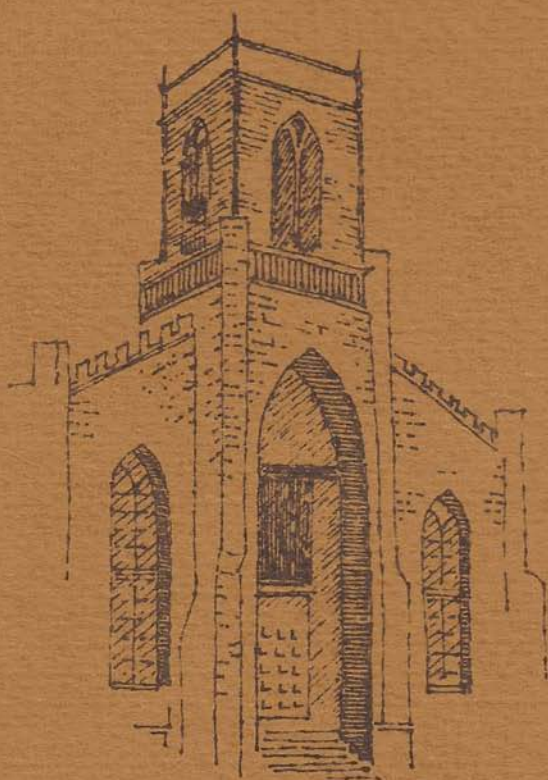


CHRIST CHURCH

Nashville

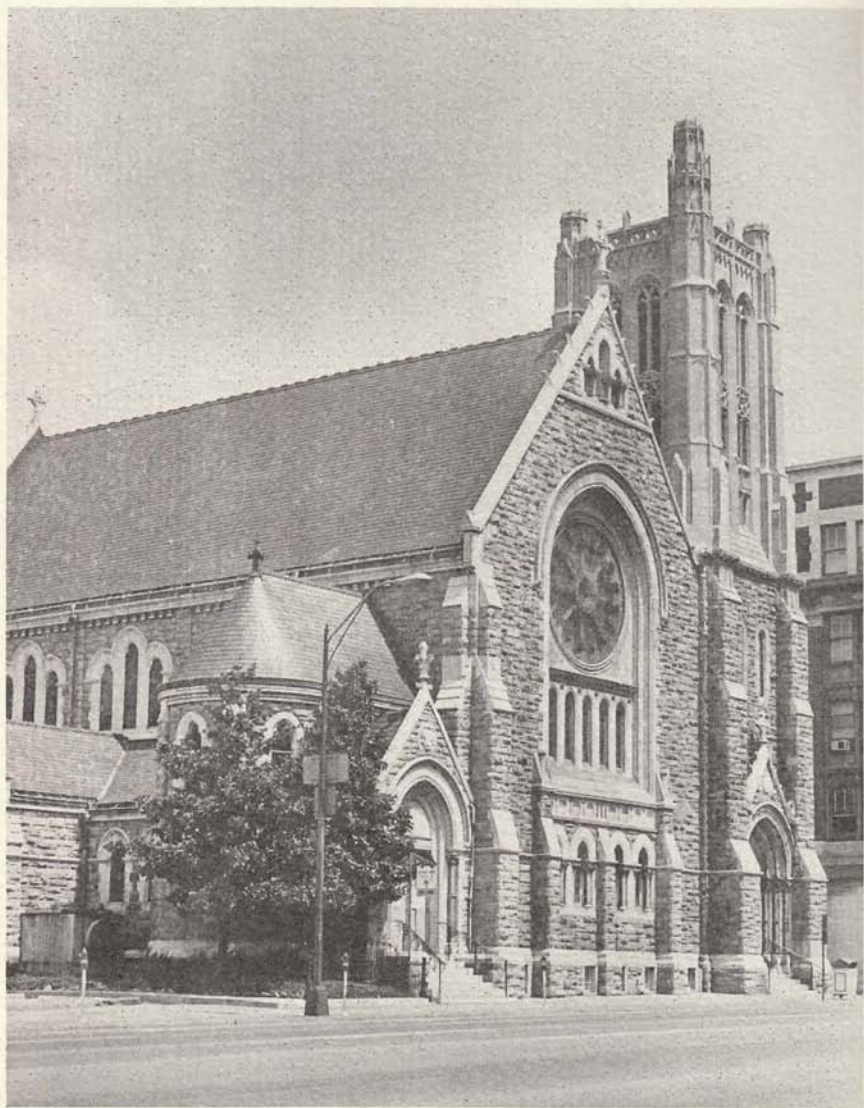
1830 * 1890 * 1972



Walter Stokes, Jr.

CHRIST
CHURCH

Nashville



Photograph by Terry Tomlin

CHRIST CHURCH

Nashville

1830 • 1890 • 1972

Walter Stokes, Jr.



Nashville, Tennessee
Christ Church, Episcopal
1972

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FOREWORD

BEGINNING in late 1969, the Public Library of Nashville and Davidson County has each year since sponsored a course of lectures entitled "Paragraphs in Nashville History." The series of 1971-1972 bore the subtitle, "Historic Churches in Nashville." It was my good fortune on the night of January 10, 1972, to be included in an attentive audience which heard Mr. Walter Stokes, Jr., make an important address on the history of Christ Episcopal Church, Nashville, and its role in the life of this city and in the Diocese of Tennessee. That address, with minor editing, is here made available to a greater audience.

Without question Mr. Stokes is eminently well qualified to discuss the story and meaning of this parish. Born in 1891, he was enrolled at the age of six by his mother, a lifelong member of Christ Church, in the parish Sunday School. During his boyhood and young manhood he was a member of the Christ Church Chapter of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew. Entering the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, he was confirmed there in 1910 by the Right Reverend Joseph Blount Cheshire. He returned to Nashville in 1913. During his lifetime he has seen at first hand the later history of the parish, and he has served here in practically every place and office of ministry open to the layman. He has before this time shared with both hearers and readers not only his intense interest in matters historical, but also his significant contribution to that larger work, *Christ Church, Nashville, 1829-1929*.

He writes both from head and heart. This booklet will be a welcome resource to those who love this place as well as to those who, in future days, will be interested in the story and the contribution of Christ Church and of those who, in serving her, sought to give glory to God.

ERIC SUTCLIFFE GREENWOOD, D.D.

Rector

Nashville, Tennessee

June 1972



CHRIST CHURCH has had bred into its very bone and sinew the strivings and prayers of a long line of devoted rectors enlisted from many quarters of our country and two foreign nations (if we count England and Scotland as two separate nations). A common denominator binding all of them in a single purpose has been love of God through the life of Jesus, his ministry being the bedrock of the foundation, the binding force, the catalyst, the torch of faith which lighted the way of these men. They quibbled not about his humanity or divinity but simply accepted him as the vehicle of their relationship with God, a God of mercy as opposed to the then-popular idea of a God of vengeance.

If we take a look at the times, the first quarter of the nineteenth century just ending, we see the graphic imprint of the Circuit Rider upon an emerging civilization. They were strong men and preached strong doctrine. It was hellfire and eternal damnation to the sinner, and a heavenly paradise for the good. A discipline of religious fear prevailed in the new Middle Tennessee community.

I count it remarkable then that in the midst of those fear-some teachings the still small voice of a layman is recorded to have uttered these words, "It might be inferred that God is a cruel God. I think otherwise of Him, and consider Him to be both munificent and merciful. . . . The Christian system,

which is my system of faith, is as broad as the plan of redemption and salvation.”¹ Those words were privately expressed in 1822 in a letter to John Hillsman from Willie Blount, several times Governor of Tennessee. Reading them in the context of the community they bring to mind John the Baptist crying in the wilderness, for they seem to have foretold a latent but strong desire for a more compassionate Creator. I have found no record of Governor Blount’s affiliation with any church, but from the fact that his brother was an Episcopalian and from the nature of the statement I infer that he may have inclined in that direction.

Onto the stage at this point strode a remarkable young Virginian, James Hervey Otey, who was graduated in 1820 with highest honors from the University of North Carolina. His ambition was to go West and establish a classical school for boys. Before realizing this ambition, he taught at the University for a time and then was in charge of the Warrenton, North Carolina, Academy. It is said of him that he had never bent his knee in prayer, but at one or the other of those institutions when it became his duty to conduct student prayer in Chapel a friend gave him a copy of the Book of Common Prayer. He found this so useful and satisfying that it changed the course of his life. Says Bishop Green: “He delighted to be called a ‘Prayer Book Churchman.’”

At Warrenton he found a fellow student of his University days, William Mercer Green—the same Bishop Green quoted above—who as deacon was in charge of the parish church there. In that church he was baptized by his old friend. Then on May 8, 1824, in St. John’s Church, Williamsboro, he was

1. Quoted by Silas B. McKinley, “Religious Conditions in Tennessee in 1829,” in *Christ Church, Nashville, 1829-1929* (Nashville: Marshall & Bruce Co., 1929), p. 26.

confirmed by Bishop John Stark Ravenscroft, whose own staunch churchmanship formed a strong and permanent impression upon the young convert.² He was made deacon October 10, 1825. Thereupon he returned to Tennessee and founded Harpeth Academy in Franklin. There, in the face of much opposition, he began to conduct services in the Masonic Hall at Franklin; soon he began journeys to Ashwood, near Columbia, twenty-four miles South. Thus did he found both St. Paul's Parish, Franklin, and St. John's, Ashwood. He lies interred in the churchyard at St. John's.

In the history of Christ Church published in 1930, the late Reverend James Robert Sharp, quoting from Dr. Noll's history of the Diocese, had this to say concerning his determined efforts to spread the kingdom in Middle Tennessee:

Tennessee was still in its pioneer stages. There were neither steamboats nor railways in those days; not even turnpikes, stage roads nor stage coaches west of the Alleghenies. Bridle paths and rough farm roads were the only thoroughfares. And the soil of Tennessee, attractive as it might be to the agriculturist, was regarded as the most stubborn of any in the whole country to receive the impress of religious instruction. This was largely the result of the religious methods established by the "Great Revival" and practiced periodically ever since.³

In order to hold services in Nashville it was necessary for Mr. Otey to take a hurried dinner after his Sunday morning service in Franklin, and, regardless of the weather, ride a borrowed horse over roads scarcely passable to a less determined person. Arriving punctually in the town, he was accustomed to hunt up the key to the Masonic Hall where services were to be held,

2. Arthur Howard Noll, *History of the Church in the Diocese of Tennessee* (New York: James Pott & Co., 1900) p. 55.

3. Noll, p. 56.

make a fire when necessary, and give notice to the people of his readiness for the service.⁴

Revisiting North Carolina in 1827, Mr. Otey was advanced to the priesthood by Bishop Ravenscroft on June 7 of that year. Consecrated in Philadelphia in January 1834 by the then presiding Bishop White of New York, assisted by Bishop Doane of New Jersey, Otey became, at the age of thirty-three, the first Bishop of Tennessee. That he was sincere in carving out of the wilderness a place for a religion of mercy and compassion may be seen in his works and in his epitaph, which he composed himself, on his tomb in St. John's churchyard:

James Hervey Otey

First Bishop of the Holy Catholic Church in Tennessee
"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseest from all Sin"

Thus Christ Church owes its beginning to James Hervey Otey, brilliant young Virginian, honor graduate of the University of North Carolina in 1820, who by a chance encounter with the Book of Common Prayer became the fountain source of the Episcopal Church in Tennessee. Out of the ministry of Otey in the Masonic Hall in Nashville emerged the old Christ Church, colorful and meaningful in the life of the city.

In 1829 Bishop Ravenscroft made a visit to Nashville, where his preachings were well received in the churches of almost all denominations. The Bishop says of this visit:

During my short stay in Nashville . . . I have been greatly delighted and encouraged by the interest manifested among the members and friends of the church for the advancement of religion, and for the attainment of regular and fixed services for the congregation once organized in the city. I find them all

4. Noll, p. 60.

zealous for putting the congregation once more upon a regular footing and for exerting themselves to build a church and to obtain a resident minister. . . . A vestry has been elected, subscription papers are out to raise funds for the building, to which a considerable sum is already subscribed, and I am authorized to employ a clergyman and to pledge eight hundred dollars certain as salary.⁵

Soon afterward sixty feet of ground fronting on Spring Street was purchased from James Stewart for the sum of \$2,400. It is now the site of Harvey's Department Store at Sixth and Church. In the *National Banner and Nashville Whig* of Thursday, July 8, 1830, we find the following notice of the laying of the cornerstone:

On Monday, July 5, the cornerstone of the new church about to be erected at the corner of Spring [later Church] and High Streets, for the use of the first Protestant Episcopal congregation in Nashville, was laid with solemn and appropriate ceremonies.

At nine o'clock a procession was formed at the Masonic Hall (the lower apartment of which is now used as a temporary place of worship), in the following order: Wardens of the Church, builder, choir, aldermen of Nashville, mayor, clergymen of different denominations, vestrymen of the Church, rector, congregation, citizens.

On arriving at the site of the building, the Rector of the Church, the Reverend Mr. Weller, commenced the service of the occasion by a solemn prayer. He then took a small box on which was inscribed, "Christ Church, Nashville, founded in 1830" and deposited therein a copy of the Holy Scriptures "in token that the church is to be built on the truth revealed by God"—a copy of the Book of Common Prayer "as a testimony that the Church is to be built on a pure faith and spiritual worship"—and some small coins of the United States of recent date and a scroll with the following inscription:

5. Noll, p. 64.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God
This Corner Stone
of the First Protestant Episcopal Church
Erected in Tennessee
By the name of
Christ Church, Nashville
was laid July 5, 1830
George Weller being Rector
Thomas Claiborne and James Stewart, Wardens
together with
John Shelby, Francis B. Fogg, Vestrymen
Hugh Roland, Architect
William Shields, Builder
Andrew Jackson, an inhabitant of this county, being
President of the United States
William Carroll, of this City, Governor of Tennessee
William Armstrong, Mayor

The whole number of ministers of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Tennessee being but three, viz.: Daniel Stephens, D.D., of Columbia, Maury County; James H. Otey, of Franklin, Williamson County; and George Weller, of Nashville.

“Neither he that planteth is anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.”

(I Cor. III: 7)

“Establish Thou, O God, the work of Thy Hands.”

(Psalm XC: 17)

The box containing these articles was solemnly deposited within the Corner Stone, which was then laid, an anthem was chanted by the choir, after which the Rev. Mr. Weller delivered a sermon to a numerous and attentive audience.

.

After the delivery of this address in the usual impressive manner of the [Rector], a hymn was sung and the crowd was dismissed with a benediction.

Such were the simple rites of this important and memorable day, which marks the successful commencement of an enterprise calculated not only to gratify the friends of the Episcopal Church, but likewise Christians of every denomination and all

who are fond of witnessing the progress of public improvement.

The edifice now commenced is to be stone, and will constitute when completed according to plan, a splendid ornament to our town extending fifty-three feet in front on Spring Street from the extremities of the buttresses, and running back along High Street nearly eighty feet.⁶

On July 9, 1831, the pews were auctioned, bringing \$60 to \$182 each. Thus was sown a seed of discontent which persisted for eighty-seven years.⁷ It is interesting to note that in parish meetings only the owners of the pews were permitted to vote.

In November 1833, the stars fell, a meteorological phenomenon not understood then, and not in dismay over the pews but creating a sort of superstitious panic which Mr. Weller's calm disposition quickly sought to dispel.⁸

Mr. Weller was a faithful servant in deed as well as word. His salary of \$800 per annum was of such meager dimensions that he was forced to teach a private school in the basement of the church to make ends meet. Nevertheless, his ministry laid a sound foundation for Christ Church and for the Episcopal Church in Tennessee. His contribution to the life of the community was appropriately recognized when, in October 1834, the University of Nashville, forebear of George Peabody College for Teachers, conferred upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity. Finally the stark reality of his economic necessity forced him to accept a call to Calvary Church in Memphis, a ministry which he resigned in 1839. The follow-

6. Quoted by Miss Mary Woods, "The Building of the First Christ Church," in *Christ Church, Nashville*, pp. 66-67.

7. William E. Beard, "The Church of Ante-Bellum Times," in *Christ Church, Nashville*, p. 77.

8. From the diary of James Hervey Otey, quoted by William E. Beard in *Christ Church, Nashville*, p. 79.

ing year he died of cholera, in Vicksburg, Mississippi.⁹

In August 1837, the Reverend John Thomas Wheat of St. Paul's, New Orleans, accepted the Rectorship and served until 1848. Christ Church History says this of him:

The new Rector was eloquent, affable and zealous, and quickly inspired the parish to new efforts. Weekly offerings were introduced, resulting in increased revenues for the church. The organist was allowed a salary of \$100 a year. The ladies inaugurated a building fund for a rectory. In 1838 Mr. Wheat was able to report 72 communicants in his congregation, 152 pupils in the Sunday School and 18 teachers.¹⁰

On April 1, 1839, Captain William Driver, a retired Sea Captain, known to fame as the man who gave the nickname "Old Glory" to the American Flag, was elected a vestryman of Christ Church. Some years later he was chosen Junior Warden.

Mr. Wheat became one of the first trustees of the state-supported school for the blind and like Mr. Weller was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Nashville. Through those years there was a close relationship between Christ Church and the University of Nashville, and the University utilized the church building for many of its meetings of Trustees.

The presentation of the doctorate to Mr. Wheat was made on the occasion of the graduation of his son, C. Roberdeau Wheat, such an unusual young man that I quote this of him:

Described as a beau sabreur, "Bob" Wheat entered the Mexican War as a Lt. of Cavalry, coming out of it with a captain's commission. He is said to have been a youth of rich intellectual attainments, but his sword had tasted blood, and it was not to be sheathed again. After the war [he joined] Carvajol, a Mexican Chief [in] . . . revolt against his government,

9. Beard, p. 81.

10. Beard, p. 81.

[and] was made a general, commander of a division. The revolt collapsed just in time for Wheat to join the first Lopez expedition to free Cuba. Again the cause failed. Next he joined William Walker, Nashville's "Grey Eyed Man of Destiny" [and] was with [him] in Central America. . . . [Thence he journeyed to Italy] to aid Garibaldi. . . . He was distinguished there in many battles but the roar of the guns at home brought him back to this country. At New Orleans he organized . . . the "Louisiana Tigers," of which he was commander, with the rank of major. He died at the head of his "Tigers" on June 27, 1862, in the Seven Days Fight Around Richmond.

Another son of Dr. Wheat, and his namesake . . . became a captain in a Louisiana Regiment and was killed at Shiloh. A third son, Leo, named for Bishop Leonidas Polk [Bishop and Confederate General], . . . gave promise of becoming a great pianist, but an early marriage to an heiress is said to have ended his career as an artist.¹¹

Like his predecessor the former Rector, Mr. Wheat augmented his meager salary by teaching school in the basement of the church. He resigned in 1848 after eleven years of a highly successful ministry, having been able to enlist the co-operation of the entire parish. After a short stay in Columbia as Rector of St. Peter's he became the headmaster of St. Mary's School for girls in Raleigh, North Carolina. I met many of its fine graduates while I was a student at the University of North Carolina.

Mr. Wheat's successor was English-born, the Reverend Charles Tomes, who came to us after being assistant rector of Christ Church, St. Louis. From the diary of Mary Elizabeth Hunt, which I commend to you for reading, I quote: "February 2, 1848, Wednesday clear. In the afternoon, Ma and I attended a meeting at the church. About a dozen ladies came and arrangements were made about cleaning the church, etc. The color decided upon for the cushions was crimson."

11. Beard, pp. 82-83.

On Sunday, November 19, 1848, says the diary: "The Rev. Charles Tomes was instituted Rector of Christ Church, Nashville. O, what a joyous day!"¹²

Highlights of Mr. Tomes's ministry included these:

- June-July 1850 Heroic service during cholera epidemic
(It is said that his only religious helpers in ministering to the unfortunate victims were two Roman Catholic nuns of the Sisters of Charity.)
- 1850 Religious instruction to convicts
- April 1852 Gas lighting installed in the church
- May 7, 1852 Founding of Holy Trinity
- 1854-55 Member, city school board
- February 1857 Free pews advocated
- April 1857 Resignation as Rector upon rejection of free pews by the parish
- April 1857 Called by newly formed Church of the Advent
- July 1857 Death, before installation at Advent, leaving a wife and seven children

The active and dynamic Mr. Tomes was succeeded by the Reverend Leonidas L. Smith of Norfolk. In the interim the

12. Quoted in "Leaves from an Old Diary," in *Christ Church, Nashville*, p. 95. Three notebooks of Miss Hunt's diaries, containing the entries from December 1848 through the end of 1849 and October 1, 1851, through February 12, 1952, are with the Catherine Pilcher Avery Papers in the Manuscripts Section of the Tennessee State Library and Archives. Excerpts from these sections were published by the Kirkwood [Missouri] Historical Society in four issues of the *Kirkwood Historical Review* as follows: 6, No. 3 (September 1967):3-12; 6, No. 4 (December 1967):3-7, 12; 7, No. 1 (March 1968):8-13, 15; 7, No. 2 (June 1968):20-26. Miss Hunt was 22 years of age in 1846, when she began keeping the diaries. She lived with her widowed mother, her sister, Ellen, and her brother, George, who later became an Episcopal priest.

pulpit was filled by the Reverend William D. Harlowe of Holy Trinity. Mr. Smith was greeted by continuing sharp division on the issue of free pews, and one of his first tasks was the transfer of 117 communicants to the newly formed Church of the Advent.

In spite of such a turbulent reception, Mr. Smith pitched into his job, rebuilt the congregation, paid off the church debt and made needed repairs, and in 1858 played a leading role when Christ Church, together with the Church of the Advent, created St. Anne's on Woodland Street in East Nashville—or Edgefield, as the section beyond the river was then known. Thus did gentlemen, sharply divided upon the question of free pews, unite in the common desire to spread the kingdom.

With the coming of war Mr. Smith resigned, effective January 1, 1862, in order that he might rejoin his family in Norfolk. The very next month, on February 23, Nashville was surrendered to the advancing Federal Army after the fall of Fort Donelson. During that tragic period the life of the church was constricted by conditions of war and the lack of a rector, but its work was continued through the voluntary ministry of the Reverend Mr. Harlowe, Rector of Holy Trinity, whose house of worship had been seized by the Federal Army for use as a powder magazine. First Presbyterian Church was used as an army hospital. In fact, I understand that only three church buildings in Nashville escaped the imprint of the invading army. It is said that Christ Church was spared for the reasons that its dark, stained-glass interior did not lend itself to army use and that there were so many members of the Federal staff who were Episcopalians. Francis B. Fogg, a founder and since 1830 a vestryman, was a staunch Unionist. The vast majority of the members of Christ Church were equally strong in support of the Confederacy. Nevertheless, the distinguished Mr. Fogg was elected Senior Warden

and served in that capacity during the entire four-year period of the Civil War.

Let us pause here to glimpse a view of its colorful life in the community.

Aunt Martha Armfield was a slave who clung to her mistress and who wished to join her mistress' church. Mrs. Armfield was unwilling to allow this until Aunt Martha had visited the colored churches and fully made up her mind where she would be happiest. She made the rounds of the churches and decided to be confirmed at Christ Church. On the night of the confirmation she waited until the white candidates had taken their places, then she knelt at the altar rail. Contrary to his custom, Bishop Otey began at her end of the chancel and Aunt Martha's hoary head was the first upon which he laid his hands. A northern man passing through the city exclaimed: "I never expected to see anything like that in the South."¹³

A reminiscence of the late Dr. L. G. Noel is interesting:

"In 1876," he wrote, as the time his reminiscences began, "on the northeast corner of Church and High, now Sixth Avenue, stood old Christ Church, upon which we looked from our north windows. Some of you remember the fine old Gothic church.

"We clearly recall the quaint, low belfry and the sound of the old bell. We remember also the gnarled old sycamore that stood on the same corner by the church and under whose shade the beaux of Nashville stood to watch the young ladies as they made their entries and exists from the sanctuary. We recall also dear old Dr. Graham, long the beloved rector, with his broad Scotch brogue and his unflinching devotion to his flock."¹⁴

It was this bell of old Christ Church, heard in this later day by Dr. Noel, that Mary Elizabeth Hunt and her people and her friends listened for and heeded all through the years of which the diary tells.

On rainy Sundays, and when the weather was bad at the time

13. "Where Memories Gather," in *Christ Church, Nashville*, p. 57.

14. Quoted in "Leaves from an Old Diary," in *Christ Church, Nashville*, p. 92.

for services that for long were held every day, they heard it with regret.

Evidently neither the cumbersome and wide skirts of the day, nor the dainty, thin-soled shoes, were proof against the weather. Nor were the crossings and pavements the best in those old times, by the diary's own descriptions of splashy puddles and unexpected mud and mire, and even of a certain little stream that ran through the downtown streets and was difficult of passage when swollen by untimely showers.

But the sound of the bell runs through all the journal's pages, with now and then a wish set down that we have echoed to this day, "I would be glad if only it were chimes!"¹⁵

The chimes were to come three quarters of a century later. The diary goes on to describe the destruction by fire of the First Presbyterian Church.

"A little before three o'clock the bell of the First Presbyterian Church rang and we thought at first it was a funeral, but by and by, we heard the town bell, and a little boy in the neighborhood began crying, 'Fire!' . . . We went up to the porch and were just turning away when I noticed a small flame in the lower part of the cupola. The windows there were all open, and as the wind was very high the flames spread rapidly, curling out of the windows, darting, flapping, crackling, far above the spire. It was a grand and beautiful sight, but how awful. The roof smoked and soon the fire broke through. Soon all the shingles and windows were gone, the cupola then fell, the chimney at the back and the walls, caving in an office adjoining which belonged to Dr. Edgar."¹⁶

Another fire, a few weeks after Christmas of 1852, took place in Christ Church itself when some of the Christmas greens caught from the [newly installed] gas and set fire, as it happened, to the very wreath that Mary herself had made.

The little blaze created a semi-panic, in which Aunt Martha

15. "Leaves from an Old Diary," pp. 92-93.

16. Quoted from the diary of Mary Elizabeth Hunt in "Leaves from an Old Diary," p. 96.

so completely lost her head when the door of her pew refused to come open, that, as Mary Elizabeth told the tale, "The first thing I remember seeing was Ma stepping across Mrs. Pritchard's pew and on to the next, helping Adelaide over at the same time, while Sarah and Lizzie made the difficult journey without assistance, a feat they would have thought impossible."

Mr. Tomes's calmness, it seems, saved the day. No harm was done, but a hilarious picture remains of Aunt Martha in flight over the high pew backs.¹⁷

Octavia Zollicoffer Bond, daughter of Confederate General Felix Zollicoffer, further touches on what the old church was like.

There is no building in greater Nashville so unsoiled of soot as the walls of Christ Church in those days. And to my childish perception there could never have been a congregation so devout, so unspotted from the world. The exterior of the building represented to me, in its noble simplicity of outline, the most appealingly mysterious interest in life. Its bell drew me, not unwillingly, on Friday afternoons, from out-of-door sports of "I Spy," "Hopscotch" and trundling hoops with the troops of children with which High Street abounded, to sit for half an hour, aloof from the world, within the transcendent atmosphere that pervaded the sacred place.¹⁸

On all occasions it was interesting to see the belles of the period come to their pews teeteringly, as fashion decreed, on tiny feet that "Like little mice, stole in and out" from beneath wide spread skirts that swept the floor. Small bonnets placed on the back of the head permitted the display of lovely ringlets or softly banded hair.

Equally exciting it was to see the beaux stride up the aisles, gold-headed cane and tall stove-pipe hat in hand, in full dress of swallow-tail coats, velvet vests and close-fitting trousers.¹⁹

17. "Leaves from an Old Diary," p. 96.

18. Octavia Zollicoffer Bond, "Old Christ Church Recalled," in *Christ Church, Nashville*, p. 120.

19. Bond, p. 122.

My earliest distinct recollection of the interior of the church was, at the funeral of my beloved mother, when for the first time the majestic sentences of the burial service fell upon my ears from the lips of her life-long friend, the Rt. Rev. James Hervey Otey, in tones of piercing effect. The stately form of the first Bishop of Tennessee, who was six feet four inches in height, was robed in black. There were no flowers on the bier, no lighted candles in the sanctuary, no surpliced choir led by a crucifer,—nothing to distract attention from the stark words. Neither was there anything to obscure the meaning of the lesson that Life Ended, was Life Begun.

Rather aiding this deeply impressed thought were the strangely comforting shafts of light from the stained glass windows that lined uniformly, the two sides of the church. Through squares of crimson and gold they flooded the chancel with radiance suggestive of the free flow of redeeming blood, and the effulgent glory into which the blessed dead are to arise.²⁰

Following Mr. Harlowe's fortunate voluntary service during the years of the occupation of Nashville, Mr. William J. Ellis became Rector in 1865 and served until 1870, when he resigned because of the failure of the church to inaugurate free pews, a perennial and perplexing question to parishioners. Indeed pew ownership persisted until 1918, when under the leadership of the Reverend Edward Ellerbe Cobbs as Rector they became free and open to all.

Into the breach in 1871 came a consecrated bachelor and Scotsman, the Reverend William Graham, D.D., who was faithful in his stewardship for eighteen years, until 1889. He had been educated for the Presbyterian ministry, but, like Otey, he came upon the Book of Common Prayer, and by its influence he was persuaded to become an Episcopal priest. During his eighteen years as Rector he produced a steady growth of strength and influence in the parish and community. He was a highly intellectual person, and his sermons at-

20. Bond, p. 121.

tracted the elite of the resident universities almost as much as his down-to-earth pastoral touch was felt by his parishioners of all ages.

Bishop Thomas F. Gailor said in his recollections of Mr. Graham that in 1888 Graham invited the noted British Evangelist Dr. W. Hay Aitken to Christ Church. His services attracted such crowds that they overran the church, so they were transferred to the Cumberland Presbyterian Church on Summer Street. At one of those services he preached on the text "Speak the Word and Thy Servant Shall be Healed." He urged the people of Christ Church to go to work and raise money to build a larger and worthier house of worship. Largely as a result of that mission Mr. Graham, in his last report to the Convention, in 1889, was able to state that a lot had been secured on the corner of Broad and McLemore Streets and that \$25,000.00 had been raised to build Christ Church Chapel on the new site.

So much for the old church. It is dear to me, because my mother worshiped there as a girl and young lady, and she related to me many happy recollections of the church and of Mr. Graham and because of the further fact that her father, my own grandfather, Thomas Ormsby Treanor, was a vestryman as early as 1866.

We come now to the new church. Its first blessing came to it in the form of a parting gift of love from the Scotsman Mr. Graham, an exquisite baptismal font, in use to this day and ever a part of the magnificent artistry within the walls of the new edifice. Here is its story, as described by our historian P. M. Radford:

It was designed and executed expressly as an example of high-class church work for the Scottish International Exhibition. It is of Sicilian marble, stands three feet, six inches high. Rising from the base are eight shafts of molded bases and caps, on which rests a very elaborately mounted and carved capital,

which again supports the bowl. The eight sides of the bowl are paneled, and the following symbolic characters carefully carved in the panels: the Dove, the Cross, the Agnus Dei, the Lily in trefoil, the Pelican, the I.H.S. in a foliated design, the Double Triangle, and an ornamental panel, upon which is engraved, "Presented to Christ Church by its Rector, 1889." On the top mounting, around the edges of the basis, is the inscription in red letters, "Suffer the little children to come unto me." The oak, of which the cover is made, was taken from a very old house in the old town of Edinburgh. The font evidences workmanship of the highest order. The rector could not have left a more fitting memorial.²¹

For those of that persuasion an immersion pool with stone steps leading into it is available beneath the floor and is accessible through a trap door.

Here in the new chapel in 1889 began the remarkable series of rectorships that would earn for the church the epithet "Cradle of Bishops." Of course, Otey, the founder of the parish, must be counted as the first of them, but he was the only one until the new church came into being.

The Reverend James R. Winchester of Maryland became Rector in 1890, succeeding Mr. Graham. I remember him dimly from the time I was a little boy in Sunday School under Miss Mary Woods. He resigned in 1898 to become Rector of Ascension Parish, St. Louis; from there he went to Calvary Church in Memphis, later becoming Bishop of Arkansas. Mr. Winchester set as his goal in Nashville the erection of the new church. Mrs. W. E. Norvell recalls: "It was a stupendous task . . . because of the depression in the business world at that time, which early in 1893 culminated in the worst financial panic in the history of this city."²²

The old church site at Church and Sixth was advantageous-

21. Quoted by Mrs. William E. Norvell, "Removal of the Church, 1887-1894," in *Christ Church, Nashville*, p. 133.

22. Norvell, p. 134.

ly sold for \$25,000.00. Miraculously, in that time of the financial depression, the church was able to borrow \$20,000.00 from a Dr. Edwards of Union City. The mortgage was executed for him in the name of the Nashville Trust Company. The instrument is recorded in Book 184, Page 565, Recorder's Office of Davidson County, and it bears the signatures of Charles Mitchell, Senior Warden; J. L. Dismukes, Junior Warden; A. B. Payne, Secretary; and W. D. Gale, Treasurer. On Whitsunday in 1890, services were held in the new chapel. In 1891 the old bell was removed to the new chapel, and work began on the new church. During its building, services were held in the Jewish Temple, through the kindness of the Temple trustees. Christ Church will be indebted to them forever for that kindness.

Not until December 17, 1894, did the church open for services. I was then three years old, but I don't remember a thing about it. It emerged into my consciousness a few years later, when I was first sent to Sunday School. It was Mr. Winchester who sparked the seemingly insurmountable task of building the new church; hence, he should be known as "The Builder."

Something should be said of the church's architecture and artistry. A treatise could be written on those features of the great edifice as it stands today; only a brief sketch is possible here. The church is constructed of Sewanee sandstone, which was a gift from the University of the South, with Kentucky Bowling Green stone used as trim and for the tower. The construction of the tower was delayed almost sixty years. The whole design of church and tower was drawn by Francis Hatch Kimball of New York, who was noted for his fine creations in Gothic architecture.²³ Noteworthy is the

23. Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)* (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1970), p. 343.

fact that each of the capitals of the granite columns in the church is of different design, in keeping with a tradition from the early church of building with materials from destroyed pagan temples.

When in 1947 funds became available to erect the tower, the Vestry communicated with the Kimball firm, which recommended Russell Hart of Nashville, a communicant of Christ Church, as being fully qualified to execute the design from the detailed drawings and to supervise construction. Thus by happy chance the tower came into being under the guidance of one who possessed a deep feeling for it. The stone work was done under his supervision by the Nashville Stone Setting Company. The tower is a beautiful thing to behold and fittingly crowns the Gothic structure. A plaque in the tower vestibule tells the story.

1890

1947

This Tower is erected
To the Glory of God
A fund begun in 1929 was
Completed by a gift from
The Grandchildren of
Albert B. Payne
A member of the Building Committee
Of this Church in 1890 and a Vestryman
— In His Memory —
And in Honor of their Mother
Amy Payne Rose

It is appropriate here to identify those generous grandchildren of Albert Payne. They are Amy, Charles, Albert, Helen, Norvell, and David Rose. David is now Bishop of Southern Virginia.

Later, in 1949, the longed-for chimes were installed in the tower, and today their tones float beautifully over the bustling

area of government, education, and business at Ninth and Broad. They were the gift of Louise Bransford McGavock in memory of her father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. William S. Bransford.

The adornment and furnishings of the interior were under the skillful direction of Silas McBee, and many interesting stories relate thereto. One of those is that of Melchior Thoni. A legend of him arose and has persisted that as a Swiss woodcarver he hoped to earn enough money carving the altar to bring his wife and family to America, that the family set sail and were drowned at sea, and that he carved the pulpit as a memorial to them. The Reverend Ray Ferris repeated that dramatic story, he confided in me, to every confirmation class while he was Rector. This is a romantic but apocryphal version that has been embellished through the years in its telling. The true story, though devoid of tragedy, has much dramatic appeal. Melchior Thoni was raised a lad in Switzerland and shepherded his father's flocks to the high mountain pastures as the winter broke and summer came on. While on such remote vigils, he learned to carve. His father recognized his talent and put him under a competent instructor. He came to America in 1869, settled in Gruetli, a Swiss colony near Beersheba Springs, Tennessee, and married a Swiss girl who came over on the same ship with him. He had not left a wife and family in Switzerland. Disappointed at finding nothing but drudgery at Gruetli, he and his wife moved to meager lodgings in Sewanee, where he worked as a janitor for the University and did some carving in his spare time while thus engaged. He was later employed by the Edgefield and Nashville Manufacturing Company, which had the Christ Church contract. He was their top man. He is credited with having carved many exquisite pieces, but the most notable was the altar at Christ Church. It is told that while engaged on that mission he was recognized by Silas McBee as the

janitor and sometime woodcarver whom he had known at Sewanee, where McBee had been graduated in 1873. This mutual recognition was a dramatic incident, for each recognized the fine talents of the other. This version has been authenticated in by Melchior's daughters, married to respected German and Swiss residents of Nashville.²⁴

Owing to the high standard of artistry set by Silas McBee the church interior today is a veritable treasure house, which delights the eye of the observant visitor. Many appropriate memorials are among the church's treasures: the Sarah Abilone Nichol lectern, a creation of Silas McBee himself; the beautifully wrought bronze gates in the chancel rail, given by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Mitchell in memory of Mary Goodwin Mitchell, their young daughter; the triptych window in the upper east wall of the nave given in memory of the Leslie Warner children. This was the work of Louis Comfort Tiffany himself and required a whole year for its execution. It depicts the young Jesus with a lamb under his right arm and a lighted lantern in his left hand, with Joseph at his workbench on his right and Mary watching intently on his left. Most beautifully spectacular of all is the grouping on the south wall consisting of the Rose window with five lancets below and, under the balcony, four lancets representing the four evangelists. These respectively from left to right are in memory of A. H. Robinson, William E. Norvell, William Dudley Gale II, and Herbert Cushing Tolman.

I well recall all four. Dr. Tolman, a Greek scholar of Vanderbilt, filled the pulpit many times in the absence of the rector. Messrs. Robinson, Norvell and Gale were prominent in the life of the church and in the business community.

An amusing legend relates to Mr. Gale. While he was on duty one Sunday as head usher a visiting lady much moved

24. Nashville *Tennessean Magazine*, November 16, 1947.

began to shout. Mr. Gale quietly approached her. He whispered to her, "Madam, what is the matter?" "I've got religion," she replied. "Well Madam, let me assure you this is no place to show it!" Mr. Gale became my warm personal friend and was my mentor in the first years of my business life. His son, William Dudley Gale, Jr., became my intimate friend and preceded me as Senior Warden in 1947.

To my mind the capstone of all the adornments of the church is Melchior Thoni's altar, its central feature depicting on a bronze plaque the nativity and crucifixion, with the resurrection window in stained glass in the wall above, placed there as a memorial to George Augustine Washington. The legend reads "Born May 24, 1815—Died December 4, 1802." This is another of those idiosyncrasies wrought by an artisan's mistake or devilish fantasy which adorn many of the cathedrals of the Old World. Both this window and the Rose Window were given as memorials by the Washington children, following the death of Mr. Washington in 1892 and that of his wife, Jane Smith Washington, in 1894.

These memorials cast in beauty go on and on, including the stone in the wall of the east vestibule in honor of Charles Martin, placed there by his boys of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew.

Mr. Winchester built the church, but an ugly phantom of debt hung over its head. William T. Manning succeeded Mr. Winchester in October 1898. Owen Wilson recalls him thus:

[Mr. Manning] at once attacked the floating debt and began mission work in various parts of the city. . . . In 1901 the bishop [Bishop Gailor] in his annual address to the convention called Christ Church the leading parish of the diocese.

On Easter Day, 1902, cancelled bonds representing over \$21,000 were placed upon the altar.

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As a concrete evidence of the spiritual growth of the parish . . . two members of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew, [the late beloved] Prentice Pugh and John B. Cannon became candidates for holy orders. [What a blessing those two, persuaded by Mr. Manning to enter Sewanee, became in later years, the 1920s to 1950s.]

Dr. Manning resigned on March 15, 1903, to become Vicar of St. Agnes Chapel, Trinity Parish, New York. Shortly afterwards he became rector of old Trinity, and in a few years was elected Bishop of the Diocese of New York.

To those of us who knew his work during these nearly five strenuous years, it was no surprise to see under his direction the magnificent Cathedral of St. John the Divine nearing completion.²⁵

Where we labeled Mr. Winchester "The Builder," I venture to accord to the Reverend Mr. Manning the title of "The Energizer and Missioner." I was twelve years old when he left us, but his dynamic, intelligent personality left somewhat of an imprint upon me.

Manning was succeeded by the Reverend Frederick Focke Reese on Thanksgiving Day 1903. With no challenging church debt he served a faithful but unspectacular ministry until 1908, when he was elected Bishop of Georgia. In the earlier years of Mr. Reese's ministry I was a member of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew football team and dramatic society. Upon one occasion the Dramatic Society presented *The Merchant of Venice*—wigs, doublet and hose, and all—with Civil War swords borrowed from the state arsenal to be used as rapiers in the play. During a dress rehearsal someone suggested the happy thought of sending across the street to the Gambill & Andrews Saloon, located just where the entry to the Federal Building is now, for a bucket

25. Owen Wilson, M.D., "Recollections of Bishop Manning," in *Christ Church, Nashville*, pp. 145-146.

of beer. This to young imaginative minds was both refreshing and stimulating. Two of the actors, whose names I shall not recall, became engaged in a duel with the borrowed Civil War sabers. At the most furious height of the duel the saintly Mr. Charles Martin appeared and disengaged them, exclaiming: "Boys! Boys! and in the chapel! in the chapel!"

Next, in 1908, was the Reverend Henry Judah Mikell, coming to us from Charleston, South Carolina, where he had been at the same time Rector of the Church of the Holy Communion and Headmaster of the famous Porter Military Academy. He was an unusually cultured gentleman, gifted in music, the arts, and churchmanship and possessed of a most contagious energy. An honorary degree was conferred upon him by Peabody College. Under his leadership, it is said, Christ Church grew from a provincial, old-fashioned parish to a great cosmopolitan church, and its service changed in form from old-time low church to a beautiful, dignified but moderate ritual. While he was Rector, the famous Lord Bishop of Salisbury visited him and preached in Christ Church. Among his most worthwhile accomplishments were his securing the saintly Reverend J. Francis McCloud as assistant rector and his encouragement of F. Arthur Henkel, who had come to Christ Church in 1906 as organist and choirmaster. In 1917 Mr. Mikell was elected Bishop of Atlanta, and he died in that post in 1942. I attended his funeral as representative of Christ Church.

Bishop Mikell was succeeded by the Reverend Edward Ellerbe Cobbs, whose brief ministry was as inspiring as it was short. His spirituality conveyed itself to all members of the parish. Through his influence, after eighty-seven long years, the "Battle of the Pews" was ended by the abolition of owned pews and consequent freedom of all to their use. His health failed and he died July 31, 1920.

Mr. Cobbs was the War Rector. Eighty-six of the church's young men entered the service; five were killed, six wounded, and ten decorated. I had the honor of writing their story in the church history published in 1930.²⁶

Thence on through James Matthew Maxon, the efficient vigorous leader, who became Bishop of Tennessee. While Rector of Christ Church, Mr. Maxon received a signal honor from the Nashville Business Community: He was awarded the Kiwanis Silver Cup in token of having been acclaimed Nashville's First Citizen in Civic Service.

Maxon was succeeded as Bishop of Tennessee by Edmund Pendleton Dandridge, who served as Rector of Christ Church from 1923 until his elevation to the episcopacy in 1938. He of all I had known since my acquaintance with the church was closest to me. During his tenure as Rector Mr. Dandridge started the Tower Fund, which was completed by the Rose family in 1947, and he planted the seed from which St. George's Mission later came into being.

In 1938-39 occurred the short tenure of the Reverend Arthur Raymond McKinstry, brilliant and impressive. He became Bishop of Delaware.

Then came Tom Carruthers, a young man who grew and grew so that you could see his stature increasing as you watched. He left us to become Bishop of South Carolina—the ninth of the bishops produced from Christ Church.

Then Peyton Williams, with whom I was privileged to work as Senior Warden during the latter years of his ministry. He was a lovable young man, with whom it was ever pleasant to be associated. He was the first of the young moderns who weighted their ministry on the side of social service, he having been a social worker prior to his entering the priesthood.

26. "In the World War," in *Christ Church, Nashville*, pp. 178-197.

One Sunday afternoon my nap was interrupted by a telephone call from Mr. Williams acquainting me of this: Dr. William S. Quinland, distinguished Negro faculty member of Meharry Medical College and parishioner of Holy Trinity, had died. Holy Trinity had not the capacity to hold the large number who would attend his funeral. Would I consent to the funeral service's being held in Christ Church? Momentarily I shook my brains together out of sleep, thought of the slave Martha Armfield's confirmation by Bishop Otey and of the fact that in the whole history of the church a Negro had never been denied access to the Christ Church altar rail. In ten seconds or less I answered, "Yes." Looking back, I am grateful for the rightness of that decision.

Under Peyton Williams the tower was built and the chimes installed; St. George's Parish became a reality, and it became the painful duty of Mr. Williams to transfer to St. George's six hundred ninety-six communicants from his own parish, Christ Church.

After that, when Peyton left us for Christ and St. Luke's Church in Norfolk, Virginia, I take pride in the fact that mine was the first voice which spoke over the long-distance telephone to Ancon, Canal Zone, Panama, to the Reverend Raymond T. Ferris, inviting him to become Rector of Christ Church. His personality and spirituality engulfed the parish in a wave of well-being that has never been surpassed. He created Cheek Hall, which was made possible by gifts from Robert Cheek and his son Owsley. It was riven out of solid stone beneath the church, by an old Egyptian process, without firing an explosive. He was also responsible for Peyton's Alley, connecting the administrative offices, on the walls of which hang pictures of rectors and wardens in the history of the church.

In addition to those physical and spiritual accomplishments, Mr. Ferris accepted the challenge of rebuilding a parish

almost decimated by the 696 transfers to St. George's. In the midst of this he declined when elected Bishop of Central America, a call which must have appealed strongly to him, because he came to us after serving nine years as Dean of the Cathedral in Ancon, Canal Zone. Thus he honored a commitment to us of rebuilding our parish, which had been sorely reduced in number.

Finally, I rejoice to recall that he persuaded Peter Fyfe to become organist and choirmaster. Mr. Fyfe's talented wife, Lois, has ably assisted him. Under their leadership the music of the church has been brought to a high standard of beauty and grandeur. Its influence of fine music has spread into the community. Mr. Ferris left us to become Rector of Christ Church, Bronxville, New York.

In 1963 occurred a unique exchange of rectors through which, for one year, Mr. Ferris was Rector of St. John's Church, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, England, and the Reverend G. W. Curtis Thomas was Rector of Christ Church. This proved a happy experience for both. Appropriate memorials in each church attest to this exchange.

Then succeeding Mr. Ferris was a tall, handsome Texan, the Reverend John Lane Denson. He came to Christ Church from the post of Chaplain at Rice University; before entering the priesthood he had been a geologist. After the passage of a few years, Mr. Denson concluded that a type of ministry other than that of a parish would prove more congenial to him. He resigned and is presently engaged in a government post related to the public-assistance program. Also, he frequently supplies at various parishes and missions in the absence of their priests.

Members of the parish with one accord acknowledge a debt of gratitude to the Reverend J. Paschall Davis, who through periods of transition and crisis has kept the parish closely knit and continuing under a consecrated guidance

for which he has steadfastly refused to accept a stipend. A prominent lawyer turned priest, he is universally beloved.

In 1969 the first woman was elected to the Vestry. Miss Mollie W. Hirsch received this historic honor. No more worthy choice could have been made.

After Ray Ferris's departure I, because of my advanced years, declined to serve further in any official capacity and received the signal honor of being elected Honorary Senior Warden for life, resigning during the past year in the belief that the title did not conform to reality and constituted an unwise precedent.

This marks a good point for an ending of my story of Christ Church, Nashville. I love it dearly. As long as the Cross is upon the Altar and the Prayer Book in the pew I shall remain loyal. As a final capstone to this paean of praise for this great and beautiful old church I must enter this addendum to the record: Christ Church, the mother church, spread her wings over the whole of Nashville community. From her were born:

Holy Trinity

St. Anne's—Edgefield

Advent

St. Andrew's—West Nashville

St. Luke's Community House

St. John's—Old Hickory

St. Phillip's—Donelson

St. Matthias—Nolensville Pike—through the personal efforts of Alfred and Margaret Martin Sharp

St. James the Less—Madison

Church of Our Savior—Gallatin

St. Anselm's—Fisk and Meharry

St. Joseph of Arimathea—Hendersonville

St. Augustine's—Vanderbilt

St. George's—Belle Meade

In turn St. George's has founded

St. Bartholomew's—Granny White Pike

St. David's—West Meade

All of these now active in the life of the community were sprung from the seed planted in 1827 by James Hervey Otey, a Virginia lad who just by a happy chance came upon the Book of Common Prayer.

And now, in 1972, as a sort of blessed benediction and promise, we pray: Thank God for Eric Greenwood.

