

## Meade Chapel: Creation and Perseverance

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Although a number of African American Baptist and Methodist churches were established in Alexandria by 1870, no similar church existed in the city for black Episcopalians. The oldest two Alexandria Episcopal Churches, Christ and St. Paul's, had recorded the presence of small numbers of African American members throughout the antebellum period. In the early 1840s African-American communicants comprised approximately 10% of the Christ Church communicants. Those numbers steadily decreased during the next two decades, and after the Civil War, African-Americans comprised only a token portion of the Christ Church congregation. Even fewer blacks joined St. Paul's or Grace Episcopal Church, founded in 1855.<sup>1</sup>

That situation began changing during the winter of 1869-1870, when Christ Church, Alexandria, established a mission church in Alexandria. After recovering from the dislocations of the Civil War and liquidating the parish debt, the Rev. Randolph Harrison McKim, Rector, the Christ Church vestry, and the parishioners focused personal and monetary efforts on mission and outreach.<sup>2</sup> First, a "Mother's mission," by parish women to poor women was established in 1869.<sup>3</sup> The following year, the enterprise which produced Meade commenced. Perhaps the mission church was in some way an outgrowth of the Mother's Mission. Whatever its origins, Christ Church, with the "assistance of St. Paul's and Grace Churches, Alexandria, Christ Church, Baltimore, some friends at the [Virginia Theological] Seminary, and others,"<sup>4</sup> established and built a mission church at Columbus and Montgomery Streets near the canal basin.<sup>5</sup> The new church was large enough to seat a congregation of 150-170 at a cost of \$1,100.<sup>6</sup>

Since the new chapel was debt-free, it was ready for immediate consecration, a rite celebrated on the evening Sunday 22 May 1870, by the Rt. Rev. John Johns, Bishop of Virginia, "assisted by Rev. R.H. McKim, in the presence of a large and attentive congregation."<sup>7</sup> Since the new chapel was not self-supporting, it remained a mission church "under the care of the earnest rector of Christ Church" and the trustees of Christ Church.<sup>8</sup> At this time the church was officially named, Meade Chapel in honor of the Rt. Rev. William Meade (1789-1862), deacon-in-charge of Christ Church, 1811-1813, Assistant Bishop of Virginia, 1828-1841, and third Bishop of Virginia, 1841-1862. By 1870, Bishop Meade was something of a church hero in the Diocese of Virginia and deeply beloved at Christ Church, making him an appropriate modern figure to honor in naming the parish's mission chapel.

During the next three years a strong and lively congregation worshipped at Meade Chapel on the canal basin. "Large congregations" attended, drawn principally from that part of the city of Alexandria, remote from the location of other Alexandria churches.<sup>9</sup> During this time, four seminarians from Virginia Theological Seminary, Charles J. Holt, Henry M. Jackson, Thomas T. Tidball, and Beverley D. Tucker,<sup>10</sup> are known to have assisted McKim in the chapel services. These services were held regularly on Sunday at 4 P.M. and Friday at 8 P.M.,<sup>11</sup> a schedule which fit into the study schedule of VTS students and similar to that followed by other local mission churches staffed largely by these students. The chapel also received numerous gifts from interested outsiders

including an “ornamental” chancel window from a Mrs. Rumney, a font, a stove and cabinet organ from the Christ Church Sunday School, and a bell from a former member of the Christ Church Sunday School. The congregation continued to grow “occasionally almost filling the building.”<sup>12</sup>

Although early accounts of the chapel do not mention the race of its congregation, one can assume that the congregation was either white or of mixed races under white leadership from evidence in the *Alexandria Gazette*, as well as developments in 1871-1873. The *Gazette* of this period regularly identified all African-American congregations as “colored” in its coverage of their activities. The *Gazette* never used such a designation for the Episcopal chapel while it was located on the canal basin, indicating that its congregation was not originally limited to people of color.

In 1871-72, Christ Church embarked on yet another mission effort: “a colored Sunday School.” Although it is unclear where this Sunday School was actually held, it was clearly under the direction of parishioner John Janney Lloyd and enjoyed “encouraging prospects.”<sup>13</sup> Lloyd was a member of the Lloyd family of Alexandria studying for holy orders under McKim in lieu of attending seminary. At the November 1872 vestry meeting, Mr. Lloyd reported to the Christ Church vestry about this school and stated “that quite a number of colored persons had expressed a desire that we would furnish a suitable place to be used as an Episcopal Church for colored persons....” The vestry was receptive to the request and resolved, “...that Meade Chapel be placed at their disposal for one year, provided the signatures of not less than fifty persons of the age of sixteen years and over can be obtained, promising to make that their regular place of worship, and provided further that they will pay for the fuel &c.”<sup>14</sup>

By spring of 1873, the required signatures had been obtained and long-time Christ Church parishioner and aunt of Mrs. Robert E. Lee, Mrs. Anna Maria Fitzhugh, of Ravensworth, Fairfax County, offered a lot at the corner northeast of Princess and Columbus Streets for the site of Meade Chapel. The existing wooden chapel would be moved to the new location instead of constructing a new building<sup>15</sup> When neighbors of the proposed Princess and Columbus Street chapel site learned of the project, however, they objected to the Christ Church Vestry, presumably on the basis of the racial make-up of the congregation.<sup>16</sup> Another site could not be found and the parties opposed to the move were persuaded to withdraw their complaints.<sup>17</sup> The actual work to move the church on rollers down Columbus Street from the canal basin began on 22 April 1873,<sup>18</sup> but contractor B.F. Price was unable to finish placing the building at Princess and Columbus streets until 13 May.<sup>19</sup> The church reopened at the new location on Sunday 18 May, with Bishop Johns making his annual visitation to the parish, preaching the sermon, and confirmed two persons: Jane and William Roland.<sup>20</sup>

When the church reopened in May 1873, a definite transformation had taken place in the Meade and Christ Church congregations. Concurrent with Meade Chapel becoming an exclusively African-American congregation, Christ Church became solely a white congregation because the remaining Christ Church parishioners of color were transferred to Meade and the whites of the original Meade Chapel were “absorbed” by Christ Church.<sup>21</sup> This segregation of the races did not translate into the Meade congregation controlling their own affairs. The canons, or church laws, of the Diocese of Virginia, written by white men born and bred in Virginia slave culture, embodied their racism, condescension, and paternalism toward blacks. Meade Chapel remained a mission of white Christ Church and the white Christ Church rector was the ultimate

liturgical head of the Chapel. A succession of white seminarians from all-white Virginia Theological Seminary, various parishioners of all-white Christ Church, and finally the black congregation of Meade Chapel assisted him in this task.

From 1873 to 1876, "the work...[continued] under the charge of Mr. J.J. Lloyd, with occasional ministrations by the Rector."<sup>22</sup> The centerpiece of this work was education. The Sunday School, superintended by Lloyd since 1871, continued to flourish with an enrollment ranging from 50 to 90 children, depending upon the year. According to Lloyd's report, the teaching staff was drawn from both races, although the majority of the teachers were white and presumably of the Christ Church congregation.<sup>23</sup> In addition, Lloyd was credited with establishing a "Parish school for colored children" which educated about 100 children in part with financial aid from the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Episcopal Church.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, the Meade congregation organized benefits to raise church funds,<sup>25</sup> and the Bishops of Virginia made their annual visitations, preaching in the Chapel and confirming new communicants.<sup>26</sup>

With the latter half of the 1870s came changes at Meade Chapel and in the Episcopal Church in Virginia which would have profound effect on the congregation. In 1875, the Rev. Mr. McKim accepted a call to Harlem, New York, and in 1876 John J. Lloyd completed his reading for holy orders, was ordained to the diaconate, and assigned by the Bishop of Virginia to Cople Parish, Westmoreland County.<sup>27</sup> Although both men had been deeply involved in the founding of Meade, Lloyd had been in charge of the Sunday School work that led to Meade Chapel becoming an exclusively African-American Episcopal congregation and had continued to provide it with consistent personal attention and leadership after the move to Princess and Columbus Streets. During the next three decades, the congregation would be under the supervision of the Christ Church rector (William Meade Dame, 1875-1878, Henderson Suter, 1878-1895, and Berryman Green, 1895-1902), with most of the services and the educational work at the chapel conducted by a series of VTS students and Meade's first black pastors.

African American pastors at Meade Chapel were the result of changes in the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Virginia: the founding of Bishop Payne Divinity School (BPDS) in Petersburg, Virginia, specifically to train African American men for ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church. A growing number of Virginia blacks desiring ordination in the Episcopal Church created pressure to provide them training opportunities. Virginia Theological Seminary admitted only white students and would continue to do so until 1951. Rather than admit black students, the VTS Board of Trustees resolved in 1878 to establish the Bishop Payne Divinity School,<sup>28</sup> and for the next century all but one of the black clergy serving at Meade would be a BPDS graduate.

The first black ministerial leader, however, arrived at Meade prior to the creation of Bishop Payne. By May 1876 John H.M. Pollard, an African American teacher studying for orders under Christ Church rector, Rev. William M. Dame, was placed in charge of the Meade parish school and commenced upon its reorganization.<sup>29</sup> In January 1878, his duties expanded to conducting a "lay service every Sunday morning" at Meade Chapel.<sup>30</sup> On 28 June 1878, the Rt. Rev. Francis M. Whittle, Bishop of Virginia, who assigned him deacon-in-charge of Meade Chapel, ordained him a deacon at the Virginia Theological Seminary Chapel.<sup>31</sup> As a deacon, the Rev. Mr. Pollard and Meade Chapel were still under the supervision of the rector of Christ Church.<sup>32</sup> In 1880, however, the Rev. Mr. Pollard, relocated to Petersburg, Virginia, where he continued his studies at the

Bishop Payne Divinity School.<sup>33</sup> When Pollard departed, VTS Seminarians continued to direct the Chapel's Sunday School and resumed conducting its worship services.<sup>34</sup>

In 1886, Meade Chapel was again blessed with the ministrations of an African-American clergyman. That summer, the Rev. Walter M. Burwell, recently ordained deacon and 1886 graduate of Bishop Payne Divinity School was assigned to Meade Chapel by the Bishop.<sup>35</sup> The Rev. Mr. Burwell found the parish in a very difficult and discouraging condition. In addition to his own bad health and poor parish finances, he found "the building in which we worship is the most uninviting and uncomfortable of any in the city." Despite these limitations and the need of a new roof and organ, the congregation was growing and it had a strong Sunday School taught by seventeen white teachers from VTS and Christ Church.<sup>36</sup> By October 1887, the Rev. Mr. Burwell accepted a call to West Virginia,<sup>37</sup> and the congregation once again was forced to rely on the combined ministrations of the Rector of Christ Church and seminarians from Virginia Theological Seminary.<sup>38</sup>

This time Meade Chapel did not have a prolonged period without the ministrations of a settled clergyman. By November 1889, the Rev. William Patterson Burke, deacon, former Alexandrian, and the Rev. Mr. Burwell's classmate from Bishop Payne Divinity School was ministering at Meade Chapel. Immediately the parish underwent reorganization and a guild for was formed "for the spiritual and financial advancement of the church."<sup>39</sup> Interestingly enough, the Alexandria Gazette article that reported these events referred to the Rev. Mr. Burke as "the rector." At that moment, Burke was still a deacon and the chapel was still under Christ Church, an arrangement that would soon change. On 13 February 1890, the Rt. Rev. Francis M. Whittle, Bishop of Virginia, ordained the Rev. Mr. Burke a priest at Meade Chapel.<sup>40</sup> For the first time in its history, the Meade Chapel congregation was ministered to by a priest of their own race and did not need to rely upon the rector of Christ Church to celebrate their Eucharistic services, a rite not performed by deacons. Thus on 14 April 1890, the communicants of Meade Chapel petitioned the vestry of Christ Church for permission to "form 'a separate and independent organization' under Canons xii & xiii of the Canons of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Virginia."<sup>41</sup> By May the Bishop of Virginia had given his consent and the chapel became known as Meade Memorial Church. The church elected its first vestry and officers: Magnus L. Robinson, Senior Warden, Samuel B. Burke, Junior Warden, S. Milton Hopkins, Register, and William B. Dulany, Treasurer.<sup>42</sup>

With this new status, Meade Chapel, now, Meade Memorial Church, seemed poised for a growing future. Unfortunately, the Rev. Mr. Patterson remained Meade's "efficient rector" only until 1892, when he accepted the call to the rectorship of Grace Church, Norfolk.<sup>43</sup> The Rev. Robert Bruce, an 1892 graduate of the Bishop Payne Divinity School, accepted the cure immediately after graduation, but left by early 1893 when he renounced his orders in the Episcopal Church and joined the A.M.E. Zion Church.<sup>44</sup> Meade Chapel returned to mission status under Christ Church and was once again served by a succession of Virginia Theological Seminary students.<sup>45</sup> Under such conditions it languished (at least to some white observers)<sup>46</sup> for nearly a decade.

Revitalization of Meade Chapel commenced in 1903 when BPDS seminarian Charles L. Somers was sent there during his summer vacation and reorganized the congregation and the Sunday School and reawakened Christ Church's interest in the chapel. With renewed efforts by the Rev. Mr. William J. Morton, new rector of Christ Church, Miss Sallie Stuart, Christ Church parishioner and President of the Virginia Branch of the

Woman's Auxiliary (now known as the Episcopal Church Women), students at VTS, and Meade parishioners, the congregation began to grow again. In May 1904, the Rev. Emmett E. Miller, BPDS 1903, and deacon ministering at St. Paul's, Gordonsville, Virginia, was persuaded by the Bishop Robert A. Gibson, to add Meade Chapel to his duties, officiating at Meade Chapel two Sundays each month.<sup>47</sup> The Rev. Mr. Miller continued this arduous schedule for nearly a year, departing in February 1905 to accept a church in Plainfield, New Jersey.<sup>48</sup>

This time neither the Diocese of Virginia nor Christ Church allowed the ministry to the African-Americans at Alexandria to languish. The black churches at Gordonsville and Alexandria would receive their own separate ministers,<sup>49</sup> and the Diocese of Virginia now saw Meade Chapel as "an important point [of ministry]...that required "the constant care of the Church." Until an African-American minister could not be located for Meade it was served by African-American seminarians from King Hall, Washington, DC, under the direction of the rector of Christ Church.<sup>50</sup> Eventually, however, the right man had been found for Meade, and on 1 February 1907 the Rev. Joseph F. Mitchell, BPDS 1889, became priest-in-charge of Meade.<sup>51</sup>

By 1907, however, the original Meade Chapel truly needed replacement. White Alexandrians characterized the chapel as "dilapidated" and lacking in the "necessities which will make it comfortable, particularly in winter, and the attractions which will commend it to those whom it is desired to reach with the ministrations of the church." A committee, comprised of members of all-white Christ, St. Paul's, and Grace Churches, Alexandria, was organized in November 1907 to solicit contributions for "a larger and more substantial church building" for the congregation, as well as a rectory for its clergyman. Although Christ Church's rector, the Rev. Mr. Morton, was repeatedly viewed as the primary advocate for Meade Chapel, supporters included white Episcopalians beyond Christ Church. The Rev. Mr. P.P. Phillips, of St. Paul's, Alexandria, the Rev. Edgar Carpenter, of Grace, Alexandria, the Rev. Dr. Randolph H. McKim, rector of the Church of the Epiphany, Washington, DC, the Very Rev. Angus Crawford, Dean of Virginia Theological Seminary, and the Rt. Rev. Robert A. Gibson, Bishop of Virginia, all actively backed the movement for a new Meade Chapel.<sup>52</sup>

Despite these resources, it required many years to raise the estimated \$10,000<sup>53</sup> needed to fund the project. A Ladies Aid Society was formed at Meade Chapel that held fund-raisers for the new church.<sup>54</sup> In 1909, the Rev. Arthur Selden Lloyd, brother of the Rev. John Janney Lloyd, was elected Bishop Coadjutor of Virginia. At his consecration service held at Christ Church, the offertory was designated for the building fund of Meade Chapel.<sup>55</sup> The Rev. Mr. Morton, made a speaking tour in New York in 1910 on behalf of the Meade Chapel Building Fund<sup>56</sup> and persuaded the Christ Church Parish Aid Society to fundraise on behalf of Meade Chapel.<sup>57</sup>

The church land at Princess and Columbus Streets, however, was too small to accommodate the church envisioned by the Meade congregation and its supporters. By May 1911, the Corporation Court of Alexandria granted permission to the Trustees of Christ Church to sell the Princess and Columbus Street property, and to purchase a lot at Princess and Alfred Street for the new church.<sup>58</sup> On June 4, 1912, the Christ Church Vestry reviewed plans for the chapel by architect W. Lem Clark,<sup>59</sup> and on July 29, 1912, they authorized the building committee to proceed with the construction.<sup>60</sup> The work proceeded apace, and on February 2, 1913, the Meade Memorial Chapel congregation

officially occupied their new brick church building at Alfred and Princess Streets, Alexandria, its continued location.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See "Parochial Reports," *Journal of the...annual Convention, Diocese of Virginia*, (hereafter cited as *JVA*), 1840-1870.

<sup>2</sup> "Parochial Report: Christ Church," *JVA*, 1869, 111-112.

<sup>3</sup> "Parochial Report: Christ Church," *JVA*, 1869, 112.

<sup>4</sup> "Parochial Report: Christ Church," *JVA*, 1870, 110.

<sup>5</sup> "Christ Church," *Southern Churchman*, 04/21/1870, 2:5. "Meade Chapel," *Alexandria Gazette*, 05/02/1870, 3:2. Sources vary as to whether the chapel seated 150, 160, or 170 persons.

<sup>6</sup> "Church Intelligence: Diocese of Virginia," *Southern Churchman*, 05/05/1870, 2:5. "Parochial Report," *JVA*, 1870, 110. Christ Church's 1870 parochial report states that it raised \$682.17 for the Mission Chapel. The rest of the funds probably came from the other churches involved in the project.

<sup>7</sup> "Local News: Local Brevities," *Alexandria Gazette*, 05/23/1870, 3:3.

<sup>8</sup> "Church Intelligence: Diocese of Virginia," *Southern Churchman*, 05/26/1870, 2:6.

<sup>9</sup> "Meade Chapel," *Alexandria Gazette*, 05/02/1870, 3:2. "Bishop Johns' Address [to Council]," *JVA*, 1870, 32.

<sup>10</sup> "Parochial Report: Christ Church," *JVA*, 1871, 110. *Alumni and Alumnae Directory: The Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary in Virginia, December 1996* (Alexandria: VTS Development & Alumni/ae Office, 1996), 6.

<sup>11</sup> "Parochial Report," *JVA*, 1870, 110. "Meade Chapel," *Alexandria Gazette*, 05/02/1870, 3:2.

<sup>12</sup> "Local Brevities," *Alexandria Gazette*, 09/06/1872, 3:1. Fairfax Parish Vestry Minutes, Book 2, 11/22/1872.

<sup>13</sup> "Parochial Report: Christ Church," *JVA*, 1871, 110. Fairfax Parish Vestry Minutes, Book 2, 06/08/1870.

<sup>14</sup> "Parochial Report: Christ Church," *JVA*, 1872, 129. Fairfax Parish Vestry Minutes, Book 2, 11/22/1872.

<sup>15</sup> Fairfax Parish Vestry Minutes, Book 2, 11/22/1872.

<sup>16</sup> Fairfax Parish Vestry Minutes, Book 2, 03/13/1873. *Alexandria Gazette*, 04/09/1873, 3:2. "Meade Chapel," *Alexandria Gazette*, 04/29/1873, 3:1.

<sup>17</sup> "Brevities," *Alexandria Gazette*, 04/09/1873, 3:2. "Local Brevities," *Alexandria Gazette*, 04/16/1873, 3:3. Fairfax Parish Vestry Minutes, Book 2, 04/21/1873.

<sup>18</sup> "Meade Chapel," *Alexandria Gazette*, 04/23/1873, 3:3. "Meade Chapel," *Alexandria Gazette*, 04/29/1873, 3:1.

<sup>19</sup> "Meade Chapel," *Alexandria Gazette*, 04/23/1873, 3:3.

<sup>20</sup> "Meade chapel," *Alexandria Gazette*, 04/29/1873, 3:1. "Local Brevities," *Alexandria Gazette*, 05/10/1873, 3:3. "Local Brevities," *Alexandria Gazette*, 05/13/1873, 3:3.

<sup>21</sup> "Bishop John's Address," *JVA*, 1873, 29. "Local Brevities," *Alexandria Gazette*, 05/20/1873, 3:4. "Church Intelligence: Diocese of Virginia," *Southern Churchman*, 05/22/1873, 2:5. "Confirmations," Christ Church Parish Register, 1861-1878.

<sup>22</sup> "Parochial Report: Christ Church," *JVA*, 1873, 130.

<sup>23</sup> "Parochial Report: Christ Church," *JVA*, 1874, 127. "Parochial Report: Christ Church," *JVA*, 1875, 108. "Parochial Report: Christ Church," *JVA*, 1876, 127.

<sup>24</sup> *Spirit of Missions*, 07/1875, 463.

<sup>25</sup> "Parochial Report: Christ Church," *JVA*, 1875, 108. *Spirit of Missions*, 07/1875, 463-464.

<sup>26</sup> "Meade Chapel," *Alexandria Gazette*, 11/04/1873, 3:2. "Local Brevities," *Alexandria Gazette*, 12/08/1873, 3:3.

<sup>27</sup> Sunday, 05/03/1874, Bishop of Virginia, the Rt. Rev. John Johns confirmed five at Meade Chapel. "Church Intelligence: Diocese of Virginia," *Southern Churchman*, 05/17/1874, 2:5. "Bishop Johns' Report," *JVA*, 1874, 34. On Easter Night, 1875, Assistant Bishop of Virginia, the Rt. Rev. Francis M. Whittle preached at Meade Chapel, but illness of those