

Centennial Moments in History

1928

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The Merger of Two Parishes

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 the fall of 1928 while planning was still underway for the enlargement of the Church of St. Michael and All Angels and its parish house, it became known that St. George's Protestant Episcopal Church, the fourth oldest parish in the city, was in great financial difficulty and would soon be forced to dissolve or to merge with another parish. St. George's Church discussed merger possibilities with the Church of the Redeemer, located at Euclid and Washington, and the Church of St. Philip the Apostle, located at Union and Maple, but nothing resulted from the discussions.

The vestry of the Church of St. Michael and All Angels voted unanimously on 27 September 1928 to extend a merger invitation to St. George's Church. Subsequently, a parish meeting was called and "there was a singular unanimity of sentiment" for the proposed merger. Parishioners were polled as to their preferences for a name for the merged parish. Forty-seven favored the name of the Church of St. Michael & St. George, five voted to surrender both names and choose a new name, and four voted to retain the name St. Michael and All Angels and give the name St. George to the new chapel that would be part of the planned building expansion. The Church of St. Michael and All Angels then extended an invitation for a merger to St. George's Church.

On 1 October 1928, St. George's Church took a vote on three invitations to merge. This vote was taken to get the "sense of the house" rather than to make a binding decision. On the first ballot, there were 20 votes for St. Peter's that had extended an invitation in which the merged congregation would continue at St. Peter's edifice at Lindell and Spring. Thirty votes were cast for merging with the Church of St. Michael and All Angels that had recently begun a building program to double the size of the church. Six votes were cast for merging with the Church of the Ascension located at Cates and Goodfellow.

A second ballot was cast with fifty persons voting. Thirty-five voted in favor of merging with St. Michael and All Angels and fifteen for a merger with St. Peter's. After these "sense of the house" votes, it was announced that all arrangements would be left entirely in the hands of the vestry, and that it was imperative that the vestry take immediate action.

After considering the outcome of the 1 October 1928 meeting at St. George's Church, the Rev. Dr. Karl Morgan Block, rector of the Church of St. Michael and All Angels, sent a letter dated 9 October 1928 to the vestry of St. George's Church. The letter informed the church that in a meeting attended by about 100 parishioners, the Church of St. Michael and All Angels had

decided unanimously to approve a merger of the two parishes. Dr. Block's letter included proposed terms that tell us much about the spirit of the offer:

The name of the merged parish shall be The Protestant Episcopal Church of St. Michael & St. George. . . .

The rector, wardens, and vestry of the Church of St. Michael and All Angels shall take over all property and rights of St. George's Church and likewise assume all the liabilities. . . .

As many of the memorials of St. George's Church as practicable shall be placed in the enlarged, merged church. . . .

Four of the vestry of St. George's Church shall be invited to sit with the vestry of the Church of St. Michael and All Angels at meetings for the balance of the current year, after which time it will be recommended that four members from the former St. George's parish be elected to the vestry of the merged parish at the annual meeting in January 1929. . . .

The present treasurer of St. George's Church shall be appointed associate treasurer of the merged parish to serve as such during the current year. . . .

The Church of St. Michael and All Angels shall guarantee Mr. Raymond Brock, upon his resignation as rector of St. George's Church, the balance of his salary for the year at the rate of \$300 per month (multiply all dollar figures in this e-letter by 12.7 to get an approximate present value, based on the CPI). . . .

After 16 years as a parish, the Church of St. Michael and All Angels merged with the venerable old St. George's Church that had been established in 1845 to form the Protestant Episcopal Church of St. Michael & St. George. The new parish immediately became the heir to the rich background of the fourth oldest Protestant Episcopal congregation in the city and to the vigor of the youngest. After a varied history of over 83 years in three locations, St. George's Church conducted its last worship service as a parish on 21 October 1928. The next Sunday, the first worship service of the merged parish, formally known as the Protestant Episcopal Church of St. Michael & St. George, was conducted at our present location. The merger was officially authorized at the Diocesan Convention in January 1929.

We will break from our traditional Centennial Moments in History e-letter format and reserve the concluding *BACK TO THE FUTURE* section for next week's e-letter where we will reflect on the merger with the goal of understanding the reasons for its success and for lessons that we can apply as we live into our future.

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