



Christ Church Looks Back

by Joseph A. Tomberlin

A group of articles beginning in the September 2009 *Vineyard* focused initially on efforts by Christ Church's Vestry to borrow money from the American Church Building Fund Commission to construct Sunday School rooms. Subsequent articles dealt with the conflicts that developed between the Vicar, Clifton H. White, and the Vestry and between Fr. White and the Bishop, Middleton S. Barnwell. What remains now is to tie together the two threads of the story.

One thread is the \$16,000 loan offered to Christ Church by the A.C.B.F.C. via a letter dated October 3, 1952. The Vestry, in the meeting of October 17, 1952, discussed the proffered loan without deciding to accept it. Vestrymen decided that Clerk Robert G. Macks should confer that evening with Bishop Barnwell about the issue and report to a called meeting on the nineteenth. Macks's later account of his conversation with Barnwell was brief, "chiefly to the effect that the Bishop did not look with any particular favor on our desire to effect a loan through" A.C.B.F.C. Barnwell's attitude, Macks explained, was that Christ Church should fortify its own financial position "before attempting any further expansion."

Vestry therefore approved a Perry-Jones motion that Mr. Macks write A.C.B.F.C. "expressing our thanks and appreciation, and asking for a postponement of at least a year." Macks sent a letter to Richard P. Kent,

Secretary of A.C.B.F.C., on October 27, 1952, in which he said, "we have come to realize the justice of the comment by the Bishop that we were trying to make too much progress too rapidly, and that, for our size, we were enjoying a plant of adequate size." He stated also that "there were other communities whose needs at this time . . . [are] greater than ours." While thanking Kent for the favorable consideration of Christ Church's loan application, he expressed his hope that "at a later date, in perhaps a year or eighteen months when we have improved both our size and financial position" the Commission would be "kind enough" to receive a new Christ Church loan request.

Regarding the second story thread, Vestry soon engaged in another round of talk about the controversies within the Parish recounted in previous articles. At a called meeting on December 23, 1952, Vestry opened the floor for an exchange of views on "recent happenings in the Church." Mr. Noah E. Fry, a former Senior Warden, according to the Minutes, "spoke feelingly and at length" about the disagreements that had occurred. Mr. Fry's remarks generated "some discussion of all angles," after which "it was agreed by all that the very best possible course would be to forget the whole matter—to bury it for good and all, and not mention it again." Sadly for the historian and for posterity, Vestry agreed that "*under the circumstances, it seemed best not to make any mention of details in the*

minutes of the meeting. The matter is settled, and a workable solution arrived at, acceptable to all. The main and sole object is to work together for the good of the Church, in an active and unified manner,"

The closing statement in the Minutes declared "Vote of confidence passed on all parties concerned."

In the Vestry's session on February 1, 1953, members first discussed the issue of rotation of Vestry membership and the question of finding \$859 to pay off the balance of the mortgage on the Parish Hall. Fr. White thereupon announced that, on January 1, he had presented to the Bishop his resignation, effective March 21, 1953. The Minutes note quite briefly, "Motion made and passed to accept [the Vicar's resignation] with regret." Next, Mr. Jamie Carroll read aloud Bishop Barnwell's letter about replacing Fr. White. Barnwell suggested that Christ Church provide a salary of around \$400 per month for the new Vicar. The Vestry's reaction was to approve a motion for Mr. Carroll to inform the Bishop that Christ Church had passed a budget for 1953 and could not afford to pay more than \$200 monthly "at the most" for the remainder of 1953. A higher salary probably could be paid in 1954, depending "very heavily on the ability of the replacement sent to this Church."

Thus the disputes between Vicar and Vestry and Vicar and Bishop affected rejection of the A.C.B.F.C. loan and led to the Vicar's resignation. In September we turn to the search for a new Vicar and to renewed pursuit of money for Sunday School rooms.