

GETTING
ACQUAINTED
WITH
CHRIST CHURCH
DOVER

A Handy Booklet of Reference Especially for Newcomers
to Christ Church Parish, Dover, Delaware.....1954-1955

MEMBERSHIP

THE Episcopal Church regards "membership" in the one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church (The Church "of which Jesus Christ is the Head and all baptized people are the members") as the IMPORTANT kind of membership. Any person baptized as Jesus commanded, with water in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, is a Member of The Church. Membership of a particular congregation is a much less important matter, but it has its definite value.

ANY person baptized as above may become a "baptized member" of Christ Church simply by declaring his desire to do so, and severing any parish connection he may previously have had, in order to keep statistics honest!

FULL "Communicant Membership," however, is gained in one of the following ways:

If one has already been confirmed in the Episcopal Church, or a Church of England parish, he secures a "Letter of Transfer" from his former parish.

If one has been confirmed in the Roman communion or an Eastern Orthodox Church, he is publicly received at the time of the Bishop's Visitation, when he renounces his former allegiance, declares his intention of adhering to the Episcopal Church, and receives a blessing, but is not re-confirmed.

If one has been baptized but not confirmed by a Bishop of the Apostolic Succession, he receives instructions and presents himself for Confirmation at the next Visitation of the Bishop.

CHRIST CHURCH is happy to have persons other than baptized or communicant members, sharing in worship and in its other parish activities; but the Rector will always gladly meet with any who wish to take steps looking toward membership, to answer their questions, suggest reading, and inform them about meetings of the "Inquirers' Classes."

A BRIEF SKETCH OF CHRIST CHURCH

Dover, Delaware

Founding of the Parish

The history of Christ Church, Dover, began when twenty-two persons signed a petition August 30th, 1703 requesting the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts in London for the ministry of a priest of the Church of England. The following year the Reverend Thomas Crawford arrived, first of a line of S. P. G. missionaries to serve this field until the Revolutionary War.

The Colonial Period

Records give the following as the names of the S. P. G. Clergy: Thomas Crawford 1704-1710, Jacob Henderson 1710-1711, George Frazer 1733-1735, Arthur Ussher 1738-1745, Theophilus Morris 1745, Thomas Bluett 1748-1749, Hugh Neill 1750-1756, Charles Inglis 1759-1764, Samuel Magaw 1767-1781. Of these the most distinguished is Charles Inglis, later Rector of Trinity Parish, New York City, and first Bishop of Nova Scotia.

Within three years from the arrival of the Reverend Thomas Crawford, a wooden church was built on the St. Jones River not far from the site of the present Air Force Base. Until recently remains of its foundations could be seen. An adjoining farm of 110 acres was provided as a Glebe by the gift of Col. Robert French of New Castle in 1704.

However, when Dover was laid out in 1717, a "Church Square" was reserved on the road from the River Landing (foot of East Water Street). Here a brick church was undertaken in 1734, and this structure forms the nave, or main portion, of the present Church. Within a few years a Vestry Room was added to the west end, and the interior finished.

Imagine a visit to the Church about 1755. Approaching the Church from the road, one would have to skirt the Vestry Room to reach the main entrance, in the middle of the south wall, passing the burial place of some early settlers. Upon entering, the visitor would have found himself under a Gallery running along the south wall and then across the west end. Under the west gallery a door opened into the Vestry Room through a passage under the gallery stair landing. It was a low-ceilinged room with an outer door directly ahead, and a fire-place in the northwest corner. The gallery stair, separated from this room by a partition, turned at the landing and ran down north to issue through a door in the corner formed by Vestry Room and Church.

Opposite the main entrance to the Church was the pulpit, high on the north wall, with a sounding board above suspended by an iron rod. Below it stood the clerk's desk. At the east end of the Church, where the present chancel begins, stood the communion table surrounded by a wood communion rail. The brick-paved floor was covered with box-type pews with high-backed walls, and doors opening onto the aisles.

As appears from the list of clergy given above, services were fairly well maintained up to the time of the Revolution, and indeed through it, the then rector being a man sympathetic to the Colonial cause. After his departure, however, there ensued several periods when the parish was vacant.

From the Revolution to 1860

Records name the following as serving the parish in the year or years mentioned: Samuel Roe 1786-1791 (his grave is in the Church Yard), George Dashiell 1794, Walter C. Gardner 1799, Henry Judah 1818-1819, C. F. Cruse D. D. 1824, Robert Piggott D. D. 1830-1833, Daniel Higbee 1832-1835, H. T. McCallum 1836-1837, S. T. Carpenter 1850-1856, Marshall B. Smith 1859-1860.

Little is known in detail of this period since except for a few years the records have perished or disappeared. From 1833 to 1859 the parish had no deputies at the Diocesan Conventions. The Church fell into disrepair, and the Church Yard was neglected.

In the first quarter of the 19th century a fire broke out in "the sexton's quarters" (which possibly refers to the Vestry Room) and damaged a Chalice and Paten given the Church in 1766 by the legacy of Esther Wynkoop. In 1844 Mary Brereton (widow of Chancellor Nicholas) Ridgely provided funds for its restoration, the work being done by Henry J. Pepper, a silversmith from Delaware then in Philadelphia. The silver, which bears his mark, is in occasional use, as is also a Lectern Bible in excellent condition given in 1767 by Mr. Benjamin Wynkoop, brother of Esther.

The concern of Bishop Alfred Lee (first separate Bishop of Delaware) and the interest of the church members, both men and women, led in 1859 to an effort to revive the parish life and restore the church to good condition. The Reverend Marshall B. Smith saw the Church repaired. A news account of the time says that the church "has been so thoroughly remodelled and modernized that it might be almost styled a new building." That this was the case is shown by the alterations that were made, evidencing little of the respect shown by later generations for 18th century architecture.

The brick floor was removed and a carpet-covered wood floor installed. The box pews were cut down and converted to the familiar modern type. The south gallery was removed as was the pulpit and desk. The original entrance became a window, and where the pulpit had stood, a new window was opened up. Near the west end of the north aisle a new Entrance was created.

This period was marked also by the termination of the last contact with the original Church site, as the Glebe Farm lands were sold, and the proceeds used to keep the remodeled church debt-free. The Church was reconsecrated with proper ceremony on Ascension Day 1860. New life entered the parish, and since then services have been well maintained, and the records are complete.

From 1860 to the Present Time

The following clergy served in this period: John Crockar White 1860-1863, T. Gardiner Littell 1865-1866, Lucius Sweetland 1867, Edward H. True 1868-1869, James W. Hoskins 1870-1871, Samuel McElwee 1871-1873, Lewis W. Gibson 1873-1894, George M. Bond 1895-1907, Henry Olmstead 1907-1910, Benjamin F. Thompson 1910-1939, and Paul A. Kellogg 1940-

In 1876-77 a bell tower was built over the Vestry Room, and a bell provided from funds left in a legacy of Mrs. Elizabeth S. A. Worrell. It is inscribed to her memory.

In 1887 a Chancel fifteen feet deep was built at the east end.

Further changes came in 1913 when the Chancel was extended, a Choir Room and Sacristy added on to the north of it, and an organ chamber on the south. A rood screen was built across the chancel opening and changes made in the woodwork and decoration to bring something of the 18th century feeling back into the interior, although no attempt was made, or has been made, at an actual "restoration."

The lych-gate and wall surrounding the Church Yard, (which had been enlarged to the east some years previously, and was now extended to State Street by the gift from Dr. Henry Ridgely of the corner property) was made possible by Mrs. Eugene du Pont, whose death occurred during the course of it. A tablet marks the Wall in honor of the Ridgely Family and their part in the parish history, especially Ann Ridgely (Mrs. Charles I.) du Pont for her interest in reviving the church in 1860. Another tablet commemorates Amelia Elizabeth (the aforementioned Mrs. Eugene) du Pont, her daughter.

In 1919 the old Vestry Room was converted into a handsome main entrance Porch. The partition and ceiling were removed, revealing some of the original timbers, the fireplace was dismantled, and the Gallery stair turned to run west as at present. One window was added and another enlarged for more light.

Principal interior changes since then include the installing of a 17-rank Pipe Organ in 1946 in memory of Henry Ridgely, (1869-1940); and an entire remodeling of the Chancel interior with new paneling, stalls, cornice lighting and other features, in memory of Alena Atkins (Mrs. William W.) Richardson in 1950-1952, accompanied by corresponding renovation in the Nave, and the removal of the rood screen.

Other Parish Buildings

In 1879 the parish acquired a dwelling built about 1770, on the southwest corner of State and Water Streets, which since then has served as the Rectory.

A frame Sunday School building, erected late in the nineteenth century near the street, and later moved to a point southwest of the Church, was destroyed by fire in 1946; and the following year witnessed the beginning of a new brick Parish House, of architectural style of the early 18th century, the first unit (wing) of which was completed in 1948, its chief feature being a handsomely paneled living room housing the parish library and used for many gatherings. The completion of the Parish House by the erection of the main building, including social hall, offices and classrooms, was undertaken in 1954. The Architect is Mr. William Heyl Thompson.

OUR "PROPAGANDA"

WE get out the mimeographed CHRIST CHURCH NEWS about Wevery two weeks, or as needed, which tells what is going on in the way of services, meetings, programs, and other useful information. It is distributed free in the pews as issued. But it will come to anyone by mail for \$1.50* payable to "Rector's Discretionary Fund" and addressed to the Parish Office, Christ Church, Dover, Del.

OUR CHURCH KALENDAR, with a picture of the Church on it, and the church seasons and days in their proper liturgical colors, can be had for Fifty Cents.

IN the Church Porch is a pamphlet rack, whose contents are frequently changed. It has much of interest to read in short compass. Make a habit of stopping and looking it over.

IN the Parish House, open 9 to 5, is our Parish Library. The room is delightful for browsing in. The Church magazines are around as well as a variety of books. It's quiet and cozy. Or you can take the books out. Rules for borrowing are posted nearby.

FORTH, in a special Delaware Edition (with news of Delaware parishes in the first and last pages) is the Episcopal Church's monthly magazine. We send it at the expense of the parish, to all contributing members; and there is always a copy in the Parish Library. If you are not a regular contributor to the Parish, you can get FORTH by mail by sending check for \$1.25 payable to "Christ Church", giving your name and address and noting "For Forth."

*CHRIST CHURCH NEWS will be mailed free to servicemen stationed at the Dover Air Force Base, when this is requested.