



Christ Church Looks Back

by Joseph A. Tomberlin

In addition to the points Fr. Clifton White made in his letter of July 13, 1952, to the Vestry and summarized in May's article, he asked, as he put it, that the Vestry "work WITH me instead of BEHIND me in forwarding our program here . . ." This meant that the Vestry should "seriously consider using the [American Church Building Fund Commission] loan to our advantage. . . ." He wanted the Vestry to "seriously apply for Parish status" and call him as the first Rector, as agreed previously. The salary increase to be paid him by Christ Church could be "proportionally what you CAN assume of . . . [his] college salary" while he continued to do some teaching at V.S.C. With those steps accomplished, Fr. White declared, "we shall . . . be moving forward in a spiritual sense."

On the material side, he insisted that Vestry either "fix up" the existing Rectory on West North Street, "as agreed," or acquire "a new Rectory at once." Fr. White outlined for the Vestry the steps that he had taken "to keep your property up." He had painted the Rectory's interior, had the house ceiled and roofed, had the porch and steps repaired, and had the exterior painted. He and Mrs. White had placed plants in the yard and had grassed the lawn. Consequently, the Rectory was in good condition to be sold. If vestrymen did not wish to sell the house, they could modernize

the downstairs by adding a new room and a bath, as approved already. Either, Fr. White said, was a "progressive step" that should be viewed "as a Church advance."

Regarding the issue of what Bishop Barnwell had once referred to as his "churchmanship," he wrote:

You need not worry. . . . I can be a Prayer Book Churchman, as I should, without going to the ridiculous (to me) excesses of the High Church position, or going to the neglectful excesses of the Low Church position. I hope we can be good churchmen – you in your single ways, as I in mine, without anyone objecting to the other.

Fr. White pointed out that Valdosta was "a two-College town" [because Emory at Valdosta was still in operation at the time], and he believed that Christ Church needed a Vicar familiar with the collegiate environment. Given his nineteen years of college teaching, he could meet "College folk" with "familiar ease at the Church." He wrote, "For the present, no other kind of Minister could serve appropriately here. And since I seem to be that kind, I am willing to give up moving entirely out of the classroom to help our Church serve you AND the College group also."

He concluded his letter by urging that he and the Vestry "consider seriously, in a PROPER kind of meeting, the points which I have here raised." He reiterated that Christ Church could "use the

\$16,000," referring to the loan offered by the A.C.B.F.C. The Vestry could pay him less than it had approved, increasing the amount "only as you CAN add. . ." The Vestry could "help" Christ Church by upgrading "Rectory facilities. . ." And the Vestry could "keep a minister here, as your Rector, who knows the needs of you and your fellow Churchmen as well as the needs of his charges at the College."

The most immediate sequel to the Vicar's letter was a called Vestry meeting on the evening of July 18, 1952, attended by Fr. White and six vestrymen. Here the story becomes muddy again, for the Minutes refer to Senior Warden Glen Robinson's reading aloud a letter from Bishop Barnwell, dated June 27, 1952. That communication did not survive in Parish records, so its contents are unknown. The Minutes say only that Mr. Robinson "had attempted to contact the Bishop, without avail, and therefore need for immediate action on part of the Vestry [was] indicated." Fr. White at once asked to be allowed to "state his position" and did so by reading his July 13th letter and by "discussing at length the differences between 'high' and 'low' Church." A prolonged debate followed, dealing with the points Fr. White made and with "the desire . . . [of] the Congregation to have the Vicar remain here, his own wish to do so, and the wish of the Bishop," (not known to us) presumably expressed in his missing letter of June 27.

More of this in July.