

THE CANTERBURY CHRONICLE

Beginnings and Early Years

St. Thomas of Canterbury has been a parish for twenty years as this chronicle is written, but our roots go back for nearly half a century. Our beginnings are already shrouded in the mists of past time. Happenings today and tomorrow are the history of future years, but we usually don't think of daily events in this way and record keeping is not seen as important or necessary. As a result, the story of the earliest days of what was to become St. Thomas of Canterbury is based on surviving scraps of information and the recollections of various "oldest inhabitants."

The community was first established in 1947 as a Canterbury Club for students, in the rectory basement at St. Mark's-on-the-Mesa. Leadership in those early days was provided by a series of energetic young curates from St. John's Cathedral and the host parish. In the late fifties Fr. Milton Rohane took over as full time Episcopal Chaplain to the University of New Mexico. With Fr. Rohane in charge, the Canterbury Club moved out of St. Mark's and began meeting in the basement of Fr. Rohane's home, a small stucco house adjacent to what is now our parking lot.

Canterbury began to take on its present form in 1962 when the city of Albuquerque widened University Boulevard. A parcel of land next to Fr. Rohane's house, not taken as part of the new right of way, was purchased by St. Mark's-on-the-Mesa and given to the Diocese. Plans were drawn up for the first building, and with money given by the Diocese and a grant from the National Church, construction began on the present site of our building. By the time Fr. Rohane left in 1963, to become Rector at Trinity-on-the-Hill in Los Alamos, the physical plant consisted of the original Nave, what is now the library, the bathrooms, and the offices.

The new priest who took over from Fr. Rohane was Fr. Lawrence Cantrel, a former Jesuit who had been received into the Episcopal Discipline. A vignette written by a one-time parishioner who had been a student in those days gives the flavor of the community at that time. "Affectionately known as 'the old man' to some of us, Fr. Cantrel moved into the little house next door and ministered to a tiny group of students who always found a kind reception at his door. Typical attendance then was eight to twelve sleepy undergraduates. Taking pity on our state, the 'old man' maintained that 'Sermons should not be long -- the first nine minutes belongs to God and anything more is the Devil's.'"

When Fr. Cantrel retired in 1968, Fr. William E. Crews, destined to lead the community for the next fourteen years, took over. In many ways Fr. Crews, known to the flock as "Bill", became

the real "father" of the Canterbury Community. Bill Crews came to Canterbury with his wife Anne, son Timothy and daughter Emily from St. Bede's in Santa Fe where he had been Rector. He had also been Assistant Youth Director for the Diocese. He was a new man with new ideas about how to conduct the chaplaincy. He felt that to truly reach the students and staff at UNM he needed to form a core group through which people could experience a loving, worshipping community. Always aggressive and inventive, Bill Crews organized the "God Squad" of students which moved out to reach the campus population.

One of the important aspects of Chapel life during the Crews years was the emphasis on teaching the basics of Christianity to the congregation. Religious education was also employed as a means of reaching out to the student population across the street. At that time UNM offered no courses in religion so Fr. Crews managed to obtain faculty status at the University of Albuquerque, A Roman Catholic institution of higher education whose campus was on the West Mesa. He then reached an agreement with UNM by which UNM students taking a University of Albuquerque course under Fr. Crews would receive UNM credit. The courses were taught in the Canterbury building. The first of these classes of which we have a record was a three credit course on "Modern Theologians" -- studying the writings of Tillich, Niebuhr and Barth -- offered in September 1970.

The Canterbury "Lay School of Theology", intended primarily as a means of educating the congregation, grew out of this beginning. The core of the curriculum, taught by Fr. Crews, consisted of an Old Testament Survey, a New Testament Survey, and Liturgics taught from The Shape of the Liturgy by Dom Gregory Dix. These classes met for 16 weeks on a regular schedule. This program was in part responsible for the establishment some years later of a degree program in religious studies at UNM.

A second option in the educational program was the non-credit seminar series. These smaller groups, generally led by qualified lay people, met for about eight weeks to study the works of various theologians and topics in newly issued books of the "Church's Teaching Series". One of the most popular of these "Minicourses" was "Hymns in History and Practice" offered by the Chapel organist and music director Edwina Beard. Edwina came to Canterbury in 1971 as recipient of a scholarship for "liturgical organists" established by Fr. Crews using a bequest from a former parishioner. In addition to these formal programs, individual study was encouraged. For this purpose copies of the Pelican New Testament Commentary on the four Gospels were given to each family in the "Household" (of God), as the Chapel was coming to be known by the members. People in the congregation were strongly urged to join a seminar or take one of the core classes every year. Most did.

Partly as a result of the education programs, the Chapel

congregation had begun to grow. To meet the demands this involved, we approached the Diocese in the fall of 1970 for a grant to enlarge the physical plant, asking for \$47,000 to build Becket Hall, the kitchen, the small apartment next to the kitchen used to house the student sexton, two class rooms and a large storage area. During construction of the building additions, finally completed in March 1971, the congregation established "sweat equity" in the project by painting the interior of our new space. This started a "tradition" which we followed about ten years later when another major addition to our building was constructed.

Another innovative strategy employed by Fr. Crews in his continuing effort to draw students into the life of Canterbury involved the management of an apartment complex just across Grand Avenue. Negotiations for management of sixteen units began in January 1971 and by April the following year these small apartments were being rented to Episcopal students as vacancies developed.

Early in January 1971 Canterbury began to use St. Augustine's Lodge, a property in the Taos ski valley owned by the Diocese, for student ski weekends sponsored by the Chapel. The response during the first season was enthusiastic. Three years later the Diocese put St. Augustine's under Chapel management.

In January 1972 we began to use Becket Hall and our new kitchen for the first of several ventures designed to draw in students, staff and faculty from the university across the street. The kitchen was open at noontime, Monday to Friday, offering lunch for \$1.00, a bowl of chili for \$.50. Women from the congregation did the cooking under the direction, at various times, of Janee Parnegg, Joan Lynch and Marianne Kessell. Deserts were prepared by Canterbury ladies, "The Fat Cows of Bashan". The kitchen was well received, we had a full house on most days, but the kitchen was not successful in drawing new people into the congregation. Neither was the student "Coffee House", started at Canterbury in the Fall of 1972: "Friday nights, 8-12, Music, Dancing, Poetry \$.50 per person." Crowds showed up on Friday night, but didn't come around on Sunday.

The "Lay School of Theology" prospered, however. New courses were added to the core curriculum over the next few years. Among these were "Readings From 20th Century Theologians", "Rediscovering the Parables", "Medieval Theologians", "Comparative Religion" and "Beginning Greek". The "Household" was beginning to grow. By June of 1973 Canterbury was sending regular delegates to the Annual Convention of the Diocese, and was operating on an annual budget of \$30,000. Toward the end of 1973 Canterbury sent a petition to Bishop Trelease asking that the Household be given parish status. This was granted in January 1974 and in March Bill Crews was installed as our first Rector.

The Years With Crews

Now officially "St. Thomas of Canterbury Episcopal Church", the Household launched into what was to be a busy and eventful life as a parish. Limitations of space and time do not permit a complete listing of events and dates -- a true chronicle -- and such a treatment would surely leave all but the most patient reader behind. Rather than this, we will try to deal with the highlights, and the key events in the developing life of the Canterbury community. One such highlight was the role played by members of Canterbury within the Diocese. Over the years our members have held leadership positions in several key committees. Hannes Parnegg has been president of the Standing Committee. David Tod and Mark Thompson have served on the Commission on Ministry. Janee Parnegg has been head of the Commission on Alcohol and Drug Awareness. Mark Thompson has served on the Diocesan Council. Dick Barlow was a member of the Program Council and Sally Barlow has been a member of the Ecclesiastical Court. Janet Steele in on the Diocesan Council as this history is being prepared.

From the very beginning Canterbury was far from being an Episcopal parish in the traditional pattern. In the early and mid-1970s the national church was giving serious thought to a revision of the Liturgy. The General Convention of 1976 adopted "The Proposed Book of Common Prayer." This was the culmination of a movement at some parishes and missions around the country to give thoughtful and prayerful study to a revision. Bill Crews and the Canterbury Household were in the vanguard. Fr. Crews assembled a few volunteers and charged them with the job of drafting an experimental liturgy for the Eucharist, to be done at the Chapel at the Sunday morning service. The whole service was up for an experimental revision: the Exhortation, readings from the Old and New Testaments, the Creed, the Prayers of the People. There was one stipulation: the Great Thanksgiving -- the Eucharistic Prayer -- was not to be altered.

Probably none of this small group of volunteers has any clear recollection of this innovative Communion service, but we dare say Fr. Crews will remember that as he approached the Chancel and looked over the congregation, he was startled to see an Episcopal priest, unknown to him at the time. He must have wondered what in the world was passing through this visitor's mind. The group of parishioners who drafted and participated in this experimental liturgy were not nearly so daring as they might have been. It was a learning experience, and the participants gained a clearer sense of appreciation for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

An historical fragment, written in 1987 by one of the founding members of the congregation, refers to Canterbury as a "beacon of change" within the Diocese. "We led the campaign to adopt a new Prayer Book which spoke the language of today. We led in trying

new and innovative liturgies. We led in adopting the modern translations of the Scriptures for liturgical use. We led in testing the new hymn texts and tunes which resulted in the Hymnal 1982." Perhaps because of this innovative attitude Canterbury became the home for a series of priest-parishioners. At one point there were five in our pews. Included in this company were Fr. Jim Kirkpatrick, Canon to the Ordinary, Fr. Jack Russell, received into the Episcopal Discipline from the Roman Church, and Fr. David B. Tod who served us as a non-stipendiary Associate. Virginia Dabney Brown was ordained to the Diaconate from our body in September 1974. In April the following year her husband Bruce was Priested at our altar. Throughout the years Canterbury has been hospitable to other priests who for one reason or another were in need of a parish home.

Outreach in various forms was a major underlying theme during the "Years With Crews". The Canterbury Lecture Series was started while Bill Crews was Rector. This series, financed by a memorial trust, brought in speakers or performers who presented programs on subjects germane to Christian education for the general public. One of these was a sell-out dramatic performance by Tom Key called "C. S. Lewis on Stage" attended by 700 people in Woodward Hall on the UNM campus. A subsequent standing-room-only event in Woodward Hall while Fr. Paul Lawson was Rector, was a lecture by famed German Theologian Hans Kung. Other programs, presented in the Nave, were "The Challenge of Living in Christian Community", "The Oxford Movement", and "Jesus and Ghandi, the Road to Peace."

Canterbury operated a Youth Hostel to serve students and other young people doing summer "wandervogel" traveling. The first season was in 1973. In the two following years we used Becket Hall for the hostellers, later we rented a house on Central Avenue just east of University Boulevard. Hostel managers were student parishioners. Outreach to another group of young people was provided at the Ya-Tah-Hai Halfway House for delinquent adolescents which Canterbury operated downtown for a year before it closed for good in April 1975. Nick Magnani and Fr. Jack Russell were instrumental in starting this project.

Attempts to involve students in the life of Canterbury by reaching out to the campus, started in pre-parish days, continued. During the summer of 1977 we rented the house of a fraternity which had gone out of business on "fraternity row" and converted it for use as a student housing cooperative. Members of the congregation worked hard getting the building ready and in August fifteen men and nine women moved in. The resident manager was Marc Johnson, a student who was a member of the Household. Sherri Holtke from the parish cooked for the first year. Marianne Kessell, another long time parishioner, was the cook during the following year. A single room plus three meals a day cost \$750, double occupancy cost \$550. This successful venture had to close down after two years when the once defunct fraternity revived and reclaimed the building.

Outreach in the form of housing, started early in 1971 when Fr. Crews became manager of sixteen units in an apartment complex just south of Grand Avenue, and was expanded in the spring of 1974 when Canterbury was given eight duplex housing units in Santa Fe. This became St. Simeon's, a housing development for retired persons with an income of less than \$7,000 per year. The original intention, to provide housing for retired clergy, was never entirely achieved, but at one point there were a retired Episcopal priest, a retired Lutheran pastor, the mother of an Episcopal priest, and the mother of a Baptist seminary professor in residence. By the end of 1978 Canterbury was managing thirty apartments in the Grand Avenue complex.

Drama and music were yet another form of outreach while Bill Crews was Rector. "Noye's Fludde", a medieval miracle play from Chester, set to music by Benjamin Britten, was by far the most ambitious production Canterbury ever attempted. Auditions for the singing roles were held in October 1979. During the next three months nearly the entire congregation worked evenings and weekends to mount the production and rehearse the performance. Stage lighting was installed in the newly completed sanctuary. An elaborate set (the Ark), designed to be taken down and put up quickly, was constructed. Costumes were made. The dress rehearsal went off without a hitch on February fifteenth, followed by performances for packed audiences on the next two evenings. There was a cast of 16 principal characters, all the children in the parish took the part of the various animals in the Ark, music was supplied by 29 instrumentalists and a choir of six handbells. The occasion for this production was celebration for the completion of the new construction enlarging the building -- of which more later.

Canterbury took note of the two hundredth anniversary of The Declaration of Independence by another kind of performance. On the fourth of July we did the liturgy as it was done in 1776. The Rector celebrated in liturgical costume from that period -- including preaching tabs and a full-bottomed wig. The sermon was the one delivered to the Virginia House of Burgesses (legislature) on a text from Romans 13:1-2 by the Reverend David Griffith.

Beginning in January 1977 Fr. Crews made an arrangement with The Broadway department store which extended outreach in the form of money to CDSP (Church Divinity School of the Pacific) in California. When The Broadway did the twice yearly inventory, the Household turned out in force to spend an evening in the store taking inventory. The money we earned in this way for the next two years -- four inventories -- went to support the seminary.

The congregation grew steadily while these parish activities were going on. Annual attendance in 1974, the year Canterbury became a parish, was 8,673. At that point we began to have problems with overcrowding. It was not unusual to have people standing in the Narthex during the main Eucharist because there

were no empty seats in the Nave. By 1976 the annual attendance had nearly doubled to 14,260. The initial response to this growth was the addition of an 11:15 Eucharist to the 8:00 and 9:30 services on Sunday morning. Explaining this in the newsletter, Fr. Crews wrote in November 1975: "On November 2 we had over 180 people at the 9:30 celebration. As you know, the Chapel only seats 106 with six to the pew."

In September 1978 discussions about enlarging our building began. As reported in the parish profile of 1989: "We had a choice: enlarge the building, or move the parish to a new location. The Bishop argued in favor of moving the parish into the northeast part of the city, known as 'the heights,' at that time an area of rapid growth. Part of this plan called for moving the Diocesan offices from rented quarters just south of the University into the Canterbury complex. The prospect of relocating the parish presented problems because about half of our people lived within a two mile radius of the chapel." After much soul-searching, and a certain amount of acrimony, the vestry decided in July 1979 to enlarge the building, putting the matter to a vote of the congregation.

An architect within the congregation drew up plans for an addition which nearly doubled the size of the building. The Nave was extended south to the building line, adding a cruciform sanctuary. A new sacristy was added, a second story was added to accommodate another office and a classroom, and a new storage area was added behind Becket Hall. Work that required licensing or special construction skill was done by a contractor. Members of the congregation supplied common labor. Parishioners installed the insulation on the outer wall of the building, painted the metal window framing and back surface of the solar heating trombe wall, laid the parquet floor in the Nave and painted the entire interior of the building. It was quite a project. The whole job cost about \$120,000, a sum which we had to finance by ourselves when the Standing Committee of the Diocese declined to help us. Work on the addition lasted nearly six months. We moved into the Nave on Christmas Eve 1979. The new building was dedicated and consecrated on February 10, 1980, in a ceremony followed by a potluck supper with Bishop Trelease.

We settled into our enlarged building with a feeling of accomplishment. Things were going well for Canterbury. With the construction behind us we sent Fr. Crews off after Easter on a well-earned Sabbatical until September. During this time Senior Warden Mark Thompson was in charge of the parish. A series of supply priests celebrated at the Eucharist. The parish rocked along on an uneventful course. The Foyer program, a feature of parish life launched in the fall of 1978, was in full swing. Bill Crews brought the idea home from a vacation trip to England that summer which included a visit to Coventry Cathedral where the program originated. Foyer groups, made up of eight to ten people,

meet for a meal together once a month for six months. At the end of this time new groups are formed. There is no agenda beyond the goal of helping people in the parish to know each other better. The kitchen reopened in September after the summer break. The first Messiah Sing-In took place in the Nave in November. The third presentation in the Canterbury Lecture Series took place in December.

The tranquility of parish life, continued during the early months of 1981, was shattered in July when Fr. Crews announced his intention to resign as Rector effective 1 September 1981. He told us that after fourteen years as priest at Canterbury he felt the need for a change in course. He wanted to return to seminary at CDSP for graduate study leading to a doctorate in theology. The parish was in shock. By that time Canterbury had grown to nearly 300 souls. Most of the programs were running well, and the prospects for further growth seemed good. The loss of our leader, however, left the flock in disarray. Left without a Rector, administration of the parish was taken over by our Senior Warden Mark Thompson. The liturgical needs of the parish were met by a series of supply priests while the search committee, headed by Junior Warden Barbara Peterson, started to look for a new priest. It was a difficult time for all of us. Despite this upset the parish mounted and presented another major dramatic production, this time in cooperation with people from St. Michael and All Angels. We staged The Nativity According to St. Luke by Randall Thompson on 12 and 14 February 1982, playing to a full Nave both nights.

By the end of January 1982 the search committee had completed the visitation phase of its task -- going to see the various candidates at work in their home parishes. In April, priests on the "short list" were invited to visit Canterbury and look over the situation there. Fr. Tom Gray was called after these visits were completed and became the second Rector of St. Thomas of Canterbury on 1 July 1982. As the congregation and the new priest started to get acquainted a time of troubles began.

A Rough Transition

We probably should have foreseen some of the difficulties Canterbury experienced during the next eighteen months. Any priest who follows a Rector who has had long tenure is in for a turbulent succession. Bill Crews was in a real sense the founder of Canterbury. He had been a well-loved pastor and charismatic leader for nearly fifteen years. By the time Fr. Gray became Rector Crews was already becoming a mythic figure who had presided over the "good old days", a time during which according to recollection everything went right. Memory can do remarkable things. In retrospect it seems clear that any person, however talented, who took over the parish under these circumstances was doomed to fail.