

## Introducing Centennial Moments in History

No. 1

February 2, 2012

*Don't know much about history,  
Don't know much biology,  
Don't know much about a science book,  
Don't know much about the French I took.  
But I do know that I love you,  
And I know that if you love me too,  
What a wonderful world this would be.*

— Sam Cooke, 1960

**W**e begin a centennial celebration of our church's history this month. We have so much to celebrate that it will take the entire year!

The history of Israel and the earliest church is recorded in the Bible. The authors did not set out to write history, per se—the kind that bored some of us in school because of the way it was taught. The Bible is history alright, but it is *confessional* history—the telling of how God's purposes have unfolded in the lives of his people. Every person and event is saturated with purpose. That history of God and his people continues beyond the pages of the Bible, and our 100-year history is an important part of God's unfolding history.

Each Thursday you will receive a “Centennial Moments in History” e-letter. Many of the e-letters will relate stories in our church's history. Others will contain stories told by our parishioners, sometimes on video. These parishioner stories will be “flesh and blood” history—history incarnate, if you will.

The history reported in the e-letters will be mined from *Trilogy: A History of Three Parishes*, written by parishioner Harriet Davidson and privately printed in 2006. It is available in the Canterbury Bookstore, and I suggest that it would make good reading in this Centennial Year. The book records the history of three parishes: (1) St. George's Protestant Episcopal Church (1845–1928); (2) The Church of St. Michael and All Angels (1912–1928); and (3) the first fifty years of The Church of St. Michael & St. George that was formed in 1928 when the first two parishes merged. We owe a profound debt of gratitude to Mrs. Davidson for her research and writing. I was captivated by the book when I read it as a new parishioner in 2006, and I am even more enthralled, if it were possible, as I re-read it now. I will summarize Mrs. Davidson's record of our history in a manner conducive to these bite-sized, weekly e-letters. I will conclude each e-letter with a section titled “Back to the Future” where I will ask several questions to help each and all of us ponder the meaning of our history and how our insights, gained with the benefit of hindsight, might point to how we should live into our future.

Now, a brief word about the terms that I will use in these e-letters. I will use the term that was used in the years on which I am reporting, for the evolution of terms helps us see how things are changing with time. For instance, I will use the term “worship service,” the term used throughout our history until recently when we began to use the term “liturgy.” I will use the term “The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America” or “The Protestant Episcopal

Church” until we get to 1964, after which time I will use the term “The Episcopal Church.” There is a history to this name change that helps us understand changes in the Church over time.

“Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America” was the first and only official name in use until 1964. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, high churchmen advocated changing the name, which they felt did not acknowledge the church’s Catholic heritage. They were opposed by the church’s evangelical wing, which felt the “Protestant Episcopal” label accurately reflected the Reformed character of Anglicanism. After 1877, alternative names were regularly proposed and rejected by the General Convention. A commonly proposed alternative was “The American Catholic Church”. By the 1960s, opposition to dropping the word “Protestant” had largely subsided. In a 1964 General Convention compromise, priests and lay delegates suggested adding a preamble to the Church’s constitution, recognizing “The Episcopal Church” as a lawful alternate designation while still retaining the earlier name. The preamble to the Constitution of the Episcopal Church now reads: “The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, otherwise known as The Episcopal Church (which name is hereby recognized as also designating the Church), is a constituent member of the Anglican Communion, a Fellowship within the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church....”

The 66<sup>th</sup> General Convention voted in 1979 (the same year the current Prayer Book was introduced) to use the name “Episcopal Church” (dropping the adjective “Protestant”) in the Oath of Conformity of the Declaration for Ordination. The evolution of the name can be seen in the Church’s Prayer Books. In the 1928 Prayer Book, the title page said, “According to the use of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America.” In contrast, the change in self-identity can be seen in the title page of the current 1979 Prayer Book, which states, “According to the use of The Episcopal Church.”

We need your help. If you have photographs of church events, people, etc. that we might use in telling our history, please send them to Eileen Klamer at the church address. Please give us a brief description of the event and the names of the people or name of the group shown in the photograph. Be sure to include your own name and mailing address. Eileen will scan your photographs and promptly return them to you. If you prefer, scanned images may be sent to [eklamer@csmg.org](mailto:eklamer@csmg.org). Thank you for your assistance.

Be looking each Thursday for a “Centennial Moments in History” e-letter. You will be amazed; you will laugh; you will cry. Every story will fill you with gratitude for what God has done and is doing in and through our church. It will be like reading an exciting novel, one chapter per week. If you are old enough, think of it like a serial at the Saturday afternoon cinema: Exciting things have happened to our characters this week. What will become of them now? What new characters will bring surprises to our story? Return next week for an exciting new episode in the life of our church and its people!

— John R. Tyler