



Christ Church Looks Back

by Joseph A. Tomberlin

This month's topic is Christ Church's movement toward becoming a parish in 1954. The Vestry had drifted in that direction in a meeting on May 16, 1952, when members unanimously approved a Glenn Robinson-D.C. Roddey motion to call Vicar Clifton H. White, "as Rector of Christ Church, Valdosta. . . ." Bishop Middleton Barnwell reacted quickly via a letter of May 20, 1952, informing vestrymen they had acted rashly. He reminded them that, given Christ Church's being a mission church, Fr. White could become the rector only after the Diocesan Convention approved the mission's transition to parish status. Barnwell also asserted that, if Christ Church made "proper application" to the next convention, he was confident the application would win approval. [For a fuller account of this episode, see *The Vineyard*, April 2010, p. 10.]

Christ Church, however, took no steps toward parish standing until the matter arose at a Vestry meeting on February 17, 1954. Fr. Michael Kippenbrock, broached the issue "of application for Parish status. . . ." He promised he would "ascertain full information . . . [about] the mechanics at the [upcoming] Clergy Meeting . . . and report at the next meeting." At the session on March 8, 1954, Senior Warden Noah E. Fry addressed "the question of our Parish status." Fry made three points: the Vicar's attitude was "that we ought definitely to apply"; the Bishop had no objections to Christ Church's becoming a parish; *The Vineyard*, p. 10, June 2011

and the "mechanics are simple – merely a formal application by the Vestry." Consequently, on a motion by Lewis Kafoure, with Roy Newham's second, Vestry voted to "make said application," and the twelve vestrymen present signed a letter to the Bishop declaring their intention to apply to the 1954 Diocesan Convention "to be admitted into union with the Convention as a Parish. . . ."

The Vestry thus asked Bishop Barnwell's permission to apply to the Convention for parish standing. The letter pointed out that, "as a mission church," Christ Church had existed since "about 1885." The Vestrymen claimed "we have made sufficient progress to enable us to be self-supporting; to meet all local expenses, including the salary of a settled clergyman; [and] to meet all obligations as currently existing to the Diocese and the National Church." Further, the church had 144 communicants enrolled, and the 1954 budget, "which we have reasonable expectation of raising, is about thirteen thousand dollars." At the letter's end, the Vestrymen affirmed their understanding that, if the Bishop approved their making application to the Convention, Christ Church would then have to "adopt the articles of association in the form provided in Canon 14, Section 2."

Bishop Barnwell responded quickly and briefly in a letter dated March 12, 1954.

He said first that he was returning "the copy of the charter of the vestry," most likely meaning the charter issued by the Georgia

Secretary of State when the Vestry incorporated in 1949. The records do not contain a copy of any other "charter of the vestry." He noted that the Chancellor of the Diocese, Judge Douglas, "had looked . . . [the charter] over and it seems to be all right." Therefore, he consented "to Christ Church[s] becoming a parish and . . . would recommend to the Convention that it be so received." In conclusion, he wrote that the only other necessary step for Christ Church was "to adopt the Articles of Association in the form provided in Canon 14, Section 2."

Subsequently, a congregational meeting convened at Christ Church at noon on Sunday, April 11, 1954, to take up and to act upon the "Articles of Association." Fr. Kippenbrock, presided and explained that the reason for the gathering was to "secure the approval of the congregation for the petition, dated March 8, 1954, submitted by the Vestry to Bishop Barnwell seeking consent for Christ Church to apply to the 1954 Convention of the Diocese of Georgia for parish status." Kippenbrock also noted that the petition had claimed 144 communicants at Christ Church and had put the church's 1954 budget at \$13,000. He confirmed that the Bishop had agreed to the petition and would urge the Convention's acceptance of Christ Church as a parish. He contended too that Bishop Barnwell had suggested adoption of the Articles of Association in a congregational meeting, but that suggestion had not appeared in his letter of March 12; perhaps it was made orally.

This story continues in July.