle. The Governor protested, "to give liberty to the Jews will be very detrimental...because the Christians there will not be able at the same time to do business... and besides giving them liberty, we cannot refuse Lutherans and Papists." Megapolensis argued that the situation was already bad enough without Jews since there were "Papists, Mennonites and Lutherans among the Dutch, also many Puritans or Independents, and various other servants of Baal among the English under this government, all of whom conceal themselves under the name of Christians." The Jews rose to positions of honor. The Sephardic Jews were joined by a few Askenazic Jews from Germany and Poland. By 1700 there were about 100 Jews in New Netherland.

The patroons sided with the Company against the Governor. As early as 1649 Adriaen Van der Donck sent a remonstrance to the Dutch government begging for "schools, churches and apparatus of civilized life." Thirty
English settlers of Flushing protested Stuyvesant's decree that anyone who gave a Quaker lodging for a night would be fined fifty florins. The English quoted the Bible that one should do good to all men and should not offend any of God's children. They declared they would shelter Quakers as God should persuade their consciences.

The persecution died down and new communities sprang up. The Company sent two new ministers, Henry Selyns and Herman Blom. Selyns served a congregation in Breuckelen that consisted of thirty-one families and 134 people. He also preached to Huguenots who settled on Staten Island. Stuyvesant supplemented Selyns's salary and requested him to preach to about forty Negroes on his farm. He requested the Company to send more clergymen to serve in New Utrecht, Gravesend, and New Harlem. The church at Veverwyck (Albany) consisting of about 130 families was served by a minister named Schaats.

New Jersey remained a wilderness for the most part. In 1661 Bergen was settled. Twenty-seven members met in a log church. For ninety years they continued without a pastor. Churches were organized at Hackensack, Passaic and a few other places.

The church grew slowly throughout New Netherland. French and Waldenses organized a congregation on the south side of Staten Island. A minister named Drusius visited them bi-monthly. The Huguenots also founded a church at Bushwyck on Long Island. A church at Harlem was composed partly of French and partly of Dutch and was ministered by Michiel Zyperius as early as 1659. In 1661 Stuyvesant negotiated with the Puritans of New England, inviting them to send colonists and offering them liberal terms and guaranteeing freedom of worship if they would settle New Jersey. Indian wars had destroyed several settlements there.

After Peter Minuit was dismissed as governor of New Netherland in 1631 he had undertaken the founding of a Swedish colony along the Delaware. Willem Usselinx, the Antwerp merchant and writer, had convinced King Gustavus Adolphus of the value of trade in the New World. In 1638 two Swedish vessels under Minuit and Admiral Klas Fleming, a Finnish noble, sailed up the Delaware River to the present site of Wilmington and founded Fort Christina as a trading post. About half the settlers were Swedish Lutherans and about half were Finnish Lutherans. The colony was named New Sweden and the church followed the ordinances of the Church of Sweden. In 1639 Reorus Torkillus, a Lutheran minister, arrived to serve the church. He died a little later of plague. He was followed by another Lutheran minister, Johan Printz who wrote that the church observed good ecclesiastical discipline and carried on divine service according to the true confession of Augsburg, the Council of Upsala, and the ceremonies of the Swedish church.

When Pastor Campanius arrived he built the first Lutheran church on the island of Tinicum near the present site of Essington, Pennsylvania. It became the seat of the governor with fort and governor's mansion. Campanius ministered to both whites and Indians. He translated Luther's Short Catechism into the Delaware language. Two additional ministers arrived in 1647 and two more in 1653 as the colony grew.

The Swedes refused to allow Dutch traders to operate on the Delaware.
In 1655 Stuyvesant attacked and took control of New Sweden. He allowed one of the three Lutheran clergymen, Lars Lock, to remain to conduct services for the Swedish Lutherans. Nine years later the English took control of the colony. The Lutheran churches continued in a static condition until the Archbishop of Upsala sent three clergymen in 1697. At that time there were about 500 to 700 Swedes and Finns in the Lutheran Churches. Gradually they were absorbed into the English environment and many of the Swedish Lutherans affiliated with the Anglican Church. A few congregations like Holy Trinity Church in Wilmington and Gloria Dei Church in South Philadelphia kept a strong Swedish flavor.

Stuyvesant's last New Netherland ordinance was passed in March, 1664. It called for more careful instruction of the youth.

The English had never been willing to grant that the Dutch had the right to found New Netherland. When Charles II came to the throne in England he had never forgiven the Dutch for refusing to allow him to enter Holland while he was an exile from England. He was determined to end the Dutch rivalry to English commerce and to put an end to the Dutch colony in North America. He made a vast proprietary grant to his brother, the Duke of York, James. He granted him all the land between the Connecticut and Delaware Rivers, including Long Island, Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, and part of Maine.

War against the Dutch began in March, 1664. The Duke of York appointed Richard Nicolls to be deputy governor of his territory and granted him four frigates to capture the Dutch territory in North America. In September, 1664, the frigates appeared before New Amsterdam with cannons aimed at the city and demanded full surrender. Stuyvesant tried to arouse the people to defend themselves but cooler heads prevailed. Nicolls had informed the inhabitants that if they resisted he would turn his troops loose to rape, sack and butcher the city. New Amsterdam surrendered without a shot being fired. By October, 1664 the Duke of York had taken Fort Orange. He renamed it Albany. Fort Casimir on the Delaware was renamed New Castle. New Amsterdam and New Netherland were renamed New York.

In the terms of surrender the Dutch were guaranteed freedom of conscience to follow their own religion. Domine Drisius sent a report of the surrender to the Classis of Amsterdum, declaring that New Amsterdam did not have men or arms to withstand the English. By surrendering they had saved many lives. The Dutch were still free to follow the Classis in religion.

At the time of the surrender the Dutch India Company had established thirteen Dutch Reformed churches. Sixteen ministers had been sent to serve the churches during the years of Dutch domination. Six ministers were on duty when the Dutch surrendered to the English. The whole Dutch colony had a population of about half the population of Connecticut. The Dutch Reformed Church was still the largest group in the colony but there were a host of other religious groups. They also were granted toleration by the Duke of York.