Unfinished Journey:

A Brief Racial History of the Diocese of Western North Carolina

**Facing Our Past to Find
Hope for Our Future**

**Written as part of the "Repairing the Breach" Process
Initiated at the 75th General Convention of the
Episcopal Church in 2006**

by

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Commission to Dismantle Racism**

2011

Unfinished Journey

This e-version of *Unfinished Journey* is essentially the same as the book version, although it has been revised slightly to correct a few factual errors in the original.

Please note that, in addition to the page numbers at the bottom of each page, the original book's page numbers have been inserted into the text of this e-version, so that people using different versions can "be on the same page" when discussing the book together. Those page numbers are in bold print and in parentheses, also at the end of each page.

With gratitude for the life and ministry of

Fay Coker Walker

1943-2011

Trail-blazing visionary, wise counselor,
spiritual companion and dear friend,

without whom the journey so far
would not have been nearly
as clear, as fruitful,
or as fun

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Preface

In 2006 the General Convention of the Episcopal Church passed Resolution A123 which called on the Church to:

- Declare unconditionally that slavery "was and is a sin and a fundamental betrayal of the humanity of all persons who were involved" and that this sin "continues to plague our common life in the Church and in the culture."
- Express "our profound regret" for the Church's participation in the institutions of slavery and segregation.
- Urge every diocese to document its "complicity in the institution of slavery and in the subsequent history of segregation and discrimination" and also to document various "economic benefits" that each diocese derived from the institution of slavery.
- Seek ways in which we can be "repairers of the breach" (Isaiah 58:12) "both materially and relationally, and achieve the spiritual healing and reconciliation that will lead us to new life in Christ."
- Hold a national "Day of Repentance" and also a series of diocesan Days of Repentance, as a way of acknowledging past wrongs, apologizing for them, and pledging ourselves to a new and different future.

The writing of this brief historical account of our diocese's "complicity in the institution of slavery and in the subsequent history of segregation and discrimination" is but one element in the Diocese of Western North Carolina's "Repairing the Breach" effort to respond to this clarion call to come to terms with our painful racial history and, with God's help, to find healing, reconciliation and new hope for the future.

I must admit that doing the research for this historical account has not been an easy task for me, for there is much in our history that is painful and difficult to face. But it has also been informative, helpful, and very rewarding. And I am grateful to the many people **(page xi)** who have entered into this process with me and helped uncover and document aspects of our history that otherwise might have been lost and forgotten altogether.

Unfortunately, most history told from a "white" perspective often either ignores, underplays, glosses over or puts a benevolent "spin" on matters dealing with race. So in this short volume, I have attempted (as commentator Paul Harvey used to say) to tell "the rest of the story"—not to shame or embarrass anyone, but to *learn* from it, to find healing and liberation from past patterns and mistakes, and to discover clues for moving forward into a more hopeful and reconciled future.

Even so, I am keenly aware that I, as a white man, may *still* not be able adequately to "tell it like it is", for it is a given that I see life through privileged eyes. Nevertheless, my intention has been

(as my seminary's motto puts it) to "seek the truth, come whence it may, cost what it will;" for the truth, Jesus said, will set us free, and as long as we remain in denial, we will *continue* to be locked in the destructive patterns of the past.

Blessedly along the way, I have discovered some very positive things in our history, as well, examples of courage and faith on the part of both blacks and whites who confronted the horrors of racism in *their* times and give us encouragement to do similar things in our own. Would that there had been more of them! And may there be more of *us* here in our own time, for the journey is far from over.

I am also aware that there is no way to do much more than scratch the surface in a treatise as short as this one. Frankly, I would love to have had more time to seek out more of the primary sources I know are out there and to travel around the diocese to interview more of the people whose personal stories would have greatly enhanced my understanding. But this work at least provides an overview, and I have consciously written it to be more of conversation facilitator in the diocese than a definitive scholarly work **(xii)**

For that reason, advance permission is granted to reproduce this book, or any portion of it, for educational purposes. In fact, the Commission to Dismantle Racism particularly *recommends* that it be used as a resource for parish-based discussion groups which seek to deepen their understanding of racism and continue to move forward on the path toward racial healing and wholeness. (An electronic 8½ x11 version of the book—in "portrait" format—may be obtained from the diocesan office. It would be easy to reproduce for such discussion groups and is available free of charge.)

I welcome any comments that you, the readers of this volume, care to share with me. Especially let me know if you come across any mistakes you find or any serious omissions you see. It would be helpful to me, and perhaps at a later date we could come out with either an addendum or a second edition.

In closing, let me express my thanks to the members St. Matthias' for their loving patience with me over the last dozen years and for all the many ways they have enriched my life and opened my eyes in sometimes painful but wonderfully liberating and helpful ways; to the members of the Commission to Dismantle Racism for their on-going work to do what the commission's name implies, including this "Repairing the Breach" initiative; to Bishops Robert Johnson and Porter Taylor for their past and present support of our efforts; to all those who shared their personal stories and parish histories with us in order to help us better understand our past; and to all those individuals and parishes around the diocese who have entered into this "Repairing the Breach" process with courage and commitment—to deal with this painful legacy of racism, not only personally but in the life of our Church and our nation, and to seek God's help in moving us forward as we continue on this winding, challenging, exciting, difficult, hopeful, but still *Unfinished Journey.*

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Jim Abbott
Late Pentecost 2011

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Introduction

Many North Carolinians are familiar with the book *Blood Done Sign My Name*. It is a true story about the 1970 murder of a black man by three white men in Oxford, North Carolina, and their subsequent acquittal by an all white jury, despite overwhelming evidence.

The author, Timothy Tyson, was a 12-year-old resident of Oxford at the time. This book is his attempt to understand all the dynamics of this blatantly racist occurrence in his childhood and, through that process, to examine the whole nature of racism in his native South.

Not surprisingly, a number of people in Oxford resented and resisted his airing the town's dirty linen in such a public way, for it is always painful and difficult to look unflinchingly at aspects of one's history that are less than flattering. But toward the end of the book Mr. Tyson explains why he felt compelled to write it:

> [M]any people seem to think—why dredge this stuff up? Why linger on the past, which we cannot change? We must move toward a brighter future and leave all that horror behind.
>
> It's true that we must make a new world. But we can't make it out of whole cloth. We have to weave the future from the fabric of the past, from the patterns of aspiration and belonging—and broken dreams and anguished rejections—that have made us. What the advocates of our dangerous and deepening social amnesia don't understand is how deeply the past holds the future in its grip—even, and perhaps especially, when it remains unacknowledged. We are runaway slaves from our own past, and only by turning to face the hounds can we find our freedom beyond. (307) **(page 1)**

Timothy Tyson is white. But a similar point is made from an African American point of view by Pauli Murray, the first African American woman priest in the Episcopal Church, in her powerful family history book entitled *Proud Shoes: The Story of an American Family*:

> It was just as well I had not stumbled upon Great-Grandfather Thomas' secret [that he had been born a slave, when all along she thought he was a free man all his life] until now. I lived too close to the blight of the slavery past when I was a child, and there were no vaccines to protect me. It was still too threatening and the future too uncertain to risk looking backward with critical eyes. It was only as an adult living in the shrunken world of the mid-twentieth century and from the vantage point of present-day knowledge that I could now see a fragment of personal history in proper perspective. It had taken me almost a lifetime to discover that true emancipation lies in the acceptance of the whole past, in deriving strength from all my roots, in facing up to the degradations as well as the dignity of my ancestors. (62)

Those of us involved in this "Repairing the Breach" process have generally been pleased that we haven't encountered *more* resistance in the diocese since entering this "truth and reconciliation" process. We have in fact been encouraged by the number of parishes that have delved courageously into their past histories, and we celebrate the fact that several parishes have begun to build bridges across historic racial divides in their communities as a result of this process.

But we *have* met *some* resistance. Most of it comes from people who seem to be quite sympathetic to the *goal* of racial reconciliation but who think we're beating a dead horse; who express frustration that we seem to keep going over the same territory time and time again and never seem to get anywhere; who think we've done enough wallowing in our past and that its time to put all that behind **(2)**   us and just move on; who have wondered how this process will be any different from what we've done in the past and whether or not the end result will be any different.

Now I have no illusions that all the hard work the Commission to Dismantle Racism has been doing over the last sixteen years or that this latest "Repairing the Breach" initiative of the CDR will magically cure the deep, complex, tenacious and pervasive problem of racism in our country or in our Church. In fact, I *know* it *won't*. We didn't get where we are overnight, and it's pretty obvious we're not going to be able to "fix" it overnight.   The truth is that anti-racism work is *long…hard…work*, and anyone who engages in it seriously needs to be prepared to stick with it for the long haul.

But isn't it true that *anything* worthwhile in life requires hard work? And I must say that, in at least three ways, the approach we have taken in this Repairing the Breach initiative may be just a little different from what most of us have experienced in the past.

I. In this process, we have attempted to take the "next step" in our anti-racism work by engaging the *entire diocese* in a focused, deep, systemic and sustained approach to the long-standing issue of racism.

I am convinced that one reason many of our past attempts at racial healing and reconciliation have had such limited success is because we, both as a Church and as a nation, have never really taken the time—or had both the courage and the humility—to go down *deep* enough or *long* enough to get to the place where true liberation and change can actually begin to take place. More than once I have heard people of color say that white America has never *really* faced up to this horrible and painful legacy of racism, and that until it is willing to do so, we're going to *keep on* getting stuck. **(3)**

A few years ago, I was part of a clergy group that met twice a month for mutual support and personal growth. One day we were talking about the difficulty we sometimes had in letting go of painful memories.   I admitted that it was certainly true for me, and I shared an example out of my own life. I forget now what the specific was—some wound, some grudge, some personal

failure, some terrible mistake, some painful memory—but I remembered saying, "I've *tried* to let go of it, and God knows, I *want* to let go of it and move on…but I just can't seem to do it!"

One of my fellow clergy (who happened also to be a therapist), leaned over, looked me straight in the eye with obvious compassion, and said, "Jim, Jim…if you *can* let go of it, go ahead and let go of it. But if you can't…*hang on tighter*!"

It was good advice. I realized then that there must still be some unfinished business I had to attend to before I would be *able* to let go of it and move on. (In fact, as I've reflected on it theologically, I've come to believe that sometimes the reason we can't let go of certain things is because God doesn't even *want* us to let go of them—or even *allow* us to let go of them—*until we've learned what we need to from them*; or *until we've made whatever amends we need to make*; or *until we can move to a place of true repentance or true forgiveness*.)

Frankly, that's where I think we are in terms of this painful and recurring issue of racism. We'd *like* to put it down and move on, but since we don't seem to be able to do so, maybe we need to "hang on tighter"! Clearly, we haven't learned yet all we need to. Clearly, we haven't made all the amends we need to. Clearly we haven't really gotten down deep enough to receive the fullness of God's healing.

In this regard, I think the experience of the South African "Truth and Reconciliation" Commission provides a helpful model. After years of de-humanizing apartheid and brutal oppression, the new **(4)** black-led government of South Africa decided to do something almost unheard of. Forsaking the easier path of revenge, recrimination and punishment, the new South African leaders, including our own Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, decided to bring both black victims and white perpetrators together, face to face, in a series of truth-telling sessions, in order to put everything up on the table and "hang on tighter" as a way to work toward healing and reconciliation.

That process not only gave people of color an opportunity to tell their horrific stories and express publicly their profound grief; it also forced white people to move beyond their denial and face the *truth* of the horrible consequences of apartheid which they had created and perpetuated. Only then could the country even *begin* to reach a place of healing, forgiveness, reconciliation and hope.

South Africa's process, of course, was not perfect. It did not magically make everything right, and deep-seated residues of racism still live on there. But their experience was a profoundly spiritual one that took them a *long* way down the road in the direction of racial healing, equality and reconciliation.

May our process of "hanging on tighter" be as fruitful as theirs.

II. Throughout this process, we have emphasized the fact that racism wounds not only people of color, but white people as well…and that what is needed most, on the part of us *all*, is *healing* and *a united effort to defeat a common* enemy.

As a group, African Americans have experienced some of the greatest suffering and abuse the world has ever known—having been kidnapped and ripped from their homeland, brought across the ocean in chains, bought and sold like cattle, beaten and over-worked and raped and branded and lynched and separated from their families and friends by subsequent sales, and having their dignity and self-worth assaulted **(5)** at every turn. The legacy and pattern of such wounding continues to this day, sometimes dramatically and publicly (as in hate crimes or other blatant acts of discrimination and violence) and sometimes subtly and quietly (as in daily slights and indignities or in institutionally-based racism that is often not even recognized by most white people). Without a doubt, African Americans are well aware of their woundedness.

However, such is generally *not* the case with European Americans. Because of our privileged position in society and the fact that we have benefited so much materially from racism, many of us have not always recognized the profound ways in which we, too, have been wounded.

I am profoundly indebted to poet-philosopher Wendell Berry for exploring this "hidden" wound of racism in his own life, in a book entitled *The Hidden Wound.* Nowhere else have I come across such a clear articulation of the need for white people to come to grips with the wounds which racism has inflicted on *us.* In the first chapter he writes:

> If I had thought it was only the black people who have suffered from their years of slavery and racism, then I could have dealt fully with the matter long ago; I could have filled myself with pity for them, and would no doubt have enjoyed it a great deal and thought highly of myself. But I am sure it is not so simple as that. If white people have suffered less obviously from racism than black people, they have nevertheless suffered greatly; the cost has been greater perhaps than we can yet know. If the white man has inflicted the wound of racism upon black men, the cost has been that he would receive the mirror image of that wound into himself. As the master, or as a member of the dominant race, he has felt little compulsion to acknowledge it or speak of it; the more painful it has grown, the more deeply he has hidden it within himself. But the wound is there, and it is a profound disorder, as great a damage in his mind as it is in his society. **(6)**

> This wound is in me, as complex and deep in my flesh as blood and nerves. I have borne it all my life, with varying degrees of consciousness, but always carefully, always with the most delicate consideration for the pain I would feel if I were somehow forced to acknowledge it. But now I am increasingly aware of the opposite compulsion. I want to know, as fully and exactly as I can, what the wound is and how much I am suffering from it. And I want to be cured; I want to be free of the wound myself, and I do not want to pass it on to my children. Perhaps this is only wishful thinking; perhaps such a thing is not to be done by one man, or in one generation. Surely a man would have to be almost dangerously proud to think himself capable of it. And so maybe I am really saying only that I feel an obligation to make the attempt, and that I know if I fail to make at least the attempt I forfeit any right to hope that the world will become better than it is now (3-4).

I join Mr. Berry in emphasizing that there no comparison between the types of wounds experienced by white people and those experienced by black people; they are of a totally different nature (except insofar as they are mirror images of a shared experience). But my observation is that racism has taken a *huge* toll on white people in terms of how it has damaged, wounded, and corroded *our very souls*—which from a *spiritual* point of view is perhaps the most grievous wounding of all (as our Lord reminded us when he said, "for what will it profit a [person], if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?")

African American professor and writer Dr. Joy Degruy Leary speaks similarly of the need for white people to recognize and deal with *their* wounds, just as black people need to deal with theirs. In the prologue to her book *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Injury and Healing*, she writes, **(7)**

> Those who have been the victims of years, decades and centuries of oppression first must heal from injuries received first-hand, as well as those passed down through the ages.
>
> Those who have been the perpetrators of these unspeakable crimes, and those who continue to benefit from those crimes, have to honestly confront their deeds and heal from the psychic wounds that come with being the cause and beneficiaries of such great pain and suffering (4-5).

In reflecting with me about this whole issue of white woundedness, a friend and colleague of mine helpfully introduced me to a new diagnostic category, which has been recently articulated by some clinical psychologists at the Veterans Administration. Known as "moral injury", this newly-identified syndrome was described recently in a *Washington Post* article entitled "The Moral Injuries of War" by Rita Nakashima Brock and Gabriella Lettini, co-chairs of the Truth Commission on Conscience in War.

> Every day brings us new stories of soldiers affected by Post Traumatic Stress Disorder….What is less known is that in December 2009 a group of VA clinical psychologists, led by Dr. Brett Litz, identified moral injury as a wound of war, distinct from PTSD, that is rarely addressed. The ground-breaking study suggested that PTSD does not fully capture the moral and spiritual distress of moral injury, which is especially connected with a sense of transgression of the moral order….The Litz study defines moral injury as resulting from "perpetuating, failing to prevent, or bearing witness to acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations." (*The Washington Post*. November 11, 2010)

Although this concept of "moral injury" was originally developed to explain the effects of war on soldiers, it seems to me to be equally applicable to the whole issue of racism and therefore a **(8)** very helpful handle for understanding "the psychic wounds that come with being the cause and beneficiaries of such great pain and suffering." Harming other people clearly harms the perpetrator as well as the victim (as any truly remorseful and repentant sinner will attest).

But racism is more than just an individual sin. The truth is that it is a reality so deeply imbedded in our history and in our culture that it inevitably wounds us all, black and white alike. Like a huge cancer, it has invaded every aspect of our lives and metastasized throughout our entire culture, embedding itself in all our institutions, affecting all of our relationships, and distorting our deepest self-concepts.

In this sense, we are *all* "victims" of this thing called racism. All of us have been *in*fected and *af*fected by it. All of us have been deeply wounded by it. And all of us, to some degree or other, are *carriers* of this horrific disease, so that it continues to be passed on from generation to generation.

Hence, this emphasis on the need we *all* have for *healing*—the healing of our self-concepts, the healing of our painful memories, the healing of our spirits, the healing of our relationships, the healing of our Church, the healing of our nation.   And we have come to realize, more and more, that *people with unhealed wounds tend to keep on wounding other people…*and that *wounded people who have experienced healing in their own lives tend to be bearers of healing to others.* Unless and until the crippling patterns of this debilitating disease of racism are disrupted, broken and healed, they will *continue* to "corrupt and destroy the creatures of God" (Book of Common Prayer, 302.).

Another book that I have found particularly helpful in this regard is Russ Parker's *Healing Wounded History: Reconciling Peoples and Restoring Places*.   In the preface, the author (quoting John Dawson, the founder and director of the International Reconciliation Coalition) makes the important and helpful point that **(9)**

> [t]he church of Jesus, divided for so long, is beginning to function again as an agent of healing, not just for individuals and families but also for institutions, nations, communities and cultures struggling with the memory of wounded history (xi).

Mr. Parker goes on to introduce the concept of "representational confession", by which people are able not only to admit their *own* responsibility and guilt, but to "accept responsibility, without admitting personal guilt, for what our ancestors have done" (1).   The reason why this is important, he maintains, is because "unhealed history repeats itself" (3) and because it is only by dealing with the wounds of the past can we ever hope to break the *patterns* of woundedness that continue to get passed down from generation to generation.

The balance of the book is filled with specific stories from around the world, real-life examples which illustrate how "wounded history" can, in fact, at least *begin* to be healed.

As St. Paul reminds us, "Our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).   In other words, it is *racism itself* that we are contending with, not one another. And it is only *together*, with God's help, that there can be any hope of resisting and overcoming this *common* enemy, which has wounded and *continues* to wound us all.

III. In this process, we have, unlike some of our attempts in the past, approached this issue intentionally from a specifically *spiritual* point of view.

A third reason why past attempts at dealing with racism may have had such limited success is because those of us of European descent have—at least in my observation—tended to deal with racism **(10)** primarily as a *sociological* problem or as a *human relations* issue that could be "solved" merely by better education, more personal interaction, and greater human effort.

Needless to say, this rather "secular" approach to racism has *not* been the case for most African Americans. In the face of unspeakable suffering, the majority of black Americans have, from the beginning, looked to God for strength and guidance, for help and comfort, and for the hope and perseverance they've needed in order to survive. (Particularly remarkable, even astounding, is the extraordinary story of how the enslaved ones were able to appropriate the religion of their oppressors and re-interpret it as the radically liberating gospel that it is!)

Significantly, of course, it was (and is) that deep and abiding faith and that tenacious reliance on God that has created, to an astounding degree, a depth of spirit in the black community that never ceases to amaze me.

Blessedly, it has now become clear to many of us who are white that we, too, cannot deal with this huge issue alone: that only God can heal these deep emotional and spiritual wounds; that only God can lift the burdens of our sinful past and liberate us for a new future; that only God can "break down the dividing walls between us [and] create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace" (Ephesians 2:14-15).

That is why the "centerpiece" (but not the culmination!) of this diocesan-wide "Repairing the Breach" process was/is the "Service of Repentance, Healing and Reconciliation" which was held at Trinity Church in Asheville on April 9, 2011. Attended by over a hundred clergy and almost five hundred lay people, that service provided us the opportunity to gather up all the inner and outer work which we as a diocese had done during our 18-month period of preparation *and lay it all before God*—for God's healing, renewal and strength—and then to be sent forth with new hope, new spiritual energy, and new resolve for the living out of God's dream for a reconciled world. **(11)**

The result was, according to the assessment of many, one of the most powerful and liberating services they had ever experienced.

Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori presided and preached at the service, underscoring the importance of this work and of this occasion. Following her sermon, our Diocesan Bishop, Porter Taylor, gave a clear, direct and moving apology on behalf of the diocese for the diocese's complicity in the profoundly un-Christian institutions of slavery and segregation.

An integrated mass choir, along with several soloists and a variety of instruments, provided

powerful and uplifting music for our worship, drawing from both African American and European American musical traditions.

An extended litany of repentance and lament was offered up from the midst of the congregation, using a number of both black and white readers, expressing our corporate remorse and lamentation.

Following the litany, all the members of the congregation were invited to go to one of a dozen different, bi-racial healing stations for individual anointing and prayer—for the healing of their wounds, the lifting of their burdens, and the renewing of their strength. For many people, this was clearly the most powerful and moving part of the service.

Together we were sprinkled with the waters of asperges, reminding us of our Baptism and the commitments of our Baptismal Covenant. And together we came to Christ's Table as one Body to be nourished and strengthened by the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation for the journey still ahead of us.

At the time of the offertory, a number of people signed "Commitment Cards" (which had been placed in each service booklet) and placed them in the offering plates—along with their monetary offerings, all of which are going toward furthering our journey toward equality and wholeness. **(12)**

Without a doubt, deep places of pain and guilt and healing and release were touched in this service. Many tears were shed. Many hugs were shared. Many burdens were lifted or lightened. Surely, the presence of the Lord was in that place….

But then it was time to leave the sanctuary and go back out into the world. So at the end of the service, as always, we were sent forth in peace "to love and serve the Lord."

Of course, we all responded in unison, "Thanks be to God!" But had it not been Lent, I feel certain that a couple of hearty "alleluias" would surely have followed our response.

With this background and context, then, let us examine our diocese's racial history, in order that we may learn from our past and find new hope for our future. **(13)**

Chapter 1

Background: The Origins and Unique Characteristics of Slavery in the United States

All history is contextual. That is, every individual story takes place in the context of a larger story. So even though this monograph deals primarily with the racial dimensions of the histories of Episcopal Church and, more particularly, the Diocese of Western North Carolina, it is important that we begin by exploring the origins and unique characteristics of slavery as it was practiced here in the United States.

Those origins go back *at least* until the middle of the 15th Century—before there ever was an Episcopal Church, before Martin Luther ever began the Protestant Reformation, before Christopher Columbus ever stumbled upon these American shores.

Two 15th C. Papal Bulls which blessed aggressive colonization and perpetual slavery

Way back in 1452, just as Western Europe was experiencing its post-medieval renaissance and beginning to send out explorers to find and claim new lands for colonial expansion, Pope Nicholas V sent a papal bull entitled *Dum Diversas* to King Alfonso of Portugal, which read in part,

> We grant you by these present documents, with our Apostolic Authority, full and free permission to invade, search out, capture and subjugate the Saracens [Muslims] and pagans and any other unbelievers and enemies of **(15)** Christ wherever they may be, as well as their kingdoms, duchies, principalities, and other property…and *to reduce their persons into perpetual slavery* (Quoted in several internet sources). (Emphasis added)

Encouraged by these papal decrees, Portuguese explorers continued to claim territories all along the western coast of Africa, to "search out, capture and subjugate" the peoples who lived there, and to "reduce [them] into perpetual slavery" for the economic benefit of their captors.

In 1455, the contents of this papal bull were reaffirmed in the more widely-known papal bull *Romanus Pontifex*, which forbade Christian nations from encroaching on one another's claimed lands, but which re-stated the earlier bull's legal and moral justifications for the colonization of foreign lands and the enslavement of native peoples.

(Later papal bulls repudiated *Dum Diversas* and *Romanus Pontifex*, but by then the pattern had been set, along with its corresponding mindset. Truly, the impact of these two papal bulls on the

history of the world has been enormous and absolutely devastating for countless non-European peoples.)

Now to be sure, neither the invasion of foreign lands nor the enslavement of other human beings was unique to 15th Century Europe. History is rife with territorial wars, and slavery has been practiced in many, many cultures and supported by many, many religious traditions.

However, *prior to this era of European colonialism, slavery had little or nothing to do with race per se or the color of one's skin.* Rather, in the classical world (as well as in early modern Europe, various Islamic countries, much of pre-Columbian America, and most of Africa), the legitimacy of slavery rested not on notions of race, but as a dimension of warfare (where, instead of killing one's enemy, the victor could enslave him or her), or as a punishment **(16)** for various crimes (in lieu of incarceration), or as a way to repay a debt (Finkelman, pp.6-7).   The difference here is significant:

> Because race or ethnicity was not a determining factor in enslavement due to war, crime, or debt, anyone in these societies might be a potential slave. Similarly, in most of these places, many slaves might potentially become free. In important ways, these notions of enslavement differentiated slavery in the Americas, and especially in the United States, from slavery in the rest of the world (7).

As a result, this uniquely American form of race-based slavery ranks as perhaps the most brutal and degrading system of slavery *ever* in the history of the world. Again, according to Paul Finkelman, author of *Defending Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Old South*,

> From the Revolution to the Civil War, Southerners grounded their defense of slavery on notions of race. Southerners argued that people of African ancestry were inherently, biologically inferior and that the racial inferiority of blacks relegated them to permanently diminished status. Most Northern whites—even some opponents of slavery—accepted the Southern argument of racial inferiority, even if they did not accept the Southerners conclusion: that this inferiority justified slavery. (5)

Religious and "scientific" attempts to justify chattel slavery

According to Dr. Joy Degruy Leary, in her book *Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, such de-humanization of Africans was necessary in order to deal with what she terms "cognitive dissonance", i.e., the conflict which arises when people's actions do not match up with their self-understanding as good and decent people.   According to her, "Chattel slavery and genocide of the Native American population were so un-Christian the only way they could make **(17)** their actions acceptable, and so resolve the dissonance, was to relegate their victims to the level of sub-human." (54-55).

At its worst, of course, such de-humanization led to extremely cruel treatment of slaves. And

historically speaking, it was dramatic accounts of such cruelty—as portrayed, for instance, in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—which galvanized the anti-slavery forces in the North and helped precipitate the Civil War. (The story is told that when President Lincoln was first introduced to Ms. Stowe, he reportedly said, "So you're the little lady who started this great war!") (Quoted by the Rev. Francis King in an unpublished paper on "Slavery in the Catawba Valley")

But even the *kindly* treatment of slaves was still based on the prediction that black people were somehow "less than" white people—less intelligent, less well developed, less important, and less capable of self-determination than white people.

Tragically, many ante-bellum slavery apologists sought and found what appeared to be Divine sanction for slavery in the New Testament, particularly in certain passages attributed to St. Paul. These passages, taken out of their original context (and *completely* out of the context of the overall New Testament), were read, quoted and preached about on numerous occasions, to both masters and slaves, in support of the entire institution of slavery.

By way of illustration, consider these words delivered in a sermon to a congregation of slaves in Maryland by Episcopal priest Thomas Bacon in 1743:

> Almighty God hath been pleased to make you slaves here, and to give you nothing but labor and poverty in this world, which you are obliged to submit….If therefore, you would be God's Free-men in heaven you must strive to be good and serve him here on earth….And for this, you have one general rule that you ought always to carry in your **(18)** minds; and that is, to do all service for them, as if you did it for GOD himself. Poor creatures! You little consider, when you are idle and neglectful of your master's business, when you steal and waste, and hurt any of their substance, when you are saucy and impudent, when you are telling them lies, and deceiving them, or when you prove stubborn or sullen, and will not do the work you are set about without stripes and vexation; you do not consider, I say, that what faults you are guilty of towards your masters and mistresses are faults done against GOD himself, who has set your masters and mistresses over you, in his own stead, and expects that you will do for them, just as you would do for him. (Archives of the Episcopal Church)

Other antebellum writers and speakers defended slavery on the basis that it provided the vehicle for bringing the Gospel of salvation to a whole group of people who would never otherwise have heard it. They argued that good Christian masters—i.e., those who treated their slaves kindly and attended not only to their physical needs but to their spiritual needs as well—should be praised, not condemned, for fulfilling their Christian duty to help guide those whom God had entrusted to their care (Finkelman, p. 96).

Oftentimes whites tried to downplay the horrors of slavery by saying that, overall (at least in *their* experience), it wasn't *really* that bad because most slave owners they knew treated their slaves kindly. The following quotation from the official history of Catawba County is an example of such thinking:

Catawba County's record as a slave area is unanimously recorded by writers as extremely honorable. Slaves were prized property, yet considered human beings. Their value, supplemented by their masters' affection for them, caused them to be kindly treated. Masters were very watchful of their slaves' health. Virtually accepted as family members, slaves were often included in family gatherings, and the **(19)** older ones were honored with titles such as "Aunt" and "Uncle". Sometimes the conduct of children was left almost exclusively to the trusted slaves' supervision. Never was the slave permitted to suffer after his usefulness was ended. They ordinarily took the names of their masters, and especially among other slaves, flouted shamelessly the accomplishments of such families (Rev. Francis King in an unpublished paper on "Slavery in the Catawba Valley").

The inherent violence of the entire slave system

In spite of such justifications and wishful thinking, it must be stated clearly that, regardless of its "packaging" (i.e., whether the treatment of slaves was outwardly very cruel or outwardly quite benevolent), the fact remains that the *system* of slavery, by its very nature, was a *violent* system—not *only* because it violated people's basic dignity (whether or not it violated their bodies) but because *the system itself necessarily, by its very nature, had to rely on force (i.e., violence) to maintain itself.*

A vivid illustration of this point is made by Wendell Berry in his courageous, soul-searching book, *The Hidden Wound*. There he recounts a story concerning his grandfather, John Johnson Berry, who once owned a "defiant and rebellious" slave whom he could not handle. Since his grandfather was "evidently a rather kind and gentle man by nature," he was unwilling to commit *personal* violence against the slave; so he sold him to someone who could and would.

In reflecting on that story, Mr. Berry writes:

> [W]riting that down, I sense as I never have before the innate violence of the slave system, and the innate flaw of the slavery myth. For if there was any kindness in slavery it was dependent on the docility of the slaves; any slave who was *unwilling* to be a slave broke through the myth **(20)** of paternalism and benevolence, and brought down on himself the violence inherent in the system…. [Any] slave who was rebellious and mean obviously had to be dealt with, and the method of dealing with him had to be violent: the master had either to answer the slave's violence with greater violence of his own, or to invoke the institutional violence of slavery, selling the slave to someone more able or willing than himself to enact the necessary cruelty (6-7).

Unfortunately, the reality of this kind of *institutional* violence against African Americans (and other people of color) continues to be operative today, in both overt and covert ways, *despite individual efforts to be kind and loving*. Similarly, the internalized messages of superiority and inferiority have also been passed down from generation to generation and are very much with us.

Conclusion: The on-going legacy of slavery

Before concluding this chapter, it is important that we recognize that African Americans are not the only group of immigrants who have been treated violently or labeled as inferior. However, with the possible exception of some Native Americans, none of these other ethnic groups was ever reduced to the level of being *property*, able to be bought and sold like domestic farm animals. Also, because American chattel slavery was limited to people with black skin, the designation of inferiority for *them* was both indelible and genetically passed on to their offspring. In the case of other immigrants, succeeding generations simply melted into the great "melting pot" of white society, whereas in the case of African Americans the color of one's skin marked them *indelibly* as "inferior" from one generation to another, whether slave or free.)

This is tough stuff to acknowledge. But it is important that we do so, for only then will we be able to understand the severity of the wounds and the depths of the pain experienced by African

(21)

Americans. Only then will we begin to understand the extent of "moral injury" experienced by European Americans. Only then will we understand why the issue of race in America is as vexing and seemingly intractable as it is. Only then will we be able to acknowledge how much we as a Church (and as a nation) have to repent of and atone for. And only then will we be able—*all* of us, both black *and* white—to find the healing and liberation we need to move forward together into a more just, hopeful and reconciled future. **(22)**

Chapter 2

The Diocese of North Carolina, 1817-1865

Episcopalians and Slavery in North Carolina

The existence of slavery in North Carolina goes way back to colonial days, more than a century before the American Revolution and almost two centuries before the establishment of the Diocese of North Carolina (our "mother" diocese) in 1817. By that time, slavery as an institution was already firmly established—with all its racial assumptions and inherent violence—as the primary underpinning for the nation's entire economy (in the North as well as the South) and as an accepted way of life in much of the nation.

Since it was not until much later that the Diocese of *Western* North Carolina came into existence, we necessarily begin our study with events which occurred in the Diocese of North Carolina, which was, at the time, *our* diocese.

The Rev. Dr. N. Brooks Graebner, the current historiographer of the Diocese of North Carolina, has written about how "enmeshed our church was in the economics of slavery" from its inception and how much of the wealth of its wealthiest members (and therefore how much of our *Church's* wealth) was generated by slave labor. He writes:

> On the eve of the Civil War, the Episcopal Church represented a small fraction of the overall population of North Carolina. There were about three thousand communicants of our church in the entire state. There were, **(23)** just for comparative purposes, about five times that many Presbyterians and about twenty times as many Baptists and Methodists. But if we look at the religious affiliation of those persons owning 70 or more slaves, our "market share" jumps to an astounding 57.5% (73 persons fall into that category and 42 of them are Episcopalians—compared to 16% for the Baptists and 9% for the Presbyterians) (2).

For the most part, of course, the concentration of large slave-holding plantations was in the eastern and piedmont sections of the state. But even here in the mountains, many people, including many Episcopalians, owned slaves, ranging from one to, in rare instances, over a hundred. According to the 1860 census in Buncombe County, for instance, the rector and four of the people listed by James Sill as founding members of Trinity Church owned slaves, in number from three to one hundred and twenty-two.

Indeed, all of our ante-bellum parishes in the western part of the state—St. James', Lenoir; St.

John in the Wilderness, Flat Rock; St. Luke's, Lincolnton; Grace, Morganton; Holy Cross, Valle Crucis; St. James', Hendersonville; St. John's, Rutherfordton; St. Paul's, Wilkesboro; Calvary, Fletcher; and Redeemer, Shelby—counted among their members a number of slave owners. And records reveal that many of these parishes' buildings were built either wholly or in part by slave labor.

By way of example: St. John in the Wilderness, Flat Rock, was established first as a kind of summer chapel by wealthy slave owners from Charleston, South Carolina, who came up to the mountains of western North Carolina, along with many of their slaves, to avoid the heat and the humidity of the Low Country. Their slaves, along with some hired local craftsmen, built the church; and the cemetery of St. John's contains a section reserved for "servants, slaves, freemen and some local settlers" (Smith, 32).

Another of our earliest parishes, Calvary Church in Fletcher, was similarly built, at least in part, by slave labor. According to that **(24)** parish's recently-updated history—compiled for this Repairing the Breach initiative—"[t]he bricks were hand made by slave labor in a field west of what is now the old Oak Park on the old Tatum place. The clay was dug, the kilns built and the regular size bricks along with the special shapes to place around widows and doors were all fashioned here and carried to the building site by negro slave labor" ("Early Days: Calvary Episcopal Church", 2).

Dr. Graebner goes on to state that "we must acknowledge two significant markers of our church's involvement with slavery":

> One is the personal engagement of North Carolina Episcopalians in the complexities and cruelties of the slave system as lived out on a daily basis. Some of the most painful and delicate aspects of the work we have to do comes when we allow ourselves to enter into the anguish of what actually happens in real life when you treat persons as property and have to live under the same roof: the abuses and the affections that are manifest. When we read the private letters and papers of the slaveholding Episcopalians, but especially when we read the narratives of those who were enslaved, we begin to appreciate how intense and how conflicted were the personal and intimate interactions of slave and slaveholder….
>
> The other is the role of Episcopalians in shaping the twin ideologies of slavery and racism. When we ask: who actually constructed the slave system as practiced in the American South: Who wrote the laws that defined it? Who gave it intellectual respectability and argued that it could be practiced honorably by Christians? Who answered the critics who challenged slavery? The answer includes leading members of our church (3).

Dr. Graebner's first point about "the complexities and cruelties of the slave system as lived out on a daily basis" is painfully illustrated in a personal family history book entitled *Proud Shoes: The Story of an American Family* **(25)** by the Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray, the first African American woman priest in the Episcopal Church.

In that book, Dr. Murray relates a twisted and sordid story involving her Great-grandmother Harriett [Smith?], who was owned by a family of Episcopalians in Hillsborough, NC. It seems that one of her master's sons forcefully banished her lawful, free-born mulatto husband and then overpowered her and repeatedly raped her; that another of her owner's sons almost killed that brother so that he could possess her as his own; and that this complicated and highly conflicted sequence of events affected not only all of those *directly* involved, but also all of the ensuing progeny, for generations to come.

Sadly, this kind of occurrence was not uncommon in the days of slavery. But Dr. Murray's account moves it out of the realm of statistics and makes it very personal and painfully real. It is difficult reading, to be sure.

In terms of Dr. Graebner's second point about "the role of Episcopalians in shaping the twin ideologies of slavery and racism", it needs only to be noted that much of the political leadership in North Carolina during this time (as was indeed the case throughout the United States) was provided by Episcopalians. In their capacity as legislators, judges, mayors, city councilmen, and other community leaders, Episcopalians were largely responsible for passing and upholding the laws supporting slavery and perpetuating what we now refer to as institutional racism—where racial discrimination and unequal treatment are built into the laws, practices and customs of an institution or society by those in power.

One particularly disturbing illustration of this reality involved a prominent Episcopalian in the Diocese of North Carolina, Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas Ruffin. In 1829, he rendered an opinion in a case before the High Court that affirmed the "absolute power" of the slave-holder over the slave. **(26)**

The case dealt with a complicated situation in which a "rented" female slave was shot and wounded by the man renting her when she tried to run off to avoid being whipped. The slave's owner, also a woman, pressed charges against the man who had rented her slave for assault and battery. A jury found him guilty and convicted him, but the Supreme Court overturned the conviction.

Chief Justice Ruffin, in writing the opinion of the Court, first shared his own personal anguish over this situation and also his personal pain in having to render his opinion. But he then went on to say that, as a justice sworn to uphold the law, he felt compelled to clarify the legal issue regarding "the extent of the dominion of the master over the slave." He wrote,

> With slavery…[t]he end is the profit of the master, his security and the public safety; the subject, one doomed in his own person and his posterity, to live without knowledge and without the capacity to make anything his own, and to toil that another may reap the fruits.

> The power of the master must be absolute to render the submission of the slave perfect. I most freely confess my sense of the harshness of this proposition; I feel it as deeply as

any man can; and as a principal of moral right every person in his retirement must repudiate. But in the actual condition of things it must be so. There is no remedy.

This discipline belongs to the state of slavery. They cannot be disunited without abrogating at once the rights of the master and absolving the slave from his subjection. It constitutes the curse of slavery to both the bond and free portion of our population. But it is inherent in the relation of master and slave (Finkelman, 130-131).

The words are chilling to modern ears, but at the time, they presumably were readily accepted by most whites, reflecting both **(27)** the internal moral conflict and the prevailing social/cultural norms of the period. As Finkelman points out in his introduction to this document, "Ruffin does not appear to be a proslavery fanatic, although he was in fact a lifelong slave owner. Indeed, much like [Thomas] Jefferson, he complains about the existence of slavery, even while defending it. This in itself in an aspect of proslavery thought" (129).

Our Earliest Bishops in the Diocese of North Carolina

The first bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina, John Stark Ravenscroft, was, in his early life, a thoroughly secular slave-holding planter. Apparently, a key element in his religious conversion was his growing awareness of the maltreatment of slaves; and although he divested himself of most of his slaves upon becoming bishop (largely for practical reasons) he still retained one slave throughout his lifetime, whom he willed to his adopted sons.

During his episcopacy slaves were baptized, confirmed and listed as members of various parish churches (a practice which dated back to colonial times—that is, once it had been legally declared that baptizing slaves did not require their Christian masters to emancipate them!). Always these slave members were counted separately from the white members, and almost always they worshipped either in a separate building or at a different time or in segregated seating (Henry S. Lewis in London and Lemmon, 117, 165).

The second bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina, Levi Silliman Ives, expressed on many different occasions his concern for the religious and spiritual welfare of slaves, even as he defended slavery against those who opposed it.

In his 1846 Convention address, Bishop Ives reported that he had officiated at a chapel created by free blacks in New Bern and that he **(28)** had been deeply moved by the "earnest solemnity of the responses, and the touching simplicity and spirit of the chanting and other music." He also spoke glowingly of a similar experience on a plantation at Lake Scuppernong in which he witnessed "master and servant standing side by side in the services of Passion-week" and "kneeling with reverent hearts and devout thanksgiving, to take the bread of life at the same Altar".

Such experiences, he said, led him to make an urgent plea to each person who called himself a

Christian churchman to do his duty toward his less fortunate brethren, using these examples to illustrate how beautiful and uplifting this kind of ministry could be (Blackwell P. Robinson in London and Lemmon, 191).

Not everyone supported Bishop Ives' defense of slavery, despite his concern for their spiritual nurture. Robinson reports that

> Ives's attitude toward slavery, as expressed in his 1846 address, elicited the condemnation of William Joy, a northerner, in a thirty-two page pamphlet entitled *A Letter of the Right Rev. L. Silliman Ives*....He accused Ives of being the only Episcopal bishop who aspired to the championship of human bondage and the only one who had thrown down the gauntlet "to the whole of Christendom beyond the slave region" (London and Lemmon, 193). (Robinson also reports that there is no known reply to this attack.)

Bishop Ives (like Bishop Ravenscroft before him and most of the other bishops who succeeded him) focused almost exclusively on the *individual, personal* dimensions of Christian ethics, rather than dealing with its *social justice* dimensions. The Rev. Mr. Joy, on the other hand, argued that Christian ethics required justice as well as charity. For him, the "Christian" thing to do was to *abolish* slavery.

North Carolina's third bishop, Thomas Atkinson, was perhaps the most progressive and enlightened bishop in the Old South **(29)** during the period just prior to, during, and just after the Civil War. But he, too, was a product of his times and his geography. By temperament he was more of a peace-maker and a reconciler than a crusader and a prophet; and, like most of our other bishops, he is probably best described as a "paternalist", i.e., one who, although *concerned* about blacks, never saw them as equals, and who, operating out of his own sense of racial superiority, sought to do good things *for* them, but without doing anything which would challenge or upset the structures of white privilege.

Bishop Atkinson himself freed all of his own slaves who desired freedom, and he had serious personal qualms about slavery. But he remained a "moderate" throughout his lifetime. Before being elected the bishop of North Carolina, he (twice!) turned down elections to be the bishop of Indiana, because he felt as though his anti-slavery sentiments were not strong enough to match people's expectations in that northern state. But, conversely, the Diocese of South Carolina failed to elect him precisely *because* of his opposition to slavery (William S. Powell in London and Lemmon, 223).

It is interesting to note that even after the formation of the Confederacy, Bishop Atkinson was reluctant to leave the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. As other Southern bishops met to form a separate Episcopal Church in the Confederate States, Bishop Atkinson "stood alone among the Southern bishops" resisting this hasty action, arguing that the secession of the Southern states did not, in itself, cause a dissolution of the relations existing among the dioceses forming the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States. Thus, it was

not until May 1862 that the Diocese of North Carolina finally joined the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Confederate States (W.S. Powell in London and Lemmon, 244-245). **(30)**

Conclusion

We close this chapter by admitting plainly that prior to the Civil War, the Episcopal Church in North Carolina was, along with the rest of society, deeply enmeshed in the institution of slavery. Even though its leadership promoted benevolent treatment on the part of slave owners and advocated active worship and religious instruction for their slaves, those actions, as well-intentioned as they may have been, may actually have had the effect of *strengthening* the institution of slavery—for kind treatment blunted many of the criticisms leveled at the proponents of slavery.

Similarly, as eminent African-American historian John Hope Franklin points out in his book *From Slavery to Freedom,* the church's concern for the slaves' spiritual well-being also worked to the benefit of the slaveholders:

> The invitation to slaves to attend white churches, which bordered on compulsion, did not represent a movement in the direction of increased fellowship. Rather, it was the method that whites employed to keep a closer eye on their slaves. It was believed that too many conspiracies had been planned at religious gatherings and that such groups gave abolitionists an opportunity to distribute incendiary ideas and literature. When Bishop Atkinson of North Carolina raised the question, "Where are our Negroes?," he not only implied that they were in churches other than the Episcopal church but that they were beyond the restraining influence of conservative white society (153).

It seems that slavery was just too deeply ingrained in the economy, the culture, the minds and the structures of Southern society to be uprooted peacefully by appeals to morality or Scripture or human decency. In the end, the abolition of slavery in America would be achieved only by a long and bloody Civil War, one which left the state and the region reeling and which presented the Church with a whole new set of challenges and opportunities for ministry with and for the newly-freed slaves. **(31) (32 blank)**

Chapter 3

The Post-War Years: 1865-1898

The Decade Immediately Following the Civil War

Across the street from St. Matthias' Church, Asheville, there is a 'Civil War Trails' historical marker which describes the final days of the war in this part of North Carolina:

> Fearing that slaves would join the Union army occupying eastern North Carolina, Governor Zebulon B. Vance decreed, "It is the duty of all slave owners to remove [to the west] their slaves able to bear arms."

> As white refugees and their slaves streamed into Asheville, the enslaved population doubled, causing housing and food shortages. Some slaves here escaped to Union-occupied Tennessee. Others aided Union fugitives, providing food, clothing and directions.

> White Asheville residents reported that the slaves welcomed Union General George Stoneman's soldiers as liberators on April 25, 1865. Fannie Patton wrote, "[W]e saw that the troops were going to move and also that a great many Negroes were going to leave with them. About 20 of ours went off, which, with those who had gone a few days before, made 29." Mary Taylor Brown wrote, "All of Mrs. J. W. Patton's servants left her and went with the Yankees….They even took her beautiful carriage and, crowding into it, drove off in full possession." **(33)**

Chaos. Confusion. Jubilation. Shock. Hope. Fear. Uncertainty. The slaves were free, but where would they go? What would they do? How would they support themselves? What would their future be? And, since the whole economic, social, political system of the state and region was upended, whites, too, were wondering about *their* future. How would they be treated by their conquerors? Would there be reprisals? How drastically would their lives be altered?

In the immediate aftermath of the war, most Southern states quickly enacted a series of laws known as Black Codes whose purpose was, according to *The Encyclopedia of African-American Heritage*, "to reestablish slavery in everything but name." Included were laws forbidding whites and blacks to marry and providing for segregated schools, trains, hotels and restaurants; also vagrancy laws, which were "used to force thousands of African-Americans into signing labor contracts with white plantation owners that they otherwise would have rejected" (Altman, 30).

It was also during this period that white supremacist organizations like the Ku Klux Klan were formed, and new acts of violence and intimidation were perpetrated against African-Americans.

Historian Gordon McKinney writes, for instance, that "[w]hen African Americans sought to vote for the first time in Asheville, North Carolina, in 1866, white residents assaulted them and drove them away from the polls"(Slap, 4). The transition from slavery to freedom was clearly not going to be easy.

The founding of St. Matthias'

Nevertheless, it was during this time of confusion, fear, and white backlash that the leadership of Trinity Church moved almost immediately, with the strong support of Bishop Atkinson, to establish a new Episcopal congregation in Asheville for the parish's recently-freed slaves (or Freedmen, as they were called **(34)** at that time). The effort was spearheaded by the Rev. Jarvis Buxton, Trinity's rector, a former slave owner himself and an active church-planter (who, in addition to St. Matthias', helped start Grace Church, Beaver Dam; St. Luke's, Chunn's Cove; St. John's, Haw Creek; Redeemer, Woodfin; and perhaps even Grace, Waynesville). Assisting him was former Confederate General James Green Martin and his wife, Hettie, who took it upon themselves to prepare Trinity's black members for life and leadership in this new mission congregation:

> [E]ach Sunday afternoon a crowd of Colored people were collected, and drilled in the Catechism and other teachings of Our Church. It is well remembered by some who were then honored by being chosen as juniors in this work, how heartily the learners sang the chants, hymns, responses, and repeated the Catechism, Sunday after Sunday, much to the amusement, and perchance ridicule of some who thought themselves wise. The result has proven who were the truly wise in those days (Patton, 1).

In these earliest days following the War, this congregation-within-the-congregation of Trinity Church was referred to as the Freedmen's Church. (A rough analogy today might be the Church of the Advocate, which, though a separate congregation, also meets and worships at Trinity.)

In 1867, Captain Thomas W. Patton, who was also a former officer in the Confederate army, gave a large parcel of land in the East End/Valley Street area of Asheville for the erection of a frame church building known as Trinity Chapel (later to become St. Matthias' Church). St. Matthias' thus became the first and oldest black Episcopal Church in all of western North Carolina and, to the best of our knowledge, the first African American church of *any* denomination in the city of Asheville.

Significantly, Trinity Chapel was also the first facility in Asheville to offer formal educational classes for both children and adults in **(35)** the black community. In 1870, Miss A. L. Chapman of Rochester, New York, was hired to form a parochial day school in the lower level of the new

Chapel. (The need for such schools was extremely acute at this time since very few slaves could read or write. In fact, in 1835, the North Carolina State Constitution had been amended to forbid even *free* African Americans from receiving any formal education.) The school had an

enrollment of up to 115 pupils at any one time; and on Sundays, the space was used as a Sunday school, which served many of the same children.

There is much in the establishment of Trinity Chapel to celebrate. First and foremost, given the fact that the vast majority of freed slaves tended to leave the churches of their masters and affiliate with all-black denominations, this move was largely responsible for keeping a number of African Americans in the Episcopal Church, something we can be extremely thankful for today. Secondly, it provided these newly-freed slaves the opportunity to experience at least a measure of autonomy and begin to develop indigenous leadership (something which probably would not have been possible if they had stayed at Trinity under the tutelage of their former owners). And thirdly, having a separate building in the heart of the black community no doubt provided a more inviting and convenient location for carrying on this missionary work.

But questions still linger regarding the practice of establishing separate, segregated parishes for African Americans—a practice which, of course, long preceded the founding of St. Matthias' and which continued in our Church and in our diocese up until the middle of the 20ᵗʰ Century.   I

It is a mixed legacy to be sure, dating back to 1794 with the founding of the *first* African American parish in the Episcopal Church, St. Thomas African Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, whose leader, Absalom Jones, was later to become the first African American *priest* in the Episcopal Church. **(36)**

The story of Absalom Jones and the founding of St. Thomas African Episcopal Church, Philadelphia

Unlike the Freedmen's Church/Trinity Chapel, St. Thomas' was not founded at the initiative of whites. Rather, it was initiated by an already-existing all-black congregation, which petitioned the Diocese of Pennsylvania to be admitted as an Episcopal Church *on the condition that it remain an intact black congregation with its current black leadership.*

Significantly, the *reason* it was an all-black congregation in the first place was because its members had received such poor treatment in their previous*, integrated* church that they had pulled out *en mass* in protest. According to the biographical sketch of Absalom Jones in the 1980 edition of *Lesser Feasts and Fasts,*

> At St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church, he [Absalom Jones] served as lay minister for its Black membership. The active evangelism of Jones and that of his friend, Richard Allen, greatly increased Black membership at St. George's. The alarmed vestry decided to segregate Blacks into an upstairs gallery, without notifying them. During a Sunday service when ushers attempted to remove them, the Blacks indignantly walked out in a body (142).

Some of those who left in protest went on to become founding members of the African American

Episcopal (AME) Church, an all-black *denomination* headed by Richard Allen, Absalom Jones' colleague and friend and the denomination's founding bishop.

However, Absalom Jones and his followers chose instead to become part of a more "catholic" Church, one that was *not* identified with one race only. Nevertheless, having experienced such negative treatment in their previously integrated church, one of the terms put forth by the Rev. Mr. Jones was that their congregation would become a self-governing parish with its existing black leadership. **(37)**

From the beginning, then, the pattern for establishing separate black parishes in the Episcopal Church seems to have been preferred by most blacks as well as by most whites (though of course for completely different reasons). And although many present-day Episcopalians have problems with the very notion of separate, segregated parishes (for, after all, we claim to be a *catholic* Church), most of us can understand why, in light of certain historical circumstances, there may be times when setting up specific parishes for specific groups of people can be justified, particularly as an *interim* strategy (as hopefully is the case today with many of our ministries serving non-English speakers, or people who are experiencing homelessness, or people who feel alienated from the traditional ways of doing church and are looking for new ways to express their faith).

However, in the case of these separate African American parishes and missions, the walls of separation became more and more fixed as time went on. What began, perhaps, as a bold new venture to uplift and educate the newly-freed slaves, soon took a decidedly negative turn. Only recently have the walls of segregation and second-class treatment even begun to break down.

The real tragedy, then—and the source of lingering pain and resentment on the part of some of our fellow African American Episcopalians—probably has less to do with the *founding* of these racially-segregated parishes than it does over the fact that, as time went on, no matter how industrious and hard-working they proved themselves to be, how educated they became, how honest, clean and upright they were, how faithful they were, or how loyal they were to the Episcopal Church, they continued to be separated from the mainstream of the Church and kept in an inferior, subordinate position, generation after generation.

The fact that that happened, of course, is also a direct result of the painful legacy of slavery. And since the purpose of this study is to "document this diocese's complicity in the institution of slavery and its subsequent history of segregation and discrimination", is **(38)** important that we not gloss over the fact that the white founders of St. Matthias' (and of *all* of our diocese's post-Civil War black congregations) were, for the most part, active participants in, and defenders of, the cruel and unjust slave *system* (whether they personally owned slaves or not) and that many of them even supported a civil war to maintain it.

Nevertheless, *given that history*, it is all the more remarkable that once the War was over and slavery was abolished, the white founders of St. Matthias' moved quickly and decisively to make

the transition from slavery to freedom as smooth and positive as possible, both materially and spiritually. Would that that had been a first step to greater equality rather than a prelude to the dark days of Jim Crow segregation!

Before concluding this reflection on the founding of St. Matthias', it is only right and proper that we acknowledge the important and often-overlooked role played by the original *parishioners* of Trinity Chapel—those trail-blazing pioneers who chose to *remain* in the Episcopal Church (no doubt in the face of great pressures of their own) and who launched out on this whole new venture with both faith and determination, accepting the challenge of starting a new parish and paving the way for many future generations of black Episcopalians.

Their number included people like Isaac Dickson (who played a major role in establishing the public school system here in the 1880s and who served as the only African American on Asheville's first City School Board), and James Vester Miller (a self-taught contractor and brick artisan, who built a number of churches and civic buildings in Asheville—including the present St. Matthias' Church—and who was highly respected by people of both races throughout the community). Their early commitment to worship, education and community service laid an enduring foundation for generations of black Episcopalians in this city and this diocese. Indeed, as was noted earlier, there is much about the founding of St. Matthias' (and the other historically African American churches in this diocese) about which we can be enormously grateful. **(39)**

The re-unification of the Episcopal Church following the Civil War; the establishment of the Freedman's Commission and the founding of St. Augustine's School; and Bishop Atkinson's efforts to raise up African American clergy

Unlike many other Protestant bodies, the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America (PECUSA) did not split over slavery (despite the formation of the short-lived Protestant Episcopal Church in the *Confederate* States of America). Unlike the Presbyterians, the Baptists, and the Methodists, the Episcopal Church never took an official position condemning slavery, opting to preserve the unity of the Church over providing clear moral leadership on the issue of slavery.

(That tension continues in the Episcopal Church to this day. Many argue that the unity of the Church should always be our chief concern, since *all* political and social upheavals eventually pass into history, while the Church remains. Others disagree, saying the Church should always seek justice, no matter what the consequences, and trust God to preserve the Church. Many of our present controversies are worked out in the midst of this tension.)

In any event, when the Episcopal Church in the USA met for its General Convention in 1862, none of the Southern bishops or deputies showed up. But rather than expelling them from the church, the convention leadership simply recorded them as being "absent".

In the same spirit three years later, following the end of the War, all of the Southern bishops were invited to come back "home" to the1865 General Convention, with virtually no strings attached.

Almost all of the Southern dioceses spurned that first post-war invitation. However, two (and *only* two) bishops from the old Confederacy chose to attend that convention, one of them being Bishop Atkinson of North Carolina. In so doing, he helped pave the way for the other Southern dioceses to re-join the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of **(40)** America over the next three year period, thus playing a key role in re-uniting the Episcopal Church following the War.

The 1865 General Convention responded to the War's aftermath by establishing the Freedman's Commission, a national church agency which was charged primarily with helping provide spiritual and educational opportunities for the newly-freed slaves. This move was strongly supported by Bishop Atkinson, and two years later, the Commission established St. Augustine's Normal School and Collegiate Institute in Raleigh.

Initially, St. Augustine's primary purpose was to train "colored teachers" and to provide higher education and religious instruction and discipline for the freedmen. In later years it was expanded to prepare men for ordination, another cause that Bishop Atkinson espoused.

Here again Bishop Atkinson was more progressive (and more successful) than many of his peers. The Rev. George Freeman Bragg, Jr., one of our Church's earliest African-American historians, wrote very positively of Bishop Atkinson's commitment not only to raising up black priests but also to admitting these new black parishes into *full union* with the diocesan convention (something which even many northern dioceses had failed to do until the 1850s and 1860s).

In the early years of the 20th Century, Fr. Bragg wrote:

> Bishop Atkinson…battling in the face of a hard, bitter and unrelenting prejudice, organized colored parishes and had them admitted into union with his diocesan convention. And when the Standing Committee refused to pass the papers of a colored candidate for holy orders, he invited two "Yankee" Negro priests from the North to come into his diocese, and admitted them into full privileges in his convention. Other Southern bishops labored earnestly to do the same thing, but could not (Quoted in Lewis, 52). **(41)**

One of these two "Yankee" priests was the Rev. S. V. [Samuel Vreeland] Berry, who became the first African-American priest in western North Carolina when he became the priest-in-charge of St. Matthias'—then Trinity Chapel—in 1870. He served in that capacity until 1885, when he retired and returned to New York, where he died in 1887. (Bishop Lyman, in his 1887 annual report to the diocese, said of him that he "labored faithfully for many years in Asheville, and only gave up the work when old age and increasing infirmities rendered it impossible for him to continue his charge. To the very last he retained the confidence and love of the whole community.") (Sill, 50).

Contemporary African-American priest and historian Harold T. Lewis commends Bishop Atkinson for his "commitment to the idea of a kind of racial self-determination, a concept that would have been alien to the mind of the antebellum Southern Episcopalian." But, he notes that Bishop Atkinson and other more progressive thinkers at the time met with stiff opposition. Sadly, he notes, "between 1866 and 1877 only twenty blacks were ordained in the Episcopal Church, and of these, fourteen remained deacons and only six…were advanced to the priesthood. Of the six…only two were ordained in Southern dioceses, where the need for black clergy was greater"(50-52).

What went wrong? Dr. Lewis cites four "flaws" that undermined the efforts of the Episcopal Church's Freedman's Commission: (1) An attitude on the part of whites that work among blacks was like *foreign* missionary work, winning *those* people to Christ; (2) the Church's "patronizing attitude" which perpetuated a system of close oversight and unhealthy dependency; (3) the resistance on the part of Southerners to accept national direction over local affairs; and (4) "the mistaken belief on the part of the Church that simply by providing vocational and religious training, simply by eradicating 'ignorance,' the problems of the black race in America could be solved" (52-54). **(42)**

In conclusion, Dr. Lewis laments:

> While sincere in its efforts to improve the lot of African Americans, it [the Freedman's Commission] persisted in treating the group as separate but unequal, ministering to them as a special group and making no attempts whatever either to address the broader problem of racism in society, or to integrate blacks into the mainstream of the Church's life. Every act of the commission succeeded in further segregating the race, thereby creating a parallel—and inferior—ecclesiastical and social institution (56).

The founding of other African American churches and schools in Western North Carolina

Bishop Atkinson's twenty-eight year episcopacy ended in 1881. He was succeeded by the Rt. Rev. Theodore B. Lyman (who had served since 1874 as Bishop Atkinson's Assistant Bishop). During Bishop Lyman's episcopate, several new African American congregations were founded.

St. Cyprian's, Lincolnton, was founded in 1886 by the Rev. William R. Wetmore, the rector of St. Luke's, Lincolnton. The new facility included a church, a school, and a parsonage. Like the Rev. Jarvis Buxton in Asheville, Fr. Wetmore was something of a church planter, having established St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in 1872, a separate mission chapel for the laborers at a cotton factory near Lincolnton. And like Fr. Buxton, he had helped lay the groundwork for spinning off this new African American congregation by setting up a separate Sunday school for them at St. Luke's several years before sending them forth to establish this separate congregation.

St. Cyprian's, Franklin, began first primarily as a school for African American children, in the

early 1880s, when the Rev. John A. Deal, the rector of St. Agnes Church, Franklin, made plans to **(43)** open a new **Colored Episcopal Mission School** in Macon County. Mr. James T. Kennedy, a black educator from South Carolina, was selected to be its lead teacher.

Under Mr. Kennedy's able leadership, the school grew from two pupils to eighty-five. And in 1887, the mission church of St. Cyprian's was built. Soon thereafter, in 1890, Mr. Kennedy was ordained a Deacon and was placed in charge of St. Cyprian's.

According to an unpublished history of St. Cyprian's by one of its parishioners, Jada Bryson,

> Trade skills were taught and workshop services for the black population in the Macon County area were provided. In 1886, a small building was constructed. The wood was harvested and milled on the grounds. The workshop and classrooms were moved out of the Old Tannery which had been used since 1882 into this new building. The floor and the beams in the church were made from oak and the walls are made from poplar. The church was not doing so well because of the death of many of its members. There were only nineteen members left. The Rev. James T. Kennedy was put in charge of the school and congregation. He served until 1911, when he was sent to St. Matthias' Episcopal Church in Asheville. He made the Baptismal font and the front altar rail of oak, the lectern of cherry and back alter and cross form maple.

In 1915, Fr. Kennedy was ordained a Priest and was named rector of St. Matthias'. Five years later, in 1920, he became the Archdeacon for Colored Work in the Missionary District of Asheville. He lived a long and fruitful life and served with distinction everywhere he went (Duncan, 126).

The founding of **St. Stephen's, Morganton**, came about under quite different circumstances. Both before and after the Civil War, **(44)** blacks and whites had been worshipping together at Grace Church. But one Sunday in 1888, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Wilson were told by a Mr. John Pearson that, although they were welcome to worship there, they had to sit in the back and were not permitted to sing. Rather than remaining at Grace, the Wilsons left the church, and all the other African Americans followed. The following year, 1889, nine women and men decided to start their own Episcopal Church—Mr. and Mrs. Reuben and Lizzie Avery, Mr. and Mrs. Durand and Annie Woodard, Mr. and Mrs. William and Louise Lytle, Mrs. Lilly Harbison, Mrs. Rachel Avery and Mrs. Mary Willie Lytle.

Since Ms. Lilly Harbison was from Asheville, she knew the Rev. Henry Stephen McDuffey, the then rector of St. Matthias'. Consequently, she contacted him and asked him to help them, which he agreed to do. But they still had to find a meeting place. Fortunately, Ms. Harbison's husband, Philo, offered to let the new congregation meet upstairs on the second floor of a grocery store he owned in downtown Morganton until they could build a permanent church building of their own. And, despite the significant distance from Asheville to Morganton, the

Rev. Mr. McDuffey apparently made the trip every week to hold afternoon services for this new African American congregation.

In 1891, the founding nine members of St. Stephen's were confirmed, and ten others were baptized by Bishop Lyman (in Grace Church). And in 1892, work on a new church structure was begun. The Rev. Mr. McDuffey called on some of his northern friends to help raise the necessary funds, and Mr. Thomas Walton gave a parcel of land on a hill near Grace Church on which to build. With $1,000 in the bank, construction on the new frame church building was started. On November 23rd of the following year, 1893, the newly-built St. Stephen's was consecrated by Bishop Joseph B. Cheshire.

Later that year, an addition to the church was added, creating space for a parish hall and a school. The school, known as the Episcopal **(45)** Academy, was the only school at the time in Morganton for African American children. Its principal was Mr. J. H. Hamilton, and the school served some 30 or so children at a time. At other times during the week, the parish hall was widely used by the black community for various meetings, social events and athletic events (Ms. Maxine Happoldt, in an unpublished history of St. Stephen's).

Good Shepherd, Tryon, also got its start in this same time frame. In 1888, the Rev. Deacon Milnor Jones (who earlier had established the mission church of the Holy Cross in Tryon) constructed a log chapel for a small group of black Episcopalians in and around Tryon and named it Good Shepherd Church. As usual, the founding of this mission was accompanied by the establishment of a school for blacks. Classes were held in the log chapel until they outgrew the space and had to be moved to the second floor of a barn owned by the Rev. Mr. Ferris.

Later, in 1905, the school was re-located to Markham Road and greatly enlarged, but because that part of Good Shepherd's history occurred after we had become the Missionary District of Asheville, it will be continued in Chapter 5.

Meanwhile, as the 19th Century drew to a close, **Trinity Chapel in Asheville** had grown to the point where a new and larger church building was needed. Construction began in 1894 with the laying of the foundation and the setting of the cornerstone, at which time Bishop Cheshire re-named the church **St. Matthias'**. Built (and quite possibly even designed) by the famous African American brick artisan, James Vester Miller, the new building was far enough along for the congregation to hold Easter services there in 1896. Two years later, the structure was totally completed and paid for. Being debt-free, it was consecrated by Bishop Cheshire in July of 1898. The adjoining chapel was built soon thereafter and consecrated in 1901.

It should be noted that St. Matthias' is truly a remarkable architectural treasure. The Gothic-style building features elaborate **(46)** woodwork, beautiful stained glass windows, a Midmer (tracker) pipe organ, and excellent acoustics. Since 1979, it has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is, even today, one of the *largest* Episcopal Churches in Western North Carolina (something highly unusual for an historically African American church in the

South). In the 1990s, it was even considered for designation as the diocese's cathedral.

St. Gabriel's, Rutherfordton, also belongs in this list of African American churches begun in the latter decades of the 19th Century (even though its *official* beginning was not until 1915 when the present church building was completed). Its earliest roots, in fact, go way back to the 1840s with the founding of St. John's, the first Episcopal Church in Rutherfordton.

Built by slave labor, St. John's basically had two congregations, one white (which worshipped on Sundays) and one black (which worshipped on Saturday evenings). In the 1890s, the white congregation outgrew the space, so they moved down Main Street and built a new church named St. Francis, where their descendants still worship. With all the white parishioners now in a new facility at a different location, the diocese deconsecrated St. John's and leased the property for a time, later selling it.

This move, of course, left the black communicants of St. John's without a church home. But by the grace of God, the congregation persevered, and for the next 15 years or so continued to meet in peoples' homes in New Hope, the original black community in Rutherfordton (Curl, unpublished history of St. Gabriel's).

It would not be until 1915 that these hardy and faithful black Episcopalians would have a home of their own. But again, that is a story that we will continue in Chapter 5.

Four of these five congregations (all except St. Cyprian's, Lincolnton) are still in existence and, like St. Matthias', they have been a blessing not only to their own members over the years but **(47)** also to the Diocese and to their respective communities. Even in the face of neglect, paternalism and discrimination, they have persevered in faith and determination, both supporting the Church as loyal members and often challenging it to *be* the Church it professes to be. **(48)**

Chapter 4

The Episcopal Church and Jim Crow Segregation

The short-lived period of Reconstruction

Mention has already been made of the passage of the highly racist and discriminatory Black Codes immediately following the Civil War. They were made possible because of the tacit approval of Southern-born President Andrew Johnson, who succeeded President Lincoln.

However, in 1867, Congress rose up in opposition to the post-war policies of President Johnson and established a whole new plan of Reconstruction, which, although it lasted only 10 years, resulted in much progress in the area of black advancement and empowerment. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments were passed, which made African Americans full citizens, provided for equal protection under the law, and gave black males the right to vote. Federal troops and policies provided an increased measure of protection for black people. And the Freedmen's Bureau (a governmental agency similar in purpose to the Episcopal Church's Freedman's Commission) provided assistance and support to the impoverished ex-slaves with food rations, educational opportunities, medical care, and labor mediation.

As a result of these advances, there developed in time a political coalition made up of Republicans and Populists (both black and white) known as the Fusion Party, which succeeded in electing a number of African Americans to public office. **(49)**

Had this phase of Reconstruction remained in effect for a longer period of time, it is conceivable that Southern history would have unfolded in a much different way. However, in the late 1870s, for a number of reasons, the era of Reconstruction slowly ground to a halt. Federal troops were withdrawn, white backlash increased, anti-black terror activity re-surfaced (often with a vengeance), and a new period of Jim Crow segregation began to take root.

The Wilmington *Coup d'Etat* of 1898

Here in North Carolina the *decisive* end of Reconstruction took place in 1898 in a bloody event traditionally referred to as The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898, but in recent years more accurately described as The Wilmington *Massacre* or The Wilmington *Coup d'Etat* of 1898 because of its very nature.

It was in November of that year that a group of prominent white Democrats—including, sadly, a

number of Episcopalians—violently overthrew the duly-elected, bi-racial, Fusion-led City Council and either killed or drove out of town any African Americans and their sympathizers who resisted.

This is how Timothy Tyson described the Wilmington Massacre in *Blood Done Sign My Name*:

> [H]undreds of white vigilantes burned down the [black-owned] *Daily Record's* printing press. Next they marched into the neighborhood called Brooklyn, where they left a trail of dead and dying African Americans….Nobody really knows how many African Americans died in Wilmington in the bloody counterrevolution that overthrew one of early-twentieth-century America's few chances for meaningful democracy. The most readily confirmed estimate is fourteen; the leader of the white mob said "about twenty." Hugh McCree [another leader of the *coup*] boasted later of ninety dead. Echoing the stories of their **(50)** grandparents, many African Americans in Wilmington say they believe that the death toll exceeded three hundred. That night and the next day, hundreds of black women and children huddled in the swamps on the outskirts of the city while white men with guns built a new social order….One reason the death toll remains so difficult to determine with any accuracy is that fourteen hundred black citizens fled the city during the next thirty days (273).

That event emboldened whites all across North Carolina in a way that changed the political landscape of this state for decades to come. Again, according to Timothy Tyson,

> Approval, not condemnation, thundered down on the vigilantes from white pulpits, editorial pages, and political podiums across the United States. White dissent in North Carolina had been rendered almost impossible, and black dissent suicidal. The Wilmington Race Riot was the centerpiece of a white supremacy revolution that swept the state in 1898, and the first thing the new regime did was to take the vote away from African Americans. This created what one of the nation's leading Democrats, Raleigh *News and Observer* editor Josephus Daniels, hailed as "permanent good government by the party of the white man." Without their black political allies, the dissenting whites of that day had nowhere to go. Most signed on with the new order, encouraged by their ministers and elected officials. "We have taken a city," the Reverend Peyton H. Hoge declared from the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church in Wilmington. "To God be the praise." Governor Charles B. Aycock, one of the architects of the white supremacy campaign that robbed blacks of their civil and political rights, assessed the role of the Democratic Party this way: "We have ruled by force, we have ruled by fraud, but we want to rule by law." (273-274)

This egregious act of political violence did not happen in a vacuum. For the past 20 years, the whole nation had been moving steadily **(51)** in the direction of making sure that social and political power remained securely in white hands. In fact, two years prior to the Wilmington Massacre, the Supreme Court, in its famous *Plessy v. Ferguson* case, had declared that the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment would be honored and upheld even in the face of

state-imposed segregation laws, as long as they met the criterion of "separate but *equal*". North Carolina, being perhaps a little more progressive than most of its Southern neighbors, was simply among the last of the dominos to fall. But fall it did. North Carolina thus joined the rest of the South in legally-sanctioned Jim Crow segregation.

The complicity of the Episcopal Church in Jim Crow segregation

Not only did our Church do little or nothing to *stop* this horribly regressive movement, it actually in a way helped lay the *foundation* for it. That is, despite many protestations by our Church's black leadership, the Episcopal Church as a whole continued the process of building *its own form* of Jim Crow segregation into the very structures of the Church's life and ministry.

In 1883, for instance, a group of Southern bishops (all white, of course) met at the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee, to discuss how best to minister to their growing number of black communicants. What they came up with was a proposal which clearly reflected the old patterns of paternalism and racial superiority and which they presented as a proposed canon to the General Convention later that year.

In part, the proposed "Sewanee canon" read: "In any Diocese containing a large number of persons of colour, it shall be lawful for the Bishop and Convention of the same to constitute such population into a special Missionary Organization under the charge of the Bishop" (Quoted in Lewis, 68). **(52)**

This plan was vehemently opposed by the Church's black leadership. Dr. Lewis writes

> Perceiving that the enactment of this proposed canon would result in the total disenfranchisement of black Episcopalians, and would remove any vestige of hope that a black man could be elected bishop, a group of black churchmen met in New York immediately following the Sewanee gathering. They reviewed the white churchmen's proposal and decided to send a delegation to the convention for the purpose of protesting the approval of the proposed canon. The wishes of the black churchmen won the day, and the General Convention rejected the "Sewanee canon", as it had become known, on the grounds that it drew "lines of classification and distinction between the followers of our common Lord" (68-69).

Unfortunately, as Dr. Lewis goes on to say, "this action proved, at best, to be a pyrrhic victory for blacks in the Episcopal Church", for the Southern bishops went ahead on their own, in direct defiance of the vote of General Convention, and set up separate "colored *convocations*" in their dioceses, directly under their authority and control (69).

What resulted, according to Dr. Lewis, was "a bifurcation in the life of the Episcopal Church, from which, it can be argued, the Church has never fully recovered" (67).

Black Episcopalians did not give up, though. For the next two decades (i.e., during the period of time when this part of the Diocese of North Carolina had been officially designated as the Missionary District of Asheville) they pressed for more equality in the Church and particularly for the election of black bishops, which they saw to be essential for any real advancement. The Conference of Church Workers among Colored People (CCWACP or CCW, for short) initially objected to any plan "smacking of segregation or differentiation based on race". However, **(53)**

> [r]ealizing that they were powerless to elect a black bishop through the colored convocation process, and knowing that no black bishop could be elected who would have any jurisdiction whatsoever over whites, black churchmen began to endorse the creation of separate Negro dioceses or missionary districts. The difference between such missionary districts and those proposed at Sewanee was that they would be under the authority of black bishops, not white (72).

The majority of black Episcopalians would have preferred (if there were to be separate racial missionary districts at all) to have them be tied directly to the General Convention, rather than to individual dioceses. Their thinking was that they would then be able to elect their own bishops, have representation in the General Convention, and manage their own affairs.

Bishop Cheshire of North Carolina supported this more liberal compromise favored by the Church's black leadership, but with conflicting motives and concerns. White historian Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr., in his book *Episcopalians and Race,* sums up his position this way:

> Cheshire himself had long been known as a paternalist who insisted that the church should not be divided on racial lines. In prior discussions about the subject, he had always distinguished between what he regarded as local, "human arrangements" (that is, racially separate parishes) and the essential unity of the church (the bishop, clergy and people of a diocese). In recent years, however, his mind had changed, and he now feared that race relations in the United States had become so poor that only drastic measures could improve the situation. He saw the creation of racial missionary districts as a helpful compromise, for they would give African Americans **(54)** a sense of Membership in the Episcopal Church at the national level without threatening the dominance of white Episcopalians within southern dioceses (23-24).

However, even this more liberal compromise plan did not prevail. After years of much debate and controversy, the General Convention of 1907 approved a canon allowing only for the election of black *suffragan* (i.e., assistant) bishops, who would serve under their (white) diocesan bishops and have no vote in the House of Bishops.

The episcopacy of Bishop Henry Beard Delany, one of the first two black bishops in the Episcopal Church in the United States

The 1907 canon authorizing black suffragan bishops ended up not pleasing much of anyone. Not

only did most black Episcopalians strenuously object to it, but it was not fully accepted by most white Episcopalians either. In fact, only the Diocese of North Carolina and the Diocese of Arkansas chose to exercise this option, so only two African American bishops were elected at this time, one of them being the Rt. Rev. Henry Beard Delany, who served as the Suffragan Bishop for Colored Work in the Diocese of North Carolina from 1918 until his death in 1929.

Prior to his election, Bishop Delany had been a longtime faculty member of St. Augustine's College and was serving as the Archdeacon for Colored Work in the Diocese of North Carolina at the time of his election.

After his consecration, he served not only the African American congregations in his own diocese but also the African American congregations here in Western North Carolina (as well as in other neighboring dioceses).   For that reason, this diocese has a *personal* connection with Bishop Delany.   (Interestingly, there is an entry in the "Confirmation" section of St. Matthias' parish register dated Dec. 7th, 1919, which reads, "This was Bishop Delany's first visit **(55)** to St. Matthias' after his consecration."   In more recent years, descendents of his were members here in St. Matthias' as well.)

According to Dr. Shattuck, "[t]the two black bishops never received full support from the CCW, because they were thought to be too closely tied to the denomination's white establishment" (Shattuck, 25).   Not unlike Booker T. Washington, they were widely dismissed as accommodationists.

They were also subjected at times to negative, degrading, treatment by white Episcopalians. In one of the most painful passages in the Delany sisters' book *Having Our Say*, Sadie Delany recalls:

> When Papa became bishop in 1918, people were mighty impressed. His accomplishment was so extraordinary, I still wonder how he did it. He put up with a lot to get where he got. One time, not long after Papa was consecrated to the bishopric, he did a service at Christ Church in Raleigh. It was a white, segregated church. Our family attended, and do you know what happened? We had to sit in the balcony, which was built for slaves! And we were not given the privilege of Communion. Ooooh, that makes Bessie mad. At the time, she wanted to make a fuss, but she did not, because she did not want to embarrass Papa.
>
> Somehow Papa always endured this kind of degradation. He saw the hypocrisy, but he felt that gently, slowly, he was making true progress for himself and his people, and he was at peace with that (165-166).

Quite obviously, the era of Jim Crow segregation was fully entrenched and would to continue on for several more decades. Nevertheless, these two bishops at least opened up the American

episcopate to people of color (which in some small way may have paved the way for others in the future). And, whatever the circumstances of their election, we can certainly give thanks for **(56)** their faith in God, their personal decency, their perseverance in the face of so much opposition, and their faithfulness in serving their Lord and their Church.

We can also give thanks that, despite our Church's complicity in both slavery and segregation, the Episcopal Church never wrote segregation into its canon law. Only our attitudes and practices needed (and continue to need) changing. **(57) (58 blank)**

Chapter 5

The Missionary District of Asheville and the Diocese of Western North Carolina, 1895-1954

The establishment of the Diocese of East Carolina in 1883 and the Missionary District of Asheville in 1895

Unlike Bishop Atkinson, Bishop Lyman had selected Raleigh instead of Wilmington as his place of residence. Not only was it a more central location in the state, but it was fast becoming clear that the Diocese of North Carolina would soon need to be divided into two or more dioceses. In fact, the first division came about in 1883 with the establishment of the Diocese of East Carolina.

Ten years later, as the population of North Carolina continued to grow, Bishop Lyman, like his predecessor, sought the help of an Assistant Bishop. At the Diocesan Convention of 1893, the Rev. Joseph Blount Cheshire was elected to this post, and less than six months later, Bishop Lyman died after a brief and unexpected illness. Thus, Bishop Cheshire became the fifth bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina.

Here again, the workload was too great for one bishop to handle, so just two years after his consecration, the Diocesan Convention, with the blessing of Bishop Cheshire and the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, designated the westernmost counties of the remaining portion of the Diocese of North Carolina as the Missionary District of Asheville, with the understanding that when it became strong enough to support itself financially, it would become a separate, independent diocese of its own. **(59)**

For the next three years, from 1895 to 1898, the Missionary District of Asheville was under the sole but temporary care of Bishop Cheshire (that is, until the next General Convention gathered and selected someone permanent to replace him.)

In October of that year, the Rev. Junius Moore Horner was the priest selected to be consecrated as the District's new bishop. He was just 39 years old at the time of his election, thus becoming the youngest member in the House of Bishops. He was consecrated at Trinity Church, Asheville, on December 28, 1898, only a month or so after the Wilmington Coup d'Etat.

The political climate in North Carolina at the turn of the 20th Century

As previously noted, repercussions from the Wilmington *Coup d'Etat* were felt all across the

state, as far west as Murphy. In fact, while doing research for this "Repairing the Breach" process, Mr. Tom Bennett, a member of the Church of the Messiah and a former newspaper man, discovered a newspaper supplement dated July 1900, which had appeared the *Western Democrat*, Murphy's local newspaper, and which unabashedly supported a proposed amendment to the North Carolina State Constitution disenfranchising thousands of black citizens. The supplement was entitled "A TALK ABOUT THE AMENDMENT". Its headlines read:

> "WHAT THE AMENDMENT WILL DO.
> It Will Disfranchise the Ignorant Negro. It Will Not Disfranchise any Native Born White Man…LET EVERY WHITE MAN READ AND HAND TO HIS NEIGHBOR."
> (Bennett, 2)

Although the supplement had a "Raleigh" byline on it, it bore the colophon of the *Western Democrat* (whose founder and publisher **(60)** was Alfred Morgan, a member and oft-elected senior warden of the Church of the Messiah and the father of the Rev. Rufus Morgan); so it presumably had the full backing and support of its publisher.

That proposed state constitutional amendment was approved by the voters in 1900, and black voter registration reportedly fell from 331,000 in 1896 to 208,000 in 1904. In other words, in just a matter of eight years, 123,000 citizens of North Carolina lost their 15th Amendment right to vote (Bennett. 7-8).

Governor Charles B. Aycock, who had been elected to that office in the wake of the Wilmington *Coup*, was (and still is) widely referred to as one of the greatest "education governors" in the history of North Carolina. However, few people are aware of the racial assumptions that underlay his educational philosophy and his political platform. According to D.G. Martin, host of UNC-TV's *North Carolina Bookwatch* (in an op-ed piece he wrote after reviewing Rob Christensen's *The Paradox of Tar Heel Politics* and Gregory Down's *Declaration of Dependence: The Long Reconstruction of Popular Politics in the South, 1861-1908*):

> [Aycock's] ideas were a mixture of social Darwinism and eugenics that emphasized the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic racial groups and the necessity of state action to foster the continuous improvement of the dominant races. The ideas were a part of "a global selectionist movement" and were taught by Aycock and other future political and educational leaders while they were students at the University of North Carolina.
>
> In the time leading up to Aycock's 1900 campaign, the university invited "hordes of supporters to commencements where they heard speeches on 'Evolution in Politics', 'The Conquering Race', and 'The Color Line'.
>
> This "unholy" blend of racism and progressivism was the platform for North Carolina's economic progress in the **(61)** early part of the 20th Century (The Transylvania *Times*, February 14, 2011, p. 3A).

Quite obviously, the vast majority of white people all across the state, including intellectual thinkers, political figures, religious leaders and ordinary citizens, were involved in this racist backlash, even justifying it "scientifically" with erroneous "science" based on popular but unfounded prejudices.

It was in the midst of this political climate that the Missionary District of Asheville came into being. Everything which follows in this chapter, then, needs to be understood in that context

The episcopate of Bishop Horner and the founding of more African American missions and schools

The Missionary District of Asheville began as a rather poor, mostly-rural jurisdiction with few large towns, narrow winding roads, and few public schools. According to Elizabeth Thomson (in the book *The Episcopal Church in North Carolina, 1701-1959*) the three themes that run through the Convention proceedings over those early years were the push to become a diocese, education, and money. It was not until 1922 that the Missionary District of Asheville became the (self-sustaining) Diocese of Western North Carolina. But from the beginning Bishop Horner, the son of an educator and a former teacher himself, was very committed to providing educational opportunities throughout the diocese.

During Bishop Horner's episcopate, several diocesan boarding schools were either begun or re-vitalized—Christ School in Arden (founded in 1900), Patterson School in Legerwood (begun in 1906 as the St. Paul's Farm School and re-named Patterson School in 1909), Appalachian School in Penland (begun in 1914) and Valle Crucis Mission and School in Watauga County (re-vitalized by bishops Cheshire and Horner in the last decade of the 19th Century and the first two decades of the 20th Century). **(62)**

All four of these schools served white students only. But it was also during this period—in the first decade of the 20th Century—that a combination day school/boarding school known as the **Tryon Industrial Colored School (later, the Good Shepherd Mission School)** was established in Tryon on property given for this purpose by New Jersey-born Edmund Embury.

Like other parochial schools, this one was primarily a *day* school, serving mostly local children. However, it also housed a few scholars who lived too far away to commute. The school consisted of a dormitory, a classroom, a shop and a chapel (which not only served the school but which was used on Sundays for worship by the congregation of Good Shepherd Church) The newly-enlarged school opened in 1907 with three teachers and ninety-five students..

The school's first principal was Mr. Scotland E. Harris, a graduate of St. Augustine Normal School and Collegiate Institute, who served as principal from 1907 (1908?) until 1918. He was apparently a brilliant scholar, having excelled in mathematics at St. Augustine's.

Prior to his coming to Tryon, Mr. Harris had twice been elected in his native Halifax County to serve in the North Carolina State Legislature, but both times he had been prevented from being seated because of his race and party affiliation (all part of the Democratic backlash begun in the 1890s). Once in Tryon, he and his wife taught both academic and trade courses.

According to all accounts, Mr. Harris was greatly loved and respected by his students, whom he both inspired and challenged. But apparently he also challenged some of the social norms of the community, a practice which ultimately cut short his tenure there as principal. According to a parish historical account (based to a large extent on Mr. Harris' personal memoirs), **(63)**

> Resentment arose as a result of Scotland [Harris] and wife having been invited to attend service at Holy Cross. Mr. Embury had them sit in his pew and take communion at the same time. Further conversations were had regarding Scotland and family taking a back seat when coming to a white church, and that he had used a bad judgment in building such a pretentious home. Bishop Horner says, "Building homes equal to the white people will disturb the peaceful relation of the races and raise Negro aspirations to false and elusive hopes of becoming the equal of white people." Bishop Horner had a petition from Tryon. The petition also referred to Scoltand's smoking in a public place—the post office. Scotland was relieved of his position. He sold his home and moved to Charleston, South Carolina (From the program of the Twenty-second Annual Community Service Awards Dinner Dance, October, 2000, sponsored by Good Shepherd church).

That move, however, did not mark the end of Mr. Harris' connection with Tryon.

> Periodically he returned to Tryon….He built many structures in Tryon over the years in addition to his "so stately a home"….By the late '30's, after the death of his wife in 1932, he was again living in Tryon with his daughter Helen (*Ibid*).

At about the same time, in 1906, **St. Andrew's Chapel, Poke County,** on the Green River Plantation, was built by Mrs. Mary Mills Coxe for "her colored servants and others". More will be said later in this chapter about the fate of this plantation chapel.

In 1911 or 1912 (according to various sources), **St. Peter's, Edneyville** was built on land given by Martin and Ellen Freeman and paid for with funds raised by the Rev. R. N. Willcox, the rector of St. James', Hendersonville, and the priest-in-charge of St. Paul's, Edneyville. **(64)**

The background and the circumstances of St. Peter's founding are quite interesting. According to Elizabeth Willcox Thomson, in her book *Man of Vision* (a biography of her father, the Rev. R. N. Willcox), the land on which St. Peter's was built had originally been inhabited by Chickasaw Indians, a few of whom continued to live in the area even after most of them had either been killed or driven out by white settlers. Ms. Thomson writes,

Later after the Civil War, some freed negroes were granted lands in this same area by the government, the thirty (sic) acres and a mule deal. One, who came originally from Charleston, S.C., brought by families from that area when they summered in Flat Rock and other parts of Henderson County, married an abolitionist from Boston. Their Children intermarried with the Indians already settled there. The families became influential apple growers. Descendants of these, Martin and Ellen Freeman, whose home was not to far from St. Paul's, wanted their children to have the same educational advantages as those attending the school at St. Paul's. Some of the teachers at St. Paul's had even called on the family and when the need for their children, and those of other relative's children, for education was expressed, suggested they contact the Reverend R. N. Wilcox. This they did in 1912. My father, whose parish was everyone, with no differentiation made because of color, immediately responded. Somehow he raised the $1500.00 needed to build a combination church and school house and the family deeded a piece of land to the Diocese on which this could be built. The building was wood, and the teachers serving St. Paul's also took over teaching Classes at St. Peter's….By 1913, according to Convention records, there were thirty-seven pupils. (101)

According to former diocesan historiographer James B. Sill, "Each winter Mr. Willcox went North on a begging trip to two to three weeks, for in this way the money was found for financing **(65)** Church building and teachers' salaries.(82) The Rev. Mr. Sill also recounts that "workers at St. Paul's worked also at St. Peter's and were among it worshippers" and that "[o]ne Sunday night Mr. Willcox baptized the twelve children of Ellen and Martin Freeman [at St. Peter's]" (164).

St. Gabriel's Church, Rutherfordton, as previously noted, was built between 1913 and 1915, finally giving that congregation a permanent home of its own. (More about St. Gabriel's in Chapter 6)

 Almost all of these African American congregations in Western North Carolina were (and remained) relatively small. In 1922, when the Missionary District of Asheville was finally strong enough financially to petition the General Convention to become the Diocese of Western North Carolina, only St. Matthias' was large enough to be listed as a "parish."

African American congregational developments and closings prior to 1954 during the episcopacies of Bishop Gribbon and Bishop Henry

Bishop Horner continued to serve as Diocesan Bishop in the new Diocese of Western North Carolina until 1933 when he died after a long, painful illness. He was succeeded by the Rt. Rev. Robert Emmet Gribbon, who served from 1934 to 1947, when ill health forced him to resign. In 1948, the Rt. Rev. Matthew George Henry became the third bishop of Western North Carolina.

As it is not the purpose of this manuscript to give a *general* history of the diocese, but rather to focus our attention on its racial dimensions, let us conclude this chapter by highlighting a few

significant events related to the diocese's ministry with its African American members during this period.

The Venerable James T. Kennedy served as the Archdeacon for Colored Work from 1920 to 1936. During that time he served **(66)** seven African American mission congregations—St. Cyprian's, Franklin; St. Stephen's, Morganton; Good Shepherd, Tryon; St. Gabriel's, Rutherfordton; St. Andrew's, Green River Plantation (Polk County); St. Peter's, Edneyville; and St. Cyprian's, Lincolnton. (He also served as the rector of St. Matthias' on three different occasions—1912 to 1922, 1931 to 1936, and 1945 to 1951—obviously overlapping, at times, his service as Archdeacon.)

Extraordinarily skilled in woodworking skills, he built various furnishings for all of these churches: altars, baptismal fonts, crosses, pews, lecterns, candleholders, etc. And even after his "retirement" in 1936, he continued to serve where needed until 1950 when, at age eighty-five, it became difficult for him to travel frequently. In 1947 he was honored by the National Boy Scouts for "the opportunities…to Negro boys in Buncombe County" given by the troop he organized and kept alive at St. Matthias in Asheville. He lived well into his nineties and was "beloved by all" (London and Lemon, 506).

As we have previously seen, **Good Shepherd Church, Tryon**, from its inception, has been committed to providing quality education for African American children. Thus, in 1942, when the "colored" Public School in Tryon burned down, Good Shepherd Church stepped up and offered its educational facility to as a temporary location for two years while a new public school was being built.

In the 1940s, a controversy erupted between Bishop Gribbon and Mrs. Daisy Coxe Wright over the control of **St. Andrew's Chapel, Polk County,** on the Green River Plantation. (Mrs. Wright was a daughter of Mrs. Mary Mills Coxe, the founder of St. Andrew's Chapel, and a sister of Ms. Maude Coxe, who had overseen the Chapel following her mother's death until her own death in 1939).

Apparently without consulting Mrs. Wright, Bishop Gribbon determined that St. Andrew's should be yoked with St. Gabriel's, **(67)** Rutherfordton, and served by the same priest. This decision was vehemently opposed by Mrs. Wright, who thought that it should remain connected instead with St. Francis', Rutherfordton. According to J. Derek Harbin in his book *No Mountain Too Steep,*

> Mrs. Wright also seemed to be quite upset about the fact that this new priest for St. Andrew's and St. Gabriel's was a black man, and in her later correspondence about the matter would paint quite a biased picture of her sister's desires and the diocese's intent. To insure that this could never happen again, she suggested that the trust [which had been set up for the maintenance of St. Andrew's] be taken over by the vestry of St. Francis, instead of by that "one man (the Bishop)…who brought the colored priest to St.

Gabriel's, which he had no right to do.. You know Maude cared nothing for that church [St. Gabriel's]…you know that the Diocese of Asheville (sic) doesn't know or care anything about the Green River churches…I don't want to go to law, but I feel it's my duty to carry out Maude's wishes." (Harbin, 109-110).

Perhaps not surprisingly, St. Andrew's closed soon thereafter, and in 1955, the Chapel itself was physically moved from the Green River Plantation to Tryon, where it became (and still is) the primary worship space for the congregation of Good Shepherd Church.

In 1947, **St. Barnabas', Murphy**, became the last separate African American Episcopal Church to be established in this diocese. It was founded by the Rev. Rufus Morgan, often referred to as the "Moses of the mountains" because he had established and served so many missions in the western part of the diocese. The new congregation initially worshipped in the home of one of the parishioners. Five years later, in 1952, the congregation moved into a home of its own—a cinderblock church building on Jackson Street, which had been erected on a half-acre parcel of land which the diocese had purchased for that purpose. (1952 WNC Convention Journal, and Bennett, 2). **(68)**

St. Stephen's, Morganton, moved to a new location on Bouchelle Street in 1949. Groundbreaking for the new stucco church building had taken place the previous year; and on August 7, 1949 it was consecrated by Bishop Henry. Except for the bishop's chair (which was brought over from the old church building), almost all of the interior furnishings were made by Fr. Kennedy (the altar, the lectern, the crucifix, the pews, the eucharistic candleholders, the altar window and the priest's kneeling bench).

In 1950**, St. Matthias', Asheville,** built a rectory next to the Church in anticipation of the arrival of its new rector, the Rev. Monroe C. DeVan. The new rectory had four bathrooms and provided St. Matthias' with the first indoor plumbing in its history. (Up until this time, the only toilet facility on church property was a wooden outhouse attached to the southwestern wall of the church building. It was not until the 1980s that indoor plumbing was installed in the main church building. One cannot help but wonder how many other non-rural Episcopal churches did not have indoor plumbing until halfway through the 20th Century.)

Fr. DeVan continued to expand the ministry with youth that his predecessors (especially Fr. Kennedy, who, as has been noted, began a Boy Scout troop at St. Matthias'). Several present-day parishioners still remember fondly the Saturday routine (either instituted or carried on by Fr. DeVan) of cleaning the church in the morning and then being treated to lunch and a movie afterwards. They also recall serving as acolytes at the early-morning mid-week services at St. Matthias', just before going across the street to their school, Stephens-Lee.

Because Fr. DeVan was not married, and also because he was very community-minded, he reportedly spent a lot of time up on "the Block"(the economic, social and cultural center of the black community in Asheville at the time) both socializing and carrying on a kind of informal ministry of evangelism and pastoral care with many in the broader community. Not all of the

parishioners at that time **(69)** were particularly happy with the fact that he spent so much time up there ("you know, hanging out up there with all those people like *Jesus* did!", as one of his present-day admirers recently put it), but it certainly helped to challenge the community's stereotype of St. Matthias' as being simply a snobby, elitist, "bourgeois" congregation. Fr. DeVan's decade-long ministry, among other things, helped the church itself become more socio-economically diverse—something the parish is very grateful for today.

St. Peter's Church, Edneyville, simply declined to the point of being un-viable and was closed sometime in the early 1950's. (Because the 1953 Diocesan Convention Journal is missing from our archives, it is unknown to this author whether or not there is reference to its closing in that Journal.   However, in the1952 Convention Journal, St. Peter's is *not* listed as one of the "Dormant Churches", but in the 1954 Journal it *is* so listed. Apparently, then, it was closed either in 1952 or 1953.)

Today, almost 60 years later, St. Peter's seems all but forgotten. The former altar from St. Peter's (made by Fr. Kennedy?) has been preserved and is currently in the St. Paul's parish hall, but it is not identified as such and now serves not as an altar, but a as a kind of credenza for church publications.   To the best of anyone's memory, none of the former parishioners of St. Peter's ever came over to St. Paul's but instead ended up going to nearby Blue Ridge Baptist Church. Despite its noble, multi-cultural beginnings, it seems now almost as though it had never existed.

The end of an era

For the first sixty years of its existence—from 1895 to 1955—the Missionary District of Asheville/Diocese of Western North Carolina carried on its life and ministry in the context of Jim Crow segregation. And although throughout that period, its black clergy and congregations had seat, voice and vote in the **(70)** Diocesan Convention, practically every other area of church life was segregated (with the exception of the prevalence of white clergy serving many of the black congregations). Old patterns of paternalism and second-class treatment of our black population continued, and while some of our African American congregations seemed to hold their own, others declined or faded away altogether.

But in the late 1950s, black America began to awaken to new possibilities for recognition and advancement. Ferment was in the air. Segregation as an accepted way of life was beginning to be challenged in the courts and would soon be hitting the streets. The era of Jim Crow segregation was beginning to unravel and, like the end of the Civil War, it would bring new challenges and adjustments, as well as new hopes and new opportunities for ministry. **(71) (72 blank)**

Chapter 6

The Diocese of Western North Carolina from 1954 to the Present

In this chapter, we will explore the impact of the Civil Rights Movement on the Church and on society in general and also examine in some detail how the new historical circumstances impacted our life here in Western North Carolina.

Bishop Henry was our bishop just prior to, during, and immediately following the Civil Rights Movement, so it is he who was at the helm during the time of greatest change. In 1976, he was succeeded by Bishop William G. Weinhauer, who served until 1990. He was succeeded by Bishop Robert H. Johnson, who served until 2004, when Bishop G. Porter Taylor became the Sixth Bishop of Western North Carolina.

The Civil Rights Movement and the Episcopal Church

On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court, in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, unanimously overturned the long-standing *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling of "separate but equal" as it applied to public schools, and ordered that all formerly-segregated public schools be desegregated "with all deliberate speed".

That mandate to accomplish this monumental task "with all deliberate speed" proved to be exceedingly slow. But the decision dramatically altered the whole fabric of American society, **(73)** especially in the South. It also it gave a significant boost to the nascent Civil Rights Movement.

Up until that time, most of the civil rights advances, including the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case, had come about because of the legal work of the NAACP (the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). However, following the *Brown* decision, the Civil Rights Movement became much more widespread. Increasingly, clergy from the historically African American denominations stepped up to provide leadership for the growing movement, and many individuals (both black and white, clergy and laity) joined in to take active roles in various non-violent public demonstrations, as well as in quiet, local acts of bridge-building between the races.

For the most part, the Episcopal Church's role in the Civil Rights Movement tended to be fairly cautious and low-key. Most Episcopalians preferred a gradual, "pastoral" approach to the issue of integration (as opposed to a confrontational and "prophetic" one). That approach was praised by some and strongly criticized by others. (Recall, for instance, Dr. King's withering criticism of the "liberal", mainline white churches in his famous "Letter from the Birmingham Jail", in which he chastised them for their timidity and their failure to take a strong moral stance in the cause of justice.) Even so, almost every Southern diocese and parish experienced some level of division, pain and conflict over the issue, even the black parishes.

The response to the Civil Rights Movement here in Western North Carolina

In the year following the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, Bishop Henry addressed the issue in his annual Bishop's Address:

> One of the great problems facing all Christians of our time is the changing social structure, particularly as it **(74)** applies to the schools in which our children go. We are Christians and, as such, should be leaders in solving this problem. There are some who are still arguing whether we should have unsegregated schools. It seems to me that this question has already been settled by the Supreme Court's decision. The real problem now is how shall we, to the best advantage of both races, arrive at a point which is just and profitable for all men….May our generation show itself to be a great one, as we solve this problem in the light of Christian brotherhood (1955 Convention Journal).

Clearly, he was calling on the diocese to live out its professed faith and to approach this highly-volatile societal issue "in the light of Christian brotherhood". His approach was one of appeal, not confrontation; and he spoke in terms of overarching principles rather than putting forth specific proposals or suggestions for addressing the issue.

Five years later, shortly after the first "sit ins" in Greensboro by students from North Carolina A & T College (now University), he again addressed the Convention:

> In the past year we have had what has been called "sit ins" in our public eating places. Near violence has been averted in some locations and in others there has been real trouble. Expediency no longer can answer the question. If the answer is to last…that answer must be based on eternal truths.
>
> Do I have to tell you that each human being is as precious in God's sight as is any other? Do I have to tell you to love your neighbor as yourself means that I ask no more for myself than I ask for others, or rather I give to others what I ask for myself?
>
> To what are we as a diocese witnessing? To expediency which will not upset the apple cart, or to the eternal Will, Power and Victory of God? **(75)**

The Christian Witness has been made in certain of our communities. I think of one congregation having a preaching mission which welcomed the members of a Negro congregation for al of its services. We are moving in the right direction, but we have the world as our field of redemption. At the same time we have our own souls as the area in which we must allow Jesus Christ to reign as King, as our Lord and Saviour (1960 Convention Journal).

The following year, he became even more specific and direct:

It is the conviction of your Bishop that Christians will welcome any and all people to the worship of almighty God in our churches. This is the position of our Church on a National basis. This is our position in this diocese.

Taking this position, as we feel bound to do, places us in an anomalous position with regard to certain institutions in our diocese. The time has come for us to stop hiding and hoping that this fact will not come to light. It has been our policy at Valle Crucis to accept Negro students….It has been, as long as I have been in the diocese—and before— the policy of accepting children regardless of race at our diocesan camp….Here at In-the-Oaks, many conferences are held which are integrated….Yet when we point to these developments we have to acknowledge that there are certain other institutions which have not witnessed to the world that they are Christian in this area. We have not as yet received any Negroes at the Appalachian School, nor at the Patterson School. The time has come, my brethren, when we have got to face up to this fact (1961 Convention Journal).

The desegregation of our diocesan institutions

Valle Crucis was both the earliest of our diocesan educational institutions to be established and the first to be integrated, as early **(76)** as the middle of the Nineteenth Century. According to I. Harding Hughes, Jr., in his book *Valle Crucis: A History of an Uncommon Place*, an African American, William Alson, was among students studying there for Holy Orders in the 1840s. Mr. Hughes goes on to say that "[n]owhere in historical records has been found any suggestion that students or faculty at Valle Crucis or Episcopalians across the state considered Alston's presence in the mission family to be unusual." Although the last candidate for the ordained ministry left Valle Crucis in 1849, Mr. Alston stayed on another year, until 1850, when he transferred elsewhere to complete his preparation for ordination. He was, according to Mr. Hughes, subsequently ordained and served parishes in Philadelphia and New York (47).

Camp Henry, according to Bishop Henry, may have had a long-standing *policy* to "accept children regardless of race at our diocesan camp", but it was not until 1962 that it was *actually* integrated. Encouraged by the Rev. Delmas Hare, the priest-in-charge of St. Stephen's in Morganton, two youth from St. Stephens', Forney "Skeet" Happolt and his cousin, Daniel Evans, III, along with two other African American boys from Gastonia, blazed a trail and enrolled in

one of the camp sessions. According to the now-grown Mr. Happoldt, the four were warmly received and they had a very positive experience.

Subsequently, in the late 1960s and 1970s, Camp Henry had a kind of "affirmative action" plan to integrate (in more than just a token way) the various camp sessions, making a conscious effort to *recruit* African American youth, not only from the Diocese of Western North Carolina, but from as far away as Charlotte. In every case, these minority youth were incorporated into the camp sessions with no special introductions or explanations; they were just "part of the camp" along with everyone else.

How and when **In the Oaks** first became integrated is unknown to this author. However, one significant event occurred in the late 1960s when Dr. King and the Executive Committee of the **(77)** Southern Christian Leadership Conference met at In the Oaks for a planning/strategy meeting. Apparently, when word got out that this meeting was going to take place at ITO, there was some fairly strong opposition in various parts of the diocese regarding the decision to use In the Oaks for such a "political" event. But Bishop Henry and the resident manager of In the Oaks at the time, Sefton Abbott, with the support of a number of clergy, stood firm and welcomed the SCLC with open arms. No negative incidents seem to have resulted.

The Appalachian School and **the Patterson School**, on the other hand, did not move quickly enough in this area to avoid being "called out" by name on the floor of the diocesan convention by Bishop Henry in his 1961 Bishop's Address.   Behind these particularly pointed words apparently was the fact that, following the court-ordered integration of the Charlotte city schools, Patterson School's enrollment swelled with "white flight" students, and Patterson had become labeled by many as a "segregation academy".   In any event, in response to the Bishop's Address, the following resolution was passed:

> Be it resolved that the Boards of the Appalachian School and the Patterson School respectively determine their policies, as soon as possible, on admission of students and report the same to the Convention of 1962 (1961 Diocesan Journal).

Apparently, diocesan resolutions are not always implemented (!), for this writer saw no such report in the 1962 Convention Journal. It *was* reported in that journal that the Appalachian School in Penland had had "a most difficult year", financially and otherwise. But it wasn't until the 1964 Convention that a spokesman for the Patterson School gave an update regarding the steps the school had taken to address the segregation issue:

> The question has been asked me several times recently, "What about other than white students coming to **(78)** Patterson?" As most of you know, we obtained that property by the will of Mr. Patterson, and that will states that it must be a school for white boys. This we know is not in keeping with the will and statements of our Church, so we have engaged a firm of lawyers in Charlotte to study the whole question and give us the benefit of their expert advice. As yet this law firm has not sent us their report (1964 Diocesan Convention Journal).

The following year, it was reported that the legal firm of Kennedy, Covington, Lobdell and Hickman of Charlotte advised that

> the reversionary clause in the will with which the Diocese received the property for the Patterson School does not include special reference to "white boys" and so the firm felt that the school may accept not-white students without running the risk of any reversion of property to the heirs of Samuel L. Patterson (1965 Diocesan Convention Journal).

Even so, it was not until 1971 that the Patterson School was actually integrated. Two black students, James and William Toms, applied to the school in November of 1970, were admitted the following semester. According to the Patterson School report to that year's convention, the two were "warmly received into the school family and are actively participating in the all-school program." (1971 Diocesan Convention Journal)

The Patterson School subsequently disassociated itself from the diocese and in 2009 closed altogether. The Appalachian School closed in July of 1964, apparently never having been integrated.

Christ School in Arden, which, since about 1906, has been under the control of an independent Board of Directors (and therefore not subject to the Diocese of Western North Carolina in the same way that the Patterson School and the Appalachian School were) was also integrated in either 1970 or 1971 when three African American students were admitted (one of whom later served on Christ School's Board of Directors). **(79)**

Kanuga, unlike In the Oaks or Camp Henry, had to overcome a stated *policy* of segregation dating back to 1938, when Kanuga's Board of Directors had refused to grant permission for the Boy Scout troop from St. Matthias' to camp on the Kanuga property. That historical fact was brought to light by Dr. Cecil L. Patterson (a former professor at North Carolina Central University and one of the first African Americans to serve on Kanuga's Board of Directors) when he was doing research for an "addendum" he was writing to Jack Reak's previously-published history of Kanuga, entitled *Kanuga—A Gathering Place.*

Dr. Patterson believed that it was important for Kanuga to deal directly with its past racial history if it was serious about changing its course for the future. So in 1998 he undertook this companion volume to Mr. Reak's book and entitled it *Kanuga—Story of a Welcoming Place—A Beginning Made.* In it he traces in detail Kanuga's journey toward racial acceptance and inclusion, from its early segregated years, through its processes of integration and on up until the present (that is, 1998).

To the credit of both Dr. Reak and Kanuga, Dr. Patterson's addendum was graciously accepted. Dr. Reak actually wrote the introduction to Dr. Patterson's book, and Kanuga funded the book's publishing. (Both books are currently available in the Kanuga bookstore.)

Referring back to that 1938 request by the Boy Scout troop of St. Matthias' to camp on the

Kanuga grounds, Dr. Patterson writes that Kanuga "was forced to make explicit a position it had previously not been required to enunciate" regarding race. From the Board minutes he quotes:

> *After considerable discussion, the Board regrets that it cannot accede to the request of the troop of Boy Scouts of St. Matthias Church, Asheville, to use Kanuga grounds for camping* (5-6). **(80)**

For over two decades this decision remained Kanuga's official policy. But the issue re-emerged in the 1950s. Dr. Patterson recounts:

> In September 1956, the Division of Camps and Conferences of the Province of Sewanee met to discuss the question of segregated camps and conferences in the province. The following October, a special Kanuga Committee met to consider the same subject. The recommendation to experiment with permitting limited integration of the Women's Auxiliary Conference was rejected because these were older women who were the least apt of all to accept the idea, or so the Board reasoned. Rather, "the Clergy Conference should be opened to Negroes and then an effort be made to get the Negro clergy to attend." For several years, there were discussion and postponement.

> Then there was no more time. In July 1963, the Kanuga Board had to face again the question it thought it had answered in 1938. This time, though, it was not a Black Boy Scout troop that came calling. It was the Standing Committee of the Diocese of North Carolina, one of Kanuga's owning dioceses. The Board answered with a resolution that:

> > *Kanuga announces its willingness to admit all qualified persons to its camps and conferences regardless of race* (7-8).

The rest of Dr. Patterson's book documents various attempts made by Kanuga in the last three decades of the Twentieth Century to invite people of color not only to be campers and conferees, but to be invited as program staff leaders as well; to sponsor *specifically*-integrated conferences and camps for both youth and adults; to establish a Minority Affairs Committee; to integrate its Board of Directors; and continue to seek ways of encouraging more people of color to attend events at Kanuga. **(81)**

Kanuga had a lot of Old South history to overcome, particularly in the eyes of many African Americans. But like many church institutions, it continues to work at it, and in many ways it has done so quite successfully. For instance, since 1999, Kanuga, in conjunction with the Episcopal Office of Black Ministries and the Union of Black Episcopalians, has sponsored seven "Transformation and Renewal" conferences which have been designed to provide inspiration, models, and resources for congregational development in historically African American- and mixed-race churches. Kanuga has also in recent years hosted meetings of the House of Bishops and the international Anglican Communion.

The impact of the Civil Rights Movement on Southern society

Desegregation had huge and unsettling impacts on every segment of society. Many white neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, buses, trains, movies, restaurants and churches either all-of-a-sudden or gradually changed character as they became integrated. Some of those transitions went smoothly, but many, if not most, of them were accomplished only in the face of bitter resistance, if not violent protests. On several occasions, the National Guard had to be called in to enforce federal law.

Similarly, but in totally different ways, many *black* neighborhoods, schools, colleges and businesses also experienced major trauma in the wake of integration—often in some quite *unanticipated* ways.

For instance, the sense of community in many black neighborhoods began to break down as more and more affluent blacks moved into previously all-white neighborhoods. Various urban renewal projects, while greatly improving the housing conditions for many African Americans, also resulted in the re-location of many blacks from their traditional neighborhoods and further undermined the sense of community in those neighborhoods. **(82)**

In the field of education, many black high schools were simply subsumed into their white counterparts, meaning the loss of their history and traditions, their mascots and school colors, and many of their best teachers. Oftentimes, the community's white high school *remained* the high school and the black high school became the middle school. In some cases, as in the case of the black Stephens-Lee High School in Asheville, the historic black high school was simply razed and replaced by a new school, a trauma still felt by many in Asheville. Also, with so many more opportunities for employment in the newly-integrated society, many black students, who formerly might have become teachers, instead chose higher paying careers, thus depriving the public schools of scores of excellent and dedicated teachers.

In terms of black colleges and universities, many of the brightest and best of the black professors were hired away by large, wealthy white colleges and universities; and many of the brightest and best of the black students were similarly sought out and offered large scholarships by the more affluent and prestigious white colleges and universities. And in the area of commerce, many black businesses failed in the face of integration because they were unable to compete with larger, white-owned businesses, which, because of their size, were able to provide greater variety and lower prices.

In other words, practically *everything* was radically upended, and everyone, on every level, experienced both gains and losses. It was a time of major upheaval and re-adjustment for all.

The impact of these changes on African American churches

All this had huge implications for the church, *particularly* for African-American congregations in predominantly white denominations. After so many years of segregation and so many call

for the desegregating of society, the question arose: Should **(83)** there *be* separate black churches anymore? If so, why? And if not, why not?

Liberal bishops often wanted to merge their African American congregations with neighboring white ones, both because many of those black congregations were small and struggling and because they wanted to right the wrongs of segregation.   Especially in light of the push on the part of so many African Americans for the integration of everything else, many of these bishops surprised at the level of resistance they received from most of the black congregations. But for many African Americans, not only did their church hold dear memories for them which they understandably did not want to lose, but it was (particularly when everything else was being integrated) *one* place where they could go to let down their guard, get a break from dealing with the white racism they were encountering all during the week, and find strength to face the on-going challenges of their newly integrated lives.

With this background, then, let us look as what happened in the various African American churches here in Western North Carolina.

Two of them—**St. Barnabas', Murphy** and **St. Cyprian's, Lincolnton**—were merged with white congregations in the 1969s and 1970s.   Significantly, neither of them is now in existence. Over time, most of their former members either died out or left the Episcopal Church altogether.

In the case of St. Barnabas', the property on which their church building was located was seized under the provisions of eminent domain by the State of North Carolina in the mid-1960s, in order to make way for a new four-lane bypass around Murphy.   In the face of this development, the decision was made in 1968 (how? by whom?) that St. Barnabas' and the Church of the Messiah should be merged. Money realized from the sale of the former St. Barnabas' property was used to build a fellowship hall at the Church of the Messiah, which even today bears the name St. Barnabas'. **(84)**

At the time, this move was described in the Report of the Franklin Deanery to the 1969 Diocesan Convention as "a notable achievement". But as time went on, the African American members of the combined congregation slowly drifted away. Again, according to Mr. Bennett's historical research,

> Frank Blount and Frank Sudderth and their families were African-American members who were St. Barnabas members. After the land condemnation, the two Franks and their kin attended the Episcopal Church of the Messiah for some period of time, according to their widows. How long? The widows don't recall. "We just drifted over to Mt. Zion (Baptist Church) in Texana," said Brenda Blount (3).

At **St. Cyprian's, Lincolnton**, something similar happened. In the early 1950s, St. Cyprian's seemed to be doing well. At the diocesan convention of 1954, "Miss Mary Ramsaur reported that St. Cyprian's, the colored mission in Lincolnton, is serving the colored community as a recreation center, and has now thirty children enrolled in the Church School." And in 1956 it

was reported that "St. Cyprian's in Lincolnton has been re-roofed and one whole new end put in the church" (27).

Fourteen years later, however, in 1970, the picture was not so rosy. In that year's Diocesan Convention Journal it was reported that St. Cyprian's had a total of 5 families, 13 confirmed members and 15 baptized members, and that "[i]n November the congregation of St. Cyprian's, Lincolnton, was invited to enter into fellowship within the congregation of the Church of Our Saviour in Woodside, nearby."

That invitation was apparently not accepted by the congregation of St. Cyprian's, perhaps at least in part because the Church of Our Saviour was formerly a plantation chapel but, quite obviously, because they had not been consulted with in advance. In any **(85)** event, they rejected the proposal with their feet, choosing instead either to attend St. Luke's in Lincolnton, or leave the Episcopal Church altogether. In time, however, as was the case in Murphy, those few African Americans who chose to attend St. Luke's also merely "faded away."

The stories of these two attempts to merge black and white congregations in the 1960s and 1970s—only to find out in time that the "combined" churches soon became all white again—are not at all unique to Murphy and Lincolnton. As we have previously noted, black congregations almost always resisted these mergers, and, wherever they occurred, they almost always resulted in the net loss of the number of black Episcopalians.

Very seldom were the African American congregations fully engaged (if consulted at all) in the decision-making process, and usually very little preparation preceded the mergers. Also, in virtually every case, "merger" meant "closure" for the black churches. In the process, the black congregations lost not only their familiar church buildings, but also their churches' names, their sense of identity, the "ethos" of their previous worship traditions, and their unique histories.

In addition, many of their parish leaders—vestry members, wardens, guild presidents and committee chairs—were suddenly stripped of their positions of authority, thereby vastly reducing their decision-making powers. And the crucial role of the black church as a support network for its African American members was suddenly and radically altered, if not taken away altogether.

In all of these "mergers", there seems to have been little or no awareness on the part of the bishops and others in authority of the ever-present issues of racial *power and privilege,* which were (and are) always involved in such decisions. Such decisions were simply "made", as they always had been, *by* whites *for* blacks—thus reflecting the old, in-grained notions of superiority/inferiority. **(86)**

Today we refer to this kind of "top down" decision-making as it affects people of color as a form of "structural" or "institutional" racism. It is usually not mean-spirited and is often not even *recognized* by white people; rather, it is just "built in" to the system, "the way we've always made decisions." Bringing these tendencies to light is a key part of what this historical account is intended to do.

The remaining five historically African American congregations in this diocese are still in existence, and though they share much in common, each of them has a unique history that makes them different from the other four.

In the early 1960s, Bishop Henry appointed the Rev. Delmas Hare to be the priest-in-charge of **St. Stephen's, Morganton,** along with St. Mary's, Quaker Meadows and St. Paul's, Morganton (Lake James). The Civil Rights Movement was just getting into full gear, and Fr. Hare was one of the more outspoken clergy supporters of that movement in this diocese.

In an oral history interview for this project, Fr. Hare said he had hoped to get the two nearest of these congregations, St. Stephen's and St. Mary's to do some things together, but that neither congregation was interested because "St. Mary's was not about to have much to do with black folks, and St. Stephen's certainly was *not* going out in the country, where I was told there were "Kluk-ers" out there."

Fr. Hare was more successful, however, in furthering the cause of integration on the diocesan level. One significant step has already been referred to—the integration of Camp Henry by two members of St. Stephen's and two other African Americans from Gastonia. Also, according to Mrs. Maxine Happoldt in her unpublished history of St. Stephen's, it was Fr. Hare who "started the women going to ECW [Episcopal Church Women] meetings [and] Delegates [from St. Stephen's] to the Convention." **(87)**

For a time, St. Stephen's seemed to hold its own pretty well, and a new parish hall was consecrated in 1971. But later in the 1970s, the parish fell on difficult times, so much so that St. Stephen's almost closed. Again, according to Mrs. Happoldt's unpublished parish history of St. Stephen's,

> In 1980 Bishop Weinhauer called our Senior Warden Forney Happoldt and Junior Warden Jimmy Fleming to come to Grace Church. They went and were told they were going to close St. Stephen's and we would have to go to St. Mary's. Forney and Jimmy said no, we'll go to Grace.

Obviously, the plan to close St. Stephen's never materialized, and St. Stephen's remains open to this day. But those were difficult years, and St Stephen's continued to struggle.

However, beginning in 1989, during the episcopacy of Bishop Robert Johnson, the parish had a kind of renaissance. Mrs. Happoldt writes,

> In 1989 the Rev. Deacon Crisler Greer came to St. Stephen's. We were at a low point. Cris came and started us working…found an organist for us…taught our youth to be acolytes and servers….[helped] the men built the church sign….[and] started our fellowship dinners on the third Sundays

Deacon Greer was followed by the Rev. Linda Hawkins, who also provided inspiring leadership.

During her tenure a new addition was added downstairs, the church and parish hall were air-conditioned; land was bought for a parking lot; and the acolyte ministry flourished.

Since then, St. Stephen's has had its ups and downs. Presently, it is yoked with St. Mary's, with both congregations being served by the Rev. Francis King. Things are different now from the way they were in the 1960s when they were yoked before. Today, members **(88)** from both congregations freely visit each other's churches from time to time for worship and other special events.

From the late 1960s through the mid 1990s, **St. Gabriel's, Rutherfordton,** was part of a creative missionary strategy, which was designed to raise up local talent from within the congregation to serve in ordained leadership positions there. The Rev. William Austin, who had previously spent time as a missionary in Korea developing similar indigenous ministries there, was eager to take this approach in this diocese and persuaded Bishop Henry to appoint him to be the priest-in-charge of St. Gabriel's. During his 10-year tenure there, from 1968 to 1977, Mr. Bobby Lynch and Mr. Robert Stroud were ordained to the diaconate. Presently, Deacon Lynch is the longest serving deacon in the diocese.

As a continuation of this mission strategy, in the 1980s, the Rev. Philip Mock, a long-time member of St. Gabriel's and, prior to his ordination, a leading lay leader in the congregation, was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Weinhauer. Fr. Mock served St. Gabriel's faithfully and effectively as their priest-in-charge from 1988 to 1999, when illness caused him to retire. Unfortunately, Deacon Lynch is the only African American deacon still resident in the diocese (although, thankfully, Ms. Glenda McDowell from St. Matthias' is scheduled, God willing, to be ordained in January 2012), but he continues to serve St. Cyprian's faithfully. And the congregation, though always struggling financially, continues to be vibrant and continues to reach out into the community through its soup kitchen and other outreach ministries. The present priest-in-charge, the Rev. Jim Curl, is a loving, caring pastor who continues to support local leadership, and in October 2011, St. Gabriel's proudly celebrated its 97th anniversary of ministry at its present site.

In the late1970s and early 1980s, **St. Cyprian's, Franklin** underwent a major transition from being basically an all-black church to being a fully integrated one. That transition occurred when the Rev. Terry Cobb, who had previously served both St. **(89)** Cyprian's and St. Agnes', became the full-time priest-in-charge of St. Cyprian's alone. At that time, many white people chose to join him at St. Cyprian's, thus not only integrating it but swelling its numbers as well. (During Fr. Cobb's tenure, the nave of the historic St. Cyprian's was expanded, nearly doubling its size, and new Sunday School classrooms were added to the parish hall (which had been build several years earlier with the help of the Rev. Dr. Rufus Morgan).

Naturally, there was ambivalence about this sudden change in the congregation's size and make-up, for as with any change, there are both costs and benefits involved. The African American parishioners were bound to have felt (at least on some level) that their church had been "taken over" by the white members. But at the same time, most believed strongly that the Church was and should be open to all, regardless of race.

This latter sentiment was memorably articulated by Mrs. Viola Lenoir, one of the matriarchs of St. Cyprian's, who, upon being asked what she thought of the influx of all the white people, replied, "This ain't no black church….it ain't no white church. This is God's Church." Those words have been immortalized on a banner, which now hangs prominently in St. Cyprian's chancel.

Since 2005, St. Cyprian's and St. Agnes' have been merged into what is now known as the **All Saints' Community**. From the beginning, the All Saints' Community has been served by the Rev. Dorrie Pratt; and from the beginning, intentional efforts have been made to preserve the integrity of the two congregations, even as they seek to build a common community of faith. Blessedly, this merger differs from most other mergers in that neither church was closed down. Both of these historic churches continue to be maintained; both of them retain their historic names; both of them are used for worship (on alternating Sundays); and both of them continue to elect their own vestries (which meet together to deal with common matters and separately to deal with issues unique to each congregation). **(90)**

St. Cyprian's outreach programs in recent years have included making a portion of their property available for use as an athletic field by the Franklin High School soccer team, providing summer camp scholarships to both members and non-members, supporting the local food bank, making their parish hall available to members of Mountain Synagogue for their worship space, and spearheading the building a playground in memory of Wesley Powell, one of St. Cyprian's youngest members, who died tragically in a nursery school fire.

Good Shepherd, Tryon, also experienced a dramatic shift in membership in 1990s when a large influx of white people from neighboring Holy Cross Church transferred their memberships to Good Shepherd. As always, of course, this change in demographics involved a certain amount of adjustment on the part of the original members. But since, at the time, the membership of Good Shepherd was small and the congregation was struggling financially, the newcomers helped assure Good Shepherd's survival and thus were a welcome addition the parish.

 In 2003, the Rev. Walter Bryan, who had grown up at Good Shepherd, retired back to Tryon and became the rector of his home parish. He is currently the only African American priest in this diocese; but the fact that he is serving as the rector of a congregation that is now predominantly white is something to celebrate, as it is still quite rare in the Episcopal Church (though something many of us hope will become more and more common as we work our way toward full inclusion and equality).

As noted earlier, Good Shepherd has, from the beginning, been committed to support and further the education of its young people. In the 1960s, then, when there were few pre-school programs available for African American children, Mrs. Helen Harris Hannon (a daughter of Mr. Scotland Harris) led an effort to establish a community kindergarten in the church's newly-built Parish Hall. **(91)**

 That ministry continued until *public* kindergarten programs filled that need, and once again the

parish's educational focus changed, this time to provide students with an after-school homework program. In January 1995 (following a Phase II expansion of the Parish Hall) the Good Shepherd Homework Center was opened. It still serves the needs of both African American students and others in the community and is open four days a week. Ms. Beryl Dade (one of Mr. Harris' granddaughters and a daughter of Mrs. Hannon) coordinates the Center and is ably assisted by a number of volunteers from both the parish and the community.

The last African American priest to serve **St. Matthias', Asheville,** was the Rev. William C. Weaver, who served as rector from 1968 to 1971. Since then, this parish, like most of our other African American parishes (with the exception of Good Shepherd, Tryon), has been served by various European American clergy.

In the 1970s an inter-racial group which included Barbara and David Jones of St. Matthias', Jean and Sefton Abbott of In the Oaks and St. James', Black Mountain, Gay and Joe Fox of St. James' and a few others met together regularly to share meals and build bridges of racial understanding.

In the 1980s, major improvements were made to the church building, including restoring the stained glass windows, refurbishing the organ, and converting the choir vesting room into a lavatory.

In the 1990s, during the tenure of the Rev. Tom Hughes, St. Matthias' and the Church of the Holy Spirit, Mars Hill, enjoyed a rich and active "paired church" relationship, one which included shared worship at each other's churches four times a year.

Over time, a few European Americans started attending St. **(92)** Matthias', either occasionally or on a fairly regular basis, and the parish began to be integrated. Nevertheless, by the closing years of the 1990s, Sunday attendance was often quite low, finances were extremely tight, and the church building was again in a deteriorating condition. More than once, it was suggested in diocesan meetings that St. Matthias' should be closed, and even some of the parishioners reluctantly thought that maybe the time had come.

However, several stalwarts held firm, and the doors continued to remain open. Under the leadership of Mr. David Jones, Senior Warden, the parish was able to secure the regular services of the Rev. Kirk Brown, and the occasional services of the Rev. Bill Turner, to conduct services and provide limited pastoral care. A small group of faithful parishioners began and maintained a weekly Bible study. Mr. Ron Lambe was hired as the organist and soon thereafter began program of chamber music concerts known as the "First Sunday's at St. Matthias' Concert Series". (Remarkably, all of the musicians who played in the series freely donated their time and talent, so 100% of the free will offerings received went toward repairing, maintaining and improving the church facilities. Over the years the series has turned out to be a win-win-win ministry, providing both the parish and the community with fine music, increasing St. Matthias' visibility in the community, and preserving the beauty and integrity of this remarkable, historic church building.)

In 1999, the Rev. Jim Abbott became the rector and served in that capacity for twelve years. During his tenure, the congregation both grew and became more diversified (with a present racial mix which is almost equally balanced between blacks and whites, with some Latina and Native American representation as well); the parish's music ministry was also expanded and diversified, blending music from both European- and African American traditions and drawing from both traditional and contemporary musical genres; the concert series expanded considerably and now includes concerts almost every Sunday of the year; a number of **(93)** physical improvements were able to be made to the church; the youth ministry was greatly expanded; and St. Matthias' has become increasingly active in the life of the diocese and the community..

Diocesan efforts to recognize and resist racism

At the Diocesan Convention in 1991, a resolution was passed which "affirm[ed] the actions of the 1991 General Convention in urging the Church to combat all racism and to conduct audits of institutional racism" and which directed the Outreach Commission to "establish a Racism Task Force to implement these in Western North Carolina". Following that convention, such a task force was established, headed up by the Rev. Dn. Crisler Greer, who at the time was serving as the Deacon-in-charge of St. Stephen's, Morganton. However, Deacon Greer apparently either did not get sufficient support or had to resign the position, for after several meetings, the task force ceased to meet and became dormant.

Following the Diocesan Convention two years later, in 1993, Ms. Pamela Hemphill, a member of the vestry of St. Stephen's, Morganton, wrote Bishop Johnson a letter protesting the fact that at that convention, not one African American had been elected or appointed to *any* diocesan office or committee. Bishop Johnson responded in part by saying "I will…ask Larry Thompson, who is Chair of Outreach Ministries for the Diocese, to reactivate our diocesan Committee on Racism." He went on to say, "You are quite right, it [the anti-racism committee] did meet a year or so ago for a couple of times but failed to continue because no one came forward to take the leadership role. Maybe someone will do that this time"(Copy of letter by Bishop Johnson, December 9, 1993).

Ms. Fay Walker, a layperson from Brevard, was the one who stepped up to the challenge. She volunteered to chair the newly-constituted Task Force on Racism and Cultural Issues and gathered **(94)** together a solid and diverse corps of dedicated members who, since the beginning, have worked diligently to make anti-racism a major focus of concern for the diocese.

One of the first things the task force did was to invite a Mr. Enrique Brown from the national Episcopal Church to come down to help them plan their future. Out of that meeting came an awareness that because anti-racism work is such difficult work, it requires a *long term* commitment; that in order to do this work effectively it is necessary for those doing it to spend as much time doing their "inner work" as they do their "outer work"; and that it is important for people doing this work to stay centered in the Faith, lest they lose their spiritual moorings or end up burning themselves out.

At the 1994 Diocesan Convention, the Task Force introduced a resolution urging congregations to observe the commemoration of the feast day of the Rev. Absalom Jones, the first African American priest in the Episcopal Church. In 1995, it introduced a resolution "to monitor progress in eliminating institutional racism from the Episcopal Church in this diocese" and to report their findings at all subsequent conventions. In 1997, its resolution directed each elected and appointed diocesan commission and committee to conduct, within the next three years "a four-hour workshop, 'Overcoming Racism,' under the aegis of the Task Force on Racism and Cultural Issues." In 2003, its resolution called on the diocese to be more intentional in its "efforts to increase the number of persons of color among parishioners, clergy and lay employees throughout the Diocese."

Over the years, over a dozen such resolutions have been proposed and adopted by the Convention. Perhaps the most controversial one was submitted in 2000 which called on all elected and appointed and elected committees and commissions of the diocese "to arrange at least 50 percent of [their] meetings at times other than Monday-Friday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM", so that more minorities and "working people" would be able to attend and have a greater voice in these major diocesan decision-making groups. Although **(95)** the measure passed (after much debate), it has never been fully implemented (in part because many clergy expressed concern that Saturdays were about the only day of the week they could spend with their children).

The task force has effectively addressed Ms. Hemphill's concern regarding the election and appointment of more people of color to serve on major diocesan committees and commissions. At almost every convention since its inception, the Task Force has made sure that people of color (and their allies) were nominated for important diocesan positions. And to the diocese's credit over the years, almost all of the people put forth by the Task Force *have been* elected or appointed, reflecting a widespread desire to be inclusive and to have more minorities at the table.

In 2002, the Task Force on Racism and Cultural Issues changed its name to the Commission to Dismantle Racism, for at least two reasons: One, because the very term "task force' implied a short-term, time-limited commitment, rather than a "long haul", on-going one; and, secondly, as a way of emphasizing the *institutional/systemic* dimensions of racism, which need to be "dismantled" so that we can all be free.

In that same year, the CDR asked for and received a generous grant from the diocese to send sixteen of its members off for two weeks of extensive faith-based training in anti-racism being offered by the Mennonite Central Committee. For the past decade, the CDR has used this "Damascus Road" anti-racism training model for hundreds of clergy and lay leaders across the diocese.

In 2008, the Commission became involved in the "Repairing the Breach" initiative, which was mandated by the 2006 General Convention of the Episcopal Church. Exciting things have already come out of this on-going, diocesan-wide process. In the introduction to this book, the Service of Repentance, Healing and Reconciliation was described in detail. But in addition, many parishes have gotten involved. Many people have seen **(96)** the documentary film *Traces*

of the Trade and, with the help of Constance and Dain Perry, have reflected on its content in a deeply personal way. Several of our parishes (e.g., the Church of the Messiah, Murphy, and Calvary Church, Fletcher) have done some serious historical work in terms of their own parish histories. And significant inter-racial relationships and activities have begun to be formed in Hickory, Waynesville and Boone.

So where are we now? And how are we doing?

In many ways, we thankfully have made much progress. More people in this diocese seem to be more attuned to the deeper issues of racism than ever before, and much good has come from these years of anti-racism training and this "Repairing the Breach" effort. Bishop Taylor has made the diocesan office more diverse by hiring two members of St. Matthias', Mr. Osondu McPeters and Ms. Jessica Guzman, to be the diocesan Canon for Youth, College Work and Young Adult Ministries and his Administrative Assistant, respectively. And, as America becomes more and more diverse, there is a glimmer of hope (and even some evidence, if we look at large urban areas) that inter-racial relationships will continue to increase and that the Episcopal Church *will,* as time goes on, become more diverse and inclusive.

But the wounds of racism run deep, and there are still many troubling trends at work in our Church and in our nation. For instance, the number African American Episcopalians in this diocese (and throughout much of the South) continues to decline, despite our efforts so far; and we haven't yet found a way to reverse the trend, nor have we made it a top priority to do so. As previously noted, at present we have only one African American priest and one African American deacon in the diocese (both soon to retire), and only one new African American diaconal candidate raised up and ready to be ordained to follow in their footsteps. And all across the nation, troubling statistics related to minority unemployment and incarceration rates, racially-based health and wealth disparities, and minority school drop out numbers and teen **(97)** pregnancy rates all reflect serious flaws in our system and serious challenges still facing our Church and our nation.

Fortunately, more and more *is* being done here in this diocese to address these issues and concerns, both on the diocesan level and also on the parish/local community level. Follow-up activities and initiatives stemming from this "Repairing the Breach" initiative are still being implemented and further being planned by the CDR. Exciting things are taking root in several of our parishes and the communities in which they are located. And we are fortunate that our two most recent bishops, Bishop Johnson and Bishop Taylor, have supported us in our journey so far and have committed themselves to help us *continue* this journey toward full racial healing, equality and reconciliation.

So while the journey may not be finished yet, we are at least on the path and well on the way. With God's grace, and with lots of hard work, honest dialogue, good humor and prayer, the journey will continue until that promised time when God's *Dream* for a reconciled world will be, in fact, God's *Reality*. **(98)**

Afterword

Having immersed myself in this study for many months, I have several observations, concerns and hopes that, in closing, I would like to leave with you.

1.   It appears as though each time in our history that there has been significant progress in the area of racial justice, it has been followed by a period of significant backlash.   For instance, immediately following the end of the Civil War, the abolition of slavery, and the ten-year period of racial progress known as Reconstruction, a huge backlash took place, which resulted in almost a century of Jim Crow segregation.   Similarly, following the decades-long struggle for equal rights in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were both enacted, and many affirmative action plans to help level the racial playing field were adopted and implemented—only to be met again by another backlash in the 1980s, during which many of these progressive social programs were greatly curtailed or scrapped altogether.   And just recently, when Barack Obama was elected President in 2008, many felt as though the race issue had finally been put to rest—only to discover, once again, that the negative and destructive forces of racism almost immediately began to surface and mobilize in opposition.

My hope and prayer, then, is that we will learn from our history, invite it be our teacher, and let it remind us of how important it is to stay vigilant and always to resist the fearful forces which would move us backwards once again.

2.   Another pattern of behavior which seems to have manifested itself repeatedly in our history is the pattern of paternalism, power and privilege on the part of white decision-makers.   As we have seen in this study time and again, bishops and others in authority almost always made decisions regarding people of color from an **(99)** assumed sense of racial superiority, believing that they knew best what was needed and rarely, if ever, consulting those who would be most affected by the decisions they made.

Having seen how destructive and painful many of those decisions turned out to be, I would urge everyone who is in *any* position of authority to make sure that all those who will be *affected* by any decision are involved in the *making* of it.   Those of us who are white need to be aware that we bring this often-unrecognized sense of racial superiority with us wherever we go.   And we would do well to ask ourselves often, "Who needs to be at the table when making this decision?"; for involving people of color at every level of our Church's life (and making sure their voices are heard and honored) is an absolutely *essential* ingredient if there is to be any real progress in this area of combating racism and building the Beloved Community.

3.   Although this study has focused pretty exclusively on racism—and, more particularly, on racism as it pertains to African Americans—I am convinced that the same dynamics are also at work in regard to other ethnic groups (e.g., Native Americans and Latinos) and also in regard to

women, homosexuals, immigrants, people temporarily without permanent housing, and poor people. Pitting any of these groups against each other only compounds and exacerbates the problem (and, in fact, is often a technique used by people of power to "divide and conquer" in order to *maintain* their power). Thus, my hope is that all of us can *support each other* in seeking justice and equality for *everyone* and not *allow* ourselves to get pitted against one another.

4. Finally, I would like to re-iterate what I said in the preface about what a blessing it has been for me to have been the rector of St. Matthias' for the past twelve years. Because of my ministry here, my life has been wonderfully enriched, my perspective has been greatly expanded, and my faith has been quietly deepened. **(100)**

Here I have discovered qualities and ways of being and living that I long to have for myself—an ability to laugh freely, readily and often, even in the face of all of life's trials and tribulations; a faith that is immediate, direct and trusting, in a God who is an ever-present, personal and living reality in daily life; and an approach to living that takes life as it comes, with all of its ups and downs, with a spirit of gratitude, equanimity and hope.

All of these things are things that my privileged life has somehow made more difficult and elusive for me to appropriate. But I know that I need them, and I am at least *beginning* to live into them because of my rich experience here.

So I have come to believe personally, as well as theologically, that this work for racial justice, equality and reconciliation is as important for white people as it is for people of color. The fact of the matter is that we *need* each other, for God has simply created us that way, endowing us each with gifts to share and needs that can only be filled by the gifts of others. And Jesus has come among us to reconcile us to God and one another. And the Holy Spirit has re-birthed us into Christ's mystical Body, where all are interdependent and no member can say "I have no need of you."

In other words, this journey toward healing, wholeness and reconciliation is at the heart of our faith. It is the mission of the Church. It is the goal and destiny of our life in Christ. So, together, let us "march on, till victory is won." **(101) (102 blank)**

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