



Christ Church Looks Back

by Joseph A. Tomberlin

Clifton H. White served Christ Church as Vicar from June 24, 1946, until his resignation on March 21, 1953. He continued teaching full-time at Georgia State Womans College/Valdosta State College and performed his duties as Vicar on a part-time basis. Without written sources of personal information, we cannot know how Fr. White viewed his tenure at Christ Church. However, a May 7, 1952, letter from Bishop Middleton S. Barnwell alludes to the vicar's having experienced "several discouraging years" in Valdosta. Perhaps his disappointments explain developments recounted in the Minutes of the Vestry meeting of May 4, 1952.

Fr. White reported to the Vestry that he recently had traveled to Salisbury, North Carolina, to speak to lay people of an Episcopal church there and added that he had "not yet made up his mind whether to accept any call, and it is largely a question of whether we are able to become a parish here in Valdosta." White's statement initiated "a confidential discussion of various aspects of service and cooperation between the Vicar, Vestry, the Guilds, and the members of the Church at large." The Minutes declared, "Support of the Vicar . . . absolutely essential. Details of said discussion not made a matter or record."

On May 5, Senior Warden Glen P. Robinson informed Bishop Barnwell

by letter of the situation. He recounted Fr. White's having been offered "a new charge" at a slightly larger salary than the "combined salaries" paid him by Christ Church and Valdosta State College. His church stipend was \$1,400 a year, and the church contributed \$245 annually toward his pension and provided the "Rectory" on West North Street as free housing. Robinson noted that Fr. White had not decided yet to accept the call from Salisbury but planned to teach in the summer school at Valdosta State. Accordingly, vestrymen assumed that, if he chose to move to Salisbury, he would not leave until late summer.

Robinson contended that "we are all pleased" with Christ Church's recent progress and wished it to continue. Consequently, the "loss of Clifton would be . . . serious unless a very capable young man could be had" to replace him. He suggested that, although the budget was too tight to provide a significant salary increase, "it could be done by making smaller payments on the mortgage" still outstanding from Parish Hall construction in 1949. He emphasized that, "unless you can assure us of a very capable minister and perhaps a slight supplement in his salary, we should make some inducement for Clifton to remain here. . . ." He reiterated the possibility of a higher salary for Fr. White and raised the prospect of asking White to request that V.S.C. reduce his

teaching load effective Fall Quarter 1952 to provide more time for his church work.

Robinson's correspondence prompted Bishop Barnwell's letter of May 7, 1952 to Fr. White, in which he wrote that he understood "you have a call to some parish in the Carolina's [sic] that you feel inclined to accept." Barnwell said he did not want to "do anything to influence" White's decision but believed the Vicar had overcome his troubles at Christ Church and felt vestrymen were "most anxious that I make every effort to hold you where you are." He thought it "quite possible to match any salary which the Carolina Church is offering if that is an important consideration." Doing so might involve repaying the mortgage over a longer time, "but that would not make much difference." Barnwell declared, "I personally should be very happy to see you stay where you are and will do all in my power to make it possible." The Bishop followed the Senior Warden's lead by saying he believed "it is most to your advantage to be free from school duties so that you can give your whole time to the work of the Church. . . ." He requested that White "let me know the exact situation and also . . . if there is anything I can do to help you make up your mind." When he mailed his letter to Fr. White, the Bishop sent a copy to Mr. Robinson, with the brief comment, "let us wait until I hear from him before we do anything."

This story will continue to creep along in the April *Vineyard*.