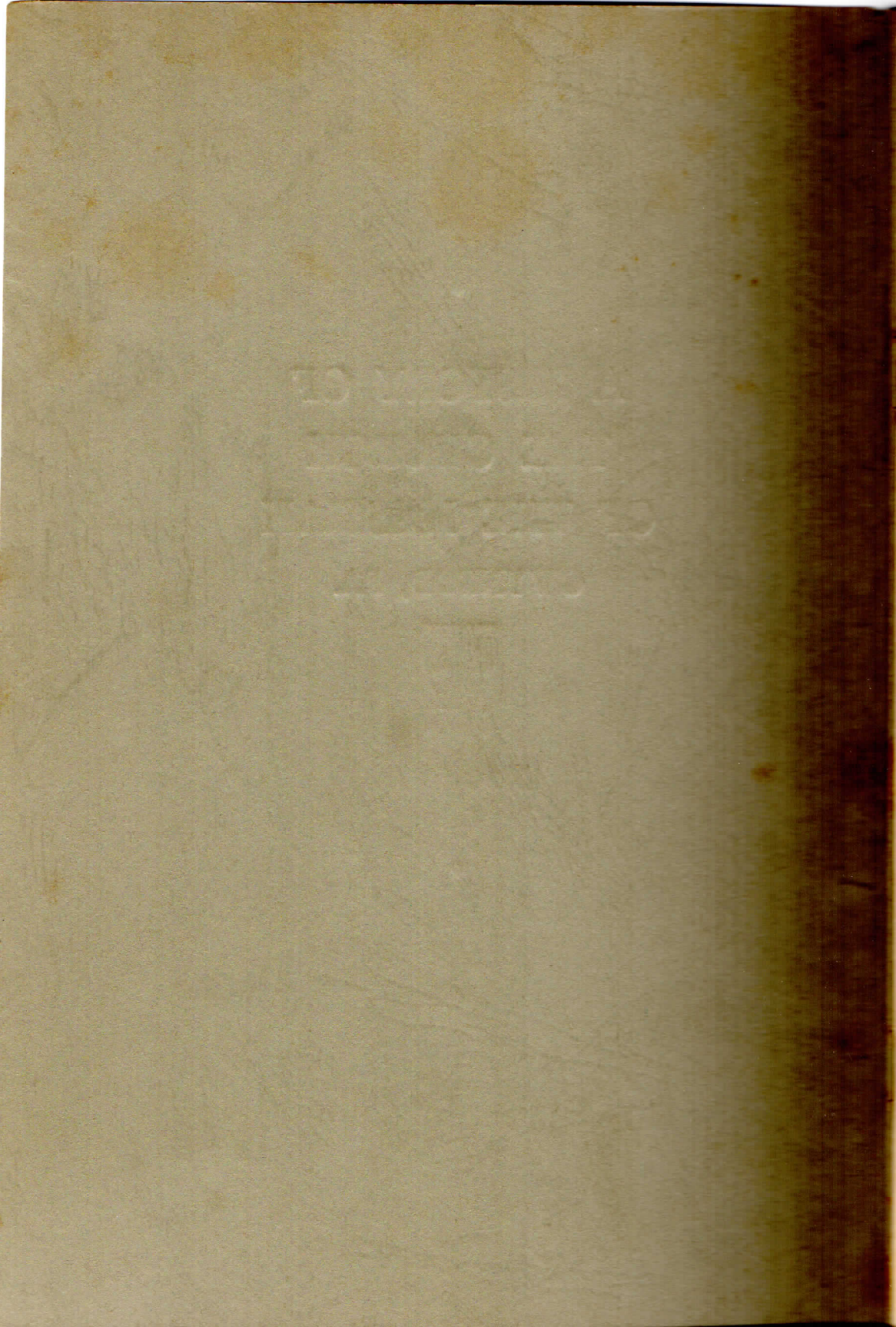
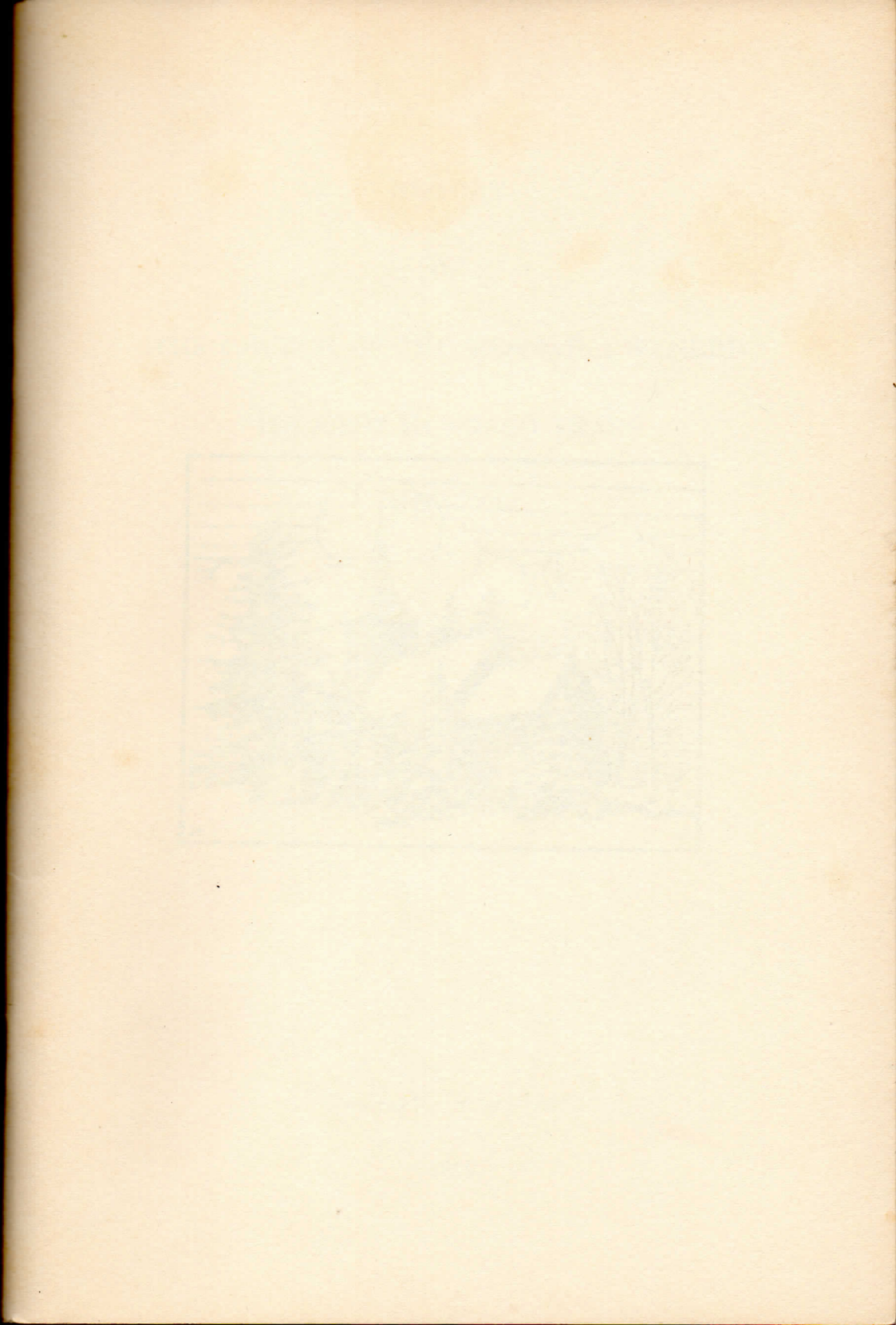


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A HISTORY OF
THE CHURCH
OF THE MESSIAH
GWYNEDD, PA.



1866-1966
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HISTORY
OF
THE CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH, GWYNEDD
ITS FIRST HUNDRED YEARS
1866 - 1966

by

NICHOLAS B. WAINWRIGHT

Gwynedd • Pennsylvania

1966



*The Very Rev. Robert M. Wainwright
Rector 1957—*

Preface

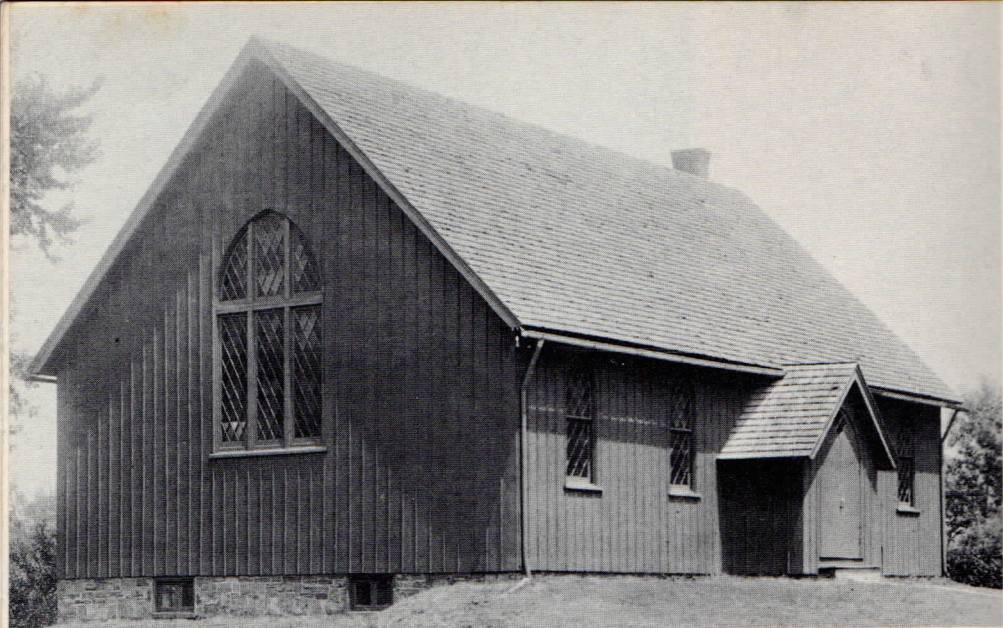
The Centennial Year in the life of any Parish is a natural time to take a careful look at the past, the present, and the future. To see what we have been, what we are, and what we might hope to be.

It is therefore most appropriate to begin this year by looking back at our rich heritage and history. To get a clearer understanding and appreciation of the work that was done by our founders and predecessors. What did they hope to accomplish by planting this parish seed and helping it to take root and grow?

Needless to say, looking at the past is only the first step. No matter how glorious any institution's past may be, we are evaluated in terms of the present; the degree to which we now fulfill our commission as Christ's witnesses in the world. We look upward for His direction and inspiration, without which everything is hollow and empty. Finally, we look forward to the future, armed with the Love of God and the Gospel of Christ, to labor in His Vineyard.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert M. Wainwright". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.



The Parish House and Sunday School, built in 1899 behind the Church on the present graveyard, was torn down in 1928.

The Church in 1905 showing the original belfry.



The Early Years

FROM ITS FOUNDING by Welsh immigrants in 1698, Gwynedd Township in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, remained for more than two hundred years a sparsely-settled, agricultural area, which, in 1891, was divided into two townships — Upper Gwynedd and Lower Gwynedd. Throughout most of this period, a large percentage of Gwynedd's residents were Quakers; others were of German background; very few were Episcopalians. In fact, in all Montgomery County there were only seven Episcopal churches by 1860, and the nearest of these to Gwynedd was St. Thomas' at Whitemarsh.

The coming of the railroad heralded a new day for the farmers of Gwynedd, whose way of life had seemingly been impervious to change for generations. In July, 1855, the North Pennsylvania Railroad was opened as far as Gwynedd Station, later to be known as Gwynedd Valley Station, and Philadelphians soon became aware of the attractions of the sleepy, tranquil Gwynedd countryside. Farmers began to take in summer boarders who sought escape from the heat of the city; several summer inns were built; some people of means purchased country estates. Such were the first steps which would in time lead to the conversion of farms to suburbs, to ensnaring Gwynedd within the maw of a voraciously expanding Greater Philadelphia.

For the benefit of summer visitors who were Episcopalians, The Rev. Samuel Edwards began holding Episcopal services in 1861 at Franklinville, which was located on what is now Route 202 about half way between the Skippack and Sumneytown Pikes. Edwards also conducted services at the residence of Rodolphus Kent near Gwynedd Station. In such activities and aspirations lay the seed which The Rev. Henry R. Smith, who held services in June, 1866, in a room over a stable, succeeded in cultivating by organizing a church the following December; and in June, 1867, Rodolphus Kent, Andrew J. Lewis, Henry R. Smith, George C. Thomas, Henry P. Rutter, and Samuel W. Hoffman united to incorporate the Church. The selection of its name doubtless reflects the fact that the Church was born in the same month as our Saviour.

The influence of summer people in founding Messiah is suggested by the first organizational meeting which was held on December 11, 1866, in Philadelphia at the office of H. P. Rutter, a coal company executive. It is apparent that there were but few people involved at first and that the early officers and vestry were virtually self-appointed. The Rev. Samuel Edwards, formerly of Christ Church, Media, was selected by the Bishop to take charge and served as rector, continuing services at Franklinville Hall until 1868, after which they were conducted on the second floor of the Gwynedd School, which was located on the State Road, just below Gwynedd Corners, where the inn stood, and opposite to where the Plymouth Road wound off toward Gwynedd Station.

The year 1868 not only saw services established at Gwynedd but it was also notable for other important steps in the Church's history. The first Parish meeting, of which there is record, was held in April and six vestrymen were elected — Jacob Bowman, Rodolphus Kent, John Preston, J. J. Robinson, William J. Smith, and Christian D. Warfel. Through the application of this vestry, the Church was admitted into the Diocese of Pennsylvania. Moreover, two acres of land adjoining the schoolhouse were purchased at two hundred and fifty dollars an acre as the site for a church building, the money for this purchase being raised by a fair held

in Franklinville Hall. The forward-looking vestrymen even agreed to solicit the sum of two hundred and fifty dollars as an annual stipend for the rector, but that much money could not be found. The Rev. Edwards can scarcely be criticized for pressing the matter. He wanted to be paid what was due him. This brought on the first of many subsequent crises, all of which stemmed from the same source — want of funds to sustain the Church of the Messiah.

Vestryman Jacob Bowman bluntly told Edwards that it would indeed be a difficult matter to raise more money for him because Edwards had offended so many churchgoers by his "unjust remarks at the sale of the fair goods." Edwards replied that he had received several calls and would be obliged to leave, a course in which the vestry encouraged him. The rector departed with good grace, preaching his farewell sermon on July 11, 1868, and exhorting the congregation to maintain services by having a lay reader until such time as a minister could be procured. Vestryman Warfel, who also served as Rector's Warden, was appointed for this purpose by the Bishop. In 1869, Warfel was relieved by Charles E. Fessenden, the first of a series of young divinity students who came to preach on Sundays for a fee of two dollars.

Although the want of a church building was keenly felt, the want of money to erect it was an all-persuasive argument against hasty action. The grass on the church lot was sold annually for five dollars in the meanwhile. However, the site where the church was to stand was established in the center of the lot, sixty feet from the road, the church to face in the direction of the station with the burial ground behind it. Finally, on Saturday, August 27, 1870, ground was broken, the ladies of the Parish turning the first sods. Members of the congregation then dug the cellar excavation and furnished the stone for the foundation walls free of cost. The walls themselves were built by George R. Shaeff, a contractor from Blue Bell, and were boarded over for the winter.

The next year, a contract was signed with Shaeff for the erection of a church according to a plan submitted by Charles M. Burns, a Philadelphia architect, the agreement being worked out at Gwynedd Station in the office of station master and Rector's

Warden Thomas W. Clark. The vestry customarily met at Clark's office. On August 10, 1871, the cornerstone for the edifice was laid in the presence of Bishop W. B. Stevens, The Rev. Henry C. Pastorius, who now had temporary charge of the church, and "a numerous congregation." The form of this service was neatly printed free of charge by N. Guilbert, a Philadelphia printer who summered in the vicinity. Shortly afterwards, a fair held by the ladies of the Church raised \$423 which helped make possible the first payment to Shaeff of \$1,000.

The Rev. Pastorius soon found himself in the same fix from which The Rev. Edwards had fled. His salary of three hundred dollars was not forthcoming. The Board of Missions of the Diocese was appealed to for help, and from 1871 contributed annually to the minister's stipend for many years. With the financial situation somewhat improved, Mr. Pastorius, who had previously served as a lay reader and later as a deacon at Gwynedd, became the regular minister on November 8, 1871. His terms were pretty steep — a salary of six hundred dollars and the summer collections — but at least the Church now had a rector, for he agreed to enter on his duties just as soon as the vestry provided him with his surplice and stole. Although the Church was not yet completed, on Christmas Day Pastorius conducted the first service to be held within its walls.

The interior of the building was finished the following spring and was lighted by evil-smelling coal oil lamps. During the summer months, when the Sunday collections were entirely turned over to the rector, he was required to pay for the oil. The ultimate cost of the building was a little over five thousand dollars, part of which was raised by a mortgage in order to pay off Shaeff. The Church's other indebtedness was reduced by sums donated by John Gilbert, a Philadelphia wholesale druggist and coal mine owner who owned a large summer place on Meeting House Road. In 1876, Mrs. Gilbert presented "a very sweet toned" four-hundred-pound bell, which "could be heard at a great distance, summoning worshippers to service." The following year, Joseph

Hopkins, the Gilberts' gardener and caretaker, became a member of the vestry. The Gilberts appear to have been the first summer family of means to take a constructive interest in the Church.

In these years of the mid 1870's, only twenty families attended services, but the Messiah's Sunday School attracted an average of fifty pupils, and there had been frequent baptisms and several confirmations. After the death of station master Thomas W. Clark, vestry meetings were held in the schoolhouse next to the Church for a time. So damp and cold was the Church in winter that the vestry avoided it as much as possible, even going so far as to hold meetings during two winters in a freight car at the station before being allowed once more to use the station itself. Most of their deliberations were over finances, the paying of debts and the minister's perpetually delinquent salary. A ladies Mite Society, founded in 1875, contributed frequently to the cause, but amounts raised were always small and a Sunday collection seldom took in as much as ten dollars. In the spring of 1875, the future looked grim to The Rev. Pastorius, who had been unpaid for months. He resigned in a gracious manner, concluding his remarks with the statement to the vestrymen, as recorded in their minutes, "that he would never forget us in his Prayers."

Thanks largely to a fund raising junket — an excursion to Long Branch in the summer of 1877, planned by vestryman Alexander Miller, who was a conductor for the North Penn Railroad — enough money was raised to pay off the mortgage the following year. Being free of debt, the Church could now be consecrated, the great event taking place on May 2, 1878. Assisted by a number of ministers, including former rectors Edwards and Pastorius, Bishop Stevens preached a fine sermon, using as his text the lines from the Twenty-eighth Chapter of the Book of Genesis: "And he was afraid and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven." The Bishop did not mean to imply that the pretty stone church filled to its one-hundred-seat capacity had a horrible appearance, but that as a House of God it was awesome.



The Rectory, built in 1886, now Patterson House, as it appeared in 1905.

The triumph of the little Parish in establishing itself and freeing itself from debt was well described by the *Norristown National Defender*, which reported the achievement of the people of Gwynedd on May 4, 1878. "The Episcopal Church of the Messiah, located on the state road just west of Sumneytown Pike, has been established nearly twelve years and is one of the small number of successful churches that owe their prosperity not to riches, not to influential friends, not to sudden windfalls, but simply to

hard work and the gritty and unweariable spirit of the members. They worked along with plodding industry and dogged determination, never wavering, never faltering, and the fruit of their labor is shown in a church free of debt, the last penny of the mortgage having been paid on the third of April."

At the time of its consecration the Church was under the temporary charge of Henry Hague, a candidate for deacon's orders. Its communicants had increased to forty; attendance at services, which were held every Sunday morning and evening, attracted an average of fifty people; and the Sunday School, conducted at the schoolhouse, numbered sixty-three pupils under the care of six teachers. The time had obviously come when the presence of a full-time clergyman was more necessary than ever. Consequently, the vestry applied for one through the Board of Missionaries. As a result of this effort, The Rev. J. R. Duganne accepted the rectorship on July 11, 1878. He proved to be a man of energy and imagination, but despite fund raising festivals the

Converted to Church School use in 1957, Patterson House today provides additional classrooms for a Church School with more than 600 pupils.



Church was barely able to pay his salary. On June 30, 1879, the Parish was in the black, thanks to seventy cents in the treasury, yet, despite this unusual prosperity, Mr. Duganne resigned on October 12.

Various ministers helped out by occupying the pulpit until February, 1880, when The Rev. John G. Furey took over and served for three years. During this period, sheds were built to protect the parishioners' carriages, and there was some slight agitation in favor of erecting a parsonage. Unfortunately, the Church was poorer than ever. The Gilbert family had withdrawn from the neighborhood and the only summer person willing to help substantially was William M. Singerly, the spectacular publisher of *The Public Record*. Singerly had recently purchased large tracts of land at Gwynedd and took such pride in the cattle he raised at his Evergreen Farm on the Swedesford Road that he had won for himself the title of "The Holstein King of Pennsylvania." He contributed money to the Church and provided quarters for the minister. Nevertheless, Messiah's condition was so unhealthy that on December 6, 1882, a vestryman stressed the necessity of doing something to revive it: "he stated that the Church had fallen away greatly in attendance and was still falling away." After this complaint, The Rev. Furey announced that he would resign his charge next Easter.

On his departure in April, 1882, The Rev. H. K. Boyer was employed at five dollars a Sunday until his permanent services as rector could be secured. Shortly after this, Mr. Boyer was ordained and became the regular minister. Meanwhile, John R. Norris was engaged as organist at an annual salary of fifty dollars, and was soon afterwards elected to the vestry.

Mr. Boyer was full of youthful enthusiasm. The Church needed repairs. He noted many improvements that should be undertaken. Informing an apparently befuddled vestry that he required a free hand in this program, he started spending money hand over fist. The vestry could not ascertain from him what his improvements were going to cost. Becoming desperate, the vestrymen succeeded in cornering the rector and demanded an account-

ing. "Mr. Boyer's demeanour," recorded the secretary, "was far from courteous toward the vestry, avoiding most questions asked him, telling the members they were interfering with business that they had no right to, in other words ignoring them altogether." After some conversation with representatives of the Parish, the Bishop decided that Mr. Boyer should return to the seminary to finish his studies.

Former Rectors Henry C. Pastorius and J. R. Duganne officiated on Sundays after Mr. Boyer's departure in September, 1884, until November, when The Rev. Robert L. B. Winskill accepted a call. Not until March of the following year were the former rector's improvement costs liquidated, "thus wiping out a debt that the vestry had no say in contracting, but that had been saddled on the Church by their late minister." Understandably, in the light of all their financial woes, the vestrymen were a little fidgety about their new clergyman when he started a fund to build a rectory. In 1885, an acre was purchased next to the church for three hundred dollars as the site of a parsonage, and a building committee was appointed.

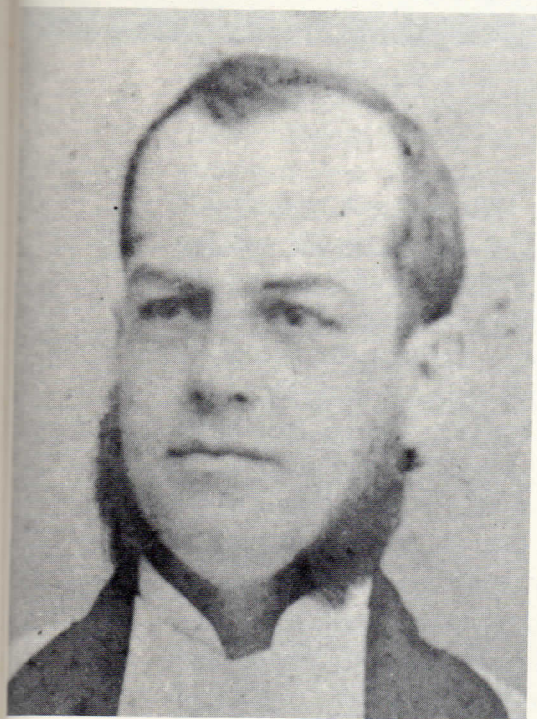
As chairman of this committee, Francis D. Morley had a most trying time. Never was there such haggling over plans and estimates, seldom had vestry meetings been so noisy. In disgust, Morley repeatedly resigned from the vestry, but his colleagues would never let him go. Eventually, a frame rectory was built by Henry C. Bender at a cost of \$2,750, but its completion came after the resignation of Mr. Winskill, who retired because of bad health on August 1, 1886.

The first minister to reside in the Rectory was thus The Rev. John Henry Burton, who took over in November at the handsome salary of one thousand dollars. In addition to his duties at Messiah, Mr. Burton was also responsible for missionary work at Lansdale. The Rev. Furey of Messiah had conducted the first Episcopal services held at Lansdale in the autumn of 1880. About a dozen people attended these services until they were terminated by the canceling of the afternoon train to Lansdale, which deprived Mr. Furey of his transportation. However, in the winter of 1884-

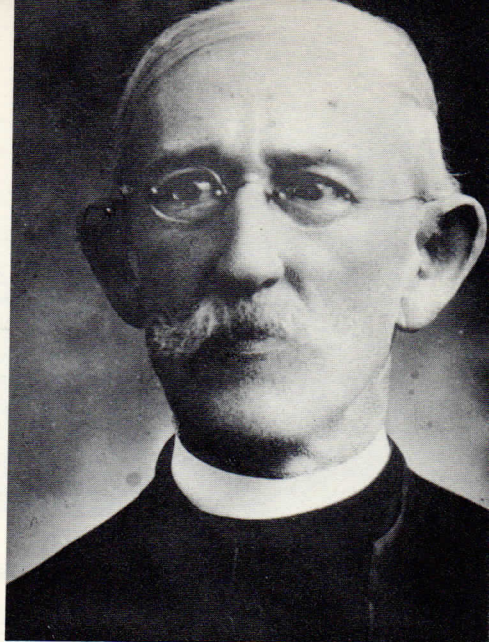
1885 The Rev. Winskill established a mission in Lansdale and held services at Freed's Hall and in private houses. But again the work was interrupted, this time because of Mr. Winskill's illness. Nothing more was done until August, 1885, when the vestry of Messiah agreed to accept a deed for a piece of ground at Lansdale and hold it in trust until the mission there could erect a place of worship. There was some thought that in uniting Gwynedd with Lansdale sufficient funds would be generated to pay the minister's stipend, and in 1886 the vestry agreed to have its rector hold Sunday morning services at Gwynedd and afternoon services at Lansdale. Generously, they voted that "evenings be let to the Minister's own disposal." Seeds of trouble lurked in this agreement, as there were those on the vestry who resented the rector's absence from Gwynedd, but at least Holy Trinity Mission was incorporated and was tied to Messiah not only by the minister but by a joint vestryman, Dr. M. M. Gilmer.

So that Mr. Burton could make the trip to Lansdale, the congregation there presented him with a horse and carriage and a stable was built near the Rectory. Something in the way in which this was done seems to have caused ill will between the vestry and the clergyman. But, at any rate, thanks largely to the dedicated efforts of the ladies' Helping Hand Society, the \$1,900 mortgage on the Rectory was paid off in 1891.

This was a momentous year for Messiah; all sorts of things happened. At the vestry election, the right of women to vote was the big question. William J. Smith, vestryman and secretary of the vestry since its formal organization in 1868, stated that he would object to any and all votes cast by women. The election followed with the victorious vestrymen each receiving about twenty-five votes and the horrified Smith only four. He wrote his own valedictory in the Minute Book, commenting on his faithful services and the fact that since April 25, 1868, he had missed but three meetings. He then retired, and it subsequently took hints of legal action to obtain from him certain papers important to the Church.

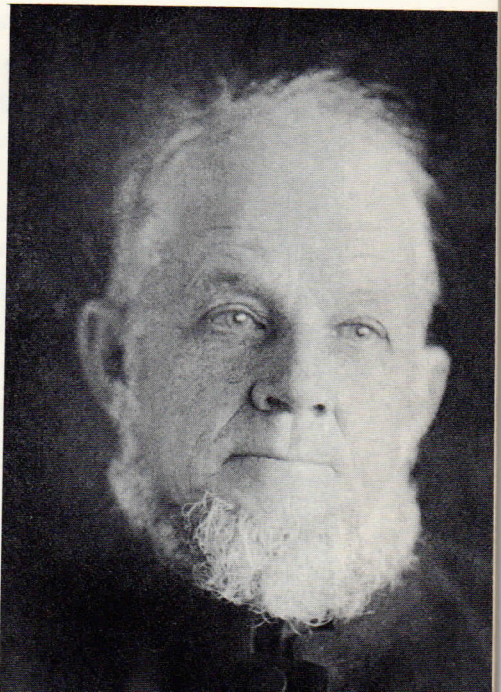


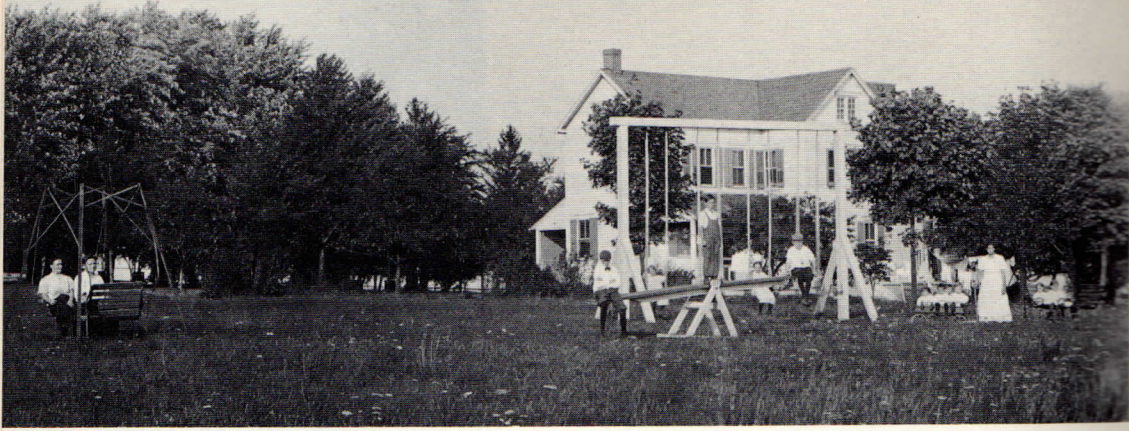
*The Rev. John Henry Burton
Rector 1886-1895*



*The Rev. Henry Clay Pastorius
Rector 1872-1875*

*The Rev. John H. Converse
Rector 1895-1904*





The present Curate's House in 1910. Known as Rainbow House before becoming part of the Church property, it was once a home for children of prison inmates.

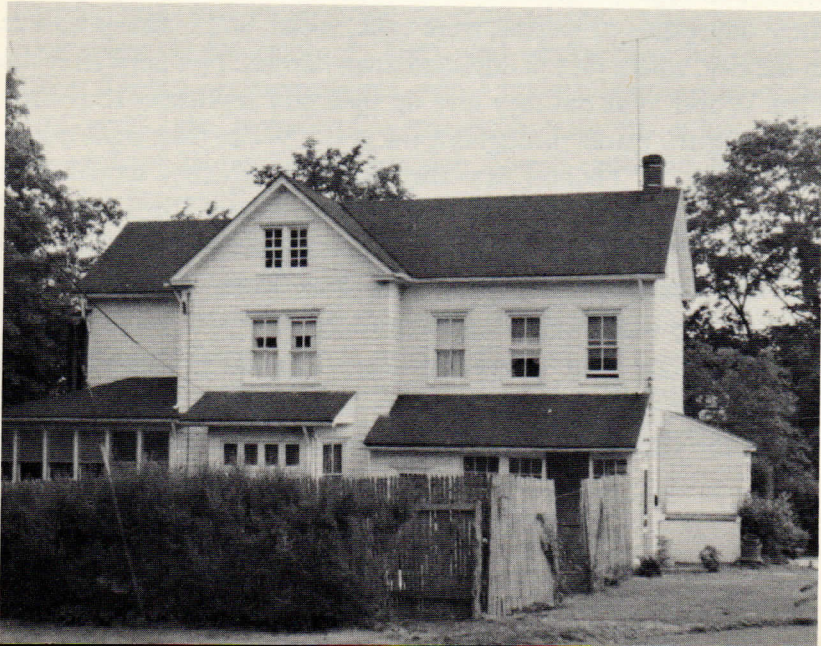
If not a happy year for Smith, 1891 was not altogether a felicitous one for the rector either. The reasons for his unpopularity with the vestry are obscure. Perhaps he was paying too much attention to Holy Trinity Church at Lansdale, whose cornerstone had been laid the previous June. Perhaps the size of his salary was an irritant. Adequate funds were not available to pay it and the Ladies Endowment Society had been asked to contribute. At all events, Mr. Burton's Lansdale activities were restricted in the summer of 1891 to preaching there only on the morning of the last Sunday in each month, and only then if Lansdale supplied his vacancy by either a clergyman or a lay reader.

Matters seemed to go from bad to worse, until, on the last day of 1891, the vestry, meeting in a store in North Wales, composed a letter to the rector calling for his resignation: "It has been for a long time a source of regret to the vestry of the Church to see that the interest manifested by the congregation has been continuously falling off and that it has become impossible to obtain sufficient funds to meet the requirements of the Church." The truth of the matter was that the churches at Gwynedd and Lansdale had so little support that both were about to shut down.

There were those in the congregation who did not approve of the vestry's discharging Mr. Burton. A Parish meeting was held on January 31, 1892, under the leadership of William H. Harding,

who presided, and Colonel Tattnall Paulding. By a vote of fifteen to twelve the vestry was overruled and at the following election in April half of the old vestry was thrown out. Among the new members were Harding, who became Accounting Warden, and Colonel Paulding, who was chosen Rector's Warden. These two now controlled the affairs of the Messiah. Their approval of Mr. Burton is manifest for he was granted a summer vacation of two weeks, the first vacation yet allowed by the Church. But Mr. Burton's triumph proved to be only temporary. Three years later, the vestry again demanded his resignation, which became effective as of October 1, 1895. The fact that four members of the vestry resigned during the negotiations which led to the rector's departure — it was necessary to call in the Bishop to smooth things out — suggests that the vestrymen were not in complete accord. However, the departure of The Rev. Burton to greener pastures and the vacancies created by the withdrawing vestrymen were in the interest of the Church. Mr. Burton's place was to be taken by the first rector of whom everyone heartily approved, and into the vestry vacancies were to step men of a different stamp than heretofore, men who were to provide the leadership and financial backing that had been so noticeably wanting in the past.

The Curate's House today. Purchased in 1956, this house served as the Rectory from 1957 until 1961.



Stability and Progress

THE VESTRY MEETING of July 3, 1895, at which an agreement was reached about The Rev. Burton's resignation and at which four new vestrymen were elected, represents a turning point in the history of the Church of the Messiah. Having depended in the past on the inadequate financial support of the relatively few year-round members of the Parish, the Church now virtually delivered the conduct of its affairs into the hands of leading members of the Gwynedd-Penllyn-Spring House summer community. The influx of well-to-do Philadelphians into these areas had recently accelerated. Many a stately mansion had just been erected and many farms acquired as countryseats. The owners of these impressive properties were civic, social, and business leaders in the city, where they maintained town houses. Not until after the First World War did they give up their city residences to occupy their country places throughout the year. When they came out in the 1890's, St. Thomas' was the church which they would have preferred to attend, but many miles of indifferent roads separated them from St. Thomas'. Close at hand was the Church of the Messiah which seemed about ready to close its doors. The newcomers decided they would keep those doors open.

The four new vestrymen were Charles E. Ingersoll and Henry McKean Ingersoll, brothers and members of a family to which the Church was to owe so much; Francis E. Bond, whose

large house, subsequently owned by another vestryman, Roland L. Taylor, is now occupied by the Sisters of Mercy; and Colonel Tattnall Paulding, a previous member of the vestry. Paulding became Rector's Warden once again; Harding continued as Accounting Warden; and Paulding, Harding, and Charles E. Ingersoll were appointed a committee to carry on the work of the Parish in the absence of a rector. It is noteworthy that for many years after 1895 most vacancies on the vestry were filled by men like the Ingersolls and Bond, Philadelphians of substantial means who had recently acquired summer places near the Church. However, following the election of 1895, the membership of the vestry tended to stay remarkably intact. When deaths and removals caused an occasional vacancy, it was promptly filled by other leading members of the summer community — men like Henry B. Coxe, Dr. Norton Downs, Henry B. Bartow, Judge Charles Francis Gummey, Pemberton Hollingsworth, Charles P. Fox, T. McK. Downs, Alfred A. Biddle, Irvin King, and Roland L. Taylor. The experience and ability of these men proved valuable at a time when Messiah's membership was still small. Since they virtually supported the Church, their leadership in its affairs was never challenged by the congregation, people with whom the vestrymen had actually little in common.

If the new vestry was able to provide the material means to keep the Church functioning, The Rev. John H. Converse was equally proficient at restoring its spiritual life. The new rector took office on December 1, 1895, and served until his death in 1904. Unlike his predecessors, Mr. Converse was a man of mature years, the picture of a patriarch with his white beard. Throughout his ministry at Messiah, he had the warm backing of Colonel Tattnall Paulding, the Rector's Warden.

Colonel Paulding has been freely recognized as the saviour of the Church of the Messiah, for without his efforts and guidance there is little question but that the Church would have closed in Mr. Burton's time. It was in part the Colonel's activity as lay reader during a period of two years, in which he read services on Sunday mornings and afternoons at Gwynedd and Lansdale, that

enabled the two churches to gather strength, to encourage their congregations with new life, and to secure resident rectors. The son of Admiral Hiram Paulding, the Colonel had served with distinction as a cavalry officer throughout the Civil War. Later he engaged in the insurance business in Philadelphia and became president of the Delaware Insurance Company. For some years he was a vestryman at St. Luke's Church in Germantown, but in 1890 he purchased property at North Wales and became interested in the Church of the Messiah, in whose annals he will stand as one of its most remarkable leaders.

The Converse years brought a number of physical improvements. The Rectory was enlarged by several rooms, a bath room, and a water closet. Since the introduction of plumbing to the building called for a different type of water supply, a new well was dug and a windmill erected for the purpose. So much improved were finances, that the payment of the rector's nine-hundred-dollar salary was handled with relative ease. In fact, the Convocation was informed in 1898 that the Parish no longer expected an appropriation for its support. Now it could paddle its own canoe.

With Converse winning friends and the congregation growing, additional hitching posts were required. The rector's barn was enlarged for the better accommodation of his cow, two horses, and carriages; and, in 1899, a frame Parish House was erected behind the Church at a cost of \$1,928. Throughout the years, new friends were generous with gifts. Mrs. Bond presented a beautiful new organ; Mr. C. O. Beaumont gave the Parish House its furnace; the chancel was tiled in 1900 with a gift of money; Charles E. Ingersoll replaced the pews and had the interior of the Church wainscoted; Henry McKean Ingersoll provided funds for the decoration of its interior walls and ceiling; and Mr. Bond enclosed the Rectory with a handsome iron fence.

The death of Mr. Converse in his sixty-second year on May 5, 1904, was a sad blow. A tablet was erected in the Church to his memory, and the vestry recorded that "Mr. Converse was a man of high culture, sound learning, wide reading, deep spirituality

and true courage, ever seeking to lead his people to higher things." As a later minister was to observe, "To Mr. Converse is due that constructive work which cannot be seen on the surface. He made the Episcopal Church more popular in the neighborhood among the people who did not understand it, and the seeds he scattered are still bearing fruit among us."

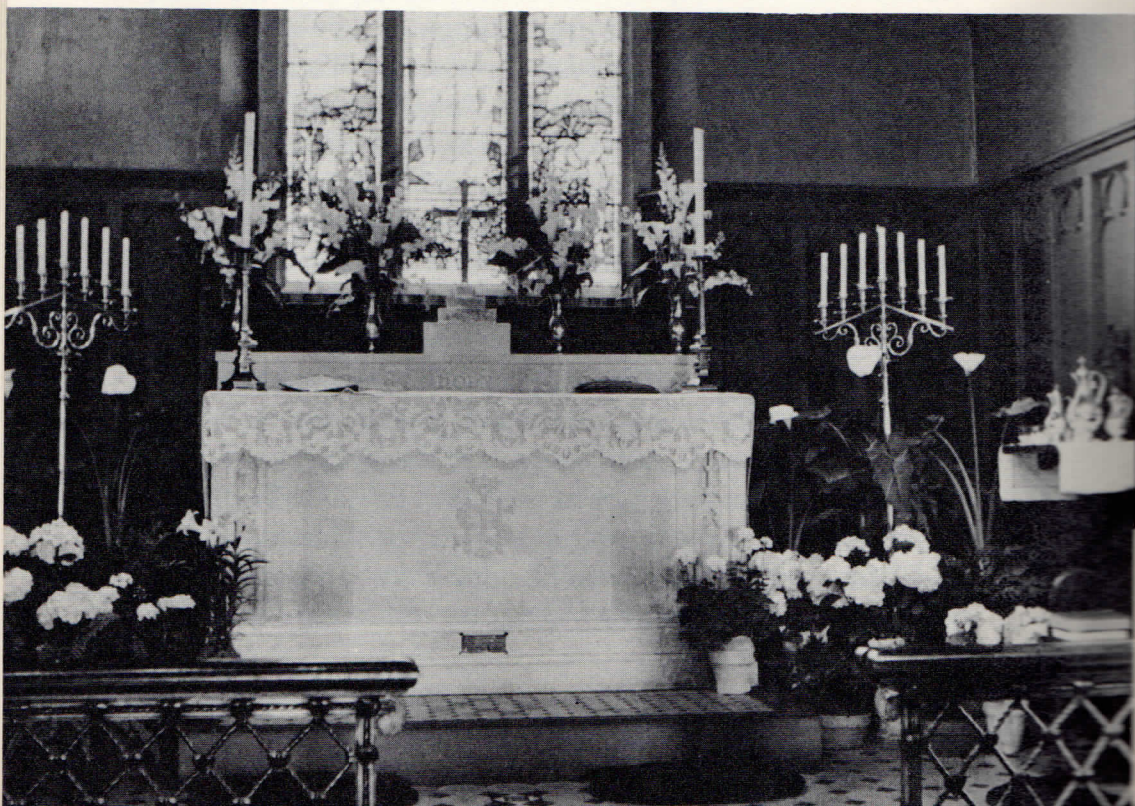
On July 3, 1904, The Rev. William Poyntell Kemper, formerly assistant minister of St. James's, Philadelphia, became rector at a salary of one thousand dollars and the promise of occasional bonuses, such as had been given Mr. Converse. Mr. Kemper was evidently an instant success. When he prepared to depart on his honeymoon several months after his arrival, the vestry presented him with a wedding present of two hundred dollars, noting that "Coming among us as an entire stranger, he has already secured the warm regards and confidence of the people of his charge." His salary was soon raised to twelve hundred dollars.

During Mr. Kemper's ministry, several important improvements were made to the Church. In 1906, it was enlarged by the addition of the north transept for the accommodation of the choir, and a new organ was installed. In addition, a splendid large stained glass double window was placed in the transept. These gifts, donated in memory of Julia Biddle (1819-1896) by the Biddle family, whose summer place was on the Plymouth Road in Gwynedd Valley, were the most princely the Church had yet received. It is related that the Biddles entrusted the funds to pay for their benefaction to a close relative. He invested the money and promptly lost it all. Fortunately, the relative was a person of means and made good the loss.

The death of Colonel Paulding the following March resulted in a memorial to him—a new vestry room, given by members of the congregation. All in all, these were prosperous times, as evidenced by the necessity of adding new carriage sheds in 1908. To protect the peace of mind of the carriage horses, the rector placed a sign at the entrance to the grounds warning automobiles to keep off. However, progress was not entirely frowned on, for the oil lamps which



Two interior pictures of the Church as it was in 1943. Later in 1956, the Church was enlarged and the chancel rearranged. The pulpit and lectern were reversed. The communion rail was lengthened. The chancel was shortened in order to permit additional seating in the nave. The gospel transept was added and the choir stalls were moved back into the transepts.



lighted the Church had had their day. In 1910, Mrs. H. B. Bartow and Miss Elizabeth Smith donated an acetylene gas plant with the necessary fixtures in honor of their mother, Mrs. Albert Smith. About this time, too, the picturesque windmill at the Rectory was removed following the introduction of a water line from the Gwynedd Inn. "The water in the house can now be used for drinking purposes, and comfort greatly increased," was the grateful comment of the rector.

Another innovation during Mr. Kemper's time was the publication of a leaflet which came out about nine times a year. Started in 1905, the *Kalendar of the Church of the Messiah* was full of Parish and Church news, pleas for funds, and spiritual advice. It is a pity that no one has evidently retained a complete file of this interesting source of information. The last number of the *Kalendar* held in the Parish archives is dated November, 1922.

So successful was Mr. Kemper in guiding both the spiritual and material aspects of the Church that when he tendered his resignation in February, 1911, preparatory to accepting a call to Trinity Church, Hewletts, Long Island, it was accepted with regret, a courtesy not previously noted in cases of prior resignations. Times had changed when the vestry of Messiah could speed a parting rector on his way with such words as "We deem it a privilege to have been under his care and Christian guidance and part from him with the deepest sorrow."

Mr. Kemper was succeeded by The Rev. Benjamin N. Bird, an able, dynamic young man who took office on June 11, 1911, at a salary of \$1,500. By this time, the Church property had been increased by a house for the sexton, which had cost \$1,474. The composition of the vestry had remained nearly constant, except that Henry B. Coxe had taken over as Rector's Warden and had ceased being secretary to the vestry, which was a mercy as his handwriting left much to be desired.

Mr. Bird lost no time in trying to build up Church membership. Although a trolley line connected North Wales with Gwynedd, he noted that relatively few North Wales people came

to his Church. He therefore started a mission at North Wales and held Sunday afternoon services in the Odd Fellows' Building. Sunday School was also instituted at the North Wales Mission and attracted thirty children, a favorable contrast to the forty-five pupils who attended Sunday School at the Church itself. Nevertheless, the North Wales effort proved unsuccessful, for, in November, 1911, Mr. Bird reported: "Services at North Wales on Sunday afternoons will be discontinued. The experiment has failed. It was thought that if an evening service were given to the Church people in North Wales some might attend who did not come regularly to Gwynedd. It is evident that there is no wish for such a service among our people there."

The North Wales Sunday School was also discontinued and funds were raised to provide free coach service — some parents did not trust the trolley — to bring the North Wales children to Gwynedd. The coach, referred to after 1916 as the "auto-bus," continued to run until 1920, when, inflation having doubled its cost, the facility was discontinued.

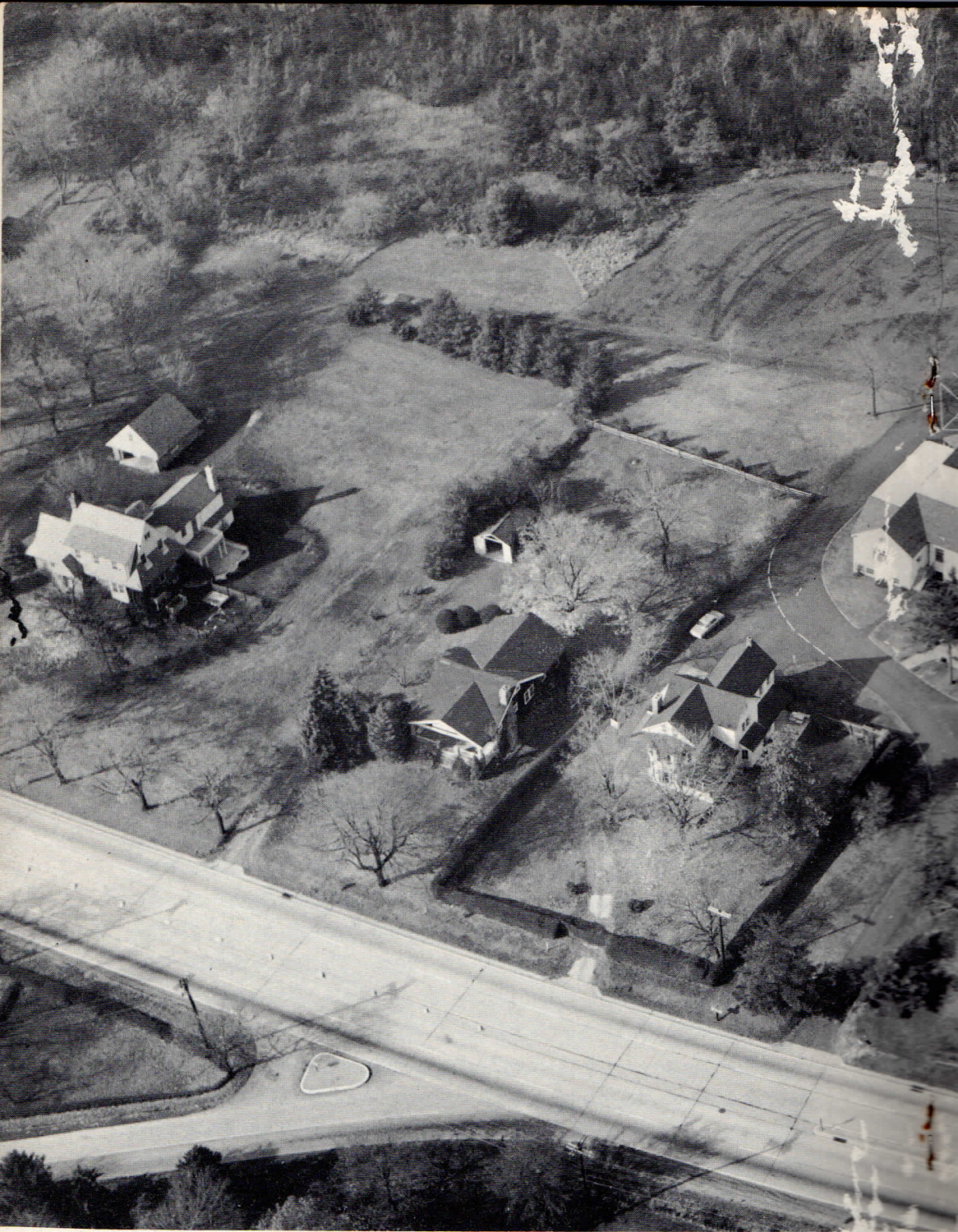
Not discouraged by the failure of his evening service to attract the people of North Wales, Mr. Bird tried another approach. In 1914, he established the St. John's Guild of the Church of the Messiah, whose purpose was to arouse interest and enthusiasm for the Church in North Wales, where it conducted "Cottage Services" in people's houses, instituted a series of Bible classes, and contributed generously to Parish expenses.

The Helping Hand Society continued to be the oldest Parish organization. It was composed of ladies who took orders for sewing aprons, dusters, dish towels, and dust caps with the object of making money with which to keep the Rectory in repair. Other organizations included the Altar Guild, presided over for many years by Miss Jeannie H. Ingersoll, the Junior Auxiliary headed by Mrs. S. Warren Ingersoll, the choir with Henry McKean Ingersoll as choirmaster, the Woman's Auxiliary, the Parish Guild, and the Sunday School. Still other organizations, mainly of a social nature, flourished from time to time.

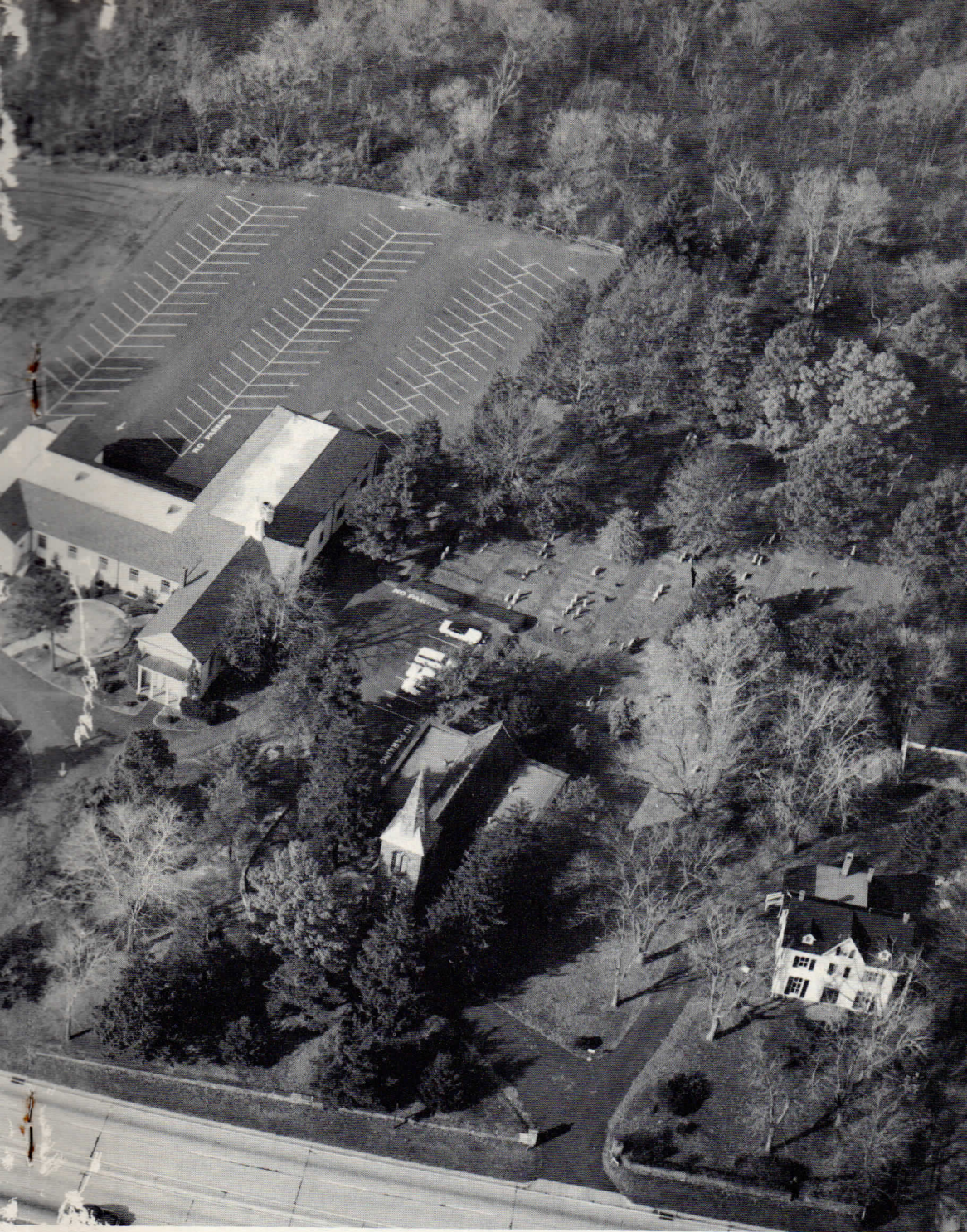
In 1913, the Girls' Friendly Society was founded. At its meetings, the girls were taught basket work, crocheting, cooking, candy making, and were given the opportunity to have a social evening, rather a rare thing for country living in those days. When the subject of their learning dancing was broached, the rector had to pause before giving his opinion that he had no objection to the girls dancing with each other, provided that "each one will promise not to attend at any time a public dancing hall of any description." Like all the other organizations, the Girls' Friendly devoted part of its time to raising money, which it did mainly through dramatic entertainments.

Some of the entertainments staged at the Church or in the Parish House seem obscure today. For example, in 1913 the Church Club gave a "Cobweb Party," and in 1916 the Girls' Friendly held a "Backwards Upside Down Party." Parish life at this time was quite active with various organizations giving plays and minstrel shows. People gathered for musical evenings around a victrola, or to attend stereopticon-illustrated talks. In 1913, the Church Club listened to an address by The Rev. Dr. Tope of the Anti-Saloon League, after which refreshments of an unspecified sort were served. The annual Parish Supper, despite the entertainment offered on such occasions — flute solos and the like — brought out nearly everybody. In 1916, three hundred came, more than twice as many people as had ever attended a Church service in Mr. Bird's time. Of course, the annual Sunday School Picnic was one of the great events of the year. Happy children and festive teachers took their places in specially chartered trolley cars and went off for a jolly day at Willow Grove or Menlo Park.

For some years, Mr. Bird had no private conveyance in which to pay calls on parishioners. To be sure, since 1911 he had had a telephone — North Wales 124 Ring Three — yet his want of a means of "locomotion" was a severe handicap. However, in 1914 he was pleased to announce the gift of a horse, which, in a rather meaningful way, he notified his parishioners was "at least a partial equipment." The hint was taken and he was promptly given a



An aerial view of the entire Church property in 1965. From left, the buildings shown are the Rectory



Rectory, a private residence, the Curate's House, Parish House, the Church and Patterson House.

runabout. Word of this gift brought forth the following letter from an illiterate but imaginative individual in Mount Airy:

Rev Mr Bird

i learn of a frend that you haf a new carridge. i haf some nice new goats a he Billy an a she Nany they make a fine team for your new carridge. i sell them very cheap if you buy

Yours very frenly

T_____ P_____

Mr. Bird did not avail himself of the opportunity to become the first minister of Messiah to travel by goat cart, but he did become its first rector to own an automobile. The story is best told in his own words:

"On a Friday evening in July [1917] the Rector of the Church in Ambler stopped in to show me his new car, the gift of his people. I won't say what trouble he had in getting it started again. As he left, Miss Elizabeth Smith stopped me to say that she was chairman of a committee of four ladies which had procured a Ford car for me, as a gift of all the people. . . . The car has arrived, with demountable rims and an extra tire of the best make. It is also insured in every possible way for me, and my one desire is to get back and use it."

Mr. Bird expressed himself at times in a delightfully naive way, which, if one did not know him, often suggested double meanings. In announcing the resignation of vestryman Andrew A. Blair, he noted that it was accepted with great sorrow "as he was most active and faithful until his removal to Chestnut Hill." And in commenting on The Rev. A. E. Clattenburg, who had taken his place during an absence and had done so well that Mr. Bird on his return heard "on all sides words of appreciation of Mr. Clattenburg's work here," the rector rather fervently concluded "We wish him Godspeed in the Parish to which he has just been called at Hazleton."

During Mr. Bird's time a number of improvements to the Church were made. In 1913, the stained glass window over the altar was removed to the transept and the window redesigned in larger form by Meller & Meigs, the Philadelphia architectural firm, for the reception of a beautiful memorial window given by Francis

E. Bond in memory of his wife. Made by Clayton & Bell of London, the window portrays the Resurrection scene with a sleeping soldier on either side of Christ, the central figure, and angels thronging about the Risen Lord, who with outstretched arms seems to breathe forth a benediction.

The growth of the congregation resulted in the Parish House being no longer adequate in size. Mr. Bird determined that a suitable thank offering on the part of the Church of the Messiah for the completion of fifty years of service in 1916 would be the enlargement of the Parish House. Plans were drawn and funds were raised. By Christmas, 1915, eighteen hundred dollars were pledged, but the addition was to cost some hundreds of dollars more than that. The attitude of the vestry was that it had done all it could and that it was up to Mr. Bird to raise the rest of the money, which had to be in hand before the building contract could be signed.

Mr. Bird reacted to this situation by publishing in January, 1916, a statement — "The Crisis in our Parish History." Pointing out that the basic celebration plan for the Church's fiftieth year was the enlargement of the Parish House and that the Convocation was actually going to meet at Gwynedd in October to see the new building, he made the following appeal for funds:

1. You, as a whole, have placed me here as your Rector to look after the spiritual life of the Parish. You have taken for granted that I am capable, as your Rector, to see what the Parish needs, and to speak of those needs. If you merely wanted Services to be held on Sunday, a lay reader with a pleasing voice or some retired priest would accomplish the purpose.

2. You no doubt expected more work to be done. We are growing. If all were to come to Church, we should soon be planning to enlarge it. We are growing slowly. The Parish House facilities are not adequate. Anyone with unprejudiced eyes may see it. You have put me here to work without proper tools.

3. Every Rector expects to be backed by his vestry and if he is not, most often there is something wrong with the vestry. The Rector hopes to be backed in this proposition by his vestrymen.

4. The people must work shoulder to shoulder and not have

this disgrace fall upon them that they could not raise the necessary amount and therefore could not build the addition.

This open attack on the vestry resulted in one of its members, Judge Charles Francis Gummey of the Philadelphia Orphans Court, taking the financial burden off the rector's shoulders. Judge Gummey provided the leadership which raised the necessary money and built the Parish House addition at a contract price of \$2,160, not including some extra charges. For this the rector was deeply thankful, but, in an era when Messiah's budget amounted to only four thousand dollars, he deplored the fact that this money came from only a relatively few parishioners. Evidently, he held the vestry to blame. Its members represented only one group in the Parish. Moreover, in winter time they moved in a body to their town houses in Philadelphia. One Sunday in the spring of 1916, Mr. Bird made some remarks about the vestry in his sermon. The comments were controversial to the extent that he felt called upon to explain them in the *Kalendar*. Maintaining that he had not intended his remarks to be a rebuke to the vestry, Mr. Bird explained that he had merely pointed out the duty of the congregation to vote for the vestry and not treat the election as a matter of form. Also, he had recommended that the vestry represent the whole body of the Church and not just one section of it.

His admonitions were evidently taken in good part, though they produced no change in the vestry. After all, the families represented by the vestry were the ones that were carrying the Church's financial burden and it would hardly do to replace them. At all events, harmony reigned at the fiftieth anniversary celebration, which took place during the week of October 29 — November 5. A booklet was prepared containing the historical sermon Mr. Bird delivered as the opening gun of the celebration. The Rev. Henry C. Pastorius returned to give a talk. "A wonderful series of events" was climaxed with the visitation of Bishop Rhineland, who confirmed a class of fifteen.

The war years passed somewhat uneventfully, at least in so far as events were recorded in the vestry minutes. The rector served briefly as an army chaplain, his absence being made possible



The Church of the Messiah today. The tower was given in 1926 as a memorial to Captain Harry Ingersoll and the men of his company who died in action in the Battle of Argonne in World War I.



*The Rev. William P. Kemper
Rector 1904-1911*

by an anonymous donation of five hundred dollars to pay someone to take his place on Sundays. Many young men of the congregation joined the armed services, and of them Julian C. Biddle of the Lafayette Escadrille was the first to die in action — killed off Dunkirk in 1917. Four other members of the Parish were also to pay the supreme sacrifice: Lt. Norton Downs, Jr., whose plane crashed in the British Channel; Captain Harry Ingersoll, killed in action near Montfaucon; Charles Troster of the American Expeditionary Force; and John W. Armstrong.

On the home front, the women of the congregation entered into Red Cross work, took classes in the care of the sick, knitted articles for the sailors, and made surgical dressings and bandages. In addition, Miss Edith Biddle, Miss Elizabeth Smith, and Miss Emily K. Smith went overseas to engage in relief work. Of the ninety-four families in the Parish, eighty-two subscribed to Liberty Loans. The only actual hardship suffered by the Church in war time was the coal shortage, which necessitated closing the Parish House and conducting Sunday School in the Church itself.

A number of plaques and stained glass windows in the Church serve to commemorate its World War I soldiers. Julian C. Biddle and Norton Downs, Jr., are both memorialized by beautiful windows, the Biddle window representing St. Michael, the warrior angel, and the dragon, and the Downs window the call of Christ to



The Rev. Benjamin N. Bird
Rector 1911-1921

the fishermen to leave their boat and follow Him. Two other windows also serve as memorials to members of the Downs family—Dr. Norton Downs (1867-1916) and Stephen Warren McKean Downs (1899-1925). All the windows were made by Clayton and Bell of London. A plaque was erected for Captain Harry Ingersoll and another for the “Honor Roll,” the names of the members of the congregation who participated in the great conflict. The most important memorial of all, stemming from the War, was to come after Mr. Bird’s time.

With the end of the War, the Church was swept more firmly out of old ways and into the Twentieth Century. In 1919, it held its first Every Member Campaign to raise funds, and in 1920 the lighting systems of both the Church and the Rectory were converted to electricity. The vestrymen were not sure that electricity had come to stay, for they initially authorized its use “either temporarily or permanently as may seem desirable.” When installed, however, it was on a permanent basis, the cost of the wiring coming to \$478. The introduction of electricity was promptly followed in 1921 by the acquisition of a fine graphoscope movie projector for use in the Parish House, a usage hotly contested by the authorities at Harrisburg who had drawn up an intensely complicated movie code. It was also in 1921 that Roland L. Taylor gave the Church its present pulpit.

From the point of view of future expansion, the most important donation in these years came in 1920 when its grounds were enlarged by the adjoining property to the southwest with its building, once the Gwynedd School where Church services were held in 1868. This was the generous gift of Mrs. Graeme Haughton, the former Mrs. Henry Pratt McKean. The Gwynedd School had long since been serving other purposes. Most recently, it had been the Gwynedd Home for Convalescent Children. This operation, however, had come to an end in the war year of 1917.

Expenses were heavier after the War. It now took \$5,000 to run the Church and, in addition to that, it was asked to contribute \$4,000 to missions. The people of Messiah had always been interested in missionary work. Many a package of food or clothing had gone out from Gwynedd, directed mainly to poor communities in North Carolina, to Indian missions in the Great West, to "starving Armenians," and to Japan. Packages were one thing, money another. The Church seldom raised quite its entire budget of \$5,000, and usually fell far short of its missionary burden. Anonymous contributors always made good the Church deficit, but the missionary deficit simply remained a deficit too great for the Parish to liquidate, and, fortunately, a deficit which no authority could foreclose.

In respects other than financial, the Church of the Messiah had never before appeared to greater advantage. In November, 1921, it had 204 communicants, twice the number of ten years earlier when Mr. Bird had become rector. Moreover, the enrollment of the Sunday School with 20 teachers and 112 scholars was at an all-time high. Mr. Bird had every reason to believe that he had done good work at Gwynedd and that he could now move on to a larger parish. On November 23, 1921, he resigned to accept the call of St. Asaph's on the Main Line. He had indeed served Messiah well and the congregation were truly sorry to see him leave just as the state of the world was returning to a comfortable "normalcy."

William C. Patterson, Rector

ON MARCH 15, 1922, The Rev. William C. Patterson accepted a call from the Church of the Messiah and became its new rector. Just one month short of his thirty-sixth birthday at that time, he was a 1912 graduate of the General Theological Seminary in New York, and had served as a curate in churches in Wilmington, Delaware, and Morristown, New Jersey, before becoming minister in charge of St. Paul's, Chatham, New Jersey, and, later, rector of St. Margaret's, Staatsburg, New York.

During his many years at Gwynedd, there was never any question but that the Church's religious affairs were firmly under his control. Its temporal aspects, however, lay in the hands of a self-perpetuating vestry. Deaths and resignations because of removal from the Parish were virtually the only causes of an occasional vacancy. Of the twelve vestrymen on the board at the time Mr. Patterson assumed his duties, eight were to die in office and three of the others were to serve between twenty and thirty years each. The longevity of the vestry is impressive, as indicated by the names and length of service of Mr. Patterson's eight original vestrymen who died at their posts: William H. Harding, 1892-1926, Accounting Warden for that entire period; Charles E. Ingersoll, 1895-1932, Rector's Warden 1930-1932; Henry McKean Ingersoll, 1895-1942, Rector's Warden 1933-1939, and Honorary Rector's Warden 1939-1942; Henry B. Coxe, 1906-1930, Rec-



The Rev. William C. Patterson
Rector 1922-1957

tor's Warden 1912-1930; Judge Charles F. Gummey, 1911-1923; Irvin King, 1918-1939; and Roland L. Taylor, 1918-1943. Even the deaths of members of the old guard did not remove the influence or continuity of their family names in the direction of the Church's affairs. When Rector's Warden Coxe died, the vacancy on the vestry was filled by his son, Henry B. Coxe, Jr. Charles E. Ingersoll was succeeded by his son-in-law Orville H. Bullitt, and into the next vacancy in 1934 stepped Mr. Ingersoll's son R. Sturgis Ingersoll, whose resignation in 1948 brought onto the vestry his son George F. Ingersoll, a third generation vestryman. More examples of father and son or father and son-in-law vestry relationships could be cited, all of them tending to safeguard a traditional point of view and way of doing things that was not essentially receptive to change.

One of the national fallacies of the 1920's was that there could exist in the state of the world, more particularly and most comfortably at home — a situation described as one of "normalcy." Yet such was the fleeting philosophy of the day and the coming of Mr.

Patterson to Messiah was opportune in this regard. Parishioners found in him a man of kindly nature, of delightful whimsy, a frequent caller on the members of his congregation. He was a man who had something of the diffidence of the scholar. Of wide reading and broad intellect, he preached sermons that were instructive and spiritual. He was the very man for the Church of the Messiah and was soon much admired and beloved by those for whose spiritual needs he was responsible.

If it may be said that Mr. Converse established the spiritual prestige of the Church at Gwynedd, and that Mr. Bird greatly increased its usefulness by doubling the size of the congregation, the first twenty-five years of Mr. Patterson's rectorship, which extended beyond World War II, were something of a sustaining effort. It was not a period of marked population growth in the Gwynedd area, and many who did come to live there in those years were not Episcopalians. Meanwhile, some of the old families died off, their numbers barely being replaced by the newcomers.

While statistics do not tell the whole story, the official Parochial Reports show a static situation at Messiah from 1922 through 1947. When Mr. Bird left in 1921, the Church had 204 communicants and 112 pupils in Sunday School. In 1947, it had 239 communicants and 80 in Sunday School. It was simply not a period of growth, but it was one of contentment. Those who attended Messiah were devoted to their little Church and were very happy with its minister.

Perhaps the fabric of a church building is never completed, but during Mr. Patterson's regime the redstone Church seemed to assume its final shape with many improvements in the form of memorials. In 1924, Mrs. Henry Pratt McKean gave a stained glass window in honor of her husband, and during the winter of 1925-1926 the tower was added. The gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Ingersoll, the tower is a memorial to their son Captain Harry Ingersoll and the forty-one other officers and men of Company H, 313th Infantry, 79th Division, who lost their lives during the Battle of the Argonne. Captain Ingersoll was posthumously

awarded the Distinguished Service Cross "For extraordinary heroism in action near Montfaucon, France, September 20, 1918. He showed absolute disregard for personal danger in leading his company in an attack against an enemy position, strongly entrenched and protected by barbed wire entanglements. Although he was killed at the enemy wire by machine gun fire, his men, inspired by his courage, carried on the attack and took the enemy position which had been holding up the advance."

Before his body was removed to the American cemetery at Romagne, Captain Ingersoll's remains were buried in the churchyard at Brabant-en-Argonne, and it was according to the design of that parish church that the architect, Horace Wells Sellers, designed the tower, which was built by Walter Shaeff, whose father had erected the Church itself. On Memorial Day, 1926, the tower was dedicated, the occasion being enhanced by the publication of a handsome book containing the order of the service and the sermon preached by Mr. Patterson.

To the tower was added a chime of bells given by the Gummey family and dedicated on January 5, 1930, in memory of Judge Charles Francis Gummey. The bells were manufactured by Meneely and Company of Watervliet, New York, and were equipped with a keyboard alongside the organ console. Eleven in number, and ranging from 150 pounds to 1,600 pounds in weight, each bell is inscribed with a name such as "Patience," "Kindness," "Courtesy," "Unselfishness," "Good Temper," and the like, traits of Judge Gummey, and, in addition, the largest bell bears an inscription dedicating the entire chime to his memory. The bell presented by Mrs. Gilbert in 1876 was given to the Chapel of the Nativity.

In 1931, Mrs. Harry Markoe gave the candelabra for the chancel in memory of Miss Florence Caldwell, and in that same year Arthur I. Meigs designed a new chancel rail, the gift of Mrs. S. Warren Ingersoll in memory of her son. A plaque was erected to commemorate Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Ingersoll, in honor of whom their daughter Anna W. Ingersoll gave the Church three chandeliers in 1947. In the transept, where the organ is housed, a

plaque calls attention to yet another memorial gift presented to the church in 1950: "This organ is erected to the Glory of God and in memory of Henry McKean Ingersoll, Vestryman 1895-1942, who devoted many years to the music of this Church." Mr. Ingersoll had served more years as superintendent of the Church's music than anyone could remember.

Not all projected memorials came into being. In 1931, the Woman's Auxiliary had promoted the idea of a new Rectory to take the form of a memorial to the late Henry B. Coxe, "beloved member, Warden, and benefactor of the Parish." Committees were appointed to examine the old Rectory, which was much in need of repairs. Meanwhile, the vestry maintained: "The present Rectory is unfortunately placed, unattractive, and detracts from the charm of the premises. It has served for many years, but it is hardly worthy of a permanent place among our Parish buildings. Rather than spend more money in keeping it in repair, it would seem wiser to try at this time to build a simple, inconspicuous Rectory in harmony with the Church, and in keeping with its surroundings. It would moreover seem very fitting to make this Memorial to Mr. Coxe." An attractive sketch of the proposed new Rectory was prepared by George A. Robbins, an architect, with the assistance of Anna W. Ingersoll, but the times were out of joint, the Great Depression had set in, and the Church was not to receive a new Rectory for a quarter of a century more. The old Rectory was refurbished with a bequest from Newbold Drayton of \$1,500.

For some years, the vestrymen did not know what to do with Mrs. Houghton's gift of the Boys' Home, which at one point they were on the verge of tearing down. A useful purpose, however, was finally decided on, and in 1928 the building was remodeled into a Parish House, the old frame Parish House behind the Church being demolished at that time and the graveyard enlarged by its site. Two fires, one in 1932, which virtually destroyed the Parish House, and the other in 1951, which severely damaged it, were followed each time by rebuilding or repairing and the property was kept in use. The lesser fire was perhaps the more frightening. Miss

Cora V. Wade, the organist, and Sexton Carroll R. Downing and his family occupied apartments on the building's second floor and had to flee for their lives, Miss Wade nearly being trapped while rescuing Alexandra, her Persian cat.

Throughout most of Mr. Patterson's rectorship, the Parish operated with a most modest budget, his salary being paid out of a special fund. This fund was maintained by annual contributions from a few members of the Parish and was an independent operation quite separate from the Church's own fund raising endeavors. For years, Rector's Warden Henry B. Coxe was treasurer of the special fund, which was often referred to as "Mr. Coxe's fund." Although it paid the Church's largest single expense, the congregation at large did not always donate enough to meet the remaining bills, and these deficits called for additional gifts from the vestrymen, who were, in the main, the chief contributors to the special fund also. Following the death of Mr. Coxe, his son Henry B. Coxe, Jr., inherited the management of the fund.

During the depression, difficulty was experienced in keeping up this special supply of Church income. Contributors reduced the size of their gifts, and the vestry considered cutting the rector's \$3,600 salary to whatever sum the fund could provide. Urgent appeals by Henry B. Coxe, Jr., to a selected list of persons produced about \$300 more in pledges, reducing the salary deficit to \$500. To cover that deficiency, the Coxe family in memory of Henry B. Coxe established a fund of \$10,000, the income from which was to be applied to the special fund. About a year after Henry B. Coxe, Jr. went into military service as Captain of the First Troop, Philadelphia City Cavalry in February, 1941, when the National Guard of Pennsylvania was called out, he wrote a member of the vestry about the fund for which he and his father had been responsible for so many years. "I feel that it is time to change the system and have Mr. Patterson paid out of the regular church fund and not have a small group carry his salary." The vestry agreed to make the new arrangement.

Although a great many members of the Parish went off to

war their service resulted in few memorials at Messiah. The temper of the times had changed since the earlier conflict when people believed they were fighting the war to end wars. A bronze plaque enumerating the war dead — William R. Addison, Leslie B. Cooper, Albert D. Gray, Gordon A. Hardwick, Jr., George B. Patterson, and Philip N. Wainwright — was placed in the Church in 1947, and in the graveyard Mr. Patterson erected a memorial stone to his son Lieutenant (j.g.) George B. Patterson, lost at sea in 1942. The tangible imprint of World War II at Messiah is not to be compared with the impressive tributes to its World War I servicemen.

During the War, some concern was felt about the attendance at services. In 1943, the vestry resolved to advertise the Church in the *Ambler Gazette* and the *North Penn Reporter*, and in the following year a plan to invite residents in quite a large area to come to Messiah was discussed. The number of those who worshipped at Gwynedd remained remarkably stable until the early 1950's, when the growth of the Church's membership became noticeable.

In 1953, a Building Fund was started as "It is obvious with the growth of our Parish, in the not too distant future, an addition to the Church may have to be made." The Church's normal seating capacity of only 145 was proving inadequate. In 1954, a planning committee was formed. Prominent in the Church's leadership at this time was John H. W. Ingersoll. The fifth of his name to serve on the vestry, he had been elected in 1949. From 1951 to 1954 he served as Rector's Warden and then rotated off the vestry in accordance with a new plan long advocated by Mr. Patterson which required each vestryman to drop off the board after three years of duty, and not to be eligible for re-election for one year's time. In 1955, Mr. Ingersoll returned to the vestry and was again appointed Rector's Warden and also was placed in general charge of the Church enlargement. On June 26 of that year he conducted a meeting of the key people in the Parish at which it was decided that the time had arrived when the Church facilities of all kinds

had to be enlarged, and that plans for adding some seventy seats to the Church, as drawn up by architect Henry B. Roberts, were approved. Preliminary plans for the financing were also discussed. Shortly afterwards, a fund raising goal of \$65,000 was set, a figure about three times the Church's annual operating budget. By July, 1956, more than \$70,000 had been received. "Only once in a generation is a parish given the opportunity and responsibility of participating in a program of this kind," the congregation was informed.

The basic plan for the enlargement of the Church was the completion of its cruciform interior by the addition of a south transept to balance the north transept. The appearance of its interior to one entering the front door was virtually unchanged; the additional seating, being to the side, was not conspicuous. Improvements to the Parish House and parking area and repairs to the Rectory formed parts of the enlargement program. A number of special gifts, such as the new choir pews in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Irvin King, helped defray costs, and the church was further beautified at this time by the gift of its final stained glass window, presented by Anna W. Ingersoll in memory of her aunt Miss Jeannie Hobart Ingersoll (1865-1951), who had left the Church fifteen thousand dollars on her death. Work on the Church was completed by the early fall of 1956. Meanwhile, the Gresh property adjacent to the Parish House was purchased for \$24,500, since the vestry believed this acquisition vital for both present and future Parish needs.

Mr. Patterson in commenting on the dynamic new phases of life at Messiah and on the many new members who were now thronging to the Church, summarized the epic year 1956: "The year drawing to a close has been marked by unusual advances in our parish life. The Church has been made more commodious while retaining its simple charm. The property adjoining the Parish House has been acquired, enabling us to use the entire Parish House for Sunday School and other parish activities, and providing extra space for parking. These things have been accomplished by



Above: the Parish House in 1945, showing the entrance to the present Guild Room. Originally the public school for the area, this is the oldest building belonging to Messiah. The first services, following the Church's move from Franklinville to Gwynedd in 1868, were held on the second floor. It served many purposes thereafter, and was donated with over an acre of ground to the parish in 1920. Below: rear view of the Parish House after the extensive enlargement, completed in 1961.



the generous co-operation of a large percentage of the parish, under the leadership of Mr. Ingersoll, who has been tireless in devoting a great deal of time and work to these developments.”

The toll of time, however, brought to its close a career forever inseparable from the history of the Church of the Messiah. In February, 1957, Mr. Patterson addressed the following letter to Rector's Warden Ingersoll:

“This coming spring I will have been rector of the Church of the Messiah for thirty-five years. I have also reached the customary age for retirement from the active ministry.

It is appropriate therefore that I tender to the Wardens and Vestrymen my resignation to take effect August 31, 1957, or at such earlier date as may seem more convenient to the Parish.”



Dynamic Growth

MR. PATTERSON'S DECISION to retire in 1957 faced the vestry with a situation it had not known since 1922. Fortunately, the solution to the problem of calling a new rector was readily solved, since a highly acceptable choice was close at hand in the person of The Rev. Robert M. Wainwright. Ordained in December, 1954, shortly before his graduation from the Union Theological Seminary, Mr. Wainwright and his bride had come to St. Paul's, Chestnut Hill, the year following. There he served as curate until September, 1957, when he assumed the rectorship of the Church of the Messiah, at which time Mr. Patterson was elected Rector Emeritus. Mr. Patterson conducted his next to last Sunday service as rector on August 25, an occasion on which his parishioners demonstrated their appreciation for his long and devoted career by giving him a gift of more than eight thousand dollars. After his retirement, he continued to reside near the Church and assisted Mr. Wainwright twice a month at Holy Communion services. Following his death on July 30, 1961, a commemorative plaque was placed near the altar, opposite to the plaque in memory of Mr. Converse, and a clergy bench and a credence table were given as additional memorials to him.

The last two years of Mr. Patterson's regime had seen more activity at the Church of the Messiah than ever before. Some \$102,000 had been committed toward the enlargement of the



The Bishop's visitation in 1962. From left: John H. W. Ingersoll (Accounting Warden), the Reverend Gustave J. Weltsek, Jr. (Curate), Bishop J. Gillespie Armstrong, John L. Black, Jr. (Rector's Warden), and the Reverend Robert M. Wainwright (Rector).

Church, the expansion of the parking lot, the purchase of the Gresh property and its conversion into a Rectory, and the renovation of the old Rectory, appropriately renamed Patterson House, into a ten-room church school and Parish office.

Impressive as these accomplishments were, they proved to be only the curtain raiser for far greater achievements in the years immediately ahead, achievements which had their genesis in the appointment in November, 1957, of a planning committee. The coming of Mr. Wainwright to the Church of the Messiah had

coincided with a period of tremendous population growth. To face this growing demand on the Church, the new rector was admirably qualified. In addition, his drive, enthusiasm, and administrative ability, and, above all, his spiritual leadership guaranteed that the Messiah would not only grow with the community but would play an increasingly active part in its affairs. The need for greatly enlarged facilities was the challenge posed by the situation.

In 1958, the Church budget was \$26,065. At the start of the year, 211 pupils were registered in Sunday School; there were 325 active communicants. Seven years later, the budget for 1965 (including \$17,147 for debt retirement) was \$100,000. The Church school enrollment had swollen to 600; there were now 950 active communicants included among a total of 1,855 baptized persons in the Parish. The upward surge in figures of every sort was a continuous tide. It showed no sign of ebbing.

Under its chairman, John L. Black, Jr., the planning committee took steps to solve the dilemma of overcrowded Church services and inadequate space for Sunday School classes. Charles Talley, an architect, was engaged to study the problem and, before long, the decision was made to enlarge the Parish House.

With the announcement early in 1959 that the enlargement fund for the improvements made during Mr. Patterson's time had been closed out, the vestry organized a campaign to raise the money required for the new program. This drive, known as The Church of The Messiah Development Fund (initial goal \$225,000) was announced by Mr. Wainwright in a Parish letter of October 28, 1959.

"Any of you who normally worship at the 9:30 Service, or who have children in our Church School, will realize how desperate our need is for additional facilities. Just about every Sunday this Fall, people have been turned away because there was no further room available for more folding chairs [to be placed in the aisles]. At almost every 9:30 Service there are at least 30 people seated on folding chairs, with the pews filled to capacity. Our Sunday School, now numbering more than 350 students, is terribly overcrowded. Even our parking lot has been bulging at the seams.



A view of the graveyard in 1965. Established in the 1890s, it was enlarged in 1928 when the old Parish House was torn down, and again in 1962 with the addition of a new section of ground behind Patterson House.

For the past year and a half now, a planning committee of our vestry has studied the situation and consulted experts in the field of architecture, building, and religious education. We have been most anxious that whenever we did enter into new construction, it should be done in the most intelligent, far-sighted, economical, and efficient way. As a result of forty or more such meetings, where the problem and plans have been discussed, we feel that we now have the best possible plan. But we also feel that the time for planning is past and the time for action has arrived.

The most crucial need, at the moment, is for a new addition to our present Parish House. It would contain Church School facilities adequate for the foreseeable future. A large functional auditorium would be a major addition. While the auditorium would be used for many Parish purposes, it would be basically designed for the conduct of any large worship services which we might have. This would do away with the necessity of enlarging our lovely little church for some time to come."

Mr. Wainwright's case for an enlarged Parish House recalls The Rev. Benjamin N. Bird's 1916 efforts to enlarge an earlier Parish House. Mr. Bird required only a few hundred dollars for his purpose, and a hard time he had in getting it. In near despair, he termed the want of support "The Crisis in our Parish History." He would have been interested to have seen how a future generation tackled the same problem on a larger scale.

At what was undoubtedly the largest Parish meeting yet held, a dinner meeting at the William Penn Inn on December 2, 1959, the plans for the new building were revealed, and four days later a horde of canvassers descended on the parishioners, securing 320 subscriptions totaling \$204,924. Thus, the drive got off to a good start, but changes in plans and the purchase of property adjoining the Church grounds resulted in increased costs. By October, 1962, the costs of the overall enlargement plan were estimated at \$344,000 (later raised to \$375,000), toward which \$252,000 had been pledged. Ultimately, a bank loan of \$119,000 was necessary to cover expenditures. Through generous gifts, and by an extra effort on the part of the congregation in its annual giving to the Church, this indebtedness was reduced to \$15,400 by January 1, 1966, and should be eliminated during the Church's centennial year.

While the building projects were of absorbing interest, the customary aspects of Parish life continued on their courses. Miss Cora V. Wade, who first played the organ on Easter Day, 1903, retired as organist after Easter, 1958, when she was made Organist Emeritus and honored by the Parish in appreciation of her unprecedented fifty-five years of service. Dr. Robert Gerson was appointed organist and choir director, until he, in turn, was succeeded by Marcellus Kuhn on September 1, 1959.

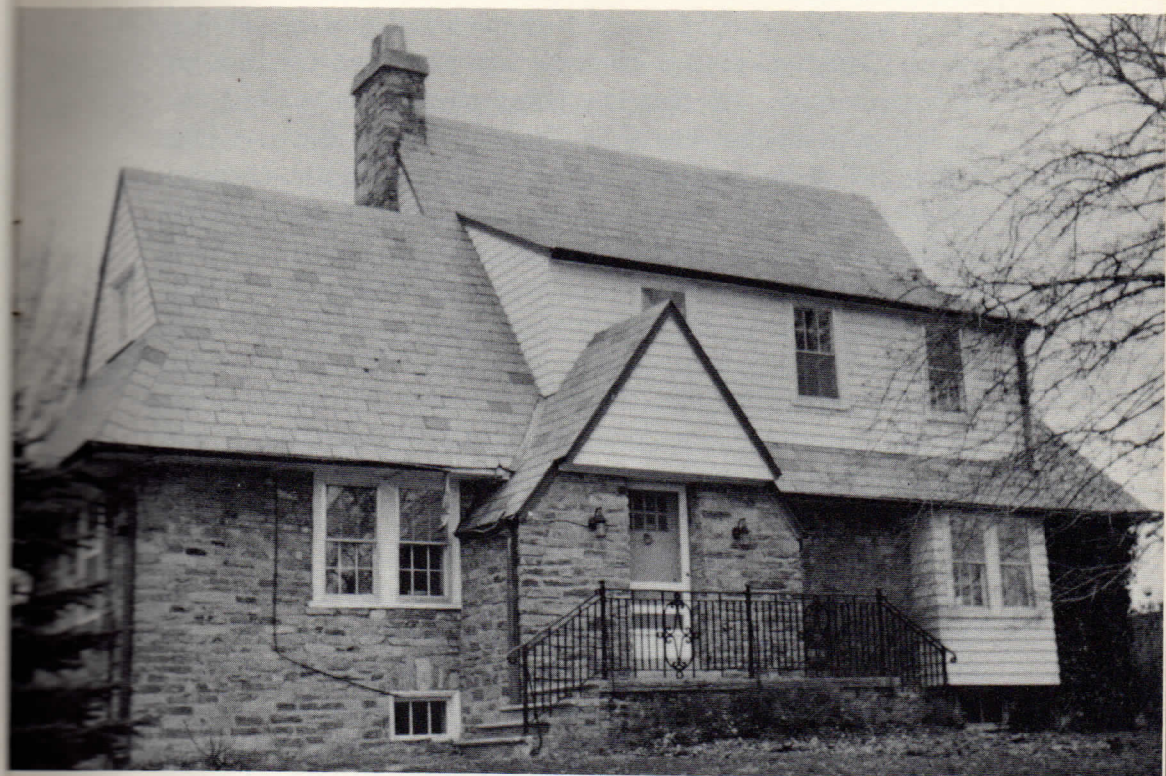
The year 1960 was notable for several events. Unquestionably the most dramatic was the ground breaking ceremony for the new Parish House. On March 13 The Right Reverend Oliver J. Hart, Bishop of Pennsylvania, turned the first spadeful of earth. The next month, a new Parish magazine, the *Messiah Messenger*, made its appearance under the editorship of Mr. Robert Whitelaw,

and in the fall the second house south of the Rectory on Route 202 was purchased. This house was called the Annex and became the temporary headquarters of the administrative offices. Its grounds added valuable space for parking and other purposes.

The tempo of Church activities and the number of people engaged in them had so accelerated by this time that the vestry approved a motion to employ a curate. In June, 1961, The Rev. Gustave J. Weltsek, Jr., a graduate of the Philadelphia Divinity School, arrived to fill the new post. Meanwhile, the oldest employee of the Church, Sexton Carroll Downing, was honored by a surprise party given by Mr. and Mrs. Wainwright in honor of the thirty-fifth anniversary of his assuming his duties.

On September 10, 1961, Bishop Hart dedicated the new Auditorium-Chapel and Parish House, and on the following Sunday the first regular service held in the building was attended by a congregation of 425 people. The total debt outstanding at this time was at its highest level, but various Parish activities were concentrating on its reduction. Notable among these was the annual fall bazaar, which had taken on the theme of "The Welsh Village Faire."

The completion of the Parish House enabled other plans to go into effect. With the administrative offices moved from the Annex to the new building, the Annex was renovated and enlarged into a Rectory, becoming the home of the Wainwrights. Into the former Rectory moved the Weltsek family, which had been temporarily housed in Patterson House. Patterson House itself continued to provide space for the Church School and for storage. Thus, 1961 saw the basic completion of the planning committee's multitudinous projects. Numerous people had played important roles in this program. Among the most prominent of the laymen involved were vestrymen John H. W. Ingersoll, Dr. Walter B. McKinney, John L. Black, Jr., and E. A. Van Steenwyck. Following Mr. Van Steenwyck's death in 1962, it is of interest to note that his vacancy was filled by Mrs. Karl H. Beyer, the first woman to serve on Messiah's vestry.



A front view of the present Rectory. This house and three acres of land was bought in 1960, and used as The Church Annex during the construction period of the present Parish House. It was used for Parish offices, Church School classes, and most Church meetings. Two rooms were added to the rear and it became the Rectory in December 1961.

A number of bequests, particularly one of five thousand dollars from former Rector's Warden E. Curzon Poultney, helped increase the Church's endowment, which now amounts to \$50,000. A variety of memorial gifts served useful purposes. One of the most attractive of these was a terrace in the corner between the Guild Room and the Chapel, given in memory of members of the allied Taylor-Ely-Hardwick families.

Continuing population growth in Montgomery County caused Mr. Wainwright to realize the desirability of establishing another church to relieve somewhat the increasing demands on the area churches. His tenacious and persistent efforts along this line helped in the founding of St. Dunstan's on the Skippack Pike at Blue Bell, a site four miles from St. Thomas' in one direction and four miles from Messiah in another. Part of the land for St. Dunstan's was given by Mrs. Clarence Doan, a member of Messiah. A vicar for this mission was appointed by the Bishop, and on September 15, 1963, the first services were held at Blue Bell in a reconditioned garage, pending the erection of a church which will be completed in 1966. In 1963, also, Mr. Wainwright was elected Dean of the Convocation of Norristown, which then comprised twenty-six parishes and two missions, and which was one of six convocations in the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

In the fall of 1963, Mr. Weltsek, curate for two and a half years, left to become rector of the Church of the Redemption at Southampton, Pennsylvania. His place was temporarily filled by The Rev. Judson Leeman, M.D., until the following June, when The Rev. Harry I. Lauer, Jr., a graduate of the Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge, Massachusetts, became curate. Mr. Lauer's subsequent ordination to the priesthood of the Episcopal Church by Bishop Robert L. DeWitt in December, 1964, was the first ordination ceremony held at Messiah.

At the January Parish dinner of 1964, attended by some three hundred parishioners, Accounting Warden John H. W. Ingersoll reported on fiscal affairs, noting that several special gifts had recently reduced the debt owed the bank to \$57,000, somewhat less than half the figure it had been only fourteen months before. Having served for fifteen years as vestryman and warden, Mr. Ingersoll then announced his retirement. If this announcement came as a surprise to the audience, it was no surprise to his fellow vestrymen, for they had been firmly informed of his decision a year earlier. In consequence, Mr. Wainwright was fully prepared. He delivered a eulogy on Mr. Ingersoll's invaluable work and presented him with a silver tray, handsomely inscribed "In recognition and

appreciation of his outstanding service to the life of the whole Parish." Mr. Ingersoll's retirement proved to be short-lived. After one year at pasture, he was re-elected to the vestry in 1965.

In October of that year, the *Messiah Messenger* carried an announcement about a new planning committee set up by the vestry to anticipate an area population growth of more than fifty per cent within the coming ten years. What effect would this growth have upon the Church, what were the consequent possibilities or implications of an expanded program, staff, or facilities? Whatever they were, the vestry realized that there was a situation arising in the years immediately ahead that could not be ignored. According to the *Messiah Messenger* "Mr. William Heyle Thompson, an experienced architect and church planner has been engaged on a consulting basis. He will explore with the Committee the alternative courses of action possible to cope with the problem of population growth anticipated in the future."

So, as the Church of the Messiah completes its first hundred years, it moves into the future relatively secure in its present situation but alert to the spiritual needs of its congregation and the necessary facilities it must have to continue its active role in the life of the community, the Diocese, and the National Church.

