

ALEXY, Gustav Albert

Clergyman

HUS CHURCH MARKS 75TH ANNIVERSARY

Year-Long Celebration Opens
—Messages From Truman
and Other Leaders Read

Tributes to the accomplishments of the Jan Hus Bohemian Brethren Presbyterian Church, 351 East Seventy-fourth Street, were paid yesterday at a special service, dinner and afternoon program that marked the beginning of a year-long celebration of the church's seventy-fifth anniversary.

Congratulatory messages from President Truman, Governor Dewey, Mayor Impellitteri and Czech-born Representative Adolph J. Sabath, Democrat, of Illinois, were read at the afternoon program. Parts of the bi-lingual morning service were recorded by Radio Free Europe for broadcast to Europe.

President Truman, in his message, said the work of the Jan Hus Church "bears eloquent witness to the wisdom and foresight of the fathers of the American Constitution in writing freedom of conscience into the organic law of the United States."

The church, named after the Czech religious leader who became a martyr for his beliefs in 1415, is the oldest Czech congregation in the United States. It was accepted into the New York Presbytery on Feb. 15, 1877.

The origin of the fellowship, however, can be traced to July 19, 1874, when eighteen adults and twenty-two children met at a German church at Avenue A and Fifth Street under the leadership of Gustav Albert Alexy, a Hungarian minister who spoke no Czech. This first congregation was known as the Bohemian Mission, and when its membership reached seventy-six it was organized as the First Evangelical Bohemian Presbyterian Church.

The present edifice was built in 1888, in the pastorate of Dr. Vincent Pisek, who served the church from 1880 to 1930. The adjoining Neighborhood House, which includes a gymnasium and meeting rooms, was dedicated on July 6, 1915, the 500th anniversary of the martyrdom of Jan Hus. The congregation now has a membership of 500 persons.

The morning service yesterday was conducted by the Rev. Joseph F. Seb, the church's fifth pastor. Sermons were preached in Czech by Dr. Kenneth D. Miller, superintendent of the New York City Mission Society, and in English by the Rev. Dr. Arthur L. Swift of the faculty of Union Theological Seminary.

Both men said the church had contributed much to the cultural and spiritual development of America by bringing Czech culture and love for freedom to this nation.

Dr. Swift paid special tribute to Dr. Pisek as "a leader of national influence, as a man of power and authority and above all else as a pastor and friend, a champion of his people." He also declared that "the love of liberty that has made Czechoslovakia, though a small land, great in spiritual achievement, will restore it in freedom, a sister republic to be loved and honored by the republic to which we owe our first allegiance."

A service will be held today at 8 P. M., at which time the church's new lighting system will be dedicated and the renovated sanctuary will be rededicated. The Rev. Dr. Wesley Megaw, moderator of the New York Presbytery, will conduct the service.

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