

Christ Church Looks Back

by Joseph A. Tomberlin



December's historical article continues to describe Christ Church's labors to obtain \$16,000 from the American Church Building Fund Commission for new Sunday School rooms. Notified by Richard P. Kent, Jr., Secretary of the A.C.B.F.C., on June 24, 1952, that the earliest possible date for the desired loan was April 30, 1953, Vestry Clerk Robert G. Macks quickly responded by Western Union telegram, dated July 27, 1952: "Informal discussion indicates immediate grateful acceptance your proposal. Regular Vestry meeting scheduled July 6th with formal advices following immediately."

Macks wrote Kent more formally the same day to report that the previous night the Vicar, Fr. Clifton H. White, had brought Kent's letter to Macks's house, where both had read it "with much pleasure." During that evening, Macks also had relayed "the good news" to Glen Robinson and James D. Carroll, the Senior Warden and the Junior Warden, and to Mr. Fry, the

Treasurer. Because several vestrymen were out of town, having a quorum at a called meeting was unlikely. Therefore, Vestry would deal with the loan offer during the regular meeting of July 6th. Macks declared that he felt confident "the Vestry will immediately accept the aid offered by the Commission. . . ."

Kent acknowledged both the telegram and the letter from Christ Church on June 30, 1952, by affirming that "we understand . . . your notice cannot be official until the Vestry has acted at its meeting . . . [on] July 6th. We . . . look forward to receiving notice of the Vestry's official approval and acceptance." Vestry met, as scheduled, on the sixth, listened to Macks's reading of the exchange of correspondence with Kent, and approved a Fry-Roddey motion to instruct the Clerk "to write the Commission and to accept their tentative offer of \$16,000." Macks duly related the Vestry's action to Kent via a letter on July 7, 1952, and Kent acknowledged having received it on July 10th.

Unexpectedly, on October 3rd, Kent sent a missive to Macks that moved forward the earliest date for the loan from April 30, 1953, to January 31, 1953, "subject, of course, to the conditions set forth in our letter of June 24th, 1952." Macks was unable to reply until October 18th, because, as he explained, "The letter was inadvertently misplaced at the Rectory and only received by me

last night [October 17th]." He thanked Kent for the excellent news and stated, "At the earliest possible moment, the matter will be brought up for full consideration, and I trust to be able to give you further news with slight delay."

What went unsaid was that vestrymen already had considered Kent's letter the night before without taking any action except to ask Macks to discuss the loan situation with Bishop Barnwell later in the evening "and report back to the Vestry." Nor did Macks tell Kent that Vestry would have a called meeting on Sunday, October 19th, 1952, to hear Barnwell's advice. At the Sunday evening assembly, Macks made clear that "the Bishop did not look with any particular favor on our desire to effect a loan through the Amer. Church Bldg. Fund . . . and that he felt we should strengthen our financial position before attempting any further expansion." In view of Barnwell's attitude, vestrymen agreed to a motion for the Clerk to express "our thanks and appreciation" to the A.C.B.F.C. and to seek "a postponement of at least a year."

Thus, it becomes necessary to weave a new thread into the story's fabric that will provide a possible explanation of the Bishop's restraining the Vestry when it was on the verge of success. That is the task of the next episode, forthcoming in the January 2010 issue of *The Vineyard*.