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Old Saint John's including site of New Parish House
to be constructed where Rectory now stands.

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Restoration At St. John's

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THIS VIEW OF THE INTERIOR was taken after the restoration of the sanctuary and front wall above each gallery.

Interior Of Venerable Shoreline Church Renovated After Century Of Service

By Justine Flint Georges

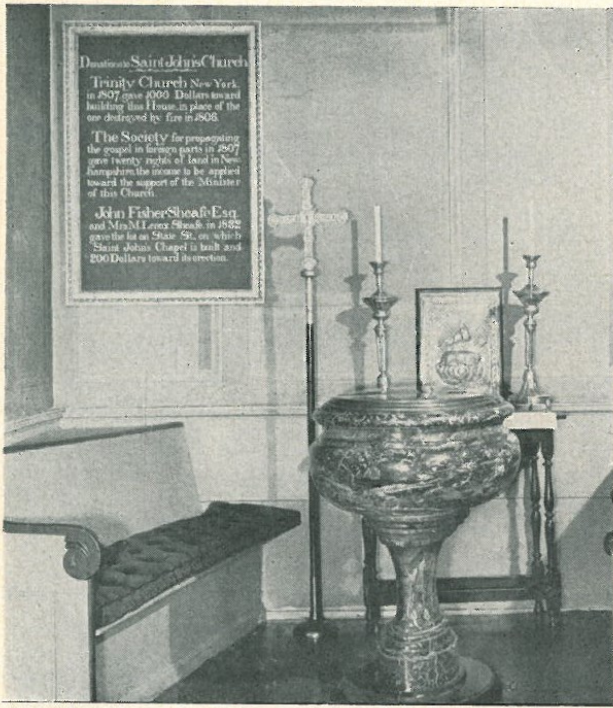
For 219 years men and women from all walks of life have turned their steps up narrow Chapel Street in Portsmouth, N. H., toward the welcoming church at the top of the hill.

Through wars and times of depression and confusion they continued to find peace as they knelt in the quiet sanctity of this House of God.

When fire destroyed the first edifice in 1806, it was replaced in 1808 by the present St. John's Church. The history of St. John's follows closely the history of Portsmouth, and the antique treasures within its walls tell the story of its progress. The recent restoration at the church has occa-

sioned further delving into its past and is transforming its interior back to its former self. Walls untouched save for minor repairs since they were redecorated over a century ago are again assuming their natural colors. For years the predominating shade was thought to be gray . . . but the present cleaning process reveals them to be far from somber. Indeed the restored parts resemble the first delicate tint that heralds early dawn. Mr. G. Morris Gray who is supervising the renovation explained that early decorative theme

During its first 40 years (from 1808 to '48) the walls were plain and it was not until 1848 that the vestry decided to paint them with applied decoration. A Mr. Sheppard of



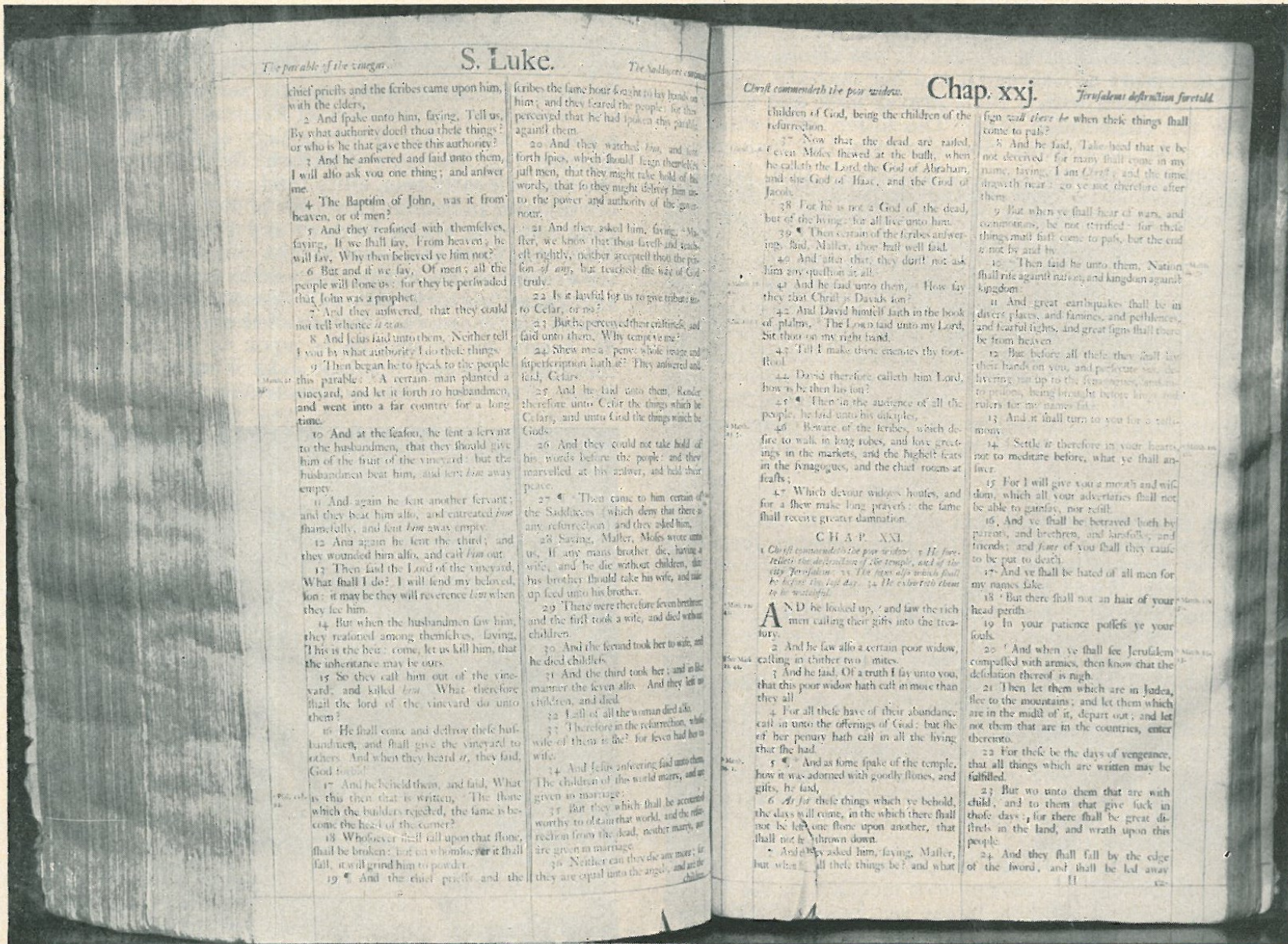
Treasured Antiques

LEFT —

PERHAPS THE OLDEST object in the church is this baptismal font. Made of porphyritic marble, it is undoubtedly African, for it was taken by Col. John Mason from the French in 1758 at the capture of Senegal. It was given to the parish by his daughters in 1761. Experts declare it to be very ancient.

RIGHT —

"OF ALL ITS COLONIAL RELICS none of St. John's treasures are more humanly interesting than her wall tablets, stained glass windows and monuments. These tell of generations long past, but still famed for deeds done." . . . Rev. Robert H. Dunn.



THE FAMOUS "VINEGAR" BIBLE, presented to Queen's Chapel by Queen Caroline. It was published in 1717 by John Basket of Oxford, the King's printer. A mistake was made in the guide line at the top (left) of this left hand page from the gospel according to St. Luke when the compositor set up the words, "Parable of the Vinegar" instead of "the Vinyard". Forty copies had been struck off before this was noticed. Of these only four exist today and they include this one at St. John's, one at Christ Church, Boston; another at Christ Church, Philadelphia and one at Lenox Library, New York.

Salem, Mass., was engaged to produce the murals which have since greeted parishioner's eyes for so many years. Mr. Sheppard was a talented artist and the present parish hesitated before embarking on restoration because it was believed that his murals could not be saved. A paint with a water composition had been used and for this reason cleaning seemed an impossibility. The nearest solution would be to try to reproduce the design on repainted walls. A representative from the Gray concern was called upon to survey the proposed project and much to the vestry's delight he reported that it was not at all necessary to destroy the century old drawings. Using a special cleaner and infinite patience the walls are indeed being restored. Mr. Walter Keltzer of Elliot, Me., is the man principally responsible for the excellent results. Retouching where necessary, he has shown both skill and artistry. Mr. Keltzer, who has been employed by F. A. Gray and Co., for 15 years, is a native of Germany where he served his apprenticeship. His achievement with the gold leaf on the cornice above the sanctuary is particularly outstanding.

St. John's members would like to be able to finish the project of restoration, but more funds are needed to do the ceiling and the area beneath the galleries. It is also hoped that someday a new parish house may be built and that an addition to the church (to be located on the site of the present parish house) will furnish the room needed for church organizations.

Queen's Chapel

Stories connected with St. John's past are the kind that grow more appealing with the years. Erected in 1734 the first church was called Queen's Chapel . . . the land being donated by a Mr. Hope of London. It was named in honor of Caroline, consort of George II, and her majesty presented the infant church with a Bible prayer book and a silver service for the communion table. The latter, still with us today, bears the royal arms. She also gave two mahogany chairs, intended probably for the Governor's pew. George Washington attended services in the Chapel in 1789 just after his inauguration. On a November Sunday morning dressed in an elegant complete suit of black silk velvet, with brilliant buckles, the President took his place in the governor's pew, which was framed in red plush curtains with a heavy wooden canopy over it bearing the royal arms. One of the chairs given by Queen Caroline was occupied by the very man who had done the most to overthrow her country's power in the New World! One of these chairs was destroyed in the later fire of 1806, and a replica was made. No one seems quite sure as to whether the surviving chair is actually the one in which Washington sat that Sunday long ago.

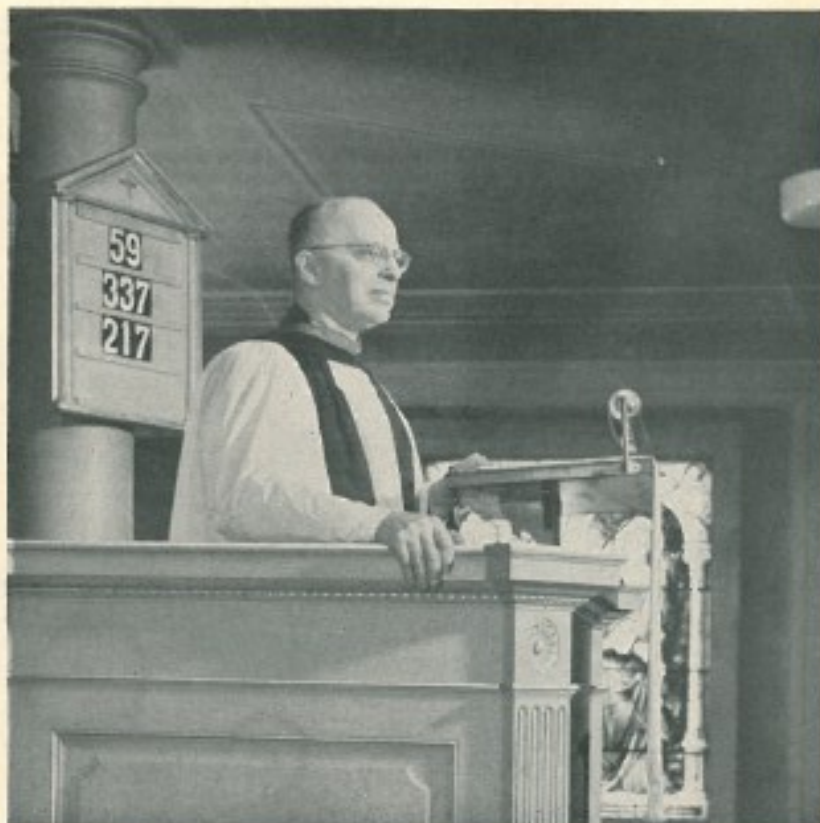
St. John's Ancient Bell

The great church bell that has tolled its deep notes for so many marriages and deaths and sounded forth in jubilation at the conclusion of each war, was itself part of the spoils of war. It was captured from the belfry of a cathedral in Louisberg and presented to Queen's Chapel by Sir William Pepperell of Kittery, who, in 1745, had conducted a successful English expedition against the French fortress there. The fire of 1806 so injured the bell that it was sent to Boston and recast by Paul Revere. For ninety more years it summoned the parishioners until one summer in 1896 it cracked and had to be sent one more to Boston . . . this time to Mr. Revere's successor's . . . for recasting. Still in use today, the old bell has looked down upon as much history and progress as it ever could have done had it remained on the stormy Cape Breton coast.

Bread From the Colonel

On one Sunday morning of each month a loaf of bread is displayed on the little table in the vestibule of St. John's . . . an ancient custom originating with the will of Col. Theodore Atkinson (Senior). He left a legacy of about two hundred pounds, the income of which was to be expended for bread to be placed at the door of the church to be taken home by those in need.

The romances recorded in the annals of this vener-



THE REV. ROBERT H. DUNN, rector of St. John's.

able church are quite well known among Portsmouth folk. Especially remembered is the marriage of portly Governor Benning Wentworth to his pretty servant girl, Martha Hilton. Then, there is the story of Frances Deering Wentworth, a comely and cultured young lady of Boston who in 1762 married Col. Theodore Atkinson, Jr. Before her marriage she had evidently been quite fond of her cousin, John Wentworth, later to become Governor of N. H. John however, had gone rambling off to England and Frances had wed young Atkinson. That she never forgot the dashing John was all too evident on his return, for gossip said signals were often exchanged via Atkinson and Wentworth windows. At the age of 33, Theodore Atkinson died and ten days afterward St. John's rector was called upon to perform a marriage ceremony between Governor John Wentworth and the widowed Frances. His unpredictable parishioners were



CROWN DIGNITARIES and leading families of Portsmouth were buried in this historical churchyard on Chapel Street, which lies beside the vine covered church. Here are the tombs of the Wentworths, the Atkinsons, the Sheafes, the Sherburnes and the Jaffreys. Head stone bearing the oldest inscription is that of John Bradford, 1736.



THE SANCTUARY AT ST. JOHN'S, EASTER SUNDAY

He Is Risen!

Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in their midst and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

And when he had said this, he breathed on them, hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father has sent me, even so send I you.

And when he had said this, he breather on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:

Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

And after eight days again his disciples were within and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hand and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless but believing.

And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

John XX; 19 through 31



evidently too much for the good rector, Rev. Arthur Brown, for after the wedding service was finished, the worthy gentleman fell and broke his arm.

The names of these and many others among Portsmouth's first aristocratic families may be read on moss grown slabs in the old church burying ground. On the Bow street side, the first tomb on the south is that of the Wentworth family . . . and in the next tomb are the Atkinsons. When the wall around this cemetery was rebuilt, the tombs were opened. They were large and quite full, some containing over 100 persons. The importance of the bodies was designated by the escutcheons, coats of arms, lions and so forth that were placed on the coffin lids. The rusty remains of a



THIS CLOSEUP clearly shows the contrast between the restored portion and that still to be cleaned. When this photo was taken only the two designs had been touched.



THE REV. ROBERT H. DUNN shakes hands with parishioners at the conclusion of Sunday morning services. From the days of the royal governors this venerable old church and its predecessor, Queen's Chapel, has brought spiritual comfort to its people.



OLDEST ORGAN IN THE UNITED STATES as far as is known is the Brattle organ at St. John's church. Originally made in London in 1690 it is one of the oldest still existing, since the majority of its contemporaries in the churches were destroyed by Cromwell. Several of its composite parts go back to a period from which none of its kind survive. It was brought to the United States from London by Thomas Brattle, well known merchant prince of Boston around 1713. As one of the founders of Boston's Brattle Street Church, he wanted it installed there, but the shocked parishioners considered it "a box of whistles" and they refused the gift. Music had not yet become a part of the Puritan church service. Mr. Brattle's will required that the church employ "a sober person that can play skillfully thereon with a loud noise." The organ finally went to King's Chapel where it was used until 1756 when it was sold to the Parish of St. Paul's in Newburyport. It remained there until its purchase by St. John's in 1836. While the case is new, the old wind chest and most of the pipes are the original ones.

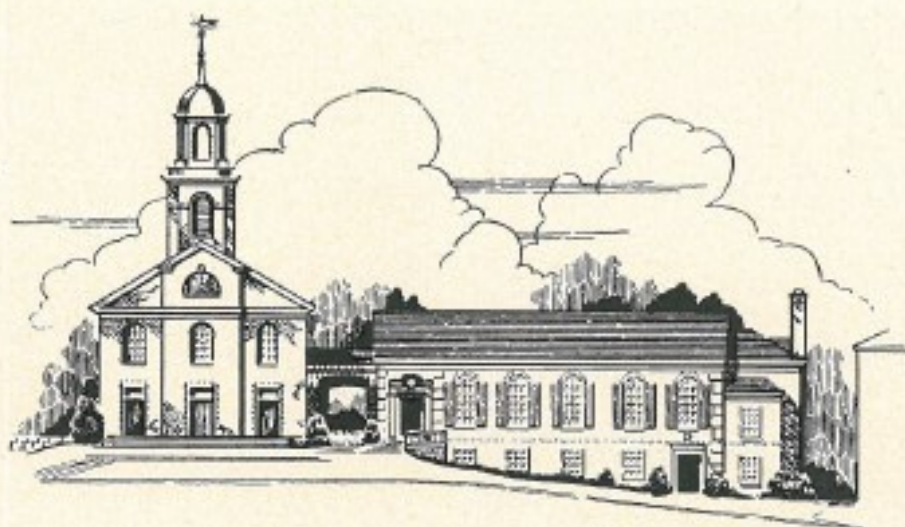
once polished sword stood guard over one crumbling coffin.

The Rev. Robert Dunn

The present rector of St. John's the Rev. Robert H. Dunn, came to Portsmouth from Trinity Church in Claremont nine years ago. He is a scholarly, understanding and tolerant man who fills a valued part in community life. In reference to St. John's Rev. Dunn once penned these words:

"Within this great old church of hallowed naval and marine and colonial memories, there have worshipped generations of New Hampshire and Maine men, women and children . . . whose lives have been enriched and blessed through that unity of mind and soul and being which comes when asked for within the reverence and sanctity of God's House . . . St. John's has been fortunate in having in every decade devoted parishioners who have carried on their corporate Christian witness with good spirit and with a "lively faith" in New Hampshire's oldest Episcopal Church. The old bell still swings back and forth today and is a speaking-symbol both of the old and the new. All through the years it has been a valiant summoner to those who wished to find their fellowship in Christ's religion under the forms of the Episcopal church. Long may it ring for the Glory of God!"

END



Conserving the Past – Serving the Future

Through the years, we of St. John's Church have retained the glorious traditions of the past. Without giving up our heritage, we are looking confidently toward the future.

For many years we have desperately needed a new Parish House. In order to finance such a project, it will be necessary to receive the whole-hearted support of all our Church families. Below you will note a pledge coupon which we sincerely trust you will fill out and mail to T. Daniel Hayes, 76 Mendum Avenue, Portsmouth, N. H., without delay. Your pledge, large or small — will be an indication of your enthusiasm and interest in the future progress of our Church.

(Please make checks payable to "St. John's Church Building Fund.")

Our Future Must Not Be Less Glorious Than Our Past

Following are but a few of the many things that the proposed new parish wing sketched above will provide:

- Suitable and pleasant classrooms for Church School and other religious education classes. The School has outgrown its present facilities.
- Space to teach our young people that working and playing together promotes good citizenship.
- Needed room for the rapid expansion of our many Church organizations. A small chapel for small gatherings and devotional functions.
- A large Fellowship Hall for social gatherings, including suppers, parish meetings, etc., together with a small stage for plays and pageants.
- Work space for our various women's organizations, and for the Choir.

The humblest church demands its price
 In human toil and sacrifice.
 God sends no churches from the skies
 Out of men's hearts they must arise.
 — Edgar A. Guest

Cut along dotted line and mail to:
 T. Daniel Hayes, 76 Mendum Ave., Portsmouth, N. H.

YOU MAY COUNT ON ME!
 During the next three year period I will, God willing,
 support the erection of our new Parish House to the
 extent of \$ monthly.

Name

Address

*Architect's drawing of St. John's Church, showing the proposed new wing which will serve as our much-needed Parish House.

St. John's Parish may well look back with pride upon its venerable history. But we also are vitally concerned with our continuing life as a family of Christ in this present and in the future. The new Parish House project commends itself to all of us. We have for years contended with inadequate facilities. The work with young people, especially in the Church School, is growing, and we could help to build the Kingdom of God among us in a better way if we could erect a Parish House on the site of the Chapel Street Rectory. The centering of our parish work in one location and the use of new and better equipment would be of lasting benefit to St. John's. Lately, our Church building has been restored so that we will not need to think of major repairs for many years. Let us now go forward steadily and construct our new Parish House for the glory of God and for the bright future of St. John's. With God's help, and by our own sacrificial giving, we can accomplish this good work in due time.

Robert H. Dunn, Rector.

