

**Centennial Moments in History
1964–1970**
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**The History of The Church of St. Michael & St. George (1928–)
The Times, They Are a'Changin'**

Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

— Hebrews 12:1–2a

The Rev. Jack E. Schweizer began his rectorate on 1 April 1964 with strong support. He had only one part-time assistant, so parishioners helped plan and run several of the church's ministries. In the summer of 1965, the Rev. Robert Betts, a recent seminary graduate, came to the parish as curate and supervised the church school 1965–1966. The Rev. Charles Morris came shortly thereafter from St. Martin's Church in Houston, TX and served as associate rector and the parish's chaplain to Washington University. He left after his first year to become Vicar-in-Charge of St. Francis Church, a mission in northeast St. Louis County. With their departures, the search for assistant clergy began anew.

In the fall of 1966, the Rev. John Clagett Danforth, a graduate of Yale Divinity School and Yale Law School, was returning to St. Louis to practice law. "Jack" Danforth had grown up in the church, and he offered to serve part-time without salary. He continued until 1968 when he was elected Attorney General of the State of Missouri and moved with his family to Jefferson City. The Rev. Allan Parker, Jr. of Bellevue, WA, became assistant rector in January 1967 and accepted a call in May 1968 to serve as rector at a church in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. In 1968, Mr. Jim Bracher, a seminarian at Eden Seminary, was called to be the leader of the Youth Group. At this point in our story, it is fitting to recall the times we are discussing.

The Civil Rights movement had begun in earnest in the late-1950s and had accelerated with each passing year. The administrations of Presidents John Fitzgerald Kennedy and his successor, Lyndon Baines Johnson, had done much to advance the cause of civil rights through the enactment of laws and use of the "bully pulpit". The Civil Rights Act of 1964 in the Johnson administration outlawed racial discrimination in many areas of public life, but the required changes were often forcibly resisted. As late as 1967, many states still had laws prohibiting marriage between two people of different races. The Vietnam War was increasingly opposed by people of all generations, but especially by those of draft age. The demands for change had been building for some time; legal action to affect the changes had come grudgingly, and when they arrived, they were resisted, often with violence. It was a recipe that produced action in the streets, and the resistance to the Viet Nam War brought in large numbers of Anglo Americans.

When Mr. Braher arrived in 1968 to head the Youth Group, members of the group expressed a desire to invite a number of speakers including H. Rap Brown, Percy Green, and a representative from the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). If you don't recognize the names and

organization, you didn't live through the '60s! The vestry was not amused and responded that if the youth group wanted to hear "radical speakers" they would have to go elsewhere to hear them.

There had been riots in cities and on college campuses, but St. Louis and our city's universities remained relatively calm compared to other cities and universities. During the summer of 1969, the Action Council to Improve Opportunities for Negroes (ACTION) began disrupting worship services in area churches. On 24 August 1969, members of ACTION visited the Church of St. Michael & St. George. Two members of the group approached the pulpit and ignored requests to wait to read their manifesto until the completion of the worship service. They made two demands. The first was the elimination of the Veiled Prophet Organization that they implied was controlled by The Episcopal Church. The second was for the Rev. William L. Matheus's immediate ordination to the priesthood. Mr. Matheus had grown up in our city's St. Stephen's Episcopal Church and had served as a lay assistant for more than 12 years before his ordination as a Perpetual Deacon in 1966. The parishioners were predominately blacks (the term of that day) while the church's staff was entirely white.

The heightened awareness of the needs of the black community produced responses from the church. The Christian Education Committee, chaired by Mrs. William Sant, began a small discussion group. The group gained momentum and became involved with the Block Partnership Program headed by Mr. John Sant and sponsored in part by the Metropolitan Church Federation. The Rev. J. Francis Sant had once served as president of the latter organization. The Block Partnership Program focused on neighborhood rehabilitation in a section of St. Louis City. Help with painting, clothing, senior citizen's problems, and employment was offered, and a tutoring school was established.

The Rev. A. Richard Bullock, former vicar at Calvary Church in Sioux City, IA joined the clergy in November 1968. His primary duties were in the fields of adult Christian education, pastoral care, and to attract and invite older members of the Washington University community to the parish. His wife, the former Ruthanne Kruse, had been a former parishioner, and her mother, Mrs. Kay Kruse, was a current parishioner.

During the late 1960s, there had been a decline in the neighborhood to the northeast of the church and an accompanying decrease in church membership, church school attendance, and financial support. When Mr. Schweizer became rector in 1964, the church had 1,805 baptized members and 1,339 communicants. By 1970, the communicant membership had dropped 11 percent to 1,191. Pledges for that year were \$24,198 below the budget. By 1970, the church could no longer ignore the declines. Once again, the question was raised as to whether the parish should remain in its urban location or move westward as had many of its parishioners. A Research and Planning Committee, chaired by Mr. Donald Danforth, Jr., was asked to study the situation.

Epilogue

In an earlier e-letter, I mentioned the Reverend John Elbridge Hines, a 1933 graduate of the Virginia Theological Seminary, who assumed duties as assistant rector at The Church of St. Michael & St. George in September 1933. He served the parish for 18 months during which time he found a bride among the parishioners, Miss Helen Orwig, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Mercer (Mabel) Orwig. Mr. Hines left in December 1934 to become rector of Trinity Church in Hannibal, Missouri. His future history is worth noting at this time of the church's history.

Mr. Hines flourished during his short tenure in St. Louis under the guidance of Bishop William Scarlett, then The Protestant Episcopal Church's premier advocate of the "social gospel" which promoted reformation of American society based on Christian imperatives. A tireless crusader for social reform, Bishop Scarlett committed the resources of the diocese to helping those left jobless and homeless by the Great Depression. In 1935 the Episcopal City Mission was created to minister to those in the city's jails. He also revitalized Christian education in the parishes, recognizing that the future of the Church was at stake.

Mr. Hines left Trinity Church in Hannibal at age 26 to serve as rector of St. Paul's Church in Augusta, Georgia 1937–1941 where he attacked racism and started his lifelong defense of those who lacked equal access to political, social, economic, and educational opportunities. He next served as rector of Christ Church in Houston, Texas 1941–1945. He was consecrated bishop coadjutor of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas on 18 October 1945 at the age of 35 and in 1955 became diocesan bishop. He founded the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest (now named Seminary of the Southwest) in Austin, Texas because the established theological seminaries of The Protestant Episcopal Church were unable to enroll all of the men volunteering for the ordained ministry in a period in which church growth was great.

Bishop Hines became the Church's 22nd presiding bishop at age 54, the youngest man ever to hold that office. He served during the tumultuous Civil Rights years of 1965–1974 and pursued profound changes in the church's structure and its outlook, helping to open its clerical ranks to women and black Americans. Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa said that Bishop Hines's movement to divest church-held assets in that nation played an important role in the demise of apartheid.

His legacy remains open to interpretation. Since his retirement 38 years ago, The Episcopal Church at the national and local levels has intensified its interest in social outreach ministries. But Bishop Hines also is considered by some as the primary cause of the church's declining numbers and loss of confidence in its national structure. When he left office voluntarily before the end of his term in 1974, The Christian Century observed that Bishop Hines "remained astride the bucking bronco of a polarized church during one of the most controversial decades in American history. . . . During his tenure, a lifetime of controversial issues was telescoped in a decade—and the good bishop is to be congratulated for remaining in the saddle that long." Bishop Hines died 19 July 1997 at age 86.

Mr. Kenneth Kesselus wrote a now out-of-print biography of Bishop Hines titled *John E. Hines: Granite on Fire* (Austin: The Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest, 1995). The book is in the J. Francis Sant Memorial Library. Bishop Hines is thus far the only former staff member of The Church of St. Michael & St. George to have been a presiding bishop.



What are your memories of the Civil Rights and Viet Nam War eras (roughly 1957–1975)? What lessons from your experiences remain with you today as you make religious, political, and social decisions?

If you did not live through those years, what have you heard about them? Do you tend to assess people's views and actions of that era based on our current context, or based on the context of that time? Why would context make a difference?

Think of a particular issue of that era, such as segregated public facilities or another issue of your choosing. What does the gospel have to say about that issue? How should the Church have responded?

How can your spiritual reflections on these issues inform how you, as a Christian individual, and the Church should respond to the burning issues of our day?

*In Christ there is no East or West,
In him no South or North,
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth.*

*Join hands, disciples of the faith,
What e'er your race may be!
Who serves my Father as his child
Is surely kin to me.*

*In Christ now meet both East and West,
In him meet South and North,
All Christly souls are one in him,
Throughout the whole wide earth.*

— John R. Tyler
Historical information from *Trilogy* by Harriet Davidson