

KEEPING THE FAITH

A History of Christ Episcopal Church, Kent, Ohio

1835-1985



BY

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"Be alert; Stand firm in the faith; be valiant and strong;
Let all you do be done in love." I Cor: 16: 13 (New Eng.)

THE EARLY YEARS

1837 - 1867

Christ Episcopal Church, Kent, Ohio has roots which date back to 1818. In that year, and for the next three years, Mrs. Josiah Wetmore read services in a log cabin on Sundays and her husband read a sermon. The cabin was located near what is now the northwest corner of the intersection of State Routes 91 and 59 in Stow. Neighbors were invited to attend and people came from all around on horseback and with ox teams. These services provided the foundation for the establishment of St. John's Church in Cuyahoga Falls, Christ Church, Hudson and Christ Church, Kent, then Franklin Mills.

St. John's parish was established in 1830 in Stow and later moved to Cuyahoga Falls. Five men were elected to the vestry of St. John's. Two of these men later moved to Franklin Mills, viz Asa Stanley and Francis Furber. Stanley became the first Senior Warden of Christ's Church, Franklin Mills and Furber a charter member of the parish.

The first Episcopal lay services were held in Franklin Mills in 1824. These services were in the George DePeyster home on Stow St.. DePeyster was postmaster and ran a general store in the basement of his home in what was then called the lower village. The DePeyster home was the first choice for services because it had a large trap door between the basement and the first floor. This enabled persons both above and below to hear the central speaker. Services were also held from time to time on the Lattimer property, just east of DePeyster's. The Lattimer's had a large wooded lot, which in good

weather permitted outdoor services.

A third place for services was in the red school house on Stow Street, located across the street from the current old citizens cemetery. The school house was the location for services after 1828.

The Diocese of Ohio had only two clergymen in the Western Reserve at this time, Alvah Sanford and Abraham Bronson. There was not a settled clergyman east of Cleveland, although there was a church at Boardman. Thus, the lay services like those held in the homes of the Wetmores, DePeysters and Lattimers were critical to the growth of the Episcopal Church in Ohio. In 1818 there were four Episcopal clergy in the entire state. By 1830 the number had increased to twelve.

Alvah Sanford visited Franklin Mills in 1831. This visit was made through the efforts of Edward Parson, George DePeyster and Anson Brewster. Sanford made a second visit in 1832. These two visits resulted in a visitation by Bishop McIlvaine in 1834. The Bishop's visit initiated two special meetings of Episcopalians in Franklin Mills to study the possibility of forming a parish and constructing a building.

On October 11, 1835 about twenty five Episcopalians gathered in the red school house in the lower village on Stow Street. The Rev. Alvah Sanford presided, as required by Canon Law. The meeting produced the organization of the Parish of Christ's Church, Episcopal in the Township of Franklin, County of Portage and State of Ohio.

The eleven men who signed the declaration of association were Edward Parson, Levi Stoddard, Frances Furber, Thomas Cartwright, L. M. Lattimer, George B. DePeyster, David McBride, Asa Stanley,

Chauncy Newberry, David Frazier and Tillman Wagoner.

The naming of the parish is found in the geneological records of the DePeyster family. There were several who wished the name of St. Paul's or St. Peter's. Anson Brewster, then of Hudson, proposed the name Christ's Church after his beloved Christ's Church in Hartford Connecticut. Brewster's proposal prevailed when he gave a promissory note of one hundred dollars towards the building of a church.

The parish needed a legal charter. Thus, on December 29, 1836 Edward Parson, George DePeyster and Lee Lattimer were elected by the vestry to secure such a charter. The Act of Incorporation was introduced to the General Assembly of the State of Ohio and was enacted on March 11, 1836.

Christ's Church, Franklin Mills was the fourteenth parish to be organized in what is now the Diocese of Ohio. St. Paul's in Akron and Grace Church Sandusky were organized in the same year, according to Diocesan reports. The Episcopalians were the fourth denomination to be organized in Franklin Mills. They were preceded by the Congregationalists, (now United Church of Christ) in 1819, the Methodists in 1822 and Disciples of Christ in 1827. The Baptists organized in the same year as the Episcopalians. These were followed by the Universalists in 1866, the Roman Catholics in 1867 and the Evangelical Lutherans in 1884.

Christ's Church continued to hold services in the red school house until 1838. In the interim the congregation turned its attention to the construction of a church building. In 1837 Lynn Griswold, George DePeyster and Lee Lattimer were appointed as a committee to select a site for a house of worship.

The choice for the site of the church building is not clear. Portage County records disclose the original owner of the land was Zenas Kent, then a Dr. Crittendon. There is no evidence which clearly indicates whether Kent, Crittendon or some other party owned the land at the time of construction. The only official clear record reveals that in 1854 Sylvester Huggins leased the land to the Episcopal Church in Franklin Mills for the sum of one dollar for as long a time as the members occupy the church for holding religious meetings.

The original church was constructed in late 1837 and during the first six months of 1838. The foundation stones for the building were given by Zenas Kent along with brick and lime for the chimney. The Franklin Silk Company donated studs and shingles and many men in the parish and community gave money and labor for construction.

The building itself was a simple wood frame structure with a bell tower on the front center of the roof, a basic Gothic style. The interior of the church had pews in a solid block down the center with aisles on either side. There was a small gallery in the back for a choir. The altar was a plain wooden table with four legs. The Eucharist was celebrated with only a fair linen cloth and the elements on the altar, as per the dictates of Bishops McIlvaine and Bodell.

The church was consecrated on June 12, 1838 by Bishop McIlvaine. This was the final step in the foundation of Christ's Church, Episcopal, Franklin Mills and the beginning of parish life.

The Rev. Orin Miller was the first rector. He held regular services for the twenty some communicants after 1838. There was a choir under the direction of Frances Furber, a musician in the area, who was appointed chorister by the first vestry.

Miller remained as priest in charge until 1841, at which time he was succeeded by the Rev. G. S. Davis, who remained for about one year. For the next six years there were only occasional services under Phelps, Bronson and Hollis. Each of these three priests were simultaneously serving other parishes in northern Ohio, albeit all three had been duly elected as rector of Christ's Church. There exists no records of baptisms or confirmations between 1844 and 1857 but there were many funerals.

The rectorship gained some stability in 1857. L. L. Holden became the priest in charge and he remained for ten years. His primary parish, however, was St. John's in Cuyahoga Falls. Holden was the first of several rectors to serve both St. John's and Christ's Church.

Lay leadership in the parish was provided by just a few men between 1835 and 1893. All of these men served lengthy terms on the vestry. Asa Stanley served nearly ten years as senior warden. Edward Parson was a vestryman for thirty five years and senior warden for about twenty five years. Holmes G. Allen served the vestry for forty seven years, twenty four as senior warden. Others with lengthy service included Thomas May, George Reeves, Lee Lattimer, Lynne Griswold, Levi Stoddard, Frances Furber, Thomas Cartwright and George DePeyster.

It was not uncommon for a nineteenth century vestry to meet on the Monday after Easter, elect a vestry and then adjourn, not to meet again for another year. Apparently church business was conducted on a more informal ad hoc basis.

A major concern of the vestry was the financial condition of

the parish, which ranged from borderline to insolvency. For example, an 1839 report revealed total collections for the month of April to be \$12.01. This money was used to pay for oil, candles and stove pipe.

The number and types of services, as well as churchmanship, is largely a matter of speculation. It can be inferred the Holy Eucharist and Morning/Evening Prayer services were held on some reasonably regular schedule by rectors, visiting priests or lay readers. It seems a reasonable assumption, however, that "low church" was the prevailing mode of churchmanship. This is based on the Evangelistic "low church" persuasion of Bishops McIlvaine and Bedell. Bedell did permit vested choirs, however, which was anathema to McIlvaine. Both these bishops were a contrast to the first Bishop of Ohio, Philander Chase, who was of the High Church persuasion.

The first reference to a church school at Christ's Church appears in an undated pencilled note in the Diocesan Archives. The note reads: "S. School Av. Att 30, teachers 5 . . .communicants 30, male 7, female 23. Sunday school teachers 5, scholars 30." Other data suggests this was written about 1855.

The first thirty two years of Christ's Church, Franklin Mills were the formative years in which a relatively few people established a precedent of faith for future generations.

FIRMING UP THE FOUNDATIONS

1867 - 1910

There is little evidence indicating the growth of the parish in the latter half of the nineteenth century. One church historian described Christ Church as a parish that ". . .labored under great discouragements. It was always poor, its church was too small. . ." Perhaps, but various renovations and remodeling of the church plant in 1867, 1886 and 1900 seem to mitigate this description.

The gallery was removed from the rear of the church in 1867, along with other extensive repairs. These provided more room for congregational seating. Extensive repairs were again made in 1886 to the forty eight year old building. At this time the congregation discussed the merits of a new building. The rector and vestry favored such and numerous meetings were held with the congregation to push it along. It ended, however, in the old building being repaired. The front entrance was altered, the remainder of the building was shored up and the windows were covered with paper affecting stained glass.

Further alterations were made in 1900. The nave was enlarged, a center aisle was created with the purchase of new pews, and a robing room and sacristy were added to the front of the building. The interior was further renovated with the installation of genuine stained glass windows. The original hardwood timbers were left intact during this project.

While these repairs were in progress the congregation held services in rooms over the Kent Courier newspaper office.

Thirteen rectors served Christ's Church between 1867 and 1910. For twenty three of these forty three years five rectors had a primary responsibility to St. John's in Cuyahoga Falls. These rectors were Fairchild and Gantner (1875-1878), Cracraft (1884-1891), Kell (1895-1906) and Washington (1906-1910). James Brown served Grace Church, Ravenna and Christ's Church from 1891-1895. The remaining seven rectors, viz Chever (1868-1869), Curtis (1869-1870), Davis (1871-1873) and Hammond (1883-1884) served an average of one and one half years each over a span of sixteen years. All of the rectors during this period received a part of their salary from the Diocese. Christ's Church became an aided parish in 1868 when Chevers was assigned to the parish by the bishop. The church remained an aided parish until 1945.

A more middle ground in churchmanship seemed to evolve with the interior modifications of 1867 and 1900. Choir leadership emanated from the front of the church with the removal of the gallery. The lengthening of the nave and installation of a center aisle provided a cross shaped interior adding to the ambience of a worship service. The wooden table altar was at the front center of the aisle. The pulpit and prayer desk remained near the west wall on the gospel side of the nave. After 1900 candles were permitted on the Lord's Table, thus introducing office lights to Christ Church, but no flowers.

The addition of the robing room and sacristy on either side of the Mantua Street entrance, as a part of the 1900 renovations,

suggests a little more importance given to a vested choir, and presumably a processional.

Services at the turn of the century were at 2:30 on Sunday afternoon except for the third Sunday when the Holy Eucharist was celebrated at 10:30am. When this schedule was not possible, services were held in mid-week, usually on Thursday, depending upon the availability of a priest. The 8:00am Holy Communion service was initiated in 1910 on the first Sunday of each month. An Evening Prayer service was held at 2:30pm on other Sundays. These hours prevailed while the parish was served by various rectors from St. John's.

No specific evidence is available on church attendance at this time. Newspaper reports, however, indicate a small but stable parish.

There is a paucity of financial records for the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Changes in the physical plant suggest a degree of solvency. A financial statement for 1899 seems to contradict such solvency. A hand written ledger, identified as a treasurers report for 1898-1899, shows receipts of \$335.72, of which \$254.30 was from envelopes. Expenditures were \$325.92, leaving a balance of \$7.80. It also shows the parish owed the rector on Easter 1898 \$149.34 and on Easter 1899 \$126.46. In 1898 the parish paid \$22.88 on the rector's stipend. In light of this report it seems amazing the parish would go ahead with the 1900 building plans.

The church school was active at this time but its size is difficult to judge. Notes in the Diocesan Archives suggest thirty two to forty persons in 1900. This included teachers and students.

Music for the services was always important. The early records are sparse. It is known, however, that in the three decades following 1867 there was a squeaky pipe organ to accompany the choir.

In 1904 "Miss Blanche Walker was presented with a beautiful ring . . . for her faithful service as organist."

Church organizations began in this period. Two womens groups were prominent in the parish in the 1890's, the Ladies Parish Guild which became St. Mary's Guild, was organized in 1895, and Daughters of the King.

These womens groups concerned themselves with the life of the parish. For example, a treasurers report for the Ladies Guild, dated March 30, 1899, reveals money raising events, of fees at meetings, musicals and socials, suppers, aprons, and the like. The money earned was largely expended on salaries for the rector and organist and for church music. Total receipts in the report were \$86.18 and expenditures of \$75.50.

The second and third generations of the people of Christ's Church followed in the foot steps of the founders. The church plant underwent several major renovations which permitted a modification in churchmanship. The absence of full time rectors did not deter them from firming up and developing a stronger parish life. The beginnings of the womens organizations in the parish further enhanced stablization and the growth of the parish family.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW SPIRIT

1910 - 1927

The years between 1910 and 1927 manifested growth in the community and parish.

The city of Kent grew from 4488 in 1910 to 7070 by 1920. On January 23, 1920 Kent officially was changed from village to city status. The population increased to 8377 by 1930.

The legislative act of 1910 which established Kent State, then the Normal School, was to have an influence on community growth for every succeeding generation, with an ancillary influence on the growth of the parish.

The church required a series of maintenance and repairs and the seeds for major remodeling were planted. In 1914 the rector proposed building a basement under the church. This met with little support, especially from St. Mary's Guild.

The church experienced its only potentially dangerous fire in February, 1917 when sparks from the chimney ignited the shingles. The fire was immediately extinguished, preventing major damage. The fire, however, stimulated discussion about a new building. Thus, the vestry conducted a post card campaign, soliciting monies from parishes in the Diocese. A little over six hundred dollars was raised (\$603.25). Construction was deferred and the money returned.

The vestry purchased a rectory at 133 N. Mantua St. instead of a new building. This proved to be a financial albatross. As far as

is known no rector ever lived in it. The parish, however, still had to pay taxes and interest. The vestry even had trouble renting the house to cover costs.

John Harris, a backdoor neighbor of the church, proposed building a garage behind church property in April, 1921. This presented a challenge to ownership and property lines. The issue went to court. In December of 1921 the court ruled in favor of the church as long as the building and property were used for religious purposes.

The vestry, in January of 1922, placed a sign on West Main street announcing to all who traveled the street the location of the "Little Church Around the Corner". The sign was placed about where the present sign is located on the corner of Main and Mantua.

Interest in a new church plant continued to grow. The vestry investigated the purchase of new property on which to erect the plant in the early and mid 1920's. They took an option on the Harris property on West Main St., the back of which butted on church property. The plan was to erect a new church with a front entrance on West Main and make the current building a rectory. This never materialized. The vestry also investigated purchasing the Kent lot immediately west of the current Masonic Lodge in 1924. The purchase required lodge approval, which was not obtained.

The one hundred fifty member congregation of 1925 was undaunted. They felt a strong need for new facilities. Purchasing new land and erecting a new building seemed out of the question. The decision was made to completely remodel the existing church.

The vestry and the "ladies guild", in May, 1926, agreed the church should be remodeled. The decision was followed by a series of discussions with the architects, Vance and Ridley. Harry B. Stein

was appointed general contractor. The last service was held in the old church on September 6, 1926.

The total cost of the remodeling was \$22,443.00. Services during the construction were held in the old Princess theater, located in the 100 block on East Main, about two doors east of the present Huntington Bank.

A brief description of the renovation seems appropriate.

The center entrance to the church was relocated to the present northeast corner. The bell tower was removed from the front center roof and placed above the entrance. The undercroft was excavated and the church lengthened to its present dimensions. The old nave, as remodeled in 1900, ended at the foot of the present chancel steps. The current chancel and sanctuary were added. The present sacristy served both as sacristy and the rector's office. Stairs were built leading to both the nave and undercroft, as at present. The large stained glass window on the east wall replaced the original entrance. Memorial stained glass windows were installed in the entry to the nave. The original walls of the church were used, and still remain, covered with stucco. New pews for the nave and chancel were given to the church by Mrs. John Reed, the former Ella Kent. The current altar was given by Mrs. Wm. S. Kent in memory of her husband. A number of other accoutrements were also given to the church.

Christ's Church, for the second time in its history, remodeled rather than buy land and build elsewhere.

Services in the newly remodeled church began in January, 1927. The building was dedicated in October, 1927.

Eight different rectors served the parish between 1910 and 1927. Of these, only four, Leslie, Zimmerman, Harkins and Buxton, served

full time. The others served other parishes. Frances McIlwaine was the priest in charge at St. John's, Cuyanoga Falls. He also served Christ's church, Kent and Grace Church, Ravenna. Leslie was appointed by the Diocesan Missionary Board which ". . .thought that work here ought to be strengthened and accordingly sent the Rev. Wm. C. Leslie." Leslie was sent because of the establishment of the Normal School. Walker served one year in 1918-1919 and Harkins for six months in 1921. Both were seminary students. In 1922 Harkins, having been ordained a priest, became rector. There was no rector in 1920 and lay readers read services, supplemented occasionally by area priests. There was no rector for the last six months of 1921, during which time Frank Barber was placed in charge of services. The only truly stable time for a rector's services was from February 1924 until August 1929 under H. J. Buxton.

It appears liturgy continued in the "low middle" category.

Service records of the parish from 1915 to 1918 reveal Holy Communion at 8:00am, Morning Prayer at 11:00am and Church School at 9:30am. There were also some Evening Prayer and Special Days services. Holy Communion was celebrated at 11:00am the first Sunday of each month.

All of the rectors had a common concern for finances and attendance. For example, on January 16, 1916 Leslie preached the first Every Member Canvass sermon under that title. He also talked to the women of St. Mary's about ". . .filling up the front seats during services, asking everyone to make an effort to have that part of the church filled first."

The vestry met the second Thursday of each month at the rectory

and choir rehearsal was at 6:45pm on Wednesdays.

The 8:00am service was discontinued in January of 1918 and did not begin again until June, 1922. A partial reason for this was the influenza epidemic of 1918 at which time all public gatherings were prohibited, including church services.

Scattered records show only fair attendance at services. The 11:00am service had an average of thirty two persons and at 8:00am thirteen. The Church School had twenty six to twenty eight students and teachers. The Evening Prayer service averaged twenty four and Christmas services averaged forty five during the late teens and early 1920's.

The 11:00am service was changed to 10:30am after the remodeling.

Parish records indicate an average of one hundred thirty one communicants in the mid 1920's.

The vestry continued its usual activities. The only modifications were in the number of men on the vestry. In 1914 there were five, in 1922 eight and in 1927 nine.

Finances continued to be a central issue. For example, a treasurers report dated April 23, 1917 revealed a balance of 38 cents in the operating budget and all bills paid. In December of that year the balance improved to \$15.86.

The church School, under Frank Barber, who began as Superintendent in 1915, was a stable force in parish life. The choir, due to the efforts of St. Mary's Guild, remained viable. The Guild continued to raise monies to pay the salaries of the choir master and organist as well as caring for choir vestments. They also raised money to purchase a new organ in time for Easter services in 1915. The women also cared for the altar hangings.

St. Mary's money raising activities included church dinners, card parties and "entertainments". The best known of their money raising efforts was the Fall rummage sale, which began in October, 1913. In their first rummage sale the Guild earned a profit of \$137.50.

Other parish organizations included the Women's Auxiliary, Kappa Beta Kappa, Junior Kappa Beta Kappa, the Brotherhood of St. Andrew and Girls Friendly. There are no records indicating the activities of these groups at this time in church history. It appears, however, the first chapter of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew at Christ's Church was organized in 1916. The chapter went through a number of reactivations after that.

A new spirit developed in the parish family during the years of 1910-1927. The congregation felt the need to enlarge and improve their house of worship. They deliberated and investigated the purchase of new land on which to build a new church. These plans did not materialize so the parish family completely remodeled its old home. A rectory was purchased with the hopes of attracting rectors on a more stable basis. This was a futile effort for the rectory became a financial burden which had near fatal results a decade after the purchase.

Parish organizations increased in numbers, generating a spirit of hope and confidence in the future among the entire congregation. This spirit was to prove vital to the survival of Christ's Church in the next decade.

EBB AND FLOW OF CHANGE

1928 - 1948

The two decades of 1928 to 1948 reflect the dynamics of change.

The Kent community grew in size commensurate with the growth of Kent State University. The college attained University status in 1935. The Diocese had three bishops; William Leonard until 1930, Warren Rogers from 1930 to 1938 and Beverly Tucker 1938-1952.

Parish membership declined between 1924 and 1930. There were one hundred twenty three communicants, two baptisms and seven confirmations in 1924. In 1930 there were eighty three communicants, no record of baptisms and six confirmations. The annual number of confirmations between 1930 and 1947 ranged from thirty three in 1942 to zero in 1947. The parish had two hundred forty nine communicants in 1946, twenty five baptisms and nineteen confirmations. This was the largest single number up to that point in parish history.

Services in the remodeled church began in 1927. The building, however, was not without its problems. The vestry wanted South Mantua paved provided the city engineer gave assurance of a storm sewer which would drain the basement. Water continued to come through the basement walls and rain drained on and stained the stucco siding. The vestry mowed the lawn and shoveled the sidewalks and the women cleaned the church interior during the 1930's.

St. Mary's Guild installed the first telephone in the church in 1938. They paid for the service for two years. The undercroft was

used for Sunday School rooms. The size of the church school generated discussions about improving church school facilities including, in 1940, a proposal to purchase the Farnham home immediately south of the church.

Ruby Bran willed the bulk of her estate to the church in 1947. This included her home at 326 Park Ave., which was used as a rectory until the mid fifties.

Six rectors served Christ's Church between 1928 and 1948. These were H. J. Buxton (1924-1929), E. H. MacDonald (1929-1935), W. B. Myll (1936-1939), Stephen Kelker (1939-1944), John Reinheimer (1944-1945) and Kenneth Gass (1945-1947). The average length of service was three and one half years. MacDonald also was co-rector of Grace Church, Ravenna. There was no rector for the first six months of 1936.

The parish came perilously close to closing in 1932-33. The primary cause was finances, a reflection of the "great depression". There was a zero balance in the operating budget and \$600.00 in unpaid bills in 1932. One year later the balance in the operating budget was ninety two cents and unpaid bills totaled \$440.65. Church finances continued in that vein for the next four years, when, in 1937 there was a balance of twenty one cents in the checkbook and all bills paid.

A major contribution to the financial woes of the parish was the thirty five hundred dollar mortgage on the rectory and the bank was pressing for payment. There was no relief from the pressure until 1937 when the rectory was sold for twenty eight hundred dollars. The church took a loss, but interest on the loan and taxes were eliminated.

An anecdotal incident in the course of the financial crisis is

of interest. The vestry had proposed, in 1933, to reduce the rector's salary as the only means of relief from the financial burdens. The proposal met with opposition from the women of St. Mary's. The women contended the salary should remain the same ". . .and if the money didn't come in to continue going further into debt. . . we stop payment on the rectory so we could pay that to the rector. In the case of foreclosure by the bank for the deficit, give them the church." Later in the same minutes of this meeting of the vestry and St. Mary's it is noted the "the vestry was criticized for cutting the rector's salary to \$40.00 per month just because the first quarter income made that necessary to balance the budget. Several of the women stated privately that they would contribute directly to the rector towards his salary rather than to the treasurer for general expenses if the \$40.00 per month was continued."

The Rev. B. Forest Bond was extended a call to become rector of the parish in July, 1947. He accepted the call and began his rectorship on September 1, 1947. Thus began the longest tenure of any rector in parish history, twenty four years.

Vestry membership remained fairly stable during these two decades. Only thirty seven men served with an average term of four years. Frank Barber led the group of those who served for many years. He was senior warden during the entire time. He also served as treasurer and church school superintendent for part of the time. His service provided an element of continuity for the parish.

Vestry size fluctuated. In the years 1927, 1941 and 1942 there were nine members; from 1928-1933 and 1946-1947 ten members; 1934 to 1936 and 1938 to 1940 seven.

The size of the congregation may have had some influence on the size of the vestry. Parish membership records are sketchy. Those which are available reveal one hundred twenty five baptised members and one hundred thirteen communicants in 1936. Respective numbers for 1937 are one hundred thirty five and one hundred twenty six, and in 1938 one hundred fifty and one hundred forty. The records for 1939 to 1944 are missing. There were two hundred forty nine baptised members in 1945 and in 1948 three hundred seventy three baptised members and two hundred eighty four communicants.

Churchmanship was modified as a result of two major changes. The first and most significant of these was the adoption of the 1928 Book of Common Prayer, discontinuing the 1892 BCP. The 1928 Prayer Book was adapted to the American life style and culture.

The second change was the addition of the chancel and "sup'r altar" in 1927.

These changes permitted a more "middle church" liturgy.

Christ's Church had two one hundredth anniversary celebrations. The first was a special event on October 13, 1935 which included a Holy Eucharist at 9:30am, organ recital at 3:00pm, tea at 4:00pm and an Evening Prayer service at 7:00pm. Bishop Rogers preached at the morning service and Bishop Remington of East Oregon at the evening service.

The second was the consecration of the remodeled church. The parish had cleared its mortgage in the summer of 1938. The mortgage was burned and the building consecrated on November 22, 1938.

The financial condition of the parish improved after 1937. The rectors' salaries continued to be increased, missionary giving

and other outreach efforts nearly quadrupled and there was a balance in the operating budget ranging from \$216.00 to \$885.00. As a consequence Christ's Church ceased to be an aided parish after 1946.

The church' school remained viable, ranging from fifty to eighty members with an average attendance of thirty five. This created a constant search for teachers.

A Wicks pipe organ was purchased in 1928. This was a small pump organ and remained in use until 1973.

There was a paid men and boys choir in 1941, under the direction of Harold Miles. The boys received 25¢ a Sunday. To pay the choir a special campaign was conducted, headed by Art Perry, which netted \$750.00. At about this same time Mary White directed a volunteer Junior Girls Choir of about twenty voices.

It seems an interesting anecdote to insert here that the present rector, Thomas Webster, was a member of the boys choir, along with Ed Gleason, Frank Phillips and others. The boys received a little brown envelope each week with change in it as payment. 10¢ for rehearsal and 15-17¢ for services.

There were fourteen organizations within the parish. Eleven of these came into being after 1927 including the Men's Club (1927), Periodical Club (1927), Altar Guild (1930), Junior Guild (1930), Parish Council (1927 and 1940), Girls Friendly (1938 reorganization) Boy Scouts (1937), Acolyte Guild (1938), Young Married People (1940), St. Stephens (1940) and Mothers Club (1944). This last became St. Hilda's Guild in 1945.

All the groups contributed to parish life. The leading roles, however, were played by St. Mary's and the Women's Auxiliary.

The operative base for the spiritual, financial, mission and social life of the parish centered in its organizations. The people in each of the groups gave much of themselves and their resources in sustaining an active parish life. This "modus operandi" continued until the mid seventies.

The two decades of 1928-1948 reflect the ebb and flow in the dynamics of parish life. The number of communicants in the parish declined to eighty three in 1930 and increased to two hundred forty nine in 1946.

The euphoria of moving into a newly remodeled church in 1927 changed to a dark period of pessimism in the early 1930's at which time the church came perilously close to closing when finances reached a low ebb. Money woes began to turn around in 1937, and by 1946 the church ceased to be an aided parish.

St. Mary's Guild and the Women's Auxiliary were the central stabilizing forces in sustaining parish life and, indeed, the parish itself.

THE HALCYON YEARS

1948 - 1958

The years 1948 to 1958 can be described as a period of growth and optimism in the community, diocese and parish.

The population of Kent increased from 12,418 in 1950 to 17,836 in 1960, more than double the population of 1940. Kent State University student population grew from 5800 in 1948 to 9568 a decade later, with a consonant increase in faculty, clerical and service personnel.

The Diocese grew in parishes and missions and Nelson Burroughs succeeded Beverly Tucker to the Episcopacy.

B. Forest Bond was in his first full year as rector in 1948, and a spirit of hope and optimism pervaded the parish. This last was manifested in a desire for cooperation among organizations and individuals.

The 1948 annual report listed three hundred seventy three baptised members, two hundred eighty four communicants, fifteen baptisms and nineteen confirmations. The average attendance at all services totaled one hundred and thirty. This data, when compared with 1946, show an increase of one hundred twenty four baptised members and one hundred forty three communicants. Parish records report five hundred and one baptised members and three hundred communicants in 1958.

The parish physical plant underwent some redecorating and the usual maintenance efforts in the 1950's. The increase in membership, however, motivated discussions about buying new land and constructing

a new building. The issue was similar to that which had presented itself in the 1890's and 1920's. The focus of discussion was whether or not to build on the east side of Kent, as had the Congregationalists (now United Church of Christ), the Methodists and the Presbyterians. Would such a move better serve the university community?

The collective judgement of the rector, vestry and congregation was to remain on the present site and expand facilities. The need for expansion was given incentive because of the growth of the Sunday school, as had been the reason in earlier years.

Expansion required the purchase of additional property. The Farnham property, immediately south of the church, was purchased in 1956, as was a pie shaped piece of land back of the church, which was owned by the Evans family. This last purchase was to "square off" the property.

The Methodists and Christ's Church entered into an agreement in 1957 whereby the Methodists would buy the rectory on Park Ave. and Christ's Church the property at 136 S. Mantua Street.

Plans for the education wing, or parish hall, were completed and ground was broken for the structure after the 11:00am service on Easter Sunday, 1958.

The vestry had approved \$50,000.00 for the new building. The actual cost was \$49,965.11, \$34.89 under budget.

Fred Fuller left the parish a \$10,000 bequest in 1955 to be used for capital expenditures. This money was used as the base for the 1958 addition, just as the money left the church by Wm. S. Kent was used to finance the remodeling in 1926.

Frank Barber was voted a life member of the vestry in 1948.

In that same year the rotation of vestry members was approved. No person was to serve more than three years. Re-election was possible after at least one year off the vestry. The system became effective in 1949.

The Church School grew during the decade. There were eighty two students and teachers in 1949. This grew to one hundred forty by 1958.

The Rev. Mr. Bond and his wife Marguerite served as superintendents of the church school from 1948-1950. John Weiser succeeded to the post in 1950. Dorothy Simpson became superintendent in 1953 and she retained the position in 1961. Adult classes were taught during the period. The first teacher was Dr. Joseph Politella, who lead the class from 1949 to 1954. John B. Nicholson Jr. began teaching the class in 1954 and continued as leader until 1967.

The practice of a family service and church school at 9:15am began in 1953. This had the effect of three congregations in the parish, the "8:00 o'clockers", "9:15ers", and "11:00 o'clockers".

Seven different persons served as choir director, and four different organists, between 1948 and 1958. Such a personnel turnover created some inconstancy in the quality of music leadership. The choir, nonetheless, survived these vicissitudes of change.

Twelve organizations were either a part of or associated with the parish. Of these, four were women's groups, six youth groups, and one group each for men and college students. The number of youth groups reflected the parish concern for its young people. The most vital source of parish life, however, continued to be the women's groups, especially St. Mary's and St. Hilda's Guilds.

A proposal to unify the womens groups was presented by the rector in 1948. The proposal failed because of an unenthusiastic response from the women of the parish. Unification did not come close to reality until the 1970's, and was completed in 1982 with the disbanding of St. Mary's. Indeed, change came slowly. In the meantime the women's groups continued and increased their participation in regional and diocesan affairs during the decade.

The Women's Auxiliary, which was almost ancillary to the two major women's groups, gradually had an increased role in parish life. For example, in 1956, the auxiliary assumed the finances of St. Hilda's Guild. St. Hilda's remained very active, but monies raised and expended were funneled through the auxiliary.

The Women's Auxiliary had a name change to Women of the Church in 1960. In 1972 it adopted the title of Episcopal Church Women.

The Altar Guild, which had been organized in 1930, continued its care of the altar. The guild adopted rather ponderous objectives in 1949 which included furnishing and decorating the altar, caring for its appointments, furnishing and caring for the rector's vestments, caring for the font and have general oversight of the cleaning of the church. These objectives were drastically modified in 1963 to ". . .providing suitable furnishings for the altar, and caring for the altar in accordance with the desires of the rector."

The decade of 1948 to 1958 manifested both physical and spiritual growth in the parish. A new building was added to the physical plant, membership increased, the church school seemed to be bursting out of its facilities, and the parish organizations were vibrant and bustling with activity. Indeed, it seems appropriate to label these years as the halcyon years.

PARADOX AND UNCERTAINTY

1958 - 1970

The 1960's witnessed a matamorphic paradox in the city, diocese and parish.

The city and university grew. Kent's population increased from 17,836 in 1960 to 28,183 in 1970. A parallel growth was evidenced at Kent State. The student population multiplied to 21,370 by 1970, and increase of 11,802 after 1958. Such growth suggests a "boom time". In one sense this was true, but it had its commensurate problems. The "gin mills" in the city mushroomed and East Main Street, with its fast food restaurants and gasoline stations, was dubbed "gasburger alley". Concurrently shopping centers were built. The Sto-Kent center opened in 1959, and was the harbinger of others. These developments brought a decline in business to downtown Kent.

Student protests intensified in the 1960's. The sometimes fragile relations between "town and gown" were strained. The protests culminated on May 4, 1970 when four students were killed on the KSU campus in a confrontation between protesters and Ohio National Guard units.

The Diocese had decreased to one hundred ten parishes and missions and a new Bishop, John Burt, succeeded Nelson Burroughs in 1968.

Parish membership fluctuated. There were five hundred and one baptised members in 1958. This decreased to four hundred twenty one by 1970. Membership averaged four hundred sixty six over the period. Paradoxically, communicants showed a slight increase from

three hundred thirty in 1958 to three hundred thirty five in 1970. The average number of communicants over the period was three hundred thirty nine, reaching a peak in 1969 of three hundred fifty eight. Baptisms and confirmations remained rather constant, averaging sixteen each year. The real decline in the number of baptisms and confirmations did not occur until the 1970's.

Attendance at church services is one barometer of the health of a parish. Attendance for all services averaged seventy eight persons. The most popular service, by a narrow margin, was Morning Prayer at 9:15am, which averaged ninety seven. The 11:00am Morning Prayer averaged ninety five. The 11:00am Eucharist was slightly better attended than the 9:15am Eucharist, with ninety at 11:00 and eighty one at 9:15am. The 8:00am Eucharist averaged twenty nine persons. The congregations, it seems, were not large but loyal.

The vestry continued its improvements to the buildings and property. The mortgage on the parish house was burned in 1965. The two properties south of the parish hall were purchased to provide parking space. This last was essential. Parking for church services had become intolerable. People were parking as far away as Stow Street, a distance of nearly three blocks, in order to attend services. The houses on the two properties were demolished and a gravel parking lot developed in 1966.

The church building underwent several repairs. The most important was the refurbishing of the exterior stucco. The refurbishing was completed in August, 1967.

There were extensive interior renovations. The stripping of the pews from a dark oak to the light oak coloring now in evidence

occured in 1969. Additionally, a new pulpit, prayer desk and lectern were given as memorials.

Churchmanship remained virtually the same during this period. The vestry did purchase one hundred copies of the trial service Prayer Books in 1971. These saw little use in Bond's last months as rector.

The hour of services was modified in 1970. The 8:00am Eucharist continued. The 9:15am service was abandoned and the 11:00am set back to 10:30am. This change permitted church school children to participate in the regular Morning Prayer services, going to classes immediately before the sermon. On the first Sunday of each month the church school teachers and students remained for the Holy Eucharist.

Frank Barber was named Senior Warden Emeritus in 1959. He had served the vestry for fifty five years, during most of which he was senior warden.

The practice of vestry persons counting the weekly offering after the late service was begun in 1964. In that same year the Diocesan Convention voted "no" to admitting women to the vestry. This vote coincided with a growing discontent in the parish. Many in the congregation felt the parish was stagnating and further change needed. The discontent also seemed a reflection of disenchantment in the nation as a whole over the war in Viet Nam.

The parish remained financially stable but not trouble free. The reduced number of pledging units were of concern to the vestry. The building fund for the parish hall required a special plea from the vestry to pay off the indebtedness. This was successful, and

on July 7, 1964 the mortgage was paid.

The Christian Education program remained strong at all levels. The major change was in adult education. The adult class, which had been taught over twenty years, was abandoned in 1970, commensurate with the change in the hour of the later service. Other efforts at adult education, such as Bible Study classes, had little success.

Six persons served as choir director between 1960 and 1971. The "revolving door" of choir directors seemed to plague the efforts at church music. Five different organists served during this same period. The situation was not relieved until Dr. Walter Watson assumed the position as organist and choir director in 1970. Watson continued in that position until August, 1984.

Sixteen active organizations existed between 1958 and 1970. This was four more than the pre 1958 era. The four additional groups were the Acolyte Guild, Jr. Altar Guild, Explorers Post of the Boy Scout program and the Brotherhood of St. Andrew. This last, along with the Acolyte Guild, had a revitalization. The other groups, St. Mary's, St. Hilda's, Altar Guild, Women of the Church, Men's Club, Boy Scouts, Young Churchmen, Girls Friendly, United Youth Fellowship and Canterbury Club all continued active. A couples club, under that name, was reorganized in 1960.

A Parish Council was formed in 1960. This suffered the same fate as earlier attempts. Lack of support from the vestry, rector and congregation resulted in its demise after only one year. The Council could only recommend action. It had no authority to implement any of its recommendations.

TORCH, Teen Outreach for Christian Help, was established in 1968

in cooperation with St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church of Kent, Christ Church, Hudson and the Presbyterian Church of Kent. This was a group of young people, under adult supervision, who aided those in need with a variety of projects. About this same time FISH, an emergency help organization, was founded. In 1970 the vestry approved the use of the church facilities for a well child clinic. The clinic continues to use church facilities.

The years 1958 to 1970 was a strange paradox. The city and the university increased in population. The increases engendered its commensurate problems in the community.

The Diocese and Christ's Church, by contrast, had a decrease in population. The reduced numbers, however, seemed to produce an increased sense of mission in both diocese and parish. A new sense of responsibility to the community became evident in spite of a spirit of stagnation extant among members of the congregation.

The family of Christ's Church was ready for change by the year 1971.

THE MATURING YEARS

1970 - 1985

The post 1970 era was a mixed market in which declines seemed to outnumber advances. The population of the city declined by over two thousand, a 7% decline, and the Kent State student population decreased by nearly twenty nine hundred, a 13% decline. The number of parishes and missions in the diocese remained fairly stable until 1984, when the total declined from one hundred fourteen to one hundred ten. Of greater concern in the diocese was the decline in baptisms and confirmations, 12% and 13% respectively.

Christ's Church also experienced population decline between 1971 and 1983. Baptised membership was reduced from five hundred to three hundred and seventy five, and communicants from three hundred forty two to three hundred and sixteen. There were nineteen baptisms in 1971 and three in 1983. Confirmations fell from nine in 1971 to one in 1983. Parish households decreased 18% between 1977 and 1980 and pledging units were down by 14%.

No single cause can be identified for the declines. Three forces, however, seemed to contribute to the problem. First, the nationwide disenchantment with the "established" churches. Second, the usual changes through death and transfer. A third factor seemed to be the declining birth rate.

Lloyd O'Keefe began his rectorship in September, 1971. The major challenge which he faced was to revitalize the spirit in the

church family, fulfill the expressed desires of the congregation for strong leadership, more community involvement by the rector and more lay participation in the church services. O'Keefe successfully met each of these challenges, albeit with some mixed response.

The first major physical change in the church was the installation of a new Allen organ. The sanctuary and chancel underwent some structural changes to accomodate the new instrument. This was completed in 1973. Other improvements included new carpeting and an acoustical ceiling in the undercroft, and a new credence table, lectern and bible. In 1975 the lexan covering was placed over the stained glass windows. New carpeting was also placed in nave and chancel.

Haymaker Parkway was completed in 1975, which included widening of S. Mantua street in front of the church. This last posed some problems of access to the parking lot. This was resolved with the help of state engineers. The gravel parking lot received asphalt paving in 1977.

O'Keefe's exertion of leadership faced its first major challenge in his efforts at parish unification. The intent was to reduce the number of organizations. The intent was that all programs in the parish be all parish functions. The first consequence of this was the disbanding of St. Hilda's Guild in 1973 and an increased role for the Episcopal Church Women.

O'Keefe faced other challenges with his financial proposals. The first was the concept of the common purse, in which all funds raised went through the vestry, which in turn allocated funds for various activities/functions. This further mitigated the role of organizations.

The second major financial proposal was that of the mission program. It was the rector's intent to codify and intensify the role of mission. His proposal was to have 50% of the budget be used for parish needs and 50% for mission. This goal was never realized. The vestry and congregation compromised, however, and agreed the amount budgeted for missions should equal that budgeted for parish programs. This was less than O'Keefe proposed, but it did result in a more intense sense of mission in the parish.

Churchmanship underwent modification under O'Keefe. Some efforts were made at a higher liturgical form, apparently reflective of the rector's personal propensities. The major modifications, however, were dictated by the new Book of Common Prayer.

Christ's Church, as per directives of the General Convention, began the Services for Trial use in 1971. The trial services were used until the adoption of the new BCP in 1976.

O'Keefe increased lay participation in the services principally through an increase in lay readers. There were only two lay readers when O'Keefe began his rectorship. By the end of his first year there were five. All were licensed also as chalice bearers in 1974. The number increased during the next five years to the present number of nine.

There were only minor modifications made in the services after Thomas Webster succeeded Lloyd O'Keefe in October, 1980. Webster reinstated the use of office lights on the altar, whereas, O'Keefe had utilized the large pavement candles. Other modifications, other than personal style, were relatively minor.

Church policy underwent a significant change in 1971.

In that year the Diocesan Convention passed legislation permitting women and youth to serve on vestries. In January, 1972 Christ's Church elected its first woman and youth representative to the vestry, Mary Byrne and John A. Miller respectively.

The parish adopted a code of regulations in 1973. This code extended voting privileges to young people age sixteen and older if they were bona fide members of the parish.

The official name of the parish was changed from Christ's Church Episcopal Kent, Ohio to Christ Episcopal Church Kent, Ohio. Thus, the reference to Christ's Church up to this point in the parish history was for purposes of historical accuracy.

Vestry committees were modified in the mid 1970's. Each of the eight committees included both vestry and nonvestry people. This structure reinforced the unification concept of the parish and involved more people in the dynamics of parish life. Proposals and actions of each committee were funneled through the vestry.

The lay ministry program was expanded by Thomas Webster. Lay persons became involved in visitation and communication with new, sick and shut-in parishioners. The purpose was to complement the rector's pastoral responsibilities.

The Church School underwent some conceptual modifications in the 1970's. The principal change was from the old Sunday School concept to a unified program of Christian Education involving home and church. To effect this Elaine Sipe was appointed Director of Christian Education in 1974. Sue Nolte continued as Church School Superintendent until 1978. This permitted an evolutionary change. The superintendents position was abandoned in 1978 and the Director

of Christian Education assumed the responsibilities, in cooperation with a pre-school superintendent, Charlotte Doherty.

Church organizations underwent a drastic overhaul in the 1970's. There were eight identifiable organizations in 1971. This number was reduced to three by 1981, and one of these, St. Mary's disbanded in 1982. The only current organizations, per se, within the parish are, Episcopal Church Women and the Altar Guild. Boy Scout Troop 257 continues to be sponsored by the parish.

The reduction in parish organizations made parish activities largely a function of vestry committees, as opposed to the earlier history of organizations. The Episcopal Church Women do, however, assume responsibility for some independent programs and activities.

The current structure of the parish was and is a realization of the parish unification program proposed by Lloyd O'Keefe. It took the parish ten years to make the adjustments.

The beginning of the Sesquicentennial year of Christ Church history reveals a vibrant and active parish.

Membership of the parish, as of January, 1985 includes three hundred forty eight baptised members, three hundred twenty eight communicants, nine baptisms, seven confirmations and one hundred fifty five families and individuals. This data does not reflect increases in church attendance nor in the number of church services.

There is a healthy spirit in the parish. Newcomers experience a sense of warmth. The congregation has demonstrated a willingness to respond to the needs of others, and there is a renewed sense of family. Indeed, the spiritual health of the parish family is good.

Current leaders in the Kent community place the church in a

favorable light and as a leader in serving community needs. Christ Church, although perceived as a relatively small parish, nonetheless provides stability among the Christian community and an anchor in the sometimes turbulent seas of Christian change.

Christ Church has experienced spurts of spiritual, financial and physical growth throughout its history. These surges occurred mostly when a resident rector provided leadership. In the more lean years, when there was no rector, or at best a part time rector, the fidelity of the congregation provided continuity and sustenance. Indeed, Christ Episcopal Church, Kent, Ohio has a heritage of concerned Christians who lived their Christian doctrines and kept the faith for one hundred and fifty years.