

## Centennial Moments in History

1960–1964

No. 26

2 August 2012

### **The History of The Church of St. Michael & St. George (1928– ) The Last Years of the Rev. Dr. J. Francis Sant's Rectorate**

*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

In April 1960, the vestry created an associate vestry on a trial basis. Each vestryman appointed one person to serve a one-year term on the associate vestry, and the appointed person was eligible for reappointment to a one-year term during the succeeding year. The original purpose was to allow business of the parish to be spread among more members of the congregation and to assist in the work of the vestry committees. Associate members had a voice but no vote in vestry meetings.

The associate vestry became popular, and it was necessary in 1964 to make its duties and limitations explicit. Associate vestrymen were now given the right to vote on all motions before the vestry, except that they could not vote or act on matters which are made solely the business of the vestry by canon or regulation, including the appropriation of finances for the operation of the church.

In 1963, Mrs. Elizabeth Johnson became the first woman elected to the vestry of the Church of St. Michael & St. George. In announcing her selection, the Rev. Jack Schweizer said, "It is high time we elected a woman!" (Miss Ada Winston and Mrs. W. H. Burritt had served on the vestry of St. George's Church in 1919, and Miss Isabella N. Skinker had been elected to the vestry of the Church of St. Michael and All Angels in 1921, although she had resigned shortly after her election due to poor health.)

In 1963, the Rev. Dr. J. Francis Sant had served as rector for 24 years. His accomplishments, some of which have been reported in earlier e-letters, were significant. Dr. Sant was also active beyond the parish. He served as the president of the Metropolitan Church Federation, as a member of the Diocesan Council, and as chairman of the Standing Committee of the diocese. He also served as chairman of the Department of Christian Education for the diocese and was a member of the Board of Examining Chaplains.

In August 1963, the parish was shocked to learn that Dr. Sant had suffered a stroke while on vacation. At a special vestry meeting on 19 September, the vestry placed Mr. Schweizer in charge of the parish. Mr. Robert H. McRoberts, the senior warden, announced Dr. Sant's resignation at the Annual Parish Meeting on 22 January 1964. After the announcement, Mr. Charles Claflin Allen, Sr. requested the floor. In an emotional and moving tribute to Dr. Sant, he said, "Jesus said to his disciples, 'Feed my flock,' and Frank Sant's ministry was occupied with carrying out this

admonition.” Only two rectors had served the merged parish for its 35 years, providing stability and continuity.

By the time of the vestry’s meeting on 10 February 1964, the Rt. Rev. George L. Cadigan, seventh bishop of the Diocese of Missouri, had given Senior Warden Thomas H. Wagner a list of candidates that the bishop believed the vestry should consider in the search for a rector. A number of vestry members believed that Mr. Schweizer had done an outstanding job in directing the parish for the previous four months, and they expressed reluctance to see the parish go without a rector during what might be a lengthy search process. It was pointed out that during the search, Mr. Schweizer might be called to another parish. Furthermore, Mr. Schweizer had four years’ experience in the parish, and it was felt that he could affect a more orderly transition than could someone called from outside the parish. After much discussion it was moved that a vote be taken at the meeting to elect a new rector. The motion passed; associate vestry members did not vote. It was then moved by Mr. Austin P. Leland and seconded by Mr. John H. Doty that Mr. Schweizer be elected rector as of 1 April 1964 and that Dr. Sant be elected rector emeritus as of the same date. The motion passed.

Dr. Sant died on Good Friday morning, 27 March 1964. His wife, Josephine Williams Sant, had preceded him in death on 11 April 1958. Dr. Sant had served as rector for a quarter of a century, dying just four days before the effective date of his retirement. The church was filled to capacity when the Rt. Rev. George L. Cadigan, Bishop of the Diocese of Missouri; the Rt. Rev. Lane Wickham Barton, one of Dr. Sant’s seminary classmates; and the Rev. Jack E. Schweizer who would become rector in four days officiated at the Order for the Burial of the Dead. The choir stalls were filled with 35 of Dr. Sant’s fellow priests who chose this method of paying tribute to one of their number who had been a friend and companion for many years.



Memorial plaque on the interior wall of the nave.

The J. Francis Sant Memorial Lectureship Fund was established in 1964 with solicited gifts totaling \$7,000. The interest from the principal was used as an honorarium to defray the expense of an annual lecture. The J. Francis Sant Memorial Scholarship Fund was established by the Church Service League with the interest presented each year to a worthy theological student. Perhaps the memorial most visible to us today is the J. Francis Sant Memorial Library in the parish house.



Dr. Sant was a blessing in many people’s lives. How can you be a blessing in other people’s lives, now and in the future?

Dr. Sant’s memory was kept alive for decades by the remembrance of the benediction he always spoke as he walked slowly from the altar to the rear of the nave at the close of each worship service. His benediction concludes this e-letter:

*Go in peace to make peace;  
Befriend the lonely;  
Comfort the sorrowing;  
Visit the sick;*

*Do good to all men.*

*Grant that when we leave thy house,  
We do not leave thy presence. Amen.*

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