

## ARCHIVIST'S REPORT 2023

*For considering the flood of statistics involved and the difficulty there is for those who wish to enter upon the narratives of history because of the mass of material, we have aimed to please those who wish to read, to make it easy for those who are inclined to memorize, and to profit all readers. (2 Maccabees 2:24-25)*

Diocesan and parish archives are required by the Canons of the Episcopal Church and are organized through the guidelines published by the Episcopal Church archives in Austin TX, along with recommendations from National Episcopal Historical Association.

### HISTORY OF THE ARCHIVES OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW JERSEY

While there have been archives in the Diocese of New Jersey from the days of our first bishops, the beginning of a formal plan and staff for such an endeavor began with the efforts of the Revd Canon Laurence D. Fish. Larry had worked alongside Fr. David R. King, who famously wrote and published the history of the diocese for the diocesan bicentennial in 1985, while Rector of St. John's Elizabeth. Tragically, he died just two years later at the age of 58.

Files and other memorabilia were collected and stored in the basement 808 West State St. in far less than ideal conditions. Eventually, part of the Matthews Conference Center was established to better store archival materials, especially those particularly susceptible to the vagaries of humidity and temperature.

Canon Fish brought to the position a strong sense of church and diocesan history, a vacuum cleaner like ability to acquire important new materials, and a graceful and clear writing style that gave freshness and vitality which made the history of our diocese come alive.

After Canon Fish's death in 2010, Canon Cynthia McFarland, who was already serving as Diocesan Communications Director had Archivist, Historiographer and Register added to her portfolio. Cynthia continued updating the existing databases (adding one listing confirmations), began the process of culling through the papers and other correspondence of all of our Bishops, and did some valuable primary source research on the lives of the Rev'd John Talbot and the Rt. Rev'd George Washington Doane. Under her direction, many of our Diocesan journals were digitized and made available online. Tragically, Cynthia died in 2013, and her two assistants, Mary Ann Jensen and Paula Morgan died within a year of each other. I was appointed Archivist by Bishop Stokes in 2014.

I rejoice that the records for approximately 180 former and present churches in the Diocese of New Jersey have been scanned, digitized, and indexed by Ancestry.com. The records are now available on-line, although there is a black-out of data entered after 1970 at <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/62073/?bm=E>. Free access to all of Ancestry's data bases is now available free-of-charge to anyone at 808 West State Street. We now have a hard drive with all the scanned data, including the web site's blacked-out dates. These files are awkward to use, but at least available.

I materially participated in the clearing out of two extinct parishes: Grace Church Plainfield and St. Mary's in Keyport. Their parish records have all been preserved in low acid storage boxes and indexed. I am always sad at the conclusion of a congregation's life, but through our program of sharing sacred vessels, vestments, books and furniture, they continue to contribute to the life of congregations around the diocese and the world. A huge amount of these items went to Liberia this autumn through the auspices of the Revd Canon James Yarsiah.

I answered over fifty questions posed to the Archives over the year, including requests for letters of transfer, baptism and wedding records, genealogical research, information for historical and ecclesiological researchers and preservation questions from parishes. I've been particularly happy to provide primary source materials for the continuing work of the diocesan Reparations Commission in compiling the first actual history of African American Episcopalians in New Jersey.

#### MATERIALS PRESENTLY KEPT IN THE ARCHIVES

##### Books:

There is a library of parish histories, the Episcopal Church, historic hymnals and prayer books, and biographies and collections of writings from prominent New Jersey Clergy in our collection.

##### Files:

1. Clergy personnel files. Records of active, retired and deceased clergy, along with files of those no longer in the ordination process.
2. Correspondence and official acts of our bishops. Includes letters dimissory and some personal effects and items of historical interest, such as the signatures of those attending electing conventions.
3. Bishop Banyard's church files: We have the files our VIIth Bishop kept of his correspondence and visitations to our congregations during his episcopate. I also recently discovered similar files from the episcopates of Bishops Van Duzer and Belshaw. They are being organized and placed in file cabinets for easier accessibility.
4. The George Councill collection: In 2019 we were blessed to receive approximately 25 feet of files from Ruth Councill containing Bishop Councill's sermons with background notes and re- search documents covering the entire three year lectionary cycle.
5. Non-published parish histories. Often a part of landmark anniversaries, many are mimeographed or photocopied sheets.
6. Bulletins from Diocesan events, such as conventions, consecrations and landmark anniversaries.
7. Materials from Diocesan organizations (e.g. Episcopal Church women, Girls Friendly, Altar Guild, the Evergreens, St. Mary's Hall / Doane Academy, etc.). Includes newsletters, treasurer's reports, and regular publications.
8. Architectural plans: blueprints, architectural renderings and floor plans of churches and diocesan headquarters.

##### Photographs:

These include historic black and white photos of churches (exterior and interior), clergy and lay leaders, photos that appeared in the Church News, Via Media, and other publications, photos of diocesan events, and a large collection of historic postcards.

##### Periodicals:

Includes magazines and other regular diocesan publications, along with runs of the Historical magazine of the Episcopal Church and the Episcopalian. However, during 2024 I will be deaccessioning the paper copies of those periodicals that are available on-line to create room for items not available digitally.

Extinct parishes:

All extant records of churches that are no longer in existence, and include parish registers, registers of church services, Vestry minute books and treasurer's reports.

Multi-media.

1. Video tapes of major diocesan events and of television programs that included diocesan churches.
2. Audio tapes and phono records: Includes recordings of diocesan events and oral histories.
3. Microfilm: Colonial records of Christ Church Shrewsbury.
4. CDs/DVDs: Video and still photos of diocesan and parish events.

Data bases:

There are both on-line and printed data bases with basic information on congregations, including

1. dates of congregational origin and clergy photos. Included in this category are a series of card files which index the contents of our Diocesan Journals.
2. 2. files and a list of books in the collection.

The Treasury:

The archives store the ecclesiastical hardware of extinct congregations including chalices and patens, candlesticks and other brassware, missal stands, home communion sets, crosses, etc.

The Bishop's Closet:

Vestments of all types are available, including cassocks, surplices, albs, stoles, chasubles and altar linens. See the Historiographer's Report for the re-use of one particular chasuble.

Miscellaneous ephemera:

Includes commemorative plates and plaques, ordination certificates, vestments and linens, along with Prayer Books and other things saved from closed churches.