



# Christ Church Looks Back

by Joseph A. Tomberlin

As related in the January *Vineyard*, on February 25, 1950, Christ Church paid \$7,555.56 to Mrs. Simpson, the holder of the \$15,000.00 mortgage on the church's property that financed construction of the Parish Hall. After reporting that development to the Vestry on March 4, 1950, Treasurer Noah Fry explained that subsequent payments had "so been arranged as to clean up the balance of the obligation [in] four years," meaning that the last payment would be in February 1954.

In the meeting of February 4, 1951, Mr. Fry reminded Vestry that the next mortgage payment of \$2,305.56 was due on February 25th "and that adequate funds were not yet on hand. . . ." He warned that some church members would have to be asked to pay their pledges early and divulged that "some \$650.00 of 1950 pledges had not yet been received." Vestrymen agreed to attempt to collect 1950's outstanding pledges but conceded that, if their efforts failed, the unpaid pledges would have to be written off. The Minute Book offers no explanation of how Vestry actually raised the necessary funds, but Mr. Fry noted in the meeting of March 4, 1951, that Christ Church had paid \$2,305.56, "thereby accordingly reducing the principal and interest payments yet ahead. . . ."

The year 1952 brought slightly less anxiety among vestrymen about paying the necessary installment to Mrs. Simpson. In the Vestry meeting on January 4, 1952, Jamie Carroll

broached the mortgage issue and sought suggestions about how Christ Church could discharge the entire balance when the yearly payment fell due on February 25. The ensuing discussion apparently yielded no substantial ideas, so Mr. Carroll's effort proved fruitless. In the next session, on February 3, Glenn Robinson offered a motion, seconded and approved, for payment of the required amount instead of the total balance. Mr. Fry, the Treasurer, pointed out that almost the full sum to be paid was on hand, and Marion Tucker offered "to advance any balance due on loan without interest." Thus, Mr. Fry was able to report at the March meeting that the installment had been paid, had reduced both the principal and interest of the mortgage, and a balance of \$4,176.21 remained to be dealt with in the next two years.

Vestrymen focused next upon the mortgage in their February 1, 1953, meeting, in which there was extended discussion. At that point, Christ Church was \$859.00 short of the total of \$4,176.21 "needed to clean up the mortgage, funds having been pledged, in excess of regular pledges, for the purpose of liquidating mortgage." Ultimately, an unidentified member moved that the balance of the mortgage be paid in full; the motion was seconded and approved, with Robert G. Macks, the Clerk, abstaining. In addition to requiring payment of the mortgage in full, the motion stated that Vestry should rely "on assistance from the various guilds for the balance necessary." After the motion had carried, vestryman Harry "Hap"

Davis made "some pertinent remarks" about publicizing the need for extra funds to eliminate the mortgage and claimed that "many families had not been solicited." Mr. Davis and Rufus B. Jones, Jr. thereupon were assigned to contact families that had not previously been reached. Just how the additional amount of \$859.00 really was raised is not clear from Vestry records. What is certain, however, is that Christ Church remitted the entire remainder of the mortgage to Mrs. Simpson on February 25, 1953. Then, on Sunday, March 1, 1953, the parish had a 4:00 p.m. service at which Bishop Middleton S. Barnwell finally consecrated the "new" church building, which had been in use for four years. One feature was "the presentation of cancelled mortgage to the Bishop at the service at 4 P.M. this date. Copy of the program entered into the Vestry notes."

Why, other than a natural aversion to debt, was Christ Church's Vestry in such a hurry to disencumber the parish of the Simpson mortgage? The short answer is that the church still needed additional Sunday School space and sought in 1952 to borrow \$16,000.00 from the American Church Building Fund Commission to construct classrooms while still paying the Simpson mortgage. After A.C.B.F.C. had already approved the loan, Bishop Barnwell made clear that he wanted the Vestry to turn down the offer and, as he put it, fortify Christ Church's financial situation "before attempting any further expansion." Vestry did as the bishop desired, but the critical necessity for classroom space still existed and so did the need to borrow more money.