



Christ Church Looks Back

by Joseph A. Tomberlin

To emphasize a point, in the conclusion of the history article for October 2011, Vestry Clerk Robert G. Macks replied on May 4, 1948, to a now missing letter from Zoë Coburn, Secretary-Treasurer of the Diocesan Executive Committee, about insurance on the new Christ Church. As Macks said to Coburn, "At the moment nothing can be done about insurance on the new building. When construction is undertaken, the contractor will place his construction risk, and we take over when the building is delivered to us."

Nevertheless, Miss Coburn was insistent. In her answer to Macks she related a recent conversation with a Mr. Carswell, obviously an insurance agent as well as a communicant and vestryman at Christ Church, Savannah, in the diocesan office. While discussing insurance on that occasion, Carswell had "laid much stress on not beginning work until the contractor had had his agent" certify that the contractor carried proper coverage, including "Compensation and Public Liability." Further, Carswell had advised that as soon as construction actually commenced, the Vestry should acquire fire and storm insurance on the structure. Miss Coburn praised Carswell by saying, he "has been a wonderful help to us in handling insurance of any kind and he has found many errors in policies which he has corrected." On another matter, she reminded Macks that Bishop Barnwell was to leave Savannah on either June 3rd or June 4th, 1948, for a prolonged

trip to Europe. As Miss Coburn put it, "if there is anything on which you need his authority or something I must carry out on which I need his authority to do so after he leaves please let us know now for he will not return until the end of September."

In another letter to Macks on May 19, 1948, obviously apropos to issues other than insurance, Miss Coburn wrote, "Valdosta [meaning Christ Church, Valdosta] has never been a problem as far as I have been concerned, finances and other matters always being handled promptly and in a most satisfactory manner but THERE ARE OTHERS and because of them we have to follow certain rules." Robert G. Macks responded on Friday, May 21, 1948, without mentioning Miss Coburn's remark. He declared that, as far as "the new building is concerned, you may rely on us to take care of the situation as it develops. We will keep you advised of all details." Macks reported that bids for construction of the church were to be opened on Monday, May 24, 1948, "and shortly thereafter we shall have some news for you." Finally, he noted that "the Bishop has given the Building Committee the green light on all arrangements and I do not think that we shall have to bother him with any details from here until after his return."

As Macks had stated, May 24, 1948, was the date established for opening construction bids for Christ Church's new building. At three o'clock in the afternoon of that date a special called meeting convened in the office of Lloyd Greer, the supervising architect. Present from Christ Church were the Vicar, Clifton

H. White, and Jerome Tillman, Jack Dawson, Joseph V. Morrison, James D. Carroll, Glenn Robinson, and Robert G. Macks. B.J. Nicholson represented the J.N. Bray Company, and R.R. McCall was there in behalf of R.R. McCall Construction Company. The bid submitted by J.N. Bray was \$69,000.00, and the McCall bid was \$69,640.00. As the Minutes of the meeting reported, the bids "being both materially in excess of the funds available for construction, neither could be accepted outright." The men from Christ Church made an effort "to determine how the Bray bid [being the lower one] might be brought in line with the funds available, and various . . . [alternatives were] suggested." The group finally decided to place a telephone call to Bishop Barnwell, "who instructed us to find ways and means of reducing cost." Also, the Episcopalians made an agreement with Mr. Nicholson, of J.N. Bray Company, that called for a two-week delay, during which "efforts will be made to solve the problem, particularly of the sash and millwork," the cost of which was \$12,000.00 of the total bid of \$69,000.00.

The following Sunday, May 30, 1948, Vicar Clifton H. White met the same group of churchmen that had attended the opening of bids on the 24th. He presented a letter from Bishop Barnwell that made two pertinent points. First, the total amount that could be borrowed locally "to assist in church construction" was \$7,500.00. Second, that amount, with the money already in hand, "would have to cover construction cost, furnishings and architect fees." The final note was the statement: "The Bishop further recommended strongly that we secure additional bids."