

Historical Society of the Episcopal Church

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The Rev. Dr. John F. Woolverton, Portland, Me. (ex-officio)
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The Society wishes to express its thanks to its former president, Scott Field Bailey, and to its former vice president, Roland Foster, who both served the Society generously and effectively in the years of their tenure in office from 1976 to 1986.

Summary of the Society's Work

The Board of the Historical Society, at the request of the General Convention, serves as Historiographer of the Episcopal Church and as publisher of the Church's historical magazine, *Anglican and Episcopal History*. In order to fulfill its obligations as the official Historiographer of the Episcopal Church (as designated by General Convention in 1976), the Historical Society met formally three times for substantive meetings in Washington, D.C., Atlanta, and New Orleans. The Washington and New Orleans meetings coincided with our biennial national conferences (jointly sponsored with the National Episcopal Historians Association and the Episcopal Women's History Project). The topics were, respectively, "The Episcopal Church in the Twentieth Century" and "Aspects of the Formation and Early History of the Episcopal Church in the United States." (The major addresses at these conferences have been or will be published in *Anglican and Episcopal History*.) The Historical Society

continued to publish and expand (in size and focus) the Church's principal historical journal, *Anglican and Episcopal History* (formerly *The Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*), the official responsibility of the Society since 1961. The Society continued to develop good working relationships, formal and informal, with all bodies and individuals involved in the research, writing, and teaching of Episcopal Church history, including the new National Archives board, the professors of church history at Episcopal seminaries (COACH), the above-mentioned groups, and others. Finally, in order to continue and expand our activities, the Society began a major membership drive and a \$250,000 capital endowment campaign.

Dr. John F. Woolverton has submitted the following report on his work as Editor of *Anglican and Episcopal History*:

The Anglican Communion needs a serious world-wide journal of current history. Anglican churches need to learn about each other. The Episcopal Church in the United States should record its history in an interesting, readable manner. We need to lead the way by our witness and by making it possible for all of our churches to witness together to our heritage to our matchless Lord.

After nearly ten years as editor of the quarterly publication of the Historical Society, it struck me that we were not fulfilling our potential in reaching sufficiently large numbers of people either in the United States or elsewhere. In order to move in a more rewarding direction and to raise our sights, an international editorial board was gathered. We have asked them to generate manuscripts about their church history as well as subscriptions. Second, we changed the name of the publication from the cumbersome *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* to the leaner *Anglican and Episcopal History*. Third, we initiated the publication of articles in languages other than English, at the same time providing English translations. Fourth, we selected as managing editor Mrs. Mary Ann Hoy, a professional newspaper woman and active communicant of the Church. She and I then chose a first-class scholarly press to print the new journal. Fifth, by selective testing of the literary waters, we discovered that the clergy as a group would be initially the most susceptible to our blandishments. Our efforts netted over three hundred new subscriptions, not a bad record in a time of falling magazine subscriptions. We believe that the rising interest in specialty magazines—*The Smithsonian* comes to mind—no doubt helped us.

There is still a great deal to be done, especially with the international side of this enterprise. Our only precedent, *Anglican World*, published in the 1950s, was a glossy, "photo opportunity" affair. Glossy and boring, it richly deserved the end it received after a few issues. In contrast, *Anglican and Episcopal History* seeks to raise the level of discussion, provide a forum for exchange of ideas, and review books of real worth and of interest to educated Anglicans. Our book review editor, the Rev. J. Barrett Miller is a Californian with a foot in both the parish ministry and in academia (he has an earned doctorate in English Reformation history). In addition, Professor David L. Holmes of the College of William and Mary is an American religious historian, a lay person with a foot in parish life. Holmes edits our "Church Review" section, a novel and lively description of Anglican worship in America and, increasingly, elsewhere. All of this rich fare now goes to 1528 individuals and libraries. Not enough. We have a long way to go. We believe we are on the right track.

Financial Report

The Historical Society does not receive any funds from General Convention for its activities. Membership fees and donations have funded its historiographic activities.

Limited resources have restricted the board's ability to carry out its responsibilities, and at times the difficulties have been so acute that the continued publication of the magazine was threatened. Completion of the endowment fund drive, which is almost half-way to its goal, should end the financial crisis. In the meantime the board seeks support from church members for continuation of its work for General Convention.

Goals and Objectives for the Coming Triennium

Over the course of the past 20 years, the Church's historical resources have been both vastly augmented and seriously depleted. Both aspects of this dichotomy pose serious problems. On the one hand, our archives have been inundated with material, and more and more parishes and other institutions are acquiring and preserving more historical records than they can manage. To some extent, this side of the problem is being addressed by the national and diocesan archive commissions, although much remains to be done and much support is still required. The other side of the dichotomy presents an even bigger concern. Currently, no survey history of the Episcopal Church is in print. Seminaries, parishes, and Sunday schools are without published resources for educational purposes. Research projects on Episcopal history topics (i.e., the ability to utilize, analyze, and present the history contained in our vast and rich archives) have been limited by lack of funds to support scholarly work and publication. Historical amnesia is widespread in the Church, and this situation is intolerable in a Church which makes its decisions based in part on an informed, accurate consideration of "tradition," of the historical witness of "the blessed company of all faithful people," the history of the Church both in its American setting and in world-wide Anglican and ecumenical perspective. The Historical Society is committed to doing all that it can to remedy this lack.

Our principal vehicle will continue to be the journal *Anglican and Episcopal History*. We urge all Episcopal parishes and interested individuals to subscribe and thus become members of the Society.

In addition, the Society intends to continue to hold biennial national conferences on topics of major historical significance and current interest. We want to work with the Episcopal Women's History Project and other groups to bring to light the "hidden histories" of our Church. We want to encourage scholarly research, doctoral dissertations, etc., in all areas of Episcopal and Anglican history and, when it becomes financially feasible, to provide grants to aid such research and publication. We intend to begin planning a history-based curriculum and other resources for Sunday schools, Lenten series, parish study groups, etc. We will publish a guide, now in preparation, to writing parish histories, and we will make regular reports on the results of such grass-roots historiography. Together with other interested groups, we will begin planning some very needed basic reference volumes (e.g., a biographical dictionary of all American bishops, a critical bibliography).

Finally, working with the Registrar and other relevant sources of information, we plan to devote special issues of *Anglican and Episcopal History* to analyses of the historical significance of this current General Convention and of this year's Lambeth Conference. We believe that such writing of contemporary history helps the Church at large to understand the broader ramifications of new developments. We also plan to devote at least one issue in 1990-91 to responsible scholarly historical background studies, reviews, and debates on those topics most likely to come before the 1991 General Convention. If these issues prove to be feasible and useful, we hope that they

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will become a regular part of the preparation for an assessment of important church meetings.

As Bishop Browning has written, "A complete understanding of our past will help ensure the future of our Church's mission. Preserving and sharing our common religious heritage is the responsibility of all Episcopalians, and the effectiveness of your donation [to the Historical Society] will be everlasting." The Historical Society dedicates itself to that mission and, with your support and prayers, will succeed.

The Rt. Rev. Bennett J. Sims
President

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Secretary