

P O O L R E P O R T

12:40 p.m. EST

November 21, 1976

## PRESIDENT FORD'S TRIP TO CHURCH

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DAVE FREDERICKSON: I am going to give you some background on the church itself that you may find of interest, the Union Church at Pocantico Hills.

The original group that started the church was a Sunday school organized a little before 1880. In 1900 they formalized the church as the Pocantico Hills Society for Christian Work. Then in 1915, September 17th of 1915, it became the Union Church of Pocantico Hills. John D. Rockefeller, Sr., Abby Rockefeller and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., were charter members of that church. They held their first services as a church on September 24, 1915, as the Union Church of Pocantico Hills. It is a nondenominational church.

JOHN COCHRAN (NBC News): The meat of the sermon, if there was any, came when the pastor, who is Smith, and whose name most of you have, talked about the fact he is a scoutmaster and one of the scouts, Jose Martinez -- we assume it is spelled phonetically -- had written a citizenship paper in which the kid praised John F. Kennedy and said that Kennedy made Americans equal. John F. Kennedy was a man who made everybody equal because at that time everybody in America hated black people. Then it goes on in that vein. He winds up by saying Kennedy made everybody equal in the United States of America.

The pastor thought the way the kid said this indicated he took great pride in America. The pastor then said the same pride in America can be found in the Presidency which has come to us with the Presidency of Gerald Ford. He said that when he took office, quoting here, "fresh winds blew across the Nation. We thank him for what he has done, bringing honesty, personal integrity, humanity and good will to America. He has done something to quicken and strengthen the vision of his country. America has been the beneficiary of a great President, and so at Thanksgiving, Mr. President, we are grateful to you as Americans."

The rest of it was your standard Thanksgiving service, I think, and I don't really think you want to hear the story of Cavanaugh. Some of you may have been in a position to hear this outside later, but Ford's response to this, just as he was about to go down the steps and get in the car, was the following. He said, "It was a beautiful service, fine sermon, and I appreciate your personal comments."

Later there was a bake sale which Ford and the Rockefellers attended, and they all bought items and money was exchanged, but I don't know how much they paid.

LENA WILLIAMS (New York Times): \$5 for the cake that Rockefeller bought.

(OVER)

**JOHN COCHRAN:** Do you know how much the Fords paid for theirs? It was miscellaneous bakery. It looked almost like a coffee cake ring that Ford was carrying.

**LENA WILLIAMS:** Ford bought pecan pastries.

**AUSTIN SCOTT (Washington Post):** The only other item I had was that the President and the Vice President were specifically included in one of the prayers. The pastor was praying for a variety of people and causes.

**LENA WILLIAMS:** Also present at the church services were David and Laurance Rockefeller, and there was David's wife, Peggy; Laurance's wife, Mary; two of the Rockefeller children, Nelson, Jr., who is 12, and Mark, who is 9, and Happy's daughter, Melinda Murphy, who is 16.

Also, Jack Marsh, Counsellor to the President, was present.

John Cochran, NBC News  
Austin Scott, Washington Post  
Henry McGee, Newsweek  
Lena Williams, New York Times