



Christ Church Looks Back

by Joseph A. Tomberlin

The purpose of this installment of Christ Church's history is to demonstrate that the difficulties in building a new church extended beyond having to raise money and to acquire construction bids that did not outstrip the funds available. To begin, Vestry Clerk Robert G. Macks received a letter of July 9, 1948, from Zoë Coburn, Secretary-Treasurer of the Executive Council of the Diocese of Georgia. Miss Coburn reported that, to prepare for Bishop Barnwell's departure for Europe, she had discussed with him the scope of her responsibilities in his absence. She said, "he told me that . . . there would be no details for my handling in connection with the Valdosta Church," meaning Christ Church. But she heard that very day from J. Randolph Anderson, Treasurer of the Corporation, "that the funds for this building [the new Christ Church] would be handled through the accounts of the Executive Council." Consequently, she sought from Macks his "understanding" of how money from the Diocese was to be handled, and she requested a project progress report. She was concerned because her vacation was planned between August 21, 1948, and September 13, 1948, when her office would be closed.

Macks answered on July 10, 1948. He noted that Miss Coburn already had a copy of Mr. Anderson's letter of June 7, 1948, to Macks that provided a schedule of dates and amounts of

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payments to Christ Church of the \$23,000.00 promised by Bishop Barnwell. He declared ". . . I assume that these figures are correct and will be carried out." Regarding the status of the building project, Macks stated, "bids were re-opened in accordance with the instructions of the Bishop and on Friday, July 2nd, the bid of Mr. H.G. Tinker of Macon was accepted." The Tinker bid, \$52,000.00, was for the church and the "parish house" and omitted the "assembly hall" [the Parish Hall] completely. The Vestry and Mr. Tinker agreed that should Christ Church succeed in obtaining enough money "in the near future" Mr. Tinker would also build the "assembly hall."

Macks affirmed that the omission for the moment of the "assembly hall" conformed to the instructions given by Bishop Barnwell "that we would have to 'reduce our building to come within the funds available.'" Also, he said, "the arrangements with Mr. Tinker are now in the hands of the architect, Mr. Greer, and the Building Committee. . . ." The Vestry's hope was that construction would start as soon as the necessary materials could be purchased. More specifically, Macks expected work to begin at the end of July.

The exchanges of letters between Mr. Macks and Miss Coburn continued the next few days because, as Miss Coburn wrote on July 12, 1948, "I was not sure of the arrangement you would make about paying the bills [during construction of the new Christ Church]." She still believed that she was responsible for bill paying, which, as she took pains

to emphasize, would destroy her vacation plans. Miss Coburn asserted, "I need this vacation terribly having had none last year, two weeks the year before, none the year before. . . ."

Macks used his response to clarify the situation, writing to Miss Coburn on July 12, 1948, "one of us is laboring under a misapprehension." He stated plainly that Christ Church's agreement with Bishop Barnwell was that "we were to handle locally all bills." Moreover, "according to the Bishop's wishes, we made arrangements for three signatures on all checks of the Building Fund." These measures had been explained to Mr. Anderson of the Diocesan Corporation, and a Vestry resolution of May 16, 1948, spelling out the arrangements had gone to the Bishop. The resolution specified that all Building Fund checks had to bear the signatures of Vicar Clifton H. White and of W. Jerome Tillman and James D. Carroll.

Macks also claimed that Anderson's letter to him on June 7th "indicated indirectly" that the procedures established "met with his approval." This was the letter that set a schedule for payment to Christ Church of the Diocese's promised \$23,000.00 for the new church. Consequently, Macks said to Miss Coburn, that he did not believe she should bear the responsibility of dealing with Christ Church's accounts "as the machinery has been set up for us to take care of all the details right here in Valdosta." He declared, "I see no reason why any of these matters should interfere in the least with your plans for your vacation."

More on this story in the March 2012 *Vineyard*.