



Christ Church Looks Back

by Joseph A. Tomberlin

In the congregational meeting of April 11, 1954, that focused on the "Articles of Association," James D. Carroll moved approval of the Vestry's application for parish status, and Courtney Ritsch seconded.

Discussion of the motion apparently was brief; the Minutes note only one question. Irene R. Miller asked if Christ Church had achieved its budget goal for 1954. Mr. Carroll, chairman of the Every Member Canvass, replied that the goal had been \$13,000.00, and the church had received \$11,000.00 in pledges, compared with only \$7,500.00 in pledges in 1953. Harry Davis then called for a vote on the question, and the motion won unanimous approval.

Subsequently, Mr. Carroll, seconded by his wife, Frances Carroll, moved that the existing Vestry "be retained." Upon consent to that motion, Fr. Kippenbrock, read aloud the "Articles of Association," and members signed the document. Forty-eight signatures appear on the "Articles of Association" in Parish records, including one instance of a husband signing for himself and his spouse. There were two duplicate signatures, as two communicants signed the document two different times. The Parish records also contain a second copy of the Articles, with the names of signers printed at the bottom; here, the names of the husband and wife signers were separated, and duplicate signatures were deleted. Inexplicably, the last three signers of the "Articles," all vestrymen, disappeared from the

printed list. Then, following the signing process, on a Gillespie-Wanman motion, the members voted to adopt the "Articles." Finally, the Vicar announced that Vestry members were to sign the Oath of Office for Vestrymen before departing.

On April 27, 1954, the Vestry submitted a formal petition to the 132nd Annual Convention of the Diocese of Georgia, to meet on May 11, 1954, seeking the "admission of Christ Church, Valdosta, Lowndes County, into union with the Convention as a Parish. . . ." This document explained that Christ Church had asked the Bishop's permission to submit "this petition" and "to adopt articles of association" on March 8, 1954, and had received his assent on March 12, 1954. The congregational meeting on April 11, 1954, had agreed to Articles of Association. Minutes of that meeting and the Articles also were attached to the petition, as was a copy of Christ Church's 1954 budget. The petition's core was the fifth paragraph, which declared: *"in compliance with Article V of the Constitution of the Diocese of Georgia, we certify that the Wardens, Vestry and Congregation of Christ Church, Valdosta, do accede to the Constitution and Canons of this Church, are regularly organized by the election of two Wardens and ten vestrymen, and we do further certify that it is our belief that this Congregation shall be able to maintain the worship of the Church and to support a Rector. . . ."*

The Vestry, on May 3, 1954, assuming that parish status for

Christ Church would prevail at the Convention, chose Fr. Kippenbrock as the first Rector. On a motion by Junior Warden W.H. Sadler, seconded by William Gabard, the group approved a statement that, contingent upon parish status, the Vestry "call[ed] and invite[d] the Reverend Michael J. Kippenbrock to be the Rector of Christ Church , at a salary of \$4,800.00 per annum and the use of the Rectory. . . ." The call went to Fr. Kippenbrock by letter from Clerk Robert G. Macks on May 8, 1954, closing with the statement, "It is my sincere hope that we will all have many years of happy association in THE GOOD WORK."

Fr. Kippenbrock responded formally by letter on May 15, 1954. He reported that the Diocesan Convention on May 11th had "voted unanimously to approve the petition for admission as a Parish; the approval of the Bishop, at least the formal approval, is lacking since the Bishop is out of his office for the time being due to an operation." He believed, however, that Bishop Barnwell's "formal approval" would come as soon as he was "able to work again at his desk." As he said, if Barnwell had disapproved, "he would have made it known before this time." Fr. Kippenbrock closed with words that are as fresh now as in 1954: *"As a parish church, Christ Church now enters a new phase of its existence, more responsible than ever for a continuing and effective witness for the truth of the Christian religion. As we work together for the extension of the Kingdom of God, may the Lord bless us all and prosper our handiwork."*