

The History of
**Grace Episcopal
Church**

Muskogee, Oklahoma
1893-1993

By Marjorie Paxson



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Muskogee, OK 74401

Printing: Heritage Printing, 124 N. Water St., Tahlequah, OK 74464

Binding: Motter Bookbinding Co. 4803 Chandler Road, Muskogee, OK
74403

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
SETTING THE SCENE	
How the Episcopal Church Came to Oklahoma.....	1
THE FIRST PARISH IN INDIAN TERRITORY	
A Letter to the Bishop Started It All	5
THE REV. HUGH J. LLWYD	
Here was a Man Who Stayed Put	21
THE REV. PAUL R. PALMER	
A Leader and a "Do-er"	35
AN ERA OF CHANGE	
Three Rectors in Thirteen Years.....	43
THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS.....	55
APPROACHING THE CENTURY MARK	
The Status of the Church Today.....	71
GRACE'S PHYSICAL PLANT	
Structures Dedicated to the Glory of God	79
THE WOMEN OF GRACE CHURCH	
In 100 Years They've "Done Everything"	85
APPENDIX.....	99

INTRODUCTION

February 23rd, 1993 marked the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of Grace Episcopal Church, Muskogee, Oklahoma. A Centennial is certainly a milestone in any institution's history and during 1993 we will be observing ours in a variety of ways.

One of the first Centennial celebration ideas to be put forth was that we should have an adequate printed history of Grace Church. It is important for us to be able to honor our past and to give thanks for the labors of those who have helped to make Grace Church what it is today. And what more lasting memorial could be made than a printed summary of our history?

As our history unfolds, it will be seen that Grace Church reflects most strongly the work of two men. The church was shaped and built by Hugh Jacob Llwyd, who labored here for a record 35 years, and it was sustained and polished for another 17 years by Paul Palmer.

If we were to ask how the Grace Church of today compares to the Grace Church of the Llwyd and Palmer years, we would find some similarities and some differences. Grace Church today reflects the Anglican Church background of Mr. Llwyd and the Anglican-tradition schooling of Mr. Palmer in that it continues to be "middle-to-low church" in liturgy and worship.

The differences are to be seen in size, financial stability and the physical plant. If the old records are to be taken at face value, Grace Church is smaller today than during the Llwyd/Palmer years. Our 1992 Parochial Report lists 356 baptized members, an average of 25 children in Church

School (grades k-8), and an average Sunday attendance of 148. The largest list of communicants in the Llwyd/Palmer years boasts approximately 750 members, a record Church School enrollment of 196 persons (I believe that this is all ages) and an average Sunday attendance of 300.

But the church of today is financially more secure than in the teens and twenties when the Vestry struggled each month to pay the "paving tax" or the interest on the church debt. Thanks to the wise fiscal management and sacrifices of our past and present parishioners, Grace Church today is debt free.

The most striking physical difference is in our buildings. From a small frame building in 1895, to a medium-sized sanctuary in 1906, Grace Church has grown to a complex of buildings which includes a large Sanctuary, a lovely Chapel, and an adequate educational wing which has a total value of well over \$1 million.

There is also a difference in our worship style. Responding to the liturgical movement of the 1960s, which moved the Episcopal Church generally towards a more Eucharistically-centered worship, Holy Communion is celebrated at every service every Sunday at Grace instead of Morning Prayer at three of the four late services every month which was characteristic of the Llwyd/Palmer years. In 1993 terms such as "father" and "priest" are applied to the clergy. This is a marked contrast to Mr. Llwyd and Mr. Palmer in earlier years, when only Roman Catholic clergy would be identified as "priests."

Finally, today we find a more heterogeneous congregation which includes representatives from minority races, persons from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, and even an associate priest who is at the same time a

female and a member of a minority race.

We are fortunate and blessed to have a talented writer like Marj Paxson come forward to write a history of Grace Church first one hundred years. We benefit from her point of view. Her Lutheran background brings her close enough to the Anglican tradition for compatibility, but she remains far enough removed from this tradition to be objective. Marj is also a regular attender at Grace Church's worship and her love for this church is clearly evidenced by the multitude of hours which she expended in writing our history. Happily and appropriately, Marj was received from the Lutheran Communion into the Anglican Communion by Bishop Moody during Confirmation services at the beginning of our anniversary week.

The author of this history is aided by priceless historical treasures which include the following:

- the first Parish Register, opened in 1893.
- the handwritten letter from Bishop Brooke admitting Grace Church as a Parish in 1904.
- a picture of Mary Morris, who invited Bishop Brooke to come to Muskogee to conduct the first service on February 23, 1893.
- Vestry Minutes from 1917 to the present.
- a photograph of the first church building, which was constructed in 1894.

The author has written our story with a skilled and loving hand which gives more emphasis to the people who shaped Grace Church history than to the chronological details. No doubt, some of our parishioners will find that items were left out which they would like to have seen included. It is, of course, not possible to say everything that should be said.

To these individuals, several of whom go back to the early days of the church, I say: you have your own history of Grace Church — a living history. And my hope is that, as we celebrate our centennial in this book, we also celebrate the precious living tradition we have in our midst and drink from it as long as we are able.

We have come a long way from the tiny wood frame building next to the livery stable on South Fourth Street to the beautiful sanctuary, parish hall, educational building, and chapel of today. The sacrifice, dedication and good stewardship of parishioners who have gone before us are to be seen in the magnificent, debt-free facilities which stand as a visual reminder of their work.

But there is an infinitely more valuable present-day reminder of the labors of Grace Church's members down through the years. It is the presence in these buildings of a viable, loving fellowship of Christians who continue to serve as an instrument of Christ's love in this community.

*The Rev. Max B. Berry, Jr.
Ninth Rector of Grace Church,
Epiphany, 1993*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When it comes to preserving historical records, Grace Episcopal Church is remarkable. Files include the Parish Register from the beginning, Vestry minutes from 1917 and Parochial Reports from 1930. Church newsletters, Sunday service bulletins, innumerable newspaper clippings and photographs and scrapbooks of women's activities also have been saved.

These were invaluable sources of information. I also relied heavily on Bess Wisdom's history that covered the years 1893-1930 and on Frances Rosser Brown's history of women's activities from 1893-1949 and her play for the 60th anniversary celebration. In addition, Mary Morris Brenner's history of the church in Pawhuska included a section on her experiences at Grace from 1893-1895.

But this history of Grace Church could not have been written without the help and cooperation of many parishioners. I want to express sincere thanks and appreciation to:

- Virginia Lipotich, who sorted the miscellaneous clippings, photos, bulletins, etc. into boxes by decade and who provided information on the GED program.
- Joyce Wright for information on the Memorial Fund and for reading proof on the text.
- Fr. Ted Hoover for information about MONARCH.
- Antoinette Harrison for her constructive editing of the manuscript.
- Book committee members Tom Alford, David Edwards and Bob Motter for their encouragement.
- Many Grace members who shared memories of bygone years. And especially to Fr. Max Berry who searched the records time and again to pin down dates and details.

I hope the congregation enjoys reading the history of our church as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Marjorie Paxson

SETTING THE SCENE

How the Episcopal Church Came to Oklahoma

Anglican Church roots run deep in American history and can be traced back to the early colonies. The first permanent church was established in 1607 at Jamestown, where its roof was a ship's sail suspended from several trees.

Until 1776 and the Revolution, missionaries were active and the Anglican Church became the largest in the Colonies. Support came from the Society for Propagation of the Gospel, an English order founded in 1701 by Dr. Thomas Bray. Two-thirds of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and of the framers of the Constitution were Anglicans. Presidents George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were vestrymen.

Its ties severed with the Church of England by the Revolutionary War, a new title was needed for the Anglican Church in America. The name "Protestant Episcopal Church" was first used in Maryland in 1780 to describe this body. The Episcopal Church suffered greatly during the Revolution, falling to one of the smallest denominations in the new United States of America by 1783. The Rev. William White, the only Anglican priest left in the City of Philadelphia, took the lead in trying to revive the church's faith and courage. At his urging, several bishops were elected. In 1789 he called a meeting of churchmen who approved a revision for the Book of Common Prayer and established canons for the church.

By 1820 the Episcopal Church was strong enough to begin financing missionary work in frontier areas and in 1823 a commission was formed to revise church music and introduce hymn singing. One commission member was Francis Scott Key, writer of *The Star Spangled Banner* and an ancestor of the Rt. Rev. Francis Key Brooke, the first bishop of the Oklahoma and Indian Territories.

A reorganized Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society began to move vigorously in the frontier mission field in 1835. About three years later the Rev. Henry Gregory was named missionary to Indian Territory, stationed at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas. Fort Gibson became a missionary station in 1839 and church records show numerous visits were made to the region by missionaries until the Civil War.

That tragic conflict did not divide the Episcopal Church regionally but it did stop missionary activity for many years. Not until 1881 did the Church again send anyone to work in the Indian Territories. That year the Rev. John B. Hicks came to the territories with two Indian friends, both deacons. They were the Rev. David P. Oakerhater, a Cheyenne, and the Rev. Paul Zotom, a Kiowa. The three did outstanding work and Oakerhater served the Episcopal Church in Oklahoma for many years. However, Mr. Hicks's health failed and he was forced to give up his missionary work in 1884.

The Rev. W. C. Campbell, an ordained deacon from West Virginia, came to the Indian Territory at his own expense and visited Muskogee several times around 1886, preaching in various churches. Of his visits to Muskogee he said, "An earnest, faithful man at Muskogee could accomplish much at this time, under the blessing of God." Mr.

Campbell had hoped to get Board of Missions support but gave up in 1887 when he failed to secure adequate help. The outlook changed in 1891 when two dedicated young classmates at a "missionary minded" seminary in Nashotah, Wisconsin accepted the challenge of the Oklahoma and Indian Territories. They were the Rev. Charles W. Tyler and the Rev. Gerard Francis Patterson, through whom the Episcopal Church got its real start in Oklahoma.

To stimulate interest in their work, the two produced and distributed a monthly newspaper, *The Oklahoma and Indian Territory Churchman*, throughout the country. In this four-page tabloid-size paper they wrote of their hopes and ambitions, of their need for money in missionary work and especially of the need for a Bishop of Oklahoma. In so doing, Mr. Tyler and Mr. Patterson preserved much of Episcopal history in this state. Their newspaper, which later became the *Oklahoma Churchman*, is one of the best information sources for researchers and historians.

Most of their pleas for money went unheeded, so in 1892 they went back East personally to seek help. They were given several hundred dollars for missionary work but accomplished something far more important.

Through a *Churchman* editorial, they argued for "a Bishop who could go from town to town, preaching the Gospel and establishing churches." They added, "We want a man who thoroughly understands the minds of Western people and who can adapt himself to their ways."

In the end, they persuaded the General Convention of the Episcopal Church to create a Missionary Jurisdiction in the twin territories.

A short time later, on the day of the Feast of Epiphany, Jan. 6, 1893, the Rev. Francis Key Brooke accepted the call as Bishop of Oklahoma and Indian Territories and was consecrated as Missionary Bishop of Oklahoma. The service was held at Grace Cathedral, Topeka, Kansas with bishops present from Nebraska, New Mexico, Colorado, Ohio, Missouri, Kansas and Arkansas.

Bishop Brooke left immediately for the territories and, as he toured the Indian Territory, was impressed by the ground work laid by his two predecessors. He paid this tribute to the journalist missionaries: "Two dedicated young men while yet only in Deacon's orders, working almost alone, came to plough the ground and sow the seed for the work in Oklahoma. While inexperienced, they were faithful, loyal self-sacrificing men and in earnest. I acknowledge my debt to them and the debt of this field. They must often have been discouraged. Much of the time they had to 'make bricks without straw' but their labor was not in vain."

The seeds of Episcopalianism in Oklahoma had taken root and now were about to grow.



THE FIRST PARISH IN INDIAN TERRITORY

A Letter to the Bishop Started It All

Only a brief entry in Bishop Francis Key Brooke's journal recorded the beginning of Grace Episcopal Church in Muskogee. It read

"February 23d (1893)

"Went to Muskogee

"Baptised 4 little children. Read Evening Prayer.

"Preached in the M.E. South."

There is much more to the story than those few lines. Muskogee was born on New Year's Day, 1872 when a steam engine rolled across the tracks of the newly-completed rail road bridge over the Arkansas River. It was a town of tents and board shanties at first but grew as merchants moved in. The first hotel was a in a tent, then in a long tin shed. Living conditions were primitive. Except for the tribal courts of the Indian Nations, there were no law offices or courts of law, no city water, no sewage system and no city government. Residents traveled on foot or on horseback, by stagecoach or by horse and buggy.

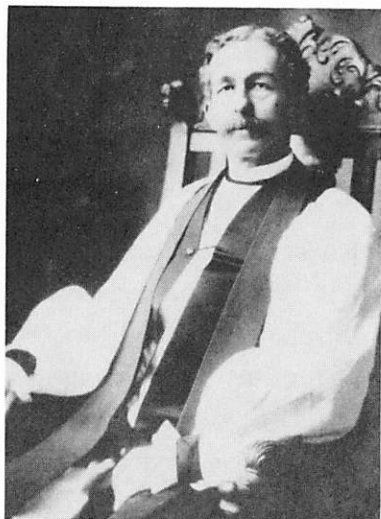
The first "White Man's Court" or symbol of local government was organized April 1, 1889, with James M. Shackelford of Evansville, Indiana as judge. Arriving by train, Judge Shackelford was an imposing figure in his Prince Albert coat and high silk hat. At the first court session, Z.T. Walrond, of Osborne, Kansas, was named prosecuting attorney. Several days later, attorneys admitted to the bar included Robert L. Owen, Napoleon B. Maxey,

Joseph G. Ralls, S. S. Fears, J. H. Akin and Waymon Crow Jackson. Some of these men, their wives and their descendants were active in organizing and serving in Grace Church.

Muskogee grew and prospered in the 1890s. Better buildings and homes were constructed, a fire department was organized and schools and a public library were opened. The new Adams Hotel advertised in 1891 that it had gas lights, steam heat, electric enunciator (telephone), barber shop, bath and laundry.

Among the newcomers to this town of about 600 in 1892 were newlyweds Florence and Fred Morris, of Saranac Lake, New York, and his sister Mary. He was a clerk with the Union Indian Agency. Miss Morris had been told to move to a warmer climate for her health. Because she was too ill to travel alone, she traveled with the honeymooners, thereby gaining a lifelong nickname "The Tag" On a mid-January day in 1893, Miss Morris read a story in the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* about Bishop Brooke's consecration. She knew of an Episcopal priest in Guthrie and promptly wrote him asking that he tell the bishop there were three Episcopalians in Muskogee eager for a visit. As it happened, Bishop Brooke was in Guthrie when the letter arrived and replied that he expected to be in Tahlequah on Feb. 22 and would come to Muskogee the next day.

In addition to the Morrises, other Episcopalians in town were a Mrs. Pearson and the two daughters of Judge and Mrs. Shackelford. This little group began to spread the word about the Bishop's plans. The Rev. Theodore F. Brewer, pastor of the First Methodist Church South, offered the use of his church at the corner of Cherokee and East Okmulgee and also his choir. Miss Morris, who had



Bishop Brooke



Miss Morris



Grace's first, small church on South Fourth Street opened for services April 14, 1895.

sung in the choir and been the organist in her church back in New York, prepared the hymns and chants for the evening service in the little "Rock Church" and held choir rehearsals. The service was printed in leaflets for distribution to those in attendance.

On the afternoon of Feb. 23, at a service in the Morris home, Bishop Brooke baptized their infant son Frederick Miller Morris, and three other children. (Frederick Morris grew up to become rector at McAlester and later assistant-treasurer of the Diocese of Virginia.) After the evening service in a church filled to capacity, a mission was organized. Why the mission was named Grace is not known, unless it was named for Grace Church Cathedral in Topeka, Kansas where Bishop Brooke was consecrated.

Grace Episcopal was the fourth church in Muskogee. The earliest was formed by the Presbyterians in 1874; next came First Methodist, established in 1878; the Nazareth Institute was founded by the Roman Catholics in 1891.

The mission field including Muskogee was not small. The minister in charge also served Wagoner, Tahlequah and Vinita. The parish register indicated that in 1897 Muskogee and Wagoner had two regular Sunday services each month; Tahlequah had week night services except when a fifth Sunday of the month occurred and Vinita had only week night services. Vinita was detached from the field in 1899.

Shortly after the mission was formed, a committee was appointed to secure a building site for a church. Meanwhile Episcopal services were held in various locations — the Methodist and Presbyterian churches, the G.A.R. Hall and the court room of the Federal Court House.

When he became Missionary Bishop of Oklahoma, F. K. Brooke was 40 years old, of medium height, slender, moustashed and, by dress and mannerism identified with a life of culture rather than that of the frontier. However, if his introduction to this new country disheartened or lessened his courage in any way, he gave no sign. One of his friends described him as "physically delicate and intellectually fastidious; one of those high-bred gentlemen who could go into the humblest kitchen without embarrassment to himself or his hostess." He endured ceaseless rough travel and illhealth undaunted and without a murmur.

Many years later, in 1931, Mary Morris (now Mrs. Harris Brenner) wrote about the founding of Grace Church and its earliest days. She said this about Bishop Brooke:

"In those days, Bishop Brooke was in his early forties, a man of fine intellectual powers, endowed with a keen sense of humor, impressing those who knew him with his perfect sincerity in work and deed. Possessed of an innate dignity, his simplicity of manner put people at ease, and he quickly won the deepest affection and also the admiration and respect of all with whom he came in contact.

"No one in these days," Mrs. Brenner continued, "can realize what the choice of such a man, with his personality, his ability, and his utter consecration to the task before him, meant to the Church and to the State. Nor can one visualize the obstacles he encountered or the almost insuperable difficulties against which he struggled."

She described conditions in the 1890s this way:

"In all the vast territory under his care, there were few railroads and very poor roads for driving. Automobiles were unknown and the stagecoach was the commonest means of conveyance. There were few hotels where one

could find the most ordinary necessities for comfort. Bishop Brooke worked to a great extent alone at first; and even later had for the most part inexperienced students serving the missions he established. There were no public schools, and a man with a family naturally hesitated to rear his children where they had to leave home at an early age for education. There was of course always a financial shortage and a shifting population, which caused many disappointments, as the Bishop might organize what seemed a promising mission at one visit, and at the next find most of the members scattered to other towns.

"The Bishop performed the services of priest as well as Bishop, baptizing, marrying and burying, and often traveling long distances to visit the sick and to give them the comfort of the offices of the Church. Often endangering his life by encountering swollen creeks, which became rivers after a heavy rain and which were in nearly every instance without bridges and had to be forded. In addition the Church was very little understood in this section of the United States and was positively disliked by the majority of the new settlers."

Despite all these hardships, Bishop Brooke carried on his work and did not wait long to revisit Muskogee. He was back May 8-9, 1893 and wrote in his journal: "Celebrated Holy Communion in A.M. Evening Prayer and sermon in Evening. There is much interest shown here. The Church music at the service was unusually well rendered. After the evening service I met the people interested and discussed plans for work and appointed an Executive Committee. Steps will be taken to secure ground and build a church soon."

In September, he wrote, "There is no reason why a flourishing Mission should not be developed here soon." And of his visit Oct. 2-3, he said, "Held services and preached on both evenings in the U.S. Court Room. Visited the people and received pledges for the support of the Missionary, Rev. Dwight Benton, Jr., who comes to this field about Oct. 12."

Young Mr. Benton, a deacon from the Diocese of Southern Ohio, turned out to be a disappointment. After a couple of months in Muskogee, he suddenly announced he was entering the Roman Church. He had neither confided in the Bishop nor given any hint of his plans. The Grace parish register stated simply that Mr. Benton "perverted" to the Roman Church.

Bishop Brooke, always reluctant to believe ill of any man, for once showed more anger than sorrow. In the *Oklahoma Churchman* the Bishop said of Mr. Benton's action:

"He continued in nominal charge of his work up to the time of his reception into the Roman Communion, and it was only through the sensible and prompt action of one of our laymen in Wagoner, that he was prevented from using the chancel of our church there to proclaim his reasons for leaving the church and to set forth the claims of Rome.

"To continue in the trust and pay of a church while he is making up his mind to leave it, to officiate in a church one Sunday and then seek to use the same church the Sunday after to betray it and speak ill of it (for so he must directly or indirectly do if he give reasons for deserting it to go to Rome) to do this is not compatible with good judgment or of a nice sense of honor." The incident was not mentioned by the Bishop again.

People moved around a great deal in those years. Some of that happened at Grace. Mr. and Mrs. Morris, for example, moved to Pawhuska in 1894 but Miss Morris remained in Muskogee. She moved to Pawhuska in 1895 to care for her brother's two sons after the death of his wife and in 1900 married Harris H. Brenner, who became prominent in Osage County.

Bishop Brooke stayed in touch with Grace parishioners and visited them again Dec. 13, 1893. His journal said: "Called on people P.M. E.P. and sermon in the school room of the Presbyterian Church." Another entry, on May 11, 1894, read: "Appointed R. D. Martin (Warden), Andrew Jackson, W. C. Jackson, Chas. H. Warth (Treas), P. H. Ford, W. S. Boren, H. J. Evans (Secy) as Executive Committee Grace Mission, Muskogee."

An item from the Bishop reported good news in June, 1894. "Rev. Henry Tudor, late of Ferguson, Mo., has taken charge of our work in the neighborhood. His field includes Muskogee, Wagoner and Tahlequah, and so far as he may be able to reach them, some other points near there. He writes very encouragingly of the first month of his work and is hopeful good results. We believe his hopes will be realized. It is a good field and he is an earnest, energetic missionary."

Mr. Tudor, the first priest to serve at Grace, arrived May 1, 1894. As the church grew, the need for a building became more pressing. Parishioner Robert L. Owen, a Cherokee Indian who had moved here from Lynchburg, Virginia and who later became Oklahoma's first U.S. senator, donated a lot for the sanctuary.

The Owens were an active Christian family. Mrs. Owen sang soprano in the first organized choir of Grace and gave the large brass processional cross still in use today.

When the first plot proved unsuitable, Owen gave another in what is now the 200 block of South Fourth St. On this land, a frame church described in the parish register as "a small but extremely neat edifice" was built. But not without a problem. Mary Morris Brenner wrote:

"When the Church was partially completed, the contractor decamped, having drawn on our funds to pay bills of his own, and leaving us stranded. As we had no more resources, Mr. Charles Moore, a painter and decorator — not a church member— volunteered to finish the work as a gift to the Church. This he very generously did."

The church opened for services on Easter Sunday, April 14, 1895. Bishop Brooke had his first look at the structure June 16, 1895 and wrote in his journal: "In Grace Church with Rev. Mr. Tudor. This is my first service in the new church, which has been in use since Easter; a very attractive and suitable building. Afternoon with Rev. Mr. Tudor. I drove to Wagoner, sixteen miles in as hot a sun as I have ever had to ride through."

Because there was no rectory when Mr. Tudor and his family moved to Muskogee, he purchased several acres of land about a mile west of the main part of town. This property was in the vicinity of what is now North 13th and 14th and Emporia and Martin Luther King Streets.

The Tudors built a beautiful home, with a windmill and a large pond to the south of the house. Mr. Tudor kept horses and had a fine carriage in which he made trips back and forth to town over a winding dirt road. Being English and of Tudor blood, he had the royal coat-of-arms of the

Tudors painted on his carriage. The area became known as "Tudorville" and driving out there became a favorite outing for Muskogeeans.

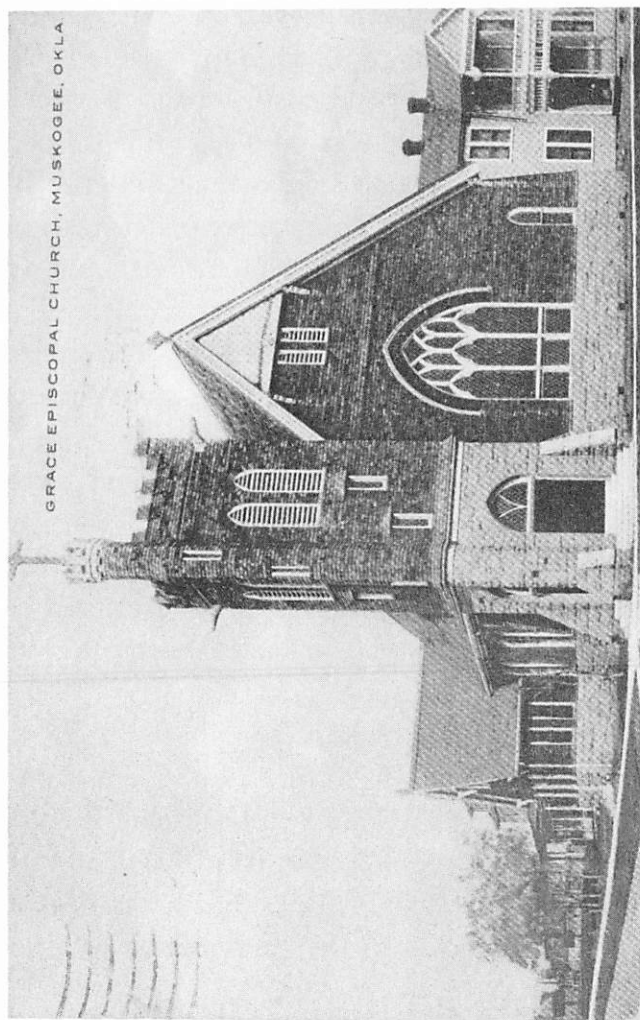
Unfortunately, soon after the little church was completed, a new crisis arose. Again, let Mary Morris Brenner tell what happened:

"Someone without much sense of fitness of things built a livery stable close to the side of the church near town, and so much nearer the street that the tiny church was entirely hidden from view. As The Tag (Mrs. Brenner) was picking her way along the unpaved street with a friend to attend service — there were no sidewalks at that time — she said, 'Straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leads to my church. 'Yes,' the friend replied, 'and few there be who find it.' "

Grace members were forced to buy a lot across the street and farther south on Fourth Street and to move their building to this better location.

The church building was only partially paid for, so The Ladies Guild began working to clear the debt. Mrs. M. L. Bragdon, one of the daughters of Judge Shackelford, was the first president of the Guild. She was succeeded in 1896 by Mrs. H. C. Rogers and during that year the debt was paid off.

Grace's priest in charge changed in 1897. Mr. Tudor resigned Feb. 1, leaving the church without leadership for some months. The parish register showed that Mr. George Biller, lay reader and student at Berkeley Divinity School, "held services and did efficient work in this field" during the summer until the Rev. Arthur V. Francis arrived to fill the pulpit on Nov. 1.



This postcard dated May 29, 1911 pictures Grace's new, larger church at 6th and Broadway.

A history of St. Paul's Cathedral in Oklahoma City tells something about Mr. Francis. A former Congregational pastor, he was ordained by Bishop Brooke as deacon and priest in St. Paul's, after which he served that church as minister-at-large. The history goes on to say:

"He was a superb preacher and musician and drew many people to the church. Coincident with his ministry at St. Paul's he conducted services on Sunday nights in Purcell."

Now the immediate need for the congregation was a rectory, since Mr. Tudor had built a home with his own money. In September, 1897 a building committee composed of Mr. George Williams, Mrs. Mary Pierson and Mrs. M. R. Williams was appointed to raise funds for a rectory. The Ladies Guild volunteered to raise part of the money needed. A six-room, one-story yellow frame rectory was completed in December, 1898. It faced Third Street just south of the old Presbyterian Church on the corner of Fourth Street and West Okmulgee. The house itself cost \$1,090; a cistern at \$115, woodshed at \$80 and other incidentals brought the total cost to \$1,500.

Towards this sum, the Bishop contributed \$250, the Rector, \$67 and The Ladies Guild, \$664.55. A debt of about \$500 remained. The Guild reduced this a little at a time until it was fully paid off on Jan. 19, 1901. The Parish Register showed that on Sept. 1, 1899 the rectory debt was down "to \$340 in addition to the construction of a good fence at a cost of \$50."

The register also recorded that from September, 1898 to September, 1899 the mission had raised "for all purposes the sum of \$1,572.52.

The years 1893 through 1897 saw tremendous growth for the Episcopal Church in the territories, as statewide membership increased from less than 200 persons in 1893 to 1,323 four years later. Grace experienced similar growth. The coming of the Dawes Commission and the allotment of Indian lands as well as a small oil boom brought many people to town. Tams Bixby and Miss Susan Vault were among the Grace communicants who came to work for the Commission.

By 1901 the little church on Fourth Street was becoming too small. In May of that year, according to the register, The Ladies Guild "commenced raising funds for a new church building."

As the century drew to a close, many changes took place in Muskogee. Up to this time it had been impossible for outsiders to pay for and own the town lots they occupied. Good homes had been built on land to which the owners had no legal title because all land was owned by the Creek Nation and non-tribal citizens had no rightful means of obtaining title to it. The Curtis Act of 1898 undertook to legalize the presence of non-citizens and to allow them to pay for and own lots by obtaining a patent from the Creek Nation for a stipulated consideration. In February, 1898 a group of Muskogee businessmen filed a petition with 240 signers, together with a plat of the town, asking the court for a decree incorporating the area on the proposed plat as the Town of Muskogee. The official plat was approved by the Department of the Interior, in Washington, D.C., over two years later, on June 4, 1900.

Many streets on that plat still carry the same names, although a few have changed. Okmulgee Avenue was then a part of the road extending across the prairie to the town

of Okmulgee. Broadway was Agency Street. Main Street has remained the same. The next street west of Main was Lake Street, so called because at its north end was the "lake" or pond that furnished water to the railroad. It is now Second Street.

Mr. Francis resigned as rector on May 20, 1902 to accept a call to Minnesota. Mr. David C. Lloyd, a communicant, served as lay reader during the months between rectors. The Rev. A. Basil Perry of West, Missouri came to Grace Feb. 1, 1903. About seven months later, on Aug. 21, 1903 after much study, a decision was made to buy a building site at the northwest corner of Sixth Street and West Broadway. "Consideration" for the lot, which at the time was on the western edge of Muskogee, was \$2,900. Muskogee was experiencing a boom as the 20th Century began and Grace boomed with it. Membership doubled from 1903 to 1904, growing from 63 communicants to 141 in 12 months. Seventy-eight persons had been added in one year.

It was time for the mission to stand on its own feet, so on Feb. 1, 1904 Grace applied to Bishop Brooke for admittance as a parish. His hand-written responses read:

Pawnee, Okl.

Mch. 9, 1904

To the Rector, Wardens & Vestry of
Grace Church, Muskogee, I.T.

This will signify my approval of the application dated, Feb. 1, rec'd by me Mch. 4, 1904 to be admitted as a parish. This parish is hereby admitted, & recognized as such in this Missionary District of Oklahoma & Indian Territory.

Attest

F. K. Brooke

Bishop, Okl. & I. T.

The Bishop's approval made Grace the first self-supporting parish in Indian Territory.

Unfortunately the document is not dated, but apparently at the time of becoming a parish, members of Grace adopted "Articles of Association" which read:

"We, whose names are herewith affixed, deeply impressed with the importance of the Christian religion and earnestly wishing to promote its holy influence in the hearts and lives of ourselves, our families and our neighbors, do hereby associate ourselves together, under the name and style and title of the Parish of Grace Church, City of Muskogee, Creek Nation, Ind.Ter.; and by so doing do adopt the Constitution and Canons of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America and of this Diocese — or Missionary Jurisdiction of Okla. and Ind. Ter."

Signatures of 37 members appear on the document. Plans for the new church building moved ahead and work on the foundation of the \$12,000 structure seating 200 persons began April 1, 1905. The cornerstone was laid seven weeks later on May 26 and the church was completed the following January.

The *Muskogee Democrat* reported in its Feb. 5, 1906 issue that "Another handsome church edifice was thrown open to the public Sunday morning, Feb. 4th, when Grace Episcopal Church was opened by Bishop Brooke. In spite of the blizzard, the auditorium was comfortably filled. A full vested choir with especially arranged music delighted the congregation."

The yellow frame rectory was moved from South Third Street to the new property immediately north of the church, facing west on Sixth Street. Eventually the old

church building on South Fourth Street was sold and moved to 610 Fondulac (now Martin Luther King) Street where it became a residence.

Mr. Perry stayed in Muskogee only long enough to see the completion of the new church. The Parish Register showed that on Jan. 31, 1906 "after three years of successful and progressive work, he resigned to accept a more lucrative and larger work at San Angelo, Texas." This time the period between rectors was brief and the Rev. Hugh J. Llwyd, of Pawnee, began his 35-year ministry at Grace March 1, 1906.

From the six Episcopalians who welcomed Bishop Brooke in 1893, Grace Church had grown in 1906 to a congregation of 231 communicants with a beautiful sanctuary. A new era was about to begin.



THE REV. HUGH J. LLWYD

Here Was a Man Who Stayed Put

The Rev. Hugh J. Llwyd, considered by many parishioners to be responsible for the growth and strength of Grace Church, came to Muskogee from Pawnee on March 1, 1906.

Of Welsh descent, he was about 5 feet, 10 inches tall, stockily built and very strong. He once played on a hockey team in Toronto and later was an avid golfer. His deep bass voice could be heard throughout the church without a public address system. Mrs. Llwyd said he never could whisper.

Mr. Llwyd had a marvelous personality. Alice (Mrs. Fred) Brown, the longest-time and oldest living member of Grace, remembers him well. "He was very fine," she said in an interview. "Everybody liked him and he was the type that stayed put. Mr. Llwyd was very lovable and quite a man. The church was very peaceful."

His son Edwin, born in Muskogee in 1913 and a present member of Grace, said he "had the unique ability to mix with rich/middle income and poor alike. His memory, especially of history, was amazing."

The kind of person Mr. Llwyd was shows clearly in this incident Edwin recalled hearing his father tell.

While at the seminary, Hugh Llwyd became acquainted with a student named Spencer. One day Spencer was called on by a professor to deliver a sermon in class without preparation. The unlucky student became confused, apparently had a case of stage fright and made a mess of the sermon.

The professor blurted out "Spencer, you will never make a preacher." Mr. Llwyd came to Spencer's defense, rose in class and said no one had a right to prophesy a man's future. Summoned to the professor's office, he listened as the professor told him the judgement of Spencer in class was correct.

Mr. Llwyd replied he had a father and two brothers who were priests and that priests ought to have time to prepare sermons. He pleaded that Spencer get a second chance, with time to prepare. Finally the professor agreed. Spencer delivered a very good sermon, stayed in school and went on to become Bishop of Western Missouri.

Born March 31, 1870 in Manchester, England, young Hugh was four years old when his parents moved to Canada. His father, the Rev. Thomas Llwyd, had been advised by a doctor to move to a better climate than England's. The family settled in Huntsville, Ontario, where Thomas Llwyd became rector of All Saints Anglican Church and later also was archdeacon of the Diocese of Algoma.

As a young man, Hugh Llwyd went into business in Toronto. He met and courted his future wife Maud Mary Apted there. Before marriage, however, he moved to New York City to work in the ladies' wholesale millinery business. Two brothers had already become Anglican priests. While in New York City, he received his call to the ministry, left his job and attended Kansas Theological Seminary in Wichita.

After seminary, he came to the Oklahoma and Indian Territories in 1899 and was ordained by Bishop Francis Key Brooke. He served in Stillwater and Pawnee and married Miss Apted before transferring to Muskogee in 1906.

The Rev. Hugh J. Llwyd
was rector at Grace from
1906 to 1941.



Grace members, with Mr. Llwyd at front center, posed for this photo found in church archives. The picture is not dated.

Apparently Mr. Llwyd was a good story teller and liked to recount his adventures in the rough Oklahoma frontier towns of Pawnee and Stillwater. His son Edwin remembers some of those tales.

One concerns Mr. Llwyd's work in Stillwater, where his assignment included a small village a few miles north. The place was comprised of two saloons and was the "hang-out" of the infamous Bill Doolin Boys outlaw gang.

On one visit, Mr. Llwyd looked into a saloon through the swinging doors and was spotted by the owner, who asked if he were a preacher. "Yes," replied the priest and the owner invited him in.

The owner cleared space in one room where Mr. Llwyd improvised an altar. He had a good attendance at the service. He visited once a month thereafter, preaching to audiences composed largely of lumber and cattle men. Another story is about the handsome, fearless sheriff in Stillwater, who became a good friend of Mr. Llwyd. One time the Doolin Boys were holed up in the hayloft of a barn outside town. As the posse headed by the sheriff closed in, the outlaws knocked shingles off the roof to see the lawmen better. The sheriff was climbing through a barbed wire fence to move closer when one of the Doolins fired, wounding him badly. Back in Stillwater, a doctor and Mr. Llwyd cared for the sheriff for several days until he died.

Edwin Llwyd also tells of his father's close call one night as he rode out of Pawnee on a horse-drawn buckboard to a nearby Osage County town. Suddenly, Mr. Llwyd noticed four mounted men ahead. He decided to go on, but stopped when a bullet sang past him. The riders' leader demanded to know who he was and where he was going.

The priest explained. The next question was, "Do you have any whiskey?" Mr. Llwyd said, "No, but I have sacramental wine." The horseman saw his clerical collar and said, "Reverend, we are Indian Police and are looking for whiskey runners." The Indian Territories had prohibition in those days.

After warning that the road was dangerous, the leader sent one of his men to accompany the priest on his way. While in Pawnee, Mr. Llwyd traveled to Pawhuska to hold services whenever a month had five Sundays. There he met Mary Morris (Mrs. Harris) Brenner, who wrote in a little-history that he furnished a plan for a parish house building that could later be converted into a church. Mrs. Brenner was the woman who had invited Bishop Brooke to Muskogee in 1893 for a visit that resulted in the founding of Grace.

As Mr. Llwyd settled into his ministry in Muskogee, big changes lay ahead for the Oklahoma and Indian Territories. The campaign for statehood succeeded and Oklahoma officially became a state Nov. 16, 1907. Bishop Brooke became Missionary Bishop of Oklahoma.

About the same time, some Episcopalians began to think of a ministry to the Negroes (as they were called then). In 1910 the Rev. A. C. Roker organized a mission for Negroes in Muskogee. This congregation, named St. Philip's, met at various places on North Sixth and South Third Streets. A lot was obtained in 1917 and a building was purchased the next year.

Historical information on St. Philip's has been lost but it is known that the congregation moved to a brick building at 502 N. 9th St. in the 1930s. Grace assisted the mission in many ways, until the two congregations merged in 1970

at the request of the Bishop and St. Philip's members were welcomed into the Grace family. Proceeds from the sale of the St. Philip's property have provided scholarships for graduating minority students from the church and also assisted the GED School.

Meanwhile, after statehood, Oklahoma's population was increasing rapidly and the demands of Bishop Brooke's job grew accordingly. The Bishop felt he was "being spread too thin," and urged that the state be divided into two districts. The 1910 General Convention approved the plan and he became Missionary Bishop of the Western District based in Oklahoma City.

To lead the Eastern District, the House of Bishops chose a young and vigorous Midwesterner, the Rev. Theodore

1863 in Delavan, Illinois, he attended Shattuck, an Episcopal Military School in Fairbault, Minnesota; after graduation from there, he went to Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut and entered the Episcopal Theological College at Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1891.

Mr. Thurston was consecrated on Jan. 25, 1911 and came to Muskogee to live a few weeks later. He was the only Bishop to have been a resident of Muskogee.

During his stay here from 1911 to 1919, Grace Church served as the Cathedral for Eastern Oklahoma. Always active in civic affairs, he had a deep-rooted influence for good in the community, both socially and spiritually, and his presence here greatly strengthened Grace.

Mary Morris Brenner said of him, "Bishop Thurston soon won the affection of his own people and seemed to appeal very strongly to the members of the other Christian bodies, who were always glad to be present whenever the Bishop could visit us (in Pawhuska)."

One indication of Bishop Thurston's appeal to other denominations came shortly after the United States entered World War I. At the request of the pastors of all Muskogee churches, he conducted a special farewell service May 7, 1917 for the young men who were about to leave for military duty.

During the war, city businessmen held a noon-day drill downtown and the Bishop's marching with the unit caught the attention of the *Muskogee Daily Phoenix*. The drill sergeant told the paper Bishop Thurston was a big help to his squad. The Bishop used his military training at Shattuck to good advantage.

Bishop Thurston remained in Muskogee until 1919 when, at the death of Bishop Brooke, the two districts were reunited. He became Bishop of Oklahoma and moved to Oklahoma City.

Under Mr. Llwyd's strong yet gentle and devoted leadership and guidance, Grace progressed steadily. By 1917, the parish had 362 communicants and in 1920, the number was up to 438. But there was no shortage of problems.

The Vestry began discussing the question of a Parish House in January, 1913 and came up with the idea of renting a rectory and changing the present rectory into a Parish House. However, no action was taken on the matter for more than a year while the Vestry dealt with bringing in delinquent pledges. Finally, in May, 1914 a house was rented for \$35 a month and the Vestry authorized spending \$17 to repair the Parish House. Finances continued to be a worry through the years. February, 1915 brought a crisis over the "paving tax" and it was decided to borrow the money. Fortunately, the March 2, 1915 Vestry minutes record a vote to thank the Daughters of the King for a gift of \$95.22 to pay that tax.

Heating and lighting in the church building were a Vestry concern also. Five stoves costing \$48 were purchased in December, 1915 and the following May the church leaders decided to keep the present gas lighting fixtures until fall or longer. Modernization came in 1917 when electric lights were installed. Peabody Electric Company's bill for wiring and fixtures was \$190.55, with a discount for the existing gas fixtures.

Meanwhile, down in the basement there was a recurrent-problem — flooding from an underground spring. Mr. Llwyd reported to the Vestry Sept. 15, 1916 that the Fire Department had pumped water out of the basement and that sewer pipes had been repaired. The minutes report: "Motion by Mr. Bragdon, second by Mr. Roach that a box of cigars be presented to the Fire Dept. — carried."

AS 1917 opened, the annual budget for Grace was \$7,200 and the rector's salary was \$1,800 a year. Discussions began over buying the Darby house and property, a tract of ground immediately north of the church site, and the purchase was completed in the late summer of 1918. Revenue stamps indicate the price was about \$2,500. The house became the new rectory.

Worries of a different sort hit Grace later in 1918. In October Mr. Llwyd was ordered by the Mayor of Muskogee to discontinue church and Sunday School services during the terrible influenza epidemic. Then came news that must have struck fear in the hearts of the Vestry and the congregation. Mr. Llwyd received a call from a church in New Jersey.

The salary of the rector and his value to the parish were discussed at length during a special Vestry meeting on Nov.3. The following resolutions were adopted:

"Resolved, by the Vestry of Grace Church of Muskogee, Oklahoma that the loss of our Rector would be irreparable and that this Parish cannot afford to let him leave; that his twelve years of service among us have been most satisfactory and conducive to the general good welfare of the Parish and its members; that his compensation be and the same is hereby increased Three Hundred (300) Dollars per year, beginning November 1st, 1918. Be it further "Resolved, that the Vestry of this church is pleased with the administration of Mr. and Mrs. Llwyd and regret that circumstances have been such that earlier and more substantial financial recognition of their valued and appreciated services could not have been made."

The increase raised Mr. Llwyd's salary to \$2,100 a year. Growing pains set in at Grace as the 1920s opened. She ranked as one of the three "big" churches in Oklahoma, along with Tulsa Trinity and St. Paul's in Oklahoma City. All had congregations of over 500 persons. Grace's church building was too small and two disturbing elements added to the urgency of the problem.

First, that spring under the building made it impossible to keep water out of the basement. Second, streetcars ran east and west on Broadway, immediately south of the church, and passed at 15-minute intervals.

The noise of the clanging cars and their warning bells to clear the tracks of pedestrians and stray dogs distracted from church services. The din may even have drowned out Mr. Llwyd's strong voice.

A switch or side track enabling east-bound and west-bound cars to pass was located on Broadway, only a short distance west of the church. Movements of the cars there added to the distractions.

Moving and expanding were talked about for two years and many options were explored. One plan included buying other real estate in another part of the city, disposing of the present lot and buildings and erecting a new church building, new Parish House and new rectory on the new site. That idea proved much too expensive. Moving the present church building very far was impossible, as the Vestry discovered. An investigation showed that "the building, on account of its peculiar construction, could not well be moved to a site of any great distance, especially where the move would require crossing a street"

Finally, the decision was made. On April 25, 1922 the Vestry voted to move the present church building to the lot at the corner of Sixth and Court Streets, and to enlarge the church, build a new Parish House and make other improvements. The cost would be approximately \$15,000 and the funds would be raised through a pledge drive, to be paid monthly or quarterly on or before one year from May 1, 1922.

Property at the corner of Sixth and Court Streets was bought for \$15,000. Architectural plans for rebuilding the church were submitted in November. Work to move and remodel the church began early in 1923 and the land at the corner of Sixth and West Broadway was sold for \$20,000. To double the seating capacity from 200 to 400 persons, the church was lengthened 38 feet. During the move, the building was cut in half and the additional space put in the middle. This gave it better architectural balance. The chancel was repaired, the altar enlarged and several memorials were placed in the building. Among these were the lectern, a memorial to S. M. Rutherford, and the bell, a memorial to Mrs. Edward Morton.

While the expansion project went on, services were held in the Congregational church at the corner of Eighth and Court Streets. Grace rented these facilities for \$100 a month for three months. Cost of all improvements to the church property was \$26,500. Construction of the Parish House was completed in November, 1924 at a cost of \$12,174.

When the move began, the original cornerstone was opened. Inside the sealed box were a copy of the Muskogee Evening Times of May 25, 1903 signed by the rector, the Rev. A. B. Perry; an 1892 Book of Common Prayer; an undated King James version of the New Testament; list of Church officers; list of members of the Ladies Guild; U.S. coins including a 1854 quarter, 1901 dime, 1902 and 1904 "V" nickels and 1864 and 1874 Indian Head pennies; a Canadian 1886 five-cent piece; copies of the March, 1905 Oklahoma and Indian Territories Churchman and The Living Church of May 20, 1905, and a copy of the cornerstone service.

Those items went back into the cornerstone when it was replaced at the new location. Added to the contents were a brief history of Grace Parish written by Mr. Llwyd, a letter describing the moving and enlargement of the church signed by Mr. Llwyd and the vestry, a list of communicants dated April 24, 1922, list of Brotherhood of St. Andrew members, a brief report about the Sunday School and a copy of the *Muskogee Daily Phoenix* of March 15, 1923. Parishioners attended the first service in their newly redone church on May 13, 1923. Bishop Thurston conducted the service during which 40 persons were confirmed. Despite his duties at Grace and the lack of assistants for that work, Mr. Llwyd was active in many community pro-

jects. He was chaplain of the Bedouin Shrine Temple in Muskogee, helped raise funds for the building of that temple and later was state chaplain.

Even though Mr. Llwyd was heavily involved with church and community, he found time for golf. Every Monday he joined a foursome to play at the "Town and Country Club." He encouraged people to come to church "as you are," even in golf togs. Son Edwin said he installed golf bag racks at the church entrance and that after church, golfers rode a streetcar to the golf course.

Bishop Thurston developed serious heart trouble in 1925 and resigned in March, 1926. The Rt. Rev. E. Cecil Seamon, Bishop of North Texas, served as Acting Bishop of Oklahoma until Oct. 2, 1927, when Thomas Casady was consecrated as Bishop of Oklahoma.

Bishop Casady's first years were perhaps the best the Oklahoma Missionary District had known, yet he seemed to sense from the start that his job would be one of making dollars stretch as far as possible. He may not have realized it at the time, but an austere decade lay ahead. The process of tightening up on expenses began in earnest in 1932 as the Great Depression hit Oklahoma hard.

Things still looked rosy in 1930 for the District and for Grace. Membership was growing and Grace's annual Parochial Report to Bishop Casady listed 614 communicants and 710 members overall. Receipts totaled \$13,136.07, enabling the church to pay \$750, in addition to the interest, on the church property mortgage. That reduced the indebtedness to \$10,050. Mr. Llwyd's salary was \$4,000.

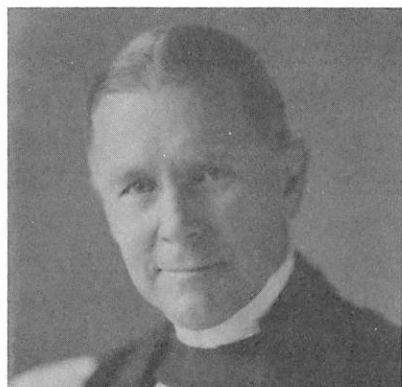
As the Depression deepened in Oklahoma, expenses began to be slashed, among them clergy salaries. Grace was no exception. By 1933, the debt had been cut to \$9,000, but payments on the principal were stopped. Interest was paid regularly every year. Grace's income from pledges and special offerings amounted to \$8,515.66 and Mr. Llwyd's salary was cut to \$3,600. By 1935 his pay had fallen to \$3,300, where it remained for the rest of the decade. Income from all sources stayed around the \$8,500 level through 1937.

The outlook brightened somewhat in 1938, when receipts totaled \$9,515.61 and the church felt able to resume payments on its mortgage. That debt was trimmed by \$300 annually for the next three years, dropping to \$8,100 in 1940.

Despite the hard times, or perhaps because of them, Grace reached its highest membership numbers during the 1930s. The annual reports to the Bishop showed these figures: 1933 - 705 confirmed, 870 (including all baptized persons); 1935 - 718 and 845; 1937 - 697 and 810; 1938 - 720 and 812; 1939 - 733 and 815. In 1940 Grace membership stood at 705 communicants and 790 members.

Records of the establishment and growth of a Church School at Grace have been lost but obviously one was started early on and grew with the congregation. By 1930 a large Church School was in operation under Superintendent Emory E. Million, who held that post for the next 15 years. The Parochial Report listed 20 teachers and 122 pupils; enrollment was up to 137 pupils in 1935.

Grace was a busy place in those days. In addition to the vestry, the annual reports listed many organizations: Brotherhood of St. Andrew, Men's Club, Ladies Guild,



Bishop Theodore Thurston of the Eastern Oklahoma District was in Muskogee from 1911 to 1919.

St. Margaret's Guild, Daughters of the King, Chancel Guild, Council of Women, Service League of Women, Episcopal Young People's Guild, St. Hilda's Guild and St. Barnabas' Guild.

As Alice Brown had said, Mr. Llwyd "was the type that stayed put." A highlight for Grace was the celebration

held March 1, 1941 marking the 35th anniversary of his ministry here. He was the oldest Episcopal clergyman in point of service in the state and was dean of all Muskogee ministers.

This happy occasion was soon followed by sadness. A month and a half later on April 15, 1941, two days after Easter, Mr. Llwyd died suddenly. He was 71. Bishop Casady officiated at the burial service.

In an editorial tribute, the *Daily Phoenix* said, "A great and good man has gone, to be forever missed in the community he loved and served most faithfully for 35 years and which loved him one hundred fold in return."



THE REV. PAUL R. PALMER

A Leader and a "Do-er"

Five months after the Rev. Hugh J. Llwyd's death, Grace got a new rector — the Rev. Paul Rudsil Palmer. He and his wife Lois arrived in Muskogee Sept. 15, 1941 and soon won the hearts of the parishioners.

Longtime member Alice (Mrs. Fred) Brown recalled, "He was mighty well liked and he did a lot for the church. She was good there."

Another longtime member and the church's unofficial historian Frances Rosser Brown said, "He had a great sense of humor. Once I was going by the Barnes Building (before it was torn down) and he passed in a car. I didn't look up but I heard this 'wolf call.' It was Paul Palmer. He was great!"

"I was in their home a great deal," Mrs. Brown went on. "They lived right next door to the church (in the rectory) and they were so hospitable. They were doers, both of them. Paul Palmer, he got around, oh I want to tell you."

"He and Lois were so devoted. I have all happy thoughts about the Palmers and I hated to see them go."

Mr. Palmer had served as rector at St. John's in Oklahoma City for six years before moving here. He came to Oklahoma from Minnesota where he had been in charge of parishes and missions for 10 years. He was graduated from the University of Minnesota and from the Seabury Divinity School.

During his years at Grace, Mr. Palmer was active in state and national church affairs, serving on a number of board

and committees. He was a member of the Muskogee U.S.O. board during World War II and also was a member of the board of directors of the local American Red Cross chapter.

The indebtedness that had hung over Grace's head since the move and expansion of the church building and construction of the Parish House in the 1920s dropped steadily during the first four years of Mr. Palmer's service. Finally, it was paid off in full early in 1945. The mortgage was burned at a joyful parish dinner on March 24. The next day, Palm Sunday, Bishop Casady consecrated the church.

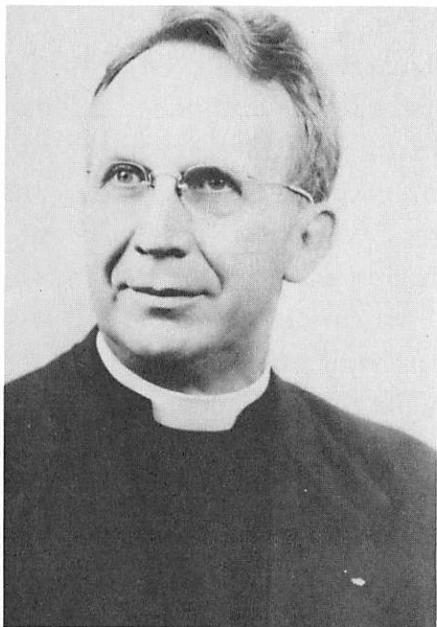
In that same year, another major project was completed when the last of the stained glass windows was installed in the sanctuary.

~~There continued to grow~~ throughout the 1940s, as a new need became apparent. Space and equipment for Church School classes and other necessary units were inadequate. Tams Bixby, Jr. offered to build the Bixby Memorial Chapel and to landscape the grounds around it at no expense to the parish.

In 1948 the Vestry had a blueprint of a tentative building program drawn up. Originally, those tentative plans to spend \$55,000 included:

1. Construction of an annex to the Parish House with space for five new classrooms, a larger choir room and separate offices for the rector and secretary. Cost: \$30,000.
2. A new pipe organ. Cost: \$18,000 .
3. Installation of attic fans in the church to circulate air in hot weather. Cost: \$2,000 .
4. Moving the rectory eastward to make room for the proposed Bixby Chapel, then renovating the house. Cost: \$5,000. The chapel was to be built on the north side of the new Parish House annex.

The Rev. Paul Palmer served as rector at Grace from 1941 to 1958.



Many children and adults participated in the 1950 Christmas pageant.

These plans changed considerably over the next 24 months. Buying a new pipe organ was postponed. The Vestry approved the lot east of the rectory as the Bixby chapel site and authorized a committee to buy a new rectory in an other location in the city. The old rectory by the church was to be sold and removed from its site at the buyer's expense. Overall cost was projected to be \$90,000, including \$70,000 for the Parish House addition; \$5,000 for renovation of the old Parish House, and \$15,000 for purchase of a new rectory.

While the expansion plans were being finalized, an other financial move was made. Mr. Palmer's salary was raised to \$4,000, the amount that Mr. Llwyd was paid before the Depression had forced its reduction nearly 20 years earlier. Church School enrollment increased also, reaching 147 pupils in 1950 and 159 in 1951.

The Advancement Plan gained momentum in April, 1950 when a church member made a challenge. This member would give \$10,000 towards the overall building program provided that other church members gave at least \$45,000 for the program by June 30, 1950. In answer to the challenge, members pledged \$69,000.

George C. Lynde was named chairman of the central committee to work throughout the program. Group meetings of congregation members were held to explain the plan and to get ideas on what all should be done before building plans were finalized. E. H. Pritchett headed the building committee.

A new rectory was purchased in the 500 block of North 13th Street, less than one block from the site of "Tudorville," which had been the home of the Rev. Henry Tudor, the first priest to serve at Grace. Work on the

Parish House addition was completed in 1951 and the building was dedicated by the new Bishop Coadjutor of Oklahoma, the Rt. Rev. Chilton Powell on Dec. 2, 1951.

By May, 1952, when all construction work under the Advancement Plan was completed, there had been a considerable cost overrun. Extensive necessary repairs to the old Parish House amounted to \$14,610 and unplanned but needed church building work cost another \$10,176. The rectory cost \$16,189 over all. Only the Parish House addition came in under expectations at \$67,777. The total bill was \$108,754.

Parishioners pledges were to be paid over a three-year period. To finance the program, a \$56,000 loan at 4 1/2 percent interest was secured, with monthly payments of \$575, plus \$200 interest. The Vestry calculated that at the end of the pledge period on July 1, 1953, the parish debt would stand at about \$42,000. Labeling this debt "far too great an amount to try to handle in the annual budget," the Vestry launched a canvass in the fall of '51 for funds to cut the debt to a workable figure.

The people of Grace rose to the occasion and the debt was steadily cut through their building fund pledges. By 1954, the debt was down to \$36,880 and by 1957 it amounted to \$9,921.

The church building was air-conditioned in 1957 when members of the family of Elbridge Seth Warner gave the system in his memory. Prior to that time, fans and an evaporative cooling system had provided relief from the summer heat.

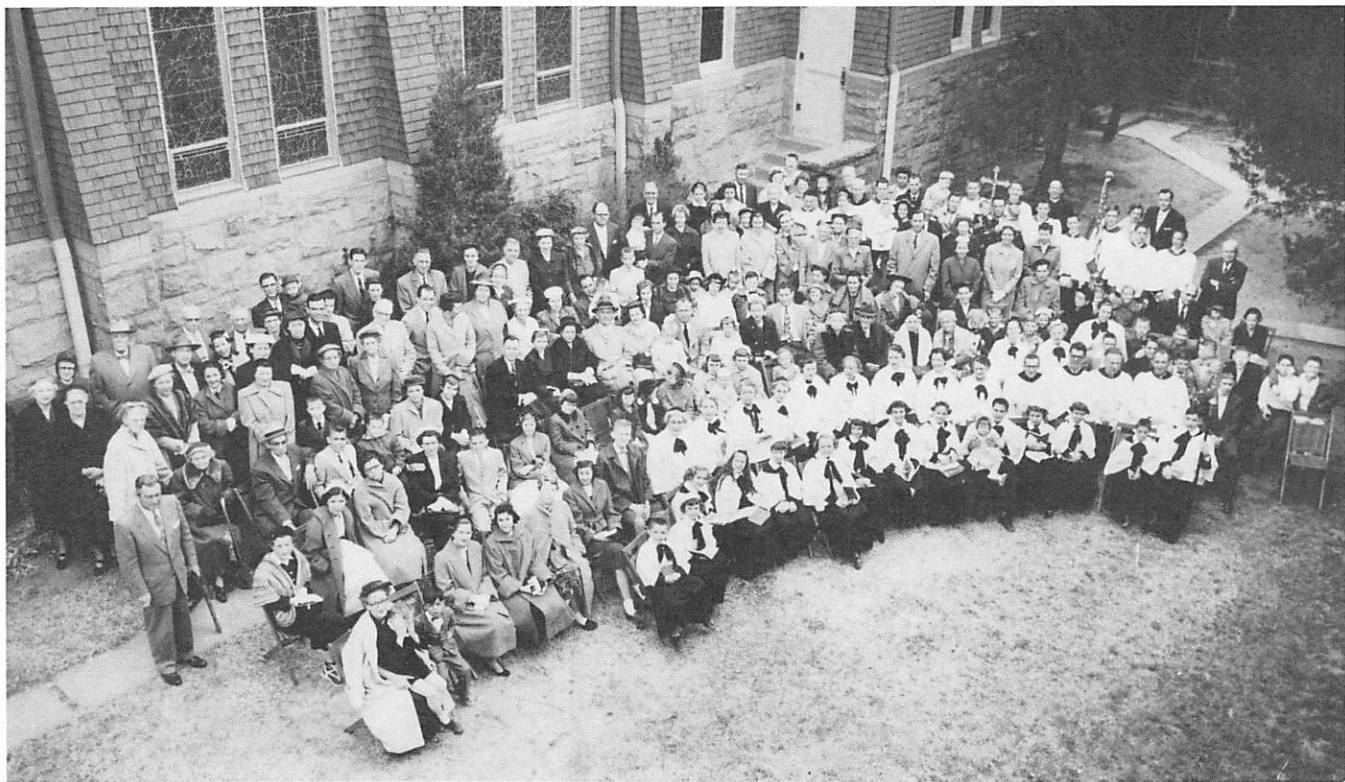
The newly-enlarged Parish Hall was put to good use as the Church School continued to grow. By 1954, there were 24 teachers for 169 students; the next year, 23 teachers and 173 pupils. Enrollment remained above 160 students until 1960.

Parish membership, while still strong, began to decline slowly. In 1945, the numbers were 692 confirmed and 772 including all baptized members; in 1950, 626 confirmed and 767 over all, and in 1955, 572 confirmed and 739 over all.

Grace celebrated her 60th birthday in fine style in 1953. The Rev. E. H. Eckel, Jr of Tulsa gave the anniversary sermon on Feb. 22 and the service was followed by a reception. For the reception, Frances Brown wrote a play tracing the history of the church from its founding. Then came the birthday cake. Mrs. H. C. Rogers, the congregation's senior communicant, did the cake-cutting honors, serving the first piece to Senior Warden Emory E. Million, the only person present who had signed the Articles of Association in 1904 when Grace became a parish

During the early '50s, a youth named Max B. Berry, Jr. of Oklahoma City visited Muskogee about once a month and on holidays to see his grandparents. Whenever he was in town, Max would volunteer to serve as an acolyte for Mr. Palmer. In 1990 that acolyte became the ninth rector of Grace.

John Meldrum, who became choirmaster in 1938 and was organist from 1948 to 1971, was blind but his lack of sight was no handicap. He walked and rode street cars around town without help, was director of music at Parkview School and spent every Thursday practicing on the church organ. A buzzer was installed from the front door to the organ to signal him when the opening procession was ready to begin. That little system is still in working order.



This congregational picture was made April 8, 1956 in the courtyard.

Today the Rev. Max Berry recalls that he served as an acolyte a great many times with Mr. Meldrum playing the organ. "I was amazed that he could know the hymns that we were singing," Fr. Berry said.

Mr. Palmer and Meldrum became special friends and were often together around town. Frances Brown told of the day they went downtown shopping and Mr. Palmer forgot where he had parked his car.

"John Meldrum said, 'Well, if you will turn me to the west, I can take us there,' " Mrs. Brown said. "Sure enough, they walked a block, turned right, walked a few more blocks, turned left and there was the car."

"The only thing he ever said to me about his blindness was, 'I wish that I could have seen one thing,' " Mrs. Brown said. "He didn't care what: he just wished he could see one thing."

Mr. Palmer retired from Grace in February, 1958 and became part-time rector of All Saints Episcopal Church in Duncan. He died there from cancer on Aug. 20, 1972.

The Palmers returned to Muskogee for a visit shortly before his death, when he was very ill and not able to walk around. He had to resign himself to sitting in a chair in the Parish House.

"He never was moody but you could see he was that day," Mrs. Brown said. "I stopped and talked to him. He said, 'This is the happiest day of my life.' And it was for him to come back and see everybody and see the church. I thought that was the most unselfish thought when he knew of course how close to heaven he was."



AN ERA OF CHANGE

Three Rectors in Thirteen Years

During the years after becoming a parish in 1904, Grace Church had enjoyed lengthy tenure from two of its three rectors. The Rev. Hugh J. Llwyd had served for 35 years and his successor, the Rev. Paul R. Palmer, for 17 years.

That situation was about to change. In the next 13 years, three rectors would lead the congregation. The Rev. James Lawrence Basil Williams served from September, 1958 to February, 1961; the Rev. Canon F. Grover Fulkerson, from April, 1961 to July, 1966, and the Rev. Daniel Leen, from September, 1966 to August, 1971.

Mr. Williams was the first man to be formally instituted as rector in the traditional high ecclesiastical rites. He had been at Grace four months when he was instituted on Jan. 4, 1959 by the Rt. Rev. Chilton Powell, bishop of Diocese of Oklahoma.

Mr. Williams worked diligently at Grace; as Peggy (Mrs.Spencer) Denton said, "Larry was doing something all the time." He had been here only a short time when he began making changes in the church plant. At the January, 1959 annual Parish meeting, a capital improvement program financed through a 10-year \$40,000 loan was approved. The old mortgage from the 1950 Advancement Plan was down to \$2,849.

The program was completed in less than 10 months. By Oct.1, the church building had been redecorated inside and out. In place of the original brown, the outside was painted off-white. The altar, which had been bought

second-hand from a Roman Catholic church, was dark brown, with a tabernacle in it. The altar was redone in off-white and the tabernacle removed

The exterior trim of the Parish House was painted. The kitchen was enlarged and modern cooking and dishwashing equipment was installed, with the help of a \$3,248 gift from the Women's organization. Parish offices were refurnished and redecorated, as were the entrance hall and dining area. A parking lot across Sixth Street from the Parish House was purchased for \$15,000, \$5,000 of which was donated by a parishioner. About \$2,000 was spent to clean off trash and weeds and to gravel the area

Mrs. Frances Rosser Brown remembered the day Mr. Williams said he wanted chandeliers in the Parish House hallway.

"Someone asked him, 'Who is going to pay for them?' she said. 'Just have faith,' Mr. Williams answered. 'Faith never paid for anything,' the person said. Some way the chandeliers were paid for." They still hang in that hallway. Long-time member Alice (Mrs. Fred) Brown recalled that Mr. Williams "really liked beautiful things. There was a little disturbance then because they thought he was spending too much money making things pretty."

In September, 1959 the Vestry sold the former rectory at 523 N. 13th St. for \$8,750 and applied that sum to the \$27,500 purchase of a new rectory at 1303 Emporia St. The balance due was financed through an additional 15-year loan. The Rev. and Mrs. Williams and their children moved into the new rectory in early October.

Mr. Williams was instrumental in having the court yard built between the church and the Parish House. Mrs. Frances Brown said that space "had been an eyesore," and

Mrs. Alice Brown noted, "He certainly did beautify the grounds of the church."

Mr. Williams had a varied, international background. He was graduated from the University of Virginia and earned a master's degree from the University of Minnesota. After serving in the U.S. Navy as a commander in World War II, he attended the Virginia Theological Seminary and became rector of the seminary congregation at Immanuel-on-the-Hill Church. During 1953-54, while on sabbatical leave, he was minister of the Henry Stimson Memorial Chapel, Bad Godesberg, Germany. From 1953 until he came to Muskogee in 1958, Mr. Williams was rector of the Cunningham Chapel at Millwood, Clarke County, Virginia.

Beyond Grace, he had a vision for Episcopal churches in the area and established two new missions. The first was St. Lawrence, on Muskogee's East Side, and the second was St. Basil's in Tahlequah.

Mr. Williams used Main Street as the dividing line and strongly urged Grace parishioners living east of Main to join the new mission. Bishop Powell authorized St. Lawrence as a mission of Grace Church on July 19, 1959 and Michael E. Vickers, seminarian minister at Grace during the summer of 1959, delivered the first sermon that day.

The first service of St. Lawrence was held in the Stardust Skating Rink off Gibson Street. After a couple of months, the congregation moved its services to the home of Emory E. Million, 506 Lawrence St. Later still, it used a newly redecorated building at 611 Chestnut St.

Grace assisted St. Lawrence in many ways but the mission never became self-supporting, perhaps because competition from the many churches of other denominations

on the East Side. In 1991 the mission was closed and its members were welcomed into the Grace parish family.

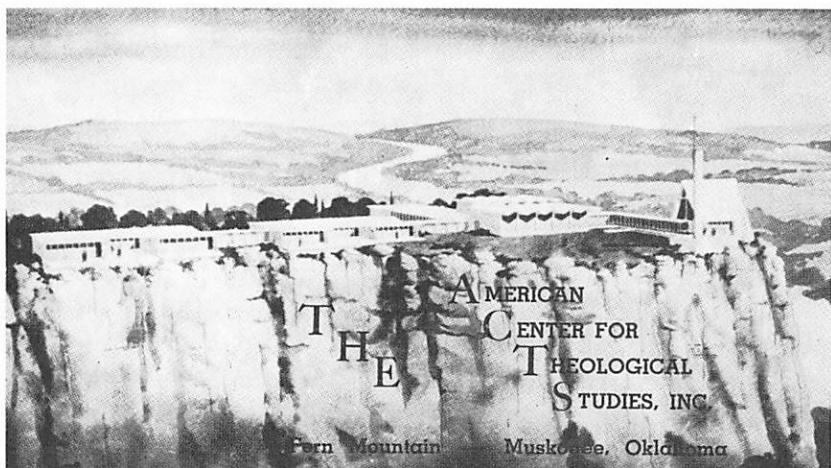
The story was different for St. Basil's, where the first service was held on June 21, 1959 at the Culver Funeral Home, Tahlequah. This mission is now a thriving parish.

The idea of getting a new pipe organ also was revived in 1959 and gifts of \$3,000 towards its purchase were made. A two-manual \$33,000 Austin Organ was installed in 1960 and used for the first time in a worship service Sunday, Aug. 7. A loan was obtained to pay for the organ.

Also during 1959 Mr. Williams helped to organize the Sequoyah Presbytery of the Diocese of Oklahoma. This group, composed of laymen and clergy, was to study the northeastern Oklahoma area and to plan to make the best use of manpower of the area.

In a front page story Nov. 8, 1959, the Muskogee Sunday Phoenix reported plans for building a center for religious study atop the area landmark Fern Mountain. The Sequoyah Presbytery had financed purchase of the 50-acre mountain where a proposed \$5 million "lay academy" would be built. Mr. Williams, the driving force behind the idea, said the center would be patterned after the popular lay academies in Europe. Conference, recreational and research facilities centered around an ecumenical chapel built in the style of a wigwam were planned. The academy, though Christian in its emphasis, was to be ecumenical in nature and would not push any particular denomination.

"The primary concept of the center," Mr. Williams said, "is that of a place for encounter where discussions might take place freely by individuals representing a variety of racial, sociological and religious backgrounds in an atmosphere of inquiry and meeting at the level where answers are sought, using as a major resource the Word of God."



A sketch of the proposed American Center for Theological Studies.



Mr. Williams



Mr. Fulkerson

A non-profit corporation called The ACTS (American Center for Theological Studies, Inc.) was formed. Preliminary architecture plans for a contemporary "City of God" on the Holy Mountain were drawn up. On the site, a rugged cross and stone altar were set up for worship services and soil from the Holy Land was placed under the altar.

Initially, some \$6,000 had been raised and ACTS leader hoped to receive endowment funds from individuals and foundations to carry out the project. Meanwhile, a group of Grace members formed the Order of St. Hilarius, whose motto was "Be Joyful in Hope." The name was taken from St. Hilary, a man of good will. The order sponsored elegant formal benefit balls to raise funds for ACTS in 1959 and 1960. St. Hilarius continued to be active for some years, sponsoring religious, educational and social activities.

A pilot conference on "Marriage as a Vocation" was held at Western Hills Lodge in Sequoyah State Park March 25-27, 1960. A second conference on "Religion and Psychical Research" was held March 17-19, 1961, only a few weeks after Mr. Williams moved to a new parish in Bethesda-by-the-Sea, Florida.

With its founding director gone, the Fern Mountain project lost momentum. ACTS trustees deeded the property to Grace Church in 1963 and the property was sold in September, 1971 for \$27,000. The vestry voted to give Bishop Powell \$2,000 of the proceeds in appreciation for his past help with the ACTS, Inc. A portion of the money was spent for miscellaneous church needs. The remainder of the funds were eventually gathered into a Certificate of Deposit that the church continues to hold. It currently is valued at \$28,145.

Establishment of the St. Lawrence mission had an immediate effect on Grace. Overall membership fell from 745 in 1959 to 526 in 1960 and a financial crisis loomed. The operating budget had not been underwritten by pledges and the congregation's bank balance on Dec. 31, 1960 was \$16.17. As 1961 opened, for the second time in four years, the parish began its year without a rector.

Wardens George C. Lynde and Robert S. McKee said in their report for 1961 that the parish was "living from day to day, so to speak." They praised Finance Chairman William Warner, Sr. and Treasurer Lynn Kerns for doing a "superb job of juggling in keeping us solvent"

The Rev. Canon F. Grover Fulkerson arrived in Muskogee from St. Paul's Cathedral in Oklahoma City in April, 1961 and immediately began work to restore the parish to a harmonious whole. By year end, Grace had achieved the most successful Every Member Canvas in its history and had a bank balance of \$1,039. The mortgage principal had been reduced to \$48,296 and the organ debt stood at \$13,159.

A major event of 1961 was the consecration of the newly-completed Bixby Memorial Chapel on May 15 by Bishop Powell. During the service Tams Bixby, Jr., son and brother of those for whom the chapel is dedicated, made the presentation of the donation and of an endowment to provide funds for maintenance and upkeep of the chapel, so that it is not a financial burden for the parish.

The fall of 1961 saw another new development at Grace, the opening of a language school at which French, Spanish and Greek were taught. Tuition was 25 cents per lesson. The school ran for several years.

Members of Grace began to think ahead again, this time about additional Church School space, organizing a parochial school for pre-school and lower grades and hiring a curate to provide assistance for the rector.

The Rev. Stanford Chambers became the parish's first curate in March, 1963. He participated in worship service and worked in the education field both for Grace and for the black Episcopal mission, St. Philip's. He also knew how to ring a church bell.

Joyce (Mrs. William) Wright, church secretary at the time, recalled Nov. 22, 1963, when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. Mr. Chambers hurried over to the church and tolled the tower bell 46 times, once for each year of the president's life. As she and Mr. Fulkerson listened, the rector said " He is well trained on the bell."

In April, 1963 Grace bought back the property it had owned when the church was located at N. Sixth and Broadway before the building was moved to Sixth and Court in 1923. The purchase price was reported at \$75,000. Part of the land was converted into a church parking lot and the remainder was rented as a used car lot. Eventually, the church expected to use the property for an expansion of the Parish House and for a parochial school. Those dreams never came to fruition and the land, still owned by Grace, continues to be rented as a used car lot.

The Parochial Report for 1963 indicated that three licensed lay readers, J. J. Harris, Edwin A. Llwyd and Robert H. Park, had transferred to the St. Lawrence mission and that DeWitt Roland was lay reader at St. Philip's. It further showed with the latest land purchase, the value of Grace's buildings and land was estimated at \$514,000. Mortgages amounted to over \$100,000 but these were paid down steadily.



Another picture from the archives shows a confirmation class in the 1960s.



Fr. Leen



Peter Weaver is the Boy-Bishop in a 1959 re-enactment of a Medieval Advent custom.

During Mr. Fulkerson's years as rector, membership remained well above 600 baptized and confirmed persons. The Sunday School was a busy place, too, with as many as 23 teachers and 165 pupils, not counting the adults in Bible Class.

Mr. Chambers left Grace in 1964 and was replaced as curate by the Rev. Richmond Thweatt, who was ordained as a priest at Grace on Feb. 2, 1965 and remained about a year. For the next six years, the rector was assisted by Grace's only deacon, the Rev. Richard G. Anderson, who was ordained deacon on Nov.10, 1965.

Mr. Fulkerson resigned in July, 1966. His replacement, the Rev. Daniel Leen, arrived two months later, in September. In the 1960s, the Episcopal Church began to renew its historic ties with the Roman Catholic Church and the practise of addressing priests as "Father" rather than "Mister" was revived. The Rev. Leen was the first Grace rector to prefer this usage.

Fr. Leen was a native of County Kerry, Ireland, where he received his early education. After completing undergraduate work at Burn Hall, Durnham, England, he studied theology at St. Joseph's Seminary, London and was ordained as a Roman Catholic priest on July 14, 1946. Fr. Leen was assigned to The Mission of Central Philippines and later lectured about the mission throughout the British Isles. His next assignment was Aquinas High School in California, where he served as vice principal and taught English and History.

In 1963, he entered the Episcopal Church and the next year came to St. Paul's Cathedral in Oklahoma City. Fr. Leen was very active in youth work, serving as a counselor and instructor at many youth conferences and retreats. For that work, he was nominated for the 1965 Jaycees Young Man of the Year award.

Under Fr. Leen's leadership, Grace was very active. Membership remained over 600 persons; debt was reduced dramatically and Sunday School enrollment topped out at 149 pupils. Value of the church buildings and land increased to \$781,65.

There was no formal celebration in 1968 for the 75th anniversary of Grace's founding because church members were busy preparing to host the Diocesan convention April 18-20. Some 500 delegates came to Muskogee for that meeting which was held at the church and also at the city's new Civic Assembly Center.

Grace has hosted two other diocesan conventions — Jan. 23-24, 1952 and Nov. 5-7, 1981.

The Rev. Dennis Maynard came to Grace as curate in July, 1969 to head the Christian education program and to work with the Sunday School, youth groups and acolytes. Mr. Maynard left in August, 1970 and was succeeded in early 1971 by the Rev. Sudduth R. Cummings.

After 14 years in this country, Fr. Leen was naturalized as a citizen in a ceremony during the annual congregational meeting in January, 1971. The Parish House dining room was set up in the style of a courtroom and Federal Judge Edwin Langley, a Grace member, presided. Judge Langley noted that Fr. Leen had entered the U.S. on the West Coast and jokingly asked the new citizen if, after his years here, he now realized the best way to enter the U.S. from Ireland was through an East Coast port.

When Fr. Leen left Grace in August, 1971, Fr. Cummings directed the worship and life of the parish for the remainder of the year until the new rector came in January. He was ordained as a priest on Dec. 21, 1971 by Bishop Powell.

During 1971 the years of owning a rectory ended. The trend throughout the country was to help rectors buy their own homes in order to build up equity in a house for their retirement years. Incoming rector the Rev. Edwin L. (Ted) Hoover requested that Grace follow this trend. So, the rectory was sold, its mortgage retired and a cash housing allowance in addition to salary was budgeted for 1972.

As Grace prepared to welcome its seventh rector, its membership stood at 586, the year-end bank balance was \$10,967.25 and the mortgage indebtedness had declined to \$15,240.55.



THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

Stained glass windows installed between 1927 and 1945 depict the life and teachings of Christ in the Grace sanctuary.

Eleven pairs of windows of identical size ring the nave. At the west end is the large "Come Unto Me" window; at the east are the "Praise and Adoration" windows on each side of the altar. Smaller windows are above the east entrance and on the south and west sides of the main entrance.

A small team of artists designed and produced the windows at the Jacoby Studios in St. Louis. A three-dimensional effect has been achieved by framing the scenes in a canopy of stonework, a characteristic of English church art in the 15th and 16th Centuries. Throughout the series of windows, Mary, the mother of Christ, is portrayed in the traditional manner in antiquity blue.

The glass was produced by the pot metal antique process and most of it was mouth-blown. To obtain the brilliant hues, the artists mixed minerals with the sand before heating to produce glass sheets. The painting and mottling on the glass are the work of artists using brown and black oxides, which with flux annealed to the glass when fired in a kiln at high temperatures. Thus they are permanently fused in the stained glass.

The windows are best viewed in sequence in a clockwise direction starting from the east entrance by the altar. The large windows are listed and illustrated here in that order. The color photographs were painstakingly made by Leonard Howard, a member of Grace. (Unfortunately, the three small windows would not reproduce well enough to be included.)

- Pair 1 Angel telling the Virgin Mary she is with Child.
Dedication: (L) The Mother of our Lord (R)
The Women of Grace Church
- Pair 2 Shepherds adoring the Christ Child with Mary and Joseph.
Dedication: (L) The Glory of God and in (R) Loving Memory of Mary Blaksley Darby, 1839-1915.
- Pair 3 Christ Child with Mary, Joseph and the Three Kings.
Dedication: (L) Given in Thanksgiving to the Glory of God (R) Cornelius Fay Lynde and Elizabeth William Lynde.
- Pair 4 Mary, Joseph and young Christ in the Temple.
Dedication: The Glory of God and in Loving Memory of Fred Elmore Brown, 1886-1945.
- Pair 5 Baptism of Christ by John and Christ at the river.
Dedication: (L) The Glory of God and in Loving Memory of (R) Robert Garner Emmert, 10-21-1873 -- 5 -25 -1929.
- Pair 6 (Southwest corner near font) Christ with children and Mary with children.
Dedication: (L) In Memory of Helen Jordan (R) In Memory of Loved Ones.
- West "Come Unto Me" - Christ
Dedication: To the Glory of God in Memory of our mother Sallie Dillard Rutherford, 1926.
- Pair 7 Sick, lame with Christ and Christ raising Lazarus.
Dedication: (L) To the Glory of God and in Loving Memory of James L. Wagner, 1869-1953 (R) Mildred Moot Wagner, 1865-1936.
- Pair 8 Last Supper: Christ with Chalice, Disciples at Prayer
Dedication: (L) To the Glory of God and in Loving Memory of John Henry Holden, 5-30-1876—12-25-1943 (R) Eloise Thornton Holden, 2-8-1855—1-17-1946.
- Pair 9 Crucifixion and Angel guarding Tomb.
Dedication: (L) To the Glory of God and in Loving Memory of Percy W. Talbot, 1867-1932 (R) Carrie R. Talbot, 1874-1915.

Pair 10 Disciples with the Risen Christ and Ascension of Christ.
Dedication: (L) To the Glory of God The Loving
Gift of (R) Alice Matthews McGimsey.

Pair 11 Tongues of Fire descend upon the Heads of the Apostles.
Dedication: (L) To the Glory of God and in Loving
Memory of Nolan Vinril Ellis, 1-18-1873—2-8-1940 ,
(R) Edward Randal Manson, 6-1-1887—4-21-1937.

Altar "Praise and Adoration" (L) Sts. Mary, John and
Peter with three Angel Musicians (R) St. Perpetua
(2nd century martyr) St. Peter, John the Baptist with
three Angel Musicians.
Dedication: To the Glory of God in Loving Memory of
Hugh Jacob Llwyd, 1870-1941 35 years Rector of Grace
Church .

THE SMALLER WINDOWS

East Entrance: Two Angels with Light and Scroll reading:
"Behold a Virgin shall bear a son and shall call his name
Immanuel."
Dedication: To the Glory of God and in Loving Memory of
Philip Thurston Snyder, 12-17-1930 – 3-10-1946 and Helen
May Snyder, 12-17-1933 – 10-25-1935 .

Main Entrance South Side: Angels with oil lamps, a Scroll read-
ing: "What God hath joined together, let no man put asun-
der."
Dedication: To the Glory of God in Honor of Mary Ellis
Youngs.

West Side: Angels before Vine with Scroll reading: "I am the
Vine; Ye are the Branches."
Dedication: To the Glory of God in Loving Memory of Rosa
Witte White, sponsor of Saint Catherine's Society .



Pair 1 Angel telling the Virgin Mary she is with Child.
Dedication: (L) The Mother of our Lord (R)
The Women of Grace Church



Pair 2 Shepherds adoring the Christ Child with Mary and Joseph.
Dedication: (L) The Glory of God and in (R) Loving Memory of Mary Blaksley Darby, 1839-1915.



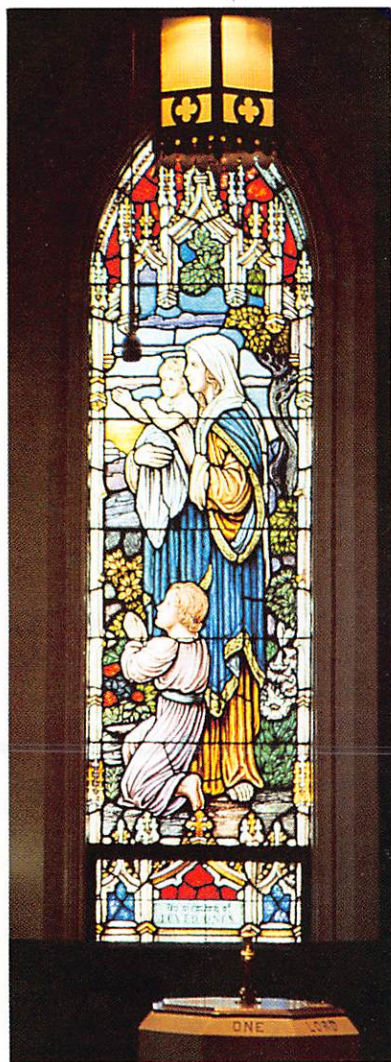
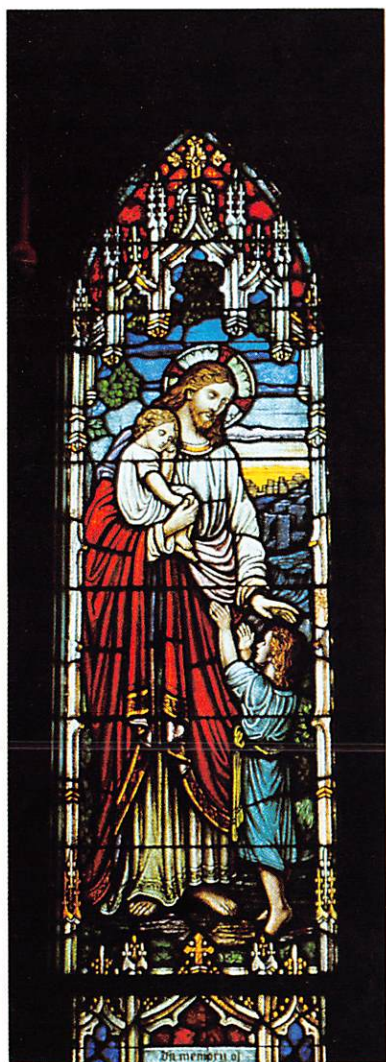
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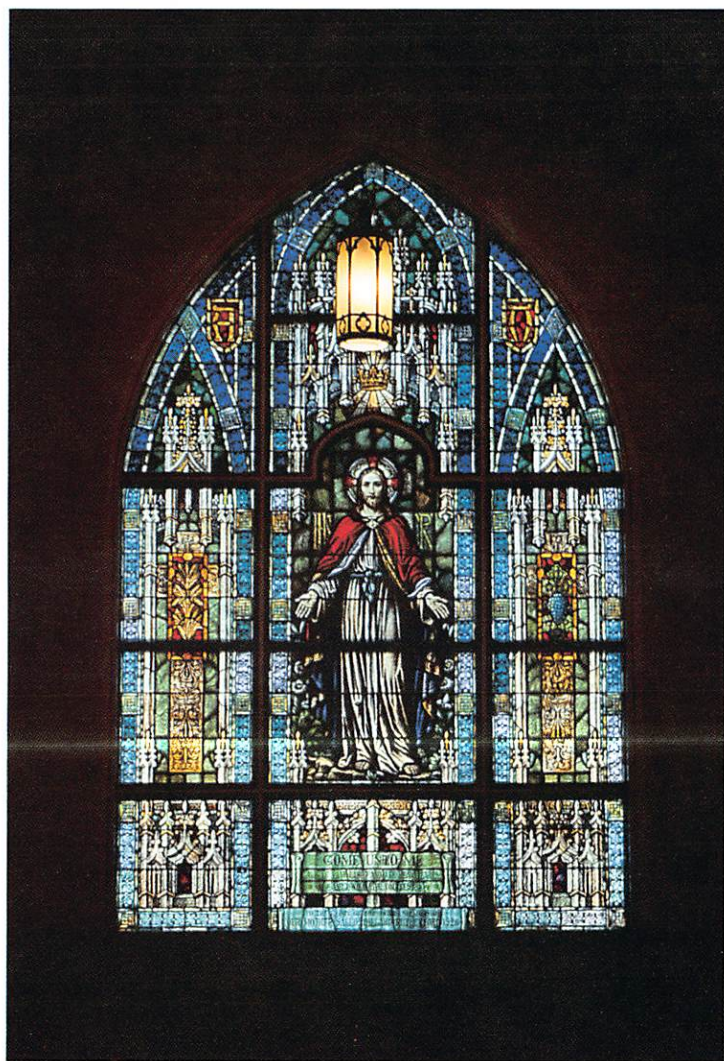
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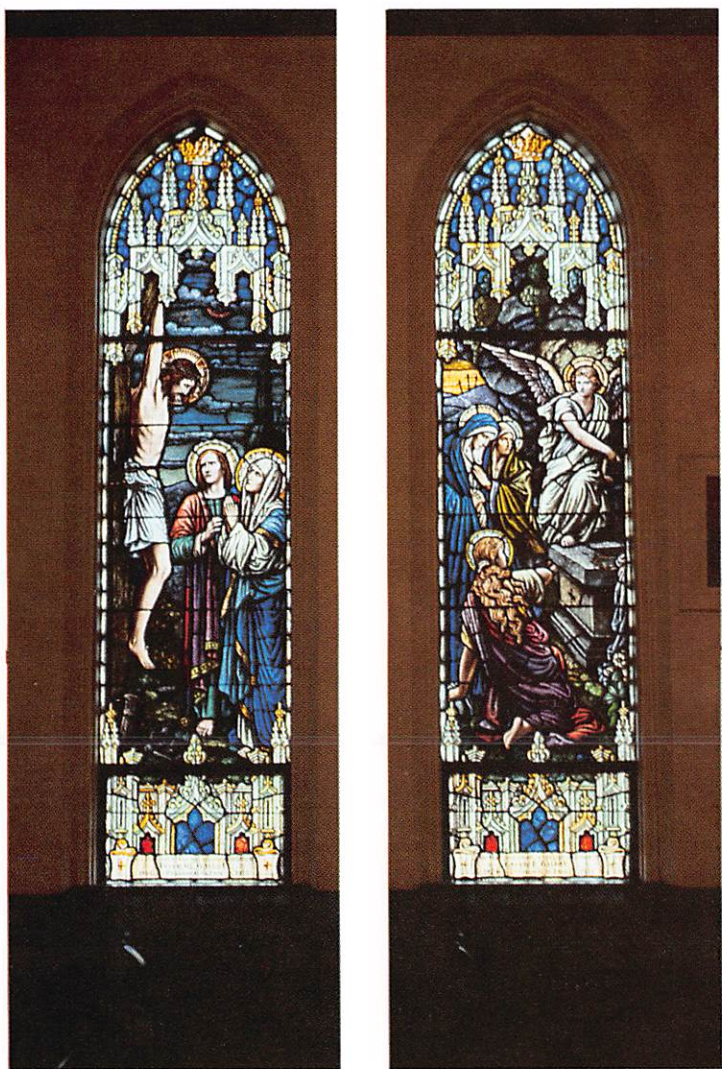
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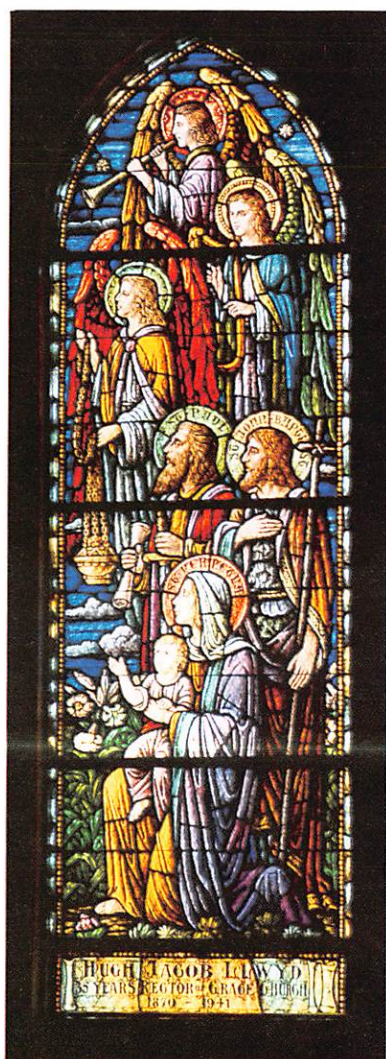
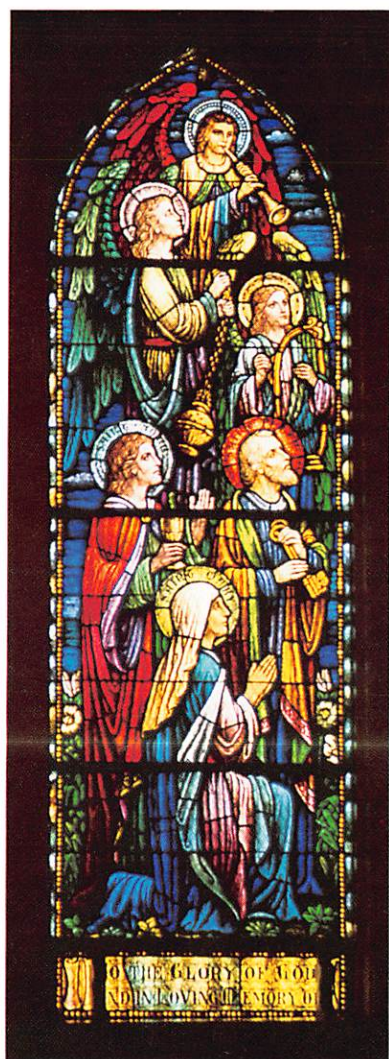
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APPROACHING THE CENTURY MARK

The Status of the Church Today

January, 1972 marked the start of another lengthy tenure for a Grace rector. The Rev. Edwin L. (Ted) Hoover, who arrived that month, served the church for more than 14 years.

Fr. Hoover came to Muskogee from Memphis, Tennessee but was no stranger to Oklahoma. In 1952 he became assistant rector of Trinity Church in Tulsa and in 1955, he was made vicar of St. Mark's Mission in Tulsa. He became rector in 1960 when St. Mark's became a parish.

In 1961 he received the James Mills Fellowship and spent a year at the University of Cambridge in England. In 1963 he moved to Memphis to serve as chaplain of Barth House, the Episcopal center at Memphis State University.

A native of Denver, Fr. Hoover was graduated from the University of Denver and the General Theological Seminary in New York. He was ordained in Colorado and did his early work in Lamar and Las Animas. Membership at Grace remained above 580 through 1974, when it started a slow decline, falling to 456 persons in 1983. Then, the trend reversed and the numbers increased to 554 in 1985, the last full year Fr. Hoover spent in the parish.

The Sunday School had ups and downs as well. Enrollment totaled 149, with a staff of 14, in 1972 but had dropped to 63, with a staff of eight, five years later. Again, the trend changed and enrollment began to climb, reaching 104, with a staff of eight, in 1980 and 116, with a staff of 10 in 1982. It had slipped to 90, with 15 staffers, by 1985.

The inflation of the '70s had a marked affect on the finances of Grace Church. Expenses rose, naturally, and so did monetary support of the parishioners. Receipts from pledges and cash in the collection plates amounted to \$71,356 in 1972. Five years later in 1977 these receipts totaled \$86,840, then climbed to \$108,975 in 1979 and to \$148,243 in 1984.

Mortgage indebtedness was steadily reduced and the final \$1,920 was paid off in 1978. The church has had no mortgage debt since then.

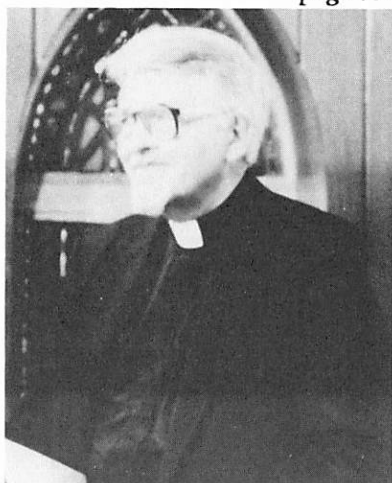
Three curates served the congregation during the first eight years of Fr. Hoover's rectorship. The Rev. Merrill K. Broach came in July, 1972 and was here until 1973. The Rev. Gary D. Gooch held the position from 1974 through 1976 and the Rev. James E. Liggett, Jr., our last curate, served from 1977 to 1980.

On June 19, 1977, Frankie Robertson Easter, whose family had long been active members of St. Philip's Mission in Muskogee, was ordained as a deacon. She was the second female deacon in the Diocese of Oklahoma. She served at Grace without pay until 1986 when she entered the General Theological Seminary in New York City. Ordained to the priesthood at Grace in June, 1988, the Rev. Easter now is Fr. Berry's pastoral assistant, serves mission churches in Eufaula and Wagoner and helps with hospital and shut-in calls at Grace when she is available.

About a year after Fr. Hoover's arrival, Grace became involved in what turned into an on-going community service project. In April, 1973, Grace agreed to house the Daytime GED (General Educational Development) classes that had been meeting at the nearby First Presbyterian Church. The move was to be temporary while the Presbyterians remodeled their building, but the classes never moved back.



Fr. Berry



Fr. Hoover



Fr. Wales



The Rev. Easter

The program involves Grace, the Muskogee County Department of Institutions, Social and Rehabilitation Services and the Muskogee Public Schools. In the beginning as a pilot program, the GED School was funded entirely by the state of Oklahoma. Muskogee schools supplied the teacher, Virginia Lipotich, and the school was open five mornings a week, year round.

After the initial period ended, the Diocese of Oklahoma supplied seed monies but these ran out in the early 1980s. Since that time, Grace has supplemented the salaries through free-will offerings and gifts from parishioners so that the school could remain open from September through May. The Women of Grace have contributed \$500 a year for many years and interest from the St. Philip's Scholarship Fund has gone to the school since 1988.

For several years, Grace also provided a 12-passenger bus to pick up mothers and youngsters and many church members volunteered assistance to help run the project. The church sponsors a day care center for preschool children of GED students. Presently two teachers each give instruction two mornings a week. Since the program began at our church, about 600 students have received their GED certificates.

The GED volunteers were honored in 1977 with an award from then Gov. David Boren for "outstanding contributions toward the enrichment of their community life."

MONARCH, Oklahoma's major treatment center for women victims of alcohol and drug abuse, is a spin-off of the ministry of Grace Church. Its establishment in early 1984 was the result of an idea proposed by Grace member Virginia Bixby Tarpley for several years before her death in 1980.

Discussions about a counselling center began in earnest in the summer of 1983 and received the support of the Grace vestry and Bishop Gerald McAllister. MONARCH, which stands for the Muskogee Organization for Narcotic and Alcohol Referral, Counselling and Help, was incorporated in early 1984. Its program got under way when it received a \$180,000 contract from the Department of Mental Health, a \$10,000 gift from the Diocese and other smaller gifts.

Originally, the Grace vestry and the Bishop of Oklahoma each appointed one of the MONARCH board members. In 1987 this system ended and MONARCH became a purely secular program.

Muskogeeans still remember the winter of 1978 and the blizzard that brought the city to a standstill. The snow was so deep that newspapers could not be delivered for three days. But the drifts did not prevent Fr. Hoover from walking to the church from his home to hold a service attended by a few parishioners who owned four-wheel-drive vehicles. Grace was the only church opened in town that Sunday.

Fr. Hoover had a knack for relating the message of his sermons to things to which his hearers could relate. In one Christmas sermon he discussed how the "Bethlehem Phoenix" might have covered the events in Bethlehem leading up to the birth of Christ. The publisher of the Muskogee Daily Phoenix was in the congregation.

Fr. Hoover retired in March, 1986 and moved to Lawton with his wife. The couple now lives in Tulsa.

The Rev. Richard C. Allen served as interim rector from May 1986 to April 1987. A retired priest, Fr. Allen directed the work of the church until Grace's eighth rector was named. Membership stood at 535 and receipts from parishioners amounted to \$135,823 while he was here.

The Rev. Drew H. Wales arrived as rector in June, 1987. Before coming to Muskogee, he had been associate rector of St. Cross Church, Hermosa Beach, California, and rector of All Saints Church, Hillsboro, Oregon.

Fr. Wales, born Aug. 5, 1947 in Reno, Nevada, earned a bachelor's degree from San Fernando Valley State College and a Master of Divinity degree from Virginia Theological Seminary. He was ordained as a deacon in June, 1974 and was ordained as a priest in January, 1975.

He served as field representative for the Episcopal Peace Fellowship in Los Angeles, as director of the Neighborhood Youth Program in Washington, D.C., and as director of the Episcopal Draft Counseling Center in Los Angeles.

Fr. Wales' more contemporary style of ministry was a mismatch with the Grace congregation steeped in traditional Anglican ways. Membership fell off, as did financial support which ran \$10,000 below expenses in 1990. After 27 months, he resigned as rector in August, 1990.

Grace's ninth and present rector, the Rev. Max B. Berry, Jr., took over the position in November, 1990. Shortly afterwards, he was asked whether he preferred to be called "Mister" or "Father." Ever quick with a joke, he replied, "You can call me anything but 'reverend.' It's not grammatically correct. What's the old story? Call me anything as long as you call me for dinner."

Born in Muskogee on March 26, 1937, Fr. Berry was baptized at Grace, along with his mother and grandmother, by the Rev. Hugh J. Llwyd on March 25, 1939. His family moved to Oklahoma City the same year and he later was graduated from the University of Oklahoma with a degree in mathematics. Entering the U.S. Coast Guard in 1960, he

served five years active and seven years active reserve duty and retired in 1978 with the rank of lieutenant commander.

He received a Master of Divinity degree from Seabury-Western Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois in 1969, was ordained to the diaconate in June, 1969 and to the priesthood in December, 1969. He was rector at churches in Sapulpa and Chickasha, was chaplain and taught at Casady School in Oklahoma City and was associate rector at All Souls' Church, Oklahoma City, before returning to his native Muskogee. In 1978 Fr. Berry received a Doctor of Ministry degree from Phillips University Graduate Seminary in Enid.

As Grace prepared to enter her Centennial year, the number of baptized members stood at 356, receipts from pledges and loose offerings totaled \$158,894 and revenue for 1992 had exceeded expenses by \$1,720.

A variety of events celebrated Grace Church's 100th anniversary.

The observance began Sunday, Feb. 21, 1993 when Bishop Robert M. Moody was present to preach, celebrate Holy Communion and to confirm and receive 15 persons. The choir and a brass quartet offered special music at the 10:30 a.m. service, which was followed by a reception in the Parish Hall and a congregational dinner, attended by 137 at Jasper's Restaurant.

The church building cornerstone had been removed and contents of the sealed metal box inside it were on display at the reception. None of the items had deteriorated; in fact, the small New Testament placed in the box originally on May 26, 1905 looked brand new. Long-time parishioners and visitors enjoyed studying the 1923 list of members; the names brought back memories and there was much reminiscing.

Retired TV weather forecaster Don Woods and his wife came from Tulsa for the event. He recalled becoming a Grace member in 1953 when he moved to Muskogee to work for KTUL Channel 8, then located in Muskogee. Woods said the Saturday after he came to Grace for the first time the rector appeared at his front door. The Rev. Paul Palmer told Woods he had to be lay reader the next day.

On Grace's real birthday, Tuesday, Feb. 23, the Rev. S. Ross Jones, rector of Trinity Church, Tulsa, preached at a 7 p.m. Evensong service. During that service the congregation sang the same chants that Mary Morris had taught a Methodist choir 100 years earlier for the first Episcopal service in Muskogee. The Holland Hall Concert Choir of Tulsa, directed by David Rollo, presented special music. Altar flowers were a gift from former rector, the Rev. J. L. B. Williams.

A dessert reception for Grace members, guests and visiting clergy was held after the service. Retired rector Fr. Hoover and Mrs. Hoover were there. The high spot of the party came when members and guests drank a toast to Grace Church and sang "Happy Birthday Dear Grace." The first year of the next century of Christian love and service at Grace Parish had begun.



GRACE'S PHYSICAL PLANT

Structures Dedicated to the Glory of God

Grace Episcopal Church's buildings and grounds, while not the largest in Muskogee, are among the city's most attractive. Church property covers a half city block with an adjacent parking lot. The buildings total 18,941 square feet with a pioneer American Gothic style throughout. Property value exceeds \$1.3 million.

Property ownership began in 1895 with a small wood church on South Fourth Street. The congregation outgrew that structure and 10 years later built a much larger church seating 200 persons at the corner of Sixth and Broadway. It opened Feb. 4, 1906. Within a decade, this church was becoming too small. So, in 1923, the building was moved to the corner of Sixth and Court Streets, cut in half and enlarged to seat 400 persons. Originally this church, which is still in use, was painted brown but was redone in off white in 1959.

A Parish House was built in November, 1924 and an education wing was added in 1951. The entire building contains small and large classrooms, a library, a children's chapel, nursery, a kitchen and a dining room that seats about 125 for luncheons or dinners, choir room, church offices and a parlor.

Landscaping of the courtyard between the church and the Parish House in 1959 and construction of the Bixby Memorial Chapel in late 1960 completed Grace's physical plant. The buildings are connected by covered walkways.

THE BIXBY MEMORIAL CHAPEL

The Bixby Memorial Chapel, located east of the church and facing Court Street, was consecrated on May 15, 1961 by Bishop Chilton Powell. Its bronze plaque reads:

TO THE GLORY OF GOD

and inspired by the life and rectorship of

HUGH JACOB LLWYD

and in loving memory of

Tams Bixby 1855-1922

Clara Mues Bixby 1864-1940

Edson Kingman Bixby 1877-1940

Joel Heatwole Bixby 1888-1940

this Chapel is erected by those who loved them most
1960

During the consecration, Tams Bixby, Jr., son and brother of those for whom the chapel is dedicated, made the presentation of the donation and of an endowment that provides funds for maintenance and upkeep of the chapel, so that it is not a financial burden for the parish.

The chapel is used for small weddings, funerals and other services that do not need the larger church. It seats 60 people.

Interior and exterior construction is of Silverdale cut stone from Silverdale, Kansas. The vaulted redwood ceiling features huge beams. Above the altar are three stained glass windows of the Star of Bethlehem with rays of light running through the three windows. Other stained glass windows are around the walls and in the upper part of the tower. The interior furniture is finished in white and the altar is floodlighted.

The elder Bixby was prominent in the early history of Eastern Oklahoma and received wide acclaim for his



The Bixby Chapel shortly after it opened in 1961.

handling of the Dawes Commission and its administration of the Five Civilized Tribes from 1897 to 1907. He later became publisher of the Muskogee Daily Phoenix. His grandson Tams Bixby III and Mrs. Bixby are present members of Grace.

THE PIPE ORGAN

Once their handsome new church opened in 1906, Grace members thought it imperative that a pipe organ be installed. Apparently bought second hand for \$1,500, the organ was made by the Kilgin Organ Company and bore the Serial Number 5, indicating it was made in the early 1800s.

Miss Lucille Walrond, daughter of Muskogee's first prosecuting attorney Z. T. Walrond, played the organ. Choirmaster/organist John Meldrum some years later described it as a "tracker-action," first operated by hand and later by motor power.

A new two-manual Austin Organ was installed in 1960 at a cost of \$33,030 and used for the first time in a worship service on Sunday, Aug. 7. It has 21 stops and 1,328 pipes. Mr. Meldrum told the congregation that day he was "carried away by the beauty and grandeur" of the instrument. He added that George Sabol, who supervised its installation, had said, "The unusual acoustical properties of the church building allow the organ to speak with equal clarity and fullness of tone in any part of the nave."

The Austin organ is dedicated to the Glory of God and in thanksgiving for Miss Mary Bickford, organist from 1918 to 1948, and to Mr. Meldrum. Bishop Powell gave the benediction of the new organ on Oct. 9, 1960 at a Choral Evensong and a recital by Meldrum.

The old organ was dismantled and different parts were sold or given to various persons. The motor went to the man who dismantled it; the bench and some of the black keys went to Meldrum, and a stopper to George Lipotich, Jr. Who got the rest is not known.



Organist John Meldrum at the new two-manual Austin Organ in 1960.

THE COURTYARD AND MEMORIAL GARDEN

Architectural plans drawn up more than 60 years ago for the rebuilding and enlargement of Grace Church called for a flower garden and courtyard with cloisters at the eastern end of the site. There also was to have been a large fountain between the church and the parish house, originally planned as a two-story building with gables.

The cloisters never came to be. Instead, there came a more modest one-story Parish House and a red brick education wing. In 1959, the courtyard between the church and the Parish House was laid out according to a design by Grace member Art Johnson, who was director of the Muskogee Parks and Recreation Department

The walls of these two buildings were lined with terraced flower beds. A small water fountain in the shape of a fish, the ancient symbol for Christianity, was placed

against the wall of the education building. Brick flooring was laid in the upper courtyard and flowerbeds were installed around the three large fir trees that sheltered the upper courtyard. Azaleas, tulips, hyacinths, begonia, lantana and ivy were planted. Both the courtyard and the sanctuary with its beautiful stained glass windows were opened for the annual Muskogee Spring Garden Tour April 14-15, 1984.

The courtyard was redone in 1992 by landscape architect Duncan Alford, a Muskogee native who regards Johnson as his mentor. Flower beds were rejuvenated and a new brick floor was laid. A statue of "Christ and the Lilies" replaced the old fountain no longer in working order. The sculpture was given by Russell Ruby as a memorial to Elizabeth (Betty) Ruby and Dorthea E. Ruby.

The memorial garden is dedicated "to the glory of God and in loving memory of Melissa Ann Moore, 1961-1984". It was dedicated May 6, 1992 by Bishop Robert M. Moody.



THE WOMEN OF GRACE CHURCH

In 100 Years They've "Done Everything"

Women's work at Grace Church began with a letter and over the years has contributed enormously to the spiritual and physical growth of the parish. Serving with fervent, diligent and liberal hearts is a century-long tradition.

Miss Mary Louisa Morris took the initiative in January, 1893 to invite the new Bishop of the Oklahoma and Indian Territories to Muskogee. When Bishop Francis Key Brooke set a date for his visit, Miss Morris busied herself planning the service and teaching a borrowed Methodist choir, augmented by several Episcopal women, the Anglican chants.

In 1986, a Planning Committee studied the congregation as part of the process of searching for a new rector. The committee noted the historical influence of the "very active and contributing women's organizations, often described as the backbone for the work of the church and relied upon for fund-raising and organizing the activities."

The women of Grace have been busy ever since Mary Morris wrote her letter.

The Ladies Guild was formed almost immediately for the new mission and its members set out to raise money to build a church. Chicken and turkey dinners were held in vacant business buildings and ice cream socials were given on the lawns of different members. However, about \$900 in debt remained after the little frame church opened in 1895, so the women redoubled their efforts.

Mrs. D. M. Wisdom, who had a small greenhouse at her home on North Cherokee Street, gave a flower show and silver tea. This was the first flower show held in Muskogee. Home talent plays were presented by church members at the Turner Opera House; one outstanding success was "Evangeline." A "Trades Carnival" added funds to the Guild treasury. The debt was paid off in 1896.

A year later there was a new challenge — raising money for a rectory. By the time plans for the \$1,500 rectory were finalized, the Guild could contribute \$664.55 towards the project. In all, nearly \$1,000 had been given for the rectory but a deficit of \$500 remained. The women promised to raise that money so the rectory could be built.

To get the ball rolling, a delegation including Mrs. H.C. Rogers, called on Clarence W. Turner, a pioneer businessman and owner of a lumber yard. They asked him about buying building materials for the rectory on credit. Mr. Turner agreed.

"Let the ladies have what they want and pay for it whenever they can," he told his employees.

In later years, Mrs. Rogers recalled, "If we made \$50 at a tea, or if we made any money at all, we took it straight to Mr. Turner until we paid off all of our debt."

Mrs. Rogers was a member of Grace for many years, seeing much growth and change and other debt retirements. As the congregation's senior communicant, she cut the first piece of birthday cake at the church's 60th anniversary celebration in 1953.

The rectory was completed Dec. 1, 1898 and the last dollar of indebtedness was paid on Jan. 19, 1901.

In almost no time, by May 1, 1901 to be exact, the Ladies Guild took on a bigger task. Grace was growing steadily and it was obvious that a larger church building would be needed soon. The women decided they would begin to raise funds for a new house of worship.

It was not easy sailing for these courageous women. It took hard work and determination and probably many of the contributions came from self-denial. But raise money they did. Among their profit-making activities were the planning and serving refreshments for parties. For example, at a ball given in the Fite-Rowsey building, Guild members prepared and served a midnight supper of chicken salad, cake and coffee for several hundred guests. They netted \$100. When the fair was held at Hyde Park in 1906, Grace women prepared food in their homes and took it to the fair for sale.

In 1913 when the fair moved to its present location, now the Muskogee Expo Grounds, the Episcopal women secured the first concession privileges and built a four-room cottage on the grounds. From it they served three meals a day during Fair Week for several years. Early members recalled that part of the food sold at the fair was prepared in the homes of Mrs. T. P. Smith and Mrs. Preston West and the remainder at the grounds.

Some of the money raised in this way went to buy an organ for the new church after it was completed in 1906. The women of Grace also found time to work with other groups, both state and local. Bishop Brooke established the Women's Auxiliary to the Oklahoma and Indian Territories in 1901 and one of its first vice presidents was Mrs. A. V. Francis, wife of the rector. At home the Missionary Federation of Muskogee was founded in 1903, with Mrs. John Templeton of Grace as its first president.

The St. Agnes chapter of the Daughters of the King was established in 1910 for the purpose of giving such assistance to the rector as he might find useful. The two obligations of the Order were "the Rule of Prayer" and "the Rule of Service," which were interpreted as an effort to bring other women into the Church and to pray for the spread of God's Kingdom throughout the world. Mrs. B. E. Spivey was the chapter's first president.

In its earlier days the Daughters of the King cared for the altar. However, the Daughters of the King were not permitted to raise money so a new group was formed — the Chancel (later called the Altar) Guild, which cared for the altar and contributed the money necessary for its support. Church records do not show a date for the beginning of the Chancel Guild, but it probably was in the early 1920s, before later guilds were organized.

Serving in this guild is serious work because every item has a meaning and God's table must be arranged carefully and beautifully. Members lay the altar for each service, then dismantle, wash and put away each vessel used. The seven linens are never used twice; each time they are taken home, laundered and returned perfectly ironed. In the early years, before altar linens were ordered from a supply house, individual members hemmed and embroidered them all by hand. After each service, candles are cleaned and brass that is not burnished is polished. Altar workers also do weddings and funerals.

Altar Guild members receive instruction in exactly how to perform their duties. Mrs. H. H. White was instructor for many years, followed by Mrs. Paul Palmer, wife of the rector. When the Palmers left in 1958, Mrs. Spencer Denton became the teacher. Mrs. Mary Cousparis now oversees altar work.



Altar Guild members in the Bixby Chapel. Left to right front are Mrs. Rollo Fewel and Mrs. Claude Wilson, and back, Mrs. W.W. Weber Jr., Mrs. Jack Hoopes and Mrs. Spencer Denton.



Mrs. George C. Lynde was elected in 1963 to be the first woman to serve on the Bishop and Council of the Diocese of Oklahoma. She also was named the Diocese's only lay delegate to the Anglican Congress that year.

The women of Grace saw a new need in 1911 and 1912 when the Women's United Thank Offering went to support the work of Miss Alice J. Hunter. A lay-worker, Miss Hunter ministered to the poor, especially the tent-dwellers living at the south edge of Muskogee along Coody Creek. Families were in want, children were ill and without medical supplies, and the heads of families were unable to find work. She did such things as organizing a neighborhood club for the women, sewing classes and recreation for the children of the area.

When U. S. involvement in World War I occurred in 1917, the women turned their attention to working for the Red Cross.

Within 10 years after Oklahoma became a state in 1907, members of Grace began to talk of a larger church building. This came about in 1923 when the church was moved to the corner of Sixth and Court Streets and enlarged. Now the Grace women found yet another way to help their Church. A number searched their homes for used rugs that were sent to a renovating company for reweaving into carpeting. This carpet was laid in the new church and remained in use until 1948, when it was replaced.

At the suggestion of the rector, St. Margaret's Guild was formed in 1926 to assist the church choir. Miss Helen Rutherford was its first president. This guild contributed \$50 a month to support the choir and gave linens, china and other items for the church and Parish House. Its members also gave \$500 toward the laying of hardwood floors in the church and made pads for the kneeling benches. Throughout Grace's 100-year history, the women have always been an imaginative lot, frequently coming up with innovative money-making ideas. Not all can be included, but some of the largest projects are worth mentioning here.

In order to buy new china and glassware for the Parish House kitchen, what by then was called the Women's Auxiliary held a day-long bazaar on Nov. 17, 1948. It featured a Toy Town, Handcraft Center, Parish Garden, Book Mart, Bake Shop, Treasure Attic and even a Button Box.

Food was available most of the day at prices that reflected the times. A ham sandwich with relish tray and potato chips cost 20 cents; wiener with chili on a bun, 15 cents; wiener sans chili, 10 cents; cake, 10 cents; pie, 15 cents, and drinks of coffee, tea, Coke or 7-UP, 5 cents.

The women took a different approach in 1952, sponsoring an "Open House" at two new homes for eight days, from Oct. 12-19. Six-room homes at 4117 High Oaks St. and 4726 West Broadway were completely furnished and decorated to the last detail, including sheets on the beds. More than 30 Muskogee merchants cooperated in the venture by loaning the furniture and decorations. Admission was 25 cents to tour both houses.

The Parish House was converted into what the newspaper described a "complete compact shopping center" called "Grace Village" for a spring bazaar April 5-6, 1956. Held to raise funds to help pay the building debt, the big bazaar was planned months in advance and the project involved almost every member of the congregation.

Men made wood items, such as patio carts, fireside benches, bird houses and feeders and barbecue equipment. The Young People's Fellowship produced posters to promote Grace Village, painted and varnished items Auxiliary members had made and created stylized enamel on copper jewelry. Needleworkers made beach bags, ponchos and wrap arounds for swimmers.

Crafts workers decorated charcoal buckets, cutting boards and just about anything else that came to mind. They used cans of all kinds, scraps of yarn, lace, rickrack — in short, whatever could be put to use. A Jan. 6, 1956 newsletter about the bazaar reported that the Crafts committee was "caught up on coffee cans and frozen fruit juice cans" but that there was "a crying need for catsup bottle tops."

The first "Grace Episcopal Church Cook Book" came out in 1951. Its 242 pages were filled with the favorite recipes of Women of Grace members and their friends. Mrs. George Lynde edited the book. Proceeds from book sales enabled the women to buy brass candlesticks, floor lamps, folding tables and several pieces of furniture for the church.

A second cook book containing many new recipes as well as favorites from the first edition was published in 1983. Copies of this one still are available.

One project launched in 1958, the Junior and Senior Cotillion Clubs, turned out to be a money-maker, good public relations and a community service as well. The purpose was to give girls and boys an opportunity to learn social dances and social graces for use in everyday life. Dancing instructors from Tulsa gave the lessons. As many as 125 students were enrolled at one point, and in 1959, the project contributed \$2,525 to the Women of Grace treasury. The Cotillions ran for four years.

The most ambitious and longest-running project, the Thrift Shop at 106 Court St., was launched on Feb. 21, 1959. Designed as a community service and a fund raiser, the shop succeeded on both counts.



These Grace women headed up activities for the big "Grace Village" spring bazaar in 1950.



Mrs. H.C. Rogers



Mrs. Dick Embody displays an afghan door prize for the 1983 bazaar.

The shop was the idea of Mrs. Frances Rosser Brown and Mrs. Charles Beard. The rector, the Rev. J. B. L. Williams, was lukewarm to the idea but did not say "No," so the two women went store hunting and rented store space for \$30 a month.

The Thrift Shop sold used seasonal clothing and accessories for men, women, children and infants, as well as curtains, bedspreads, household articles, knick-knacks, costume jewelry, pottery and white elephant items. Merchandise, that came almost entirely from Grace members, was accepted either as a donation or on consignment. Mrs. George Seibold, Jr. was the first chairman, but family duties forced her to turn the work over to Mrs. Spencer Denton, who ran the shop for the next six years.

Initially, the shop was open Thursday and Saturday; later additional days were added. The building had been renovated before the shop opened but little else was done to the place until it got a face lift and was air-conditioned in 1971. Women from both Grace and St. Lawrence mission worked there as volunteer staffers.

Financial statistics show the shop's success. For the 1959-60 year, profits were \$3,524; for 1960-61, it gave to the Women's work a sum of \$2,374 and in 1961-62, \$2,317. Gifts to the parish over its first 13 years included the kitchen stove for \$759.70 and a dishwasher for \$3,240.15, plus monies for the refrigerator-freezer, carpeting for the vestry room and for redecorating the sacristy and the ladies parlor.

In the early 1970s, however, Thrift Shop proceeds began to slip. Competition had increased and, as Mrs. Denton said in 1972, "Who ever heard of a 'garage sale' 13 years ago?" To make matters worse, the area in which the shop

was located was deteriorating. The Thrift Shop was closed in 1973 after a gigantic Spring Sale of its merchandise. Remaining goods were contributed to local charities.

Annual International Dinners in the 1980s enhanced the reputation of Grace members as excellent cooks of foreign cuisine. Now, in the '90s, the Women of Grace rely on an annual Bake Sale, Style Show and Luncheon as their chief fundraiser. Held early in November, this event attracts buyers from all over Muskogee.

Raising money for the church and other worthy causes was not the only activity of Grace women. They used their time, talents and often their hands in many other projects. In the Depression years of 1932-1933, when the federal government furnished materials to make clothes for the needy, the women opened the Parish House one day a week to sew clothes. The garments were distributed through the Red Cross. Mrs. James L. Powell, supervisor of production of the Muskogee Chapter of the American Red Cross and a member of Grace, helped direct the work. Red Cross sewing went on for years at the Parish House. During World War II a Red Cross surgical dressing unit was stationed in the Parish House, with Mrs. Claude Sledd as director. After that war Red Cross sewing, as well as sewing for the supply department of the church, continued. Mrs. Tom Windle was sewing chairman for many years and this faithful group of women was rated by the Red Cross as one of its most consistent and best-trained units. In the late 1940s the group expanded its service to the community by sewing for the Day Nursery and for the Veterans Hospital.

Sewing projects played a special role from January through September, 1958 when Grace was without a rector. Auxiliary President Mrs. Frances Rosser Brown organized a Christian Social Relations Workshop to meet each Tuesday morning. A representative from a Muskogee Social Agency would talk that agency briefly and then the women would make items of use to that agency. Among the things they produced were hospital gowns and pink puppets for children in either Muskogee General Hospital or Oklahoma Baptist Hospital.

Years later, when she was ill in 1988, Mrs. Brown told her night nurse, a Baptist, about sewing the pink puppets. "I got one," the nurse said, explaining she had been a young hospital patient when the puppets were given out.

In an effort to hold the church together until the new rector arrived, the women arranged a picnic in June and an ice cream social in August, 1958. Around 200 persons attended the picnic at Honor Heights Park, enjoying a menu that included fried chicken. The 1958 Auxiliary scrapbook noted that "the chicken came out even with Senior Warden Dr. W. N. Weaver, Sr. getting a back."

Since the Ladies Guild was formed in 1893, women's groups at Grace have undergone several reorganizations and name changes.

In the late 1920s, the rector, the Rev. Hugh J. Llwyd, set up the Woman's Council, a coordinating body of church women to meet once a month to consider matters important to all women of the church. It consisted of two representatives from each group in which the women were interested. Included were the Ladies' Guild (renamed the Senior Guild by Mr. Llwyd and later renamed St. Mary's Guild), the Daughters of the King, St. Margaret's Guild, the

Chancel Guild and the Sunday School.

Nationally, the number of guilds and other women's groups increased in the 1930s and the need for a church wide organization became apparent. A major reorganization of the Women's groups took place in the fall of 1940, after the Triennial, when all women's work was placed under one unit, the Woman's Auxiliary to the National Council. Accordingly, changes were made at Grace.

Each woman in the church now was a member of the Auxiliary and each belonged to one of the five chapters into which the Auxiliary was divided. The Auxiliary met once a month at the Parish House for lunch and a program and the chapters, designated by numbers, met separately once a month in members' homes. All women's organizations, except the Daughters of the King and St. Catherine's Society were disbanded

Alice (Mrs. Fred E.) Brown was elected the Auxiliary's first president and in 1943 moved up to serve as president of the Oklahoma Branch of the Woman's Auxiliary to the National Council. She held that post for six years. Mrs. Brown recalled that after she retired, "the women passed a resolution that nobody could be re-elected. They just re-elected me too often."

Funds for the Auxiliary's work on local, district, national and worldwide levels were raised through personal pledges. Individual chapters augmented pledges with special fund-raising activities.

Women's groups at Grace switched back to guilds with names instead of numbers in 1958.

Eventually the name "Auxiliary" was dropped in favor of the title "Episcopal Church Women". Women were given the right to vote in congregational meetings and to serve

on the vestry in 1969. Betty (Mrs. William) Weaver became Grace's first vestrywoman in January, 1970.

Profound social changes took place in the country during the 1960s and '70s as more and more women began to enter the work force. One result was less time for church groups. Attendance at guild meetings fell off although the churchwide women's organization remained very active. By 1984 the parochial report listed only three guilds in addition to the Altar Guild and the Daughters of the King. Of the guilds, St. Anna and St. Elisabeth did not meet regularly and the merged St. Mary and St. Martha was a night group for business and professional women.

Person-to-Person, whose members regularly visit parish shut-ins, was formed in 1984 at the request of the rector, the Rev. Edwin Hoover. Sally (Mrs. Ralph) King sponsored the group and served as chairman until her death in 1991. The coordinator now is Rosemary (Mrs. Leo) Ryan. Women's groups active today, usually meeting each month except in the summer, are the Episcopal Church Women, the Altar Guild, Sts. Mary and Martha Guild, Person-to-Person Guild and Daughters of the King.

Mrs. Alice Brown, who was born Dec. 23, 1890 in Goldsboro, North Carolina, is Grace's oldest and longest-time member. "I go way back when the church was down on Fourth Street in a little bit of a building," she said in an interview, "and I did everything."

Her comment sums up the century of service by Grace women. The record shows they have done everything to support the Church and its work.



APPENDIX

Important Dates

Feb. 23, 1893 — First Episcopal service held in Muskogee by Bishop Brooke. Mission with six persons organized.

April 14, Easter Sunday, 1895 — Small frame church opened as the first Episcopal Church in Muskogee.

Dec. 1, 1898 — First rectory completed and occupied by priest-in-charge and his family.

March 9, 1904 — Bishop Brooke approved application for admittance as a parish. Grace became the first self-supporting parish in Indian Territory. The Rev. A. B. Perry became the first rector.

May 26, 1905 — Cornerstone laid for new church building at corner of Sixth Street and West Broadway.

Feb. 4, 1906 — First service held in the new church, with Bishop Brooke officiating.

1910 — The Rev. A. C. Roker organized St. Philip's mission for Negroes in Muskogee.

May 13, 1923 — Church building had been moved to its present location at Sixth and Court Streets and enlarged. Bishop Thurston conducted the first service in the new sanctuary on this date.

Nov. 17, 1924 — The Parish House was accepted as completed by the Vestry.

March 24, 1945 — Church mortgage burned at a parish dinner. The following day, Palm Sunday, Bishop Casady consecrated the church.

May, 1952 — Education wing addition to the Parish House completed.

July 19, 1959 — St. Lawrence was authorized as a mission of Grace Church by Bishop Powell.

October, 1959 - Landscaping of the courtyard between the Parish House and church completed.

Aug. 7, 1960 — Two-manual Austin Pipe Organ used for the first time in a worship service.

May 15, 1961 — Bixby Memorial Chapel consecrated by Bishop Powell.

1970 — St. Philip's Mission merged with Grace Church and the mission property was sold.

1991 — St. Lawrence Mission was closed and its congregation joined Grace Church.

May 6, 1992 — Redesigned courtyard dedicated as the Melissa Ann Moore Memorial Garden by Bishop Moody.

CLERGY OF GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

During its 100 years, Grace Church has been served by the following clergy:

The Rev. Dwight Benton, Jr.	3 months in 1893
The Rev. Henry Tudor	May 1894-Feb. 1897
The Rev. Arthur V. Francis	Nov. 1897-May 1902
The Rev. A. Basil Perry	Feb. 1903-Jan. 1906
The Rev. Hugh J. Llwyd	March 1906-April 1941
The Rev. Paul Palmer	Sept. 1941-Jan. 1958
The Rev. J. L. B. Williams	Sept. 1958-Feb. 1961
The Rev. F. Grover Fulkerson	April 1961-July 1966
The Rev. Daniel Leen	Sept. 1966-Aug. 1971
The Rev. Edwin L. Hoover	Jan. 1972-March 1986
The Rev. Richard C. Allen (interim)	May 1986-April 1987
The Rev. Drew Wales	June 1987-Aug. 1990
The Rev. Max B. Berry, Jr.	Nov. 1990 to present

GRACE CHURCH MEMORIAL FUND

The Grace Church Memorial Fund, made up of money contributed by family and friends in memory of departed loved ones, has served the church well for 30 years.

The Rev. Grover Fulkerson started the fund in 1963. Until then, memorial gifts not designated for a specific purpose were mingled with the general fund and he worried that they would be lost or be spent on ordinary operating expenses. Church treasurer Lynn Kerns determined that \$1,221.47 in memorials had accumulated in the general fund.

This memorial money was transferred to a new separate bank account where all such gifts have been deposited ever since. The church keeps a detailed record of expenditures from this fund and, if the information is available, in whose memory the item was purchased.

The fund has been used for a wide variety of church needs. Only a few can be mentioned here, such as having the church charter framed, a sound system, the hand bells, pencils for the pews, cross and vases for the altar, movie screen and projector, choir cassocks, altar hangings, books for the church library, ramp handrails and a lectern lamp.

Since its inception 30 years ago, the fund has provided more than \$60,300 to buy special items that Grace otherwise would not have been able to afford.

OKLAHOMA BISHOPS

Since its beginning in 1893 Grace has been under the jurisdiction of seven Bishops:

The Rt. Rev. Francis Key Brooke	1893-1910
The Rt. Rev. Theodore Payne Thurston	1910-1925
The Rt. Rev. Eugene Cecil Seamon	1925-1927
The Rt. Rev. Thomas Casady	1928-1953
The Rt. Rev. W. R. Chilton Powell	1953-1977
The Rt. Rev. Gerald N. McAllister	1977 -1988
The Rt. Rev. Robert M. Moody	1988 to present

GRACE CHURCH STATISTICAL REPORT

Figures shown here are taken from early parish records and Parochial Reports since 1930. Not all years were saved and not all reports were complete.

YEAR	MEMBERS (baptized & confrimed)	INCOME from plate collections & pledges	PROPERTY VALUES including land
1893	6	n/a	0
1898	40 (est)	1,572.52	n/a
1903	141	n/a	n/a
1908	231	n/a	\$16,400 (est)
1918	362	n/a	n/a
1923	438	n/a	n/a
1930	710	\$9,516	\$106,000
1933	870	\$8,482	\$73,900
1938	812	\$8,600	\$78,900
1944	809	\$12,876	\$87,900
1947	738	\$17,216	\$111,400
1953	721	\$20,941	n/a
1958	747	\$27,812	n/a
1963	623	\$42,623	\$514,000
1968	601	\$63,426	\$695,000
1973	547	\$75,064	\$753,890
1978	473	\$96,101	\$1,109,063
1983	456	\$143,695	\$1,109,063
1988	415	\$130,048	\$1,109,063
1992	356	\$158,894	\$1,398,500