



## The History of Worship in Basking Ridge

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On June 10, 2017, the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church (BRPC) celebrated its 300th anniversary with a town-wide parade from Ridge High School down Finley Avenue to the iconic church of the Basking Ridge Village Green. Given this great accomplishment, we thought it'd be important to look into the town's worship history and provide some insight.

### Remembering The COVID Era

**The first virtual Easter Service EVER - April 12, 2020**

### Worship Timeline - Basking Ridge - Which Later Became Bernards Township

Quick History Reminder: Basking Ridge was here before Bernards Township. Bernards Township was charted in 1760, so any time earlier, the area was Basking Ridge.

Putting everything in perspective, a 300-year existence is incredible. Just think about what's happening worldwide as the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church started its journey as the first religious institution in Basking Ridge. What's amazing to note about the BRPC is that it was the sole religious institution for over 100 years before the Liberty Corner Church was founded. It clearly indicates that there was very little change in the area until the mid-1850s. The railroad that came to Basking Ridge in 1872 also played a part as tourists from Hoboken and New York City visited Basking Ridge.



Looking at the founding dates, you can also tell a lot about the influx of people to the region. A longtime historian once told us, *"In any old town, just go to the dead center of their main street and look down it."* You will know about the different groups of people joining the community by the places of worship as you go down the street. This is clearly evident in Basking Ridge. Another great example of this is Peapack/Gladstone.



Source: T3 Consortium

## The First Church



*BEGINNINGS "Though thy beginning was small, thy latter end should greatly increase ..." Job 8:7 The old oak in our churchyard was already some 200-300 years old when white men first settled in Basking Ridge, New Jersey. According to old documents owned by the New Jersey Historical Society, "Scotch Presbyterians settled Basking Ridge and a log church erected about the year 1700." Actually, this meeting house, as far as we can see, was erected in 1717.*

With the BRPC turning 300, after looking into the history archives at the local historical society, we found a great overview of the history of the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church.



Forward - By Mr. Felmeth .....	
Acknowledgments .....	
Chapter I - Beginnings .....	
Chapter II - The Ministries .....	
The Reverend John Cross, 1732-1741 .....	
The Reverend Charles McKnight, 1742-1744 .....	
The Reverend Joseph Lamb, 1744-1749 .....	
The Reverend Samuel Kennedy, M.D., 1751-1787 .....	
The Reverend Robert Finley, D.D., 1795-1817 .....	
The Reverend William C. Brownlee, D.D., 1818-1825 .....	
The Reverend John Coe Van Dervoort, 1826-1834 .....	
The Reverend John Anderson, 1834-1836 .....	
The Reverend Oscar Harris, 1838-1851 .....	
The Reverend John C. Rankin, D.D., 1851-1895 .....	
The Reverend Edgar C. Mason, 1895-1899 .....	
The Reverend John T. Reeve, D.D., 1900-1912 .....	
The Reverend Lauren G. Bennett, D.D., 1913-1944 .....	
The Reverend J. Merion Kadyk, D.D., 1944-1951 .....	
The Reverend William H. Felmeth, 1951- ? .....	
Chapter III - Sons of Our Church .....	
Chapter IV - The Old Graveyard .....	
Chapter V - The Old Oak Tree .....	

The presentation below goes back to the Church's 275th anniversary. The most notable change in the last 25 years was the loss of what is believed to be a 619-year-old oak tree, now remembered as what was the oldest white oak tree in America.

[BRPCHistory1717\\_1989Download](#)

### **Dr. Robert Finley ( 1795 to 1817)**

For those new to the area, Dr. Robert Finley was the original founder and sixth pastor at the 1st Presbyterian Church.



Take a trip back in time to one of the founders of Basking Ridge and the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church, Reverend Robert Finley, 6th pastor of the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church. Discussions include the Slave trade, our National Policy, and more. Written in 1857 by Rev. Isaac V. Brown. Dr. Finley founded the Brick Academy, home to the towns historical society. [Click Here](#).

Watch as Reverend Dennis Jones reincarnates Dr. Robert Finley, 6th Pastor of the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church.





The Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church and the former historic oak tree are iconic scenes of the Basking Ridge Village. Supplies are limited and might still be available. [Click Here](#)

## **Additional Information**

[Basking Ridge's Oldest Cemetery](#)

[Bishop Edmund S. Janes – His Somerset Hills Story](#)

[The Founding Families of Bernards Township \(Basking Ridge\)](#)

[Population Trends in the Somerset Hills](#)

[Three Historic Moments That Changed Basking Ridge & America](#)