

Trinity Cathedral: a History

There are few of us who can remember a time when Trinity Cathedral did not exist, yet the Cathedral in the Diocese of New Jersey is a product of the 20th century. The image of a Cathedral first made its appearance at the Convention of 1908 when the Rev. Dr. Alfred Baker, venerable rector of Trinity Church, Princeton, and Rural Dean of the Convocation of New Brunswick, moved, Bishop Scarborough concurring, that a committee of five clergymen and five laymen be appointed to consider the expediency and practicability of the establishment of the cathedral system in the Diocese. Upon passage of the motion the Bishop appointed the ten men plus the chancellor who acted as a Consulting Member. In the simplest of terms the cathedral system meant that the Cathedral staff, besides the duties of such a body, would have general charge of the missions and all other work: in the diocese deemed advisable by the Convention. This emphasis proved to be the focus of the system for many years.

Dr. Baker was appointed chair of the committee and as such gave the majority report at the 1909 Convention. Although the majority urged proceeding slowly and deliberately they presented a rather fully worked out scheme, which included the creation of a Provisional Cathedral Chapter. The Chapter, in effect, would continue the work of the committee including a future report with a definite formal Cathedral plan. The report also urged that the Chapter be the Missionary Board of the Diocese and presented three resolutions which would approve in principle the Cathedral System, appoint a Cathedral Chapter of 20 men who would consider the system, and make the Chapter the Missionary Board of the Diocese. The Rev. Charles Perkins offered a minority report that called into question the intent of the committee, which, as some of the committee understood it, was simply to report on the expediency and practicability of such a system in the Diocese. The minority group offered resolutions that questioned the advisability and expediency of such a system at that time and called for the discharge of the committee. Once raised, however, the idea of the Cathedral System became an irresistible force that swept all before it as the minority resolutions were defeated and the majority resolutions were accepted. As a consequence Bishop Scarborough appointed a Provisional Cathedral Chapter of ten clergymen, ten laymen and the Chancellor.

The Chapter's report to the 1910 Convention consisted of a preliminary rendering of the necessary Constitution and Canons of the Cathedral, which was referred to the Committee on Constitution and Canons and their declaration that the first step in the whole matter would be the formation of a Cathedral corporation of the Diocese. A period of calm settled for a spell and no mention of a Chapter report is found in the Journal for 1911. In the 1912 Convention Journal, Dr. Baker, speaking for the Provisional Cathedral Chapter, offered a resolution that formalized the Chapter's suggestion of 1910, namely that the necessary steps be taken for the formation of a Cathedral Corporation and that the Provisional Chapter make a report as soon as practicable. This motion was passed by the Convention. For some reason the incorporation had not been obtained by the time the 1913 Convention was seated and Dr. Baker, in his Chapter report, presented a resolution strongly urging it be done with the proposed name and title to be "The Trustees of the Cathedral Foundation in the Diocese of New Jersey." He also offered a resolution that spelled out the objective for which the Board of Trustees was created: to establish, erect, maintain, and manage a Cathedral Church. Both resolutions were accepted and the goal was clearly a building to serve as the Cathedral. With the weight of a resolution behind it the Incorporation papers were obtained before the next Convention in 1914.

The next step was obviously the one of money to fund the scheme and the 1914 Diocesan Convention adopted another resolution, which presented a form to be used for bequeathing money to the Trustees of the Cathedral Foundation for the express purpose of building a Cathedral. The aged Bishop Scarborough died before the 1915 Convention, which was chaired by the Fifth Bishop of New Jersey, the Rt. Rev. Paul Matthews.

Matthews had his own ideas about a Cathedral and he made them quite clear in his inaugural address to that 1915 gathering. He professed no great desire for a Cathedral to be built at that time or in the near future but he was strong in his belief that Cathedral work should include Religious Education, Social service. Missionary activity, Chaplaincy work in all state, county, and municipal Institutions, and the building up of ethnic congregations using ethnic clergy. His concept of a Cathedral System could be summed up as: cathedral work, most definitely—a cathedra, not yet.

Matthews was quick to put his stamp on the Episcopate, for he was of a privileged class, well educated, an excellent organizer, and almost monarchical in his approach to leadership. The Cathedral System he inherited was the product of Scarborough and Baker, both well into their eighties and steeped in the old school of organization. It took no time at all for Matthews's organizational skills to refocus the cathedral concept along the lines he had expressed to the Convention. However, in his address to the 1916 Convention, Matthews revealed that the vestry of Christ Church, Trenton, had offered the church as the Pro-Cathedral for the Diocese and he had accepted the offer. The Bishop felt that the building would help all visualize the diocesan and cathedral work and make it more real. He was elected rector of Christ Church and appointed the Rev. William Herbert Moor of Omaha as the Vicar of the Pro-Cathedral and the real pastor. The Cathedral clergy were installed the evening of Wednesday, May 10, 1916. The Cathedral League was organized almost immediately and its business was to further the work of the Cathedral and to raise funds. The Institutional Chaplain, the Rev. Samuel C. Wells, was appointed and began his work on February 1, 1916.

By the 1917 Convention the Cathedral League reported a membership of 84 persons who had given a total of \$856.25. The report of the Trustees of the Cathedral Foundation to the 1918 Convention reflected a restructuring with an emphasis on three changes: the membership of the Foundation had minor changes; the Chapter was formed with the duty of acting as the Executive Committee of the Foundation; and the Board of Missions, the Board of Religious Education, and the Board of Social Service were re-organized so that they would be elected by the Convention. The Committee on the Formation of a Cathedral Chapter made these recommendations. This re-organization was completed during the next year and the Foundation report to the 1919 Convention reflected the progress. At the April meeting of the Cathedral Foundation the Bishop nominated the Rev. Alfred B. Baker as Dean of the Pro-Cathedral and that worthy gentleman was installed on November 6, 1919, the first Cathedral Dean in the history of the Diocese. The next few years saw a consolidation of the Foundation's organization and operations with no new policies or changes.

The Cathedral Foundation's report to the 1924 Convention acknowledged receipt in June of 1923 of a generous gift from Bishop and Mrs. Matthews which was to become *The Harriet Proctor Matthews Fund*. The income of the estimated fifty thousand dollars was to form part of the Cathedral Endowment but until the Diocese was ready for such a fund it would be used for projects approved by the Bishop and the Foundation. The first two gifts of the Harriet Proctor Matthews Fund included \$500 for the building in the Pines and the same

amount for the Church Mission of Help. The Foundation expanded by one department when the Field Department was formed at the re-organization meeting in 1923 and Walter Mitchell was named the Executive Officer. It was also reported that additional Proctor and Gamble stock with a value of about \$65,000 had expanded the HPM Fund.

The Foundation's annual reports to Convention for the next five years showed good work being done by all the departments and no hint of any major changes in the Foundation appears in any of the reports or minutes. However, the pace of the Cathedral plans picked up abruptly in 1930 and the year ended with the Cathedral System and plans for the Cathedral complete. It began with a meeting of the Foundation on April 24, 1930, when Bishop Matthews spoke of a plan to make Trinity Church, Trenton, the Cathedral of the Diocese. He told the Cathedral Foundation that he had had an interview with the vestry of Trinity Church a few days earlier. The vestry apparently jumped at the chance and put in writing its agreement to enter into negotiations with the proper authorities. The Bishop had discussed his plan with Canon Moor, Vicar of the Pro-Cathedral and had promised Moor to drop the plan if it would hurt him or the congregation in any way. Evidently Moor assured him that the way was clear for the Bishop's plan. It was suggested that Bishop Matthews advise the Convention of his plan in his Convention Address while a committee of the Cathedral Foundation would meet with a committee of the vestry of Christ Church.

The Bishop did mention the plan in his address suggesting that it was the idea of the vestry of Trinity Church and confessing his uncertainty as to how to respond. In effect he laid out two possibilities: that it was, some might say, strictly the business of Trinity Church and the Bishop, he being the proper authority to negotiate the matter; or the business of the Convention. Matthews said that he didn't feel it was solely the business of the Bishop and then went on to say that the Pro-Cathedral was providing the center of worship for the Diocese in only a limited way whereas it would be a good thing for the Diocese to have a Cathedral building which might really belong to it. The offer of Trinity Church opened the way for such a possibility. He then asked the question *Shall we, or shall we not?* and told the Convention that the Foundation had agreed to enter upon such negotiations with Trinity for which he had appointed a Committee of Conference. He finished the subject by telling the Convention that he wished to know what they would like done in the matter. After the Address a motion was passed placing the decision in the hand of the Bishop and the Cathedral Foundation. At that point the door was opened for the completion of the plan to make Trinity Church the Diocesan Cathedral.

A joint meeting of the two committees was held on Tuesday, June 3, 1930, when they ratified the resolution passed by the Convention in the previous month. The Foundation met a week later on June 11 and proposals were developed that would become effective when both Trinity Church and the Cathedral Foundation gave their formal approval. Interestingly, this included the possibility of the relocation of Trinity Church. A Special Meeting of the Foundation was held on October 3, 1930, and a motion was passed to confirm the scheme developed at the June 11th meeting. The consent of Trinity Church had been in hand since their June 23rd parish meeting. The Bishop proposed to make the plan effective on November 1, 1930, and he would announce it in person on November 2nd at Trinity Church. All Saints' Day, November 1, 1930, is the date when the Diocese of New Jersey proclaimed Trinity Church as its Cathedral.

The Standing Committee, in a meeting on November 20, 1930, and for which there are no minutes, approved a covenant executed between Trinity Church and All Saints' Church

which agreed to a merger of those two organizations. Mention of this special meeting is only found in the minutes of the regular meeting of the Standing Committee on December 9, 1930, where it was necessary for the full Standing Committee to ratify the covenant executed on November 20th by a bare majority of that committee. This December 9th ratification followed by two weeks a meeting of the Cathedral Foundation on November 25th when the Bishop announced that Trinity and All Saints' had voted to consolidate and that the Bishop and the Standing Committee had approved the merger. The merger allowed the Diocese to acquire land around All Saints' location at West State Street and Overbrook Avenues, thus paving the way for the development of the Cathedral project where space was available rather than at Trinity Church's site where it was not. The Foundation then elected the Rev. Hamilton Schuyler, Litt.D., as an Honorary Canon of the Cathedral and the first Historiographer of the Diocese and elected the Rev. William H. Moor, Vicar of Christ Church Pro-Cathedral, as an Honorary Canon of the Cathedral.

On Sunday, the Feast Day of St. Paul, January 25, 1931, Bishop Paul Matthews, D.D., S.T.D., was enthroned in his Cathedral on the sixteenth anniversary of his consecration as Bishop of New Jersey. On February 23rd the Rev. Ralph E. Urban was installed in the Cathedral as the Dean and the Rev. Hamilton Schuyler as Honorary Canon. On March 16, 1931, the Standing Committee gave its consent to Trinity Church to change its corporate name to Trinity Cathedral and the process was complete.

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