



Christ Church Looks Back

by Joseph A. Tomberlin

In a called meeting on November 19, 1948, in the presence of Bishop Middleton S. Barnwell, five vestrymen debated the question of how to build the “assembly hall,” which had been part of the original plan for the new Christ Church. Because of insufficient funds, Vestry had chosen to omit the structure when dealing with the second round of bids in July 1948. Now, the initial focus of discussion was the possibility of a temporary structure; Vestry, however, turned down that idea. Thereupon, Bishop Barnwell suggested that Christ Church borrow money for the building. He declared that he favored carrying out the project, given the proposal by the contractor, Mr. Tinker, to reduce the cost by a thousand dollars provided “construction of the . . . [building] could be started at once.” The Bishop also pledged that Christ Church would have his “full cooperation” in making arrangements to acquire a loan.

Meanwhile, the construction of the church and the “parish house” continued and required attention. In the regular Vestry meeting of December 5, 1948, Fr. White reported that “the contract for complete furnishings for the Church had been let on December 4 for a total consideration of \$3,333.50.” The contractor had promised to deliver all furnishings but the pews by December 20. Unfortunately, the Minutes do not identify the firm receiving the contract, but it may have been the “church furnishing company North of Atlanta” mentioned in the May 2012

history article. The sequel to Fr. White’s report was talk about the feasibility of having the Christmas Eve service in the new building by using temporary seating. The decision, however, was to have no services in the new building until all furnishings were in place.

In the same session, Vestry also addressed the “assembly hall” [i.e. the Parish Hall] project, into which Bishop Barnwell had injected new life. Members heard that the Bishop had given oral permission by telephone for Christ Church to proceed with a loan for construction of the building. Vestry then decided that Senior Warden Jerome Tillman should contact Barnwell for “specific information” about how to handle such a construction loan. Mr. Tillman added that the Citizens and Southern National Bank of Valdosta was prepared to “lend us the money on a yearly basis provided [the] loan can be made on a legal basis.”

At a later called meeting, Mr. Tillman recounted his conversation with the Bishop. The plan that had emerged from their discussion was for Christ Church to incorporate the Vestry “and its successors.” When the incorporation process was completed, the Bishop “would convey to the corporation title to the church property, which could . . . [serve as security] for the required loan.” The immediate aftermath of Tillman’s report was that Vestry approved a motion to proceed with incorporation and asked the Clerk, Mr. Macks, to obtain from Bishop Barnwell “written confirmation of his verbal proposition to Mr. Tillman.” Also, Vestry authorized

the Building Committee to convey to Mr. Tinker a work order for the “immediate completion” of the Parish Hall, contingent upon incorporation of the Vestry and receipt of the needed funds via bank loan. As the Minutes pointed out, the two contingency points “were to be covered in the authorization granted to Mr. Tinker.”

Mr. Macks duly requested from Bishop Barnwell that he confirm in writing his proposal to the Senior Warden that “the church property would, on incorporation, be conveyed to the Vestry and could then be used as security for the necessary mortgage.”

Macks, in the same letter, told Barnwell that the Vestry on December 19, 1948, had approved unanimously a motion to incorporate itself to be able to “mortgage church property after conveyance by you of said property.”

The Bishop responded in a letter of January 4, 1949, in which he wrote, “The Valdosta church property stands in the name of the Protestant Episcopal in the Diocese of Georgia.” He added that, the previous day, the Corporation had passed a resolution “authorizing me as President to sign a mortgage note and deed of debt to secure mortgage for the borrowing of \$15,000.” Barnwell had ascertained that the Citizens and Southern Bank in Savannah “was perfectly willing to let me have the money” but preferred that “it be handled by the Valdosta branch. . . .” The Savannah bank would provide the funds at four and one-half percent per year, and Barnwell opined, “if the Valdosta bank takes the loan they certainly ought not to charge us more than that.”