



*“It is your ship, and it is a good old ship.
Let’s not wreck it.”*

– Bishop S. Arthur Huston

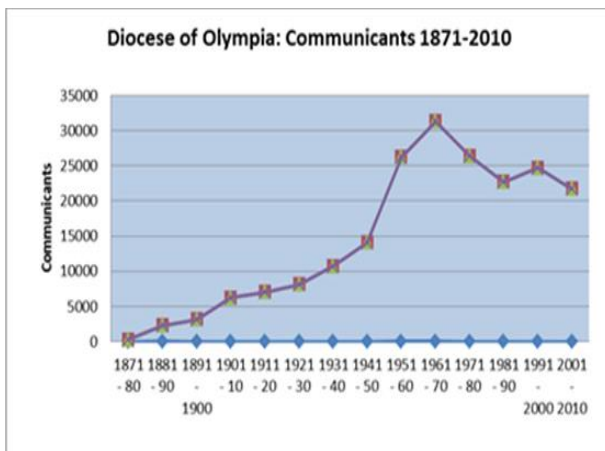
The Diocese of Olympia,
1850 – 2010:
A Community, Inclusive
and Generous

-Carle Griffin, Diocesan Historiographer

Overview

The Episcopal Church in western Washington became a full-fledged diocese in 1910, the year it adopted a seal depicting a ship and the Bishop's mitre. The ship on the seal represents many Christian themes, including salvation and community. She recalls Lady Washington, the bark in which Capt. Gray sailed into the Columbia River in 1788, building the case for the United States to claim the Pacific Northwest. A tailwind propels the ship forward.

Two rapid-growth periods challenged and rewarded the Church in western Washington, bracketed by long stretches of slow growth as if sailing into the wind. The first period, 1885 – 1892, which saw Washington leap forward in economic activity, produced rapid growth in the number of congregations.



About 60 years later, in the aftermath of WWII, both the number of congregations and communicant numbers sky-rocketed. The chart shows steady growth in the number of communicants from the 1870's to 1940. The Baby Boomer era appears from the 1940's to the 1960's as an anomaly based on a brief increase in birthrate (the "bump" in the right half of the graph.) Communicants grew by 120% in 20 years and decreased by 28% in the next 20 years. By 1990 communicant strength, projecting from the graph shown, had returned to the point it would have been without the Baby Boom.

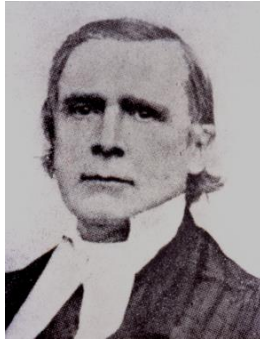
Landfall in the Pacific Northwest

For most of the 19th century, the Board of Missions of the Episcopal Church, created in 1835, was the main national organization leading the church between General Conventions. The Domestic Committee of the Board, seeking to set up bases from which to expand the Episcopal Church's presence, directed and financed the activities of missionaries in the United States. Bishops supplemented the Board's funds by making direct appeals to eastern benefactors.

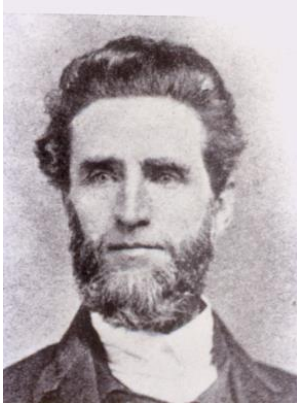


The Board of Missions sent the Rev. William Richmond to Oregon Territory in 1851. He met the Rev. St. Michael Fackler and they quickly founded four congregations. The Rev. John McCarty, army chaplain in the Mexican-American War, joined them in 1853 and served as rector of Trinity Parish, Portland, and chaplain at Fort Vancouver. The same year, the Domestic Committee moved its offices to Astor Place in New York City.

The missionaries sent by the Board of Missions found potential members and began forming congregations.



The Rev. William Richmond



The Rev. St. Michael Fackler



The Rev. John McCarty

Meeting in Oregon City in 1853, local people requested a bishop and recommended McCarty.

The Rt. Rev. Thomas Fielding Scott (1854 - 1867), elected bishop by General Convention 1853, reached Oregon in 1854.

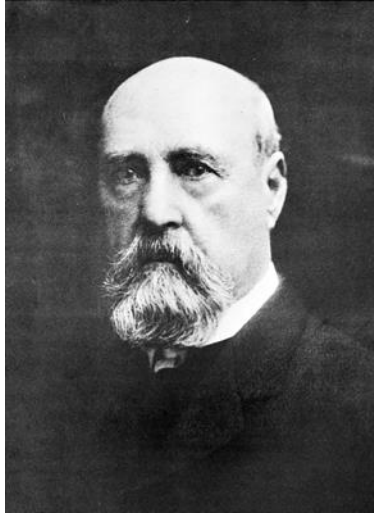


The Rt. Rev. Thomas Fielding Scott

Headwinds

Scott faced serious challenges. Lack of development, low density of settlement, minimal transportation, and lack of clergy hindered church growth. As most Episcopal clergy had college degrees, an early ministry to communities was education, the founding of schools. One of Scott's first projects was operating a school for boys near Oregon City.

The Rev. Peter Hyland fostered western Washington congregations in Olympia, Port Townsend, and Seattle.



The Rev. Peter Hyland



St. Paul's, Port Townsend

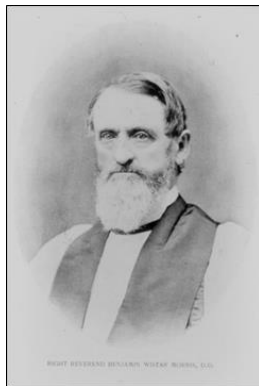


Trinity, Seattle

Scott and later bishops travelled east to recruit more clergy and raise money for the mission. In the meantime, lay members, including women, frequently performed essential duties such as leading prayer services and funerals. Churches were created where interested lay people could be gathered.

New Landings

As the lumber economy developed, many new communities, small at first and located along the shoreline, emerged. However, once the local lumber resource was exhausted, many lumber camps and mill towns disappeared. The church started missions in many such communities--before their survival became assured. Episcopal congregations survived where a managerial class established itself. This class was attracted by middle-class oriented churches. Episcopal congregations sustained a calm, rational style that appealed to community leaders. Bishop Morris made a point of expressing suspicion of overly emotional evangelism.



The Rt. Rev. Benjamin Wistar Morris



The Rev. Reuben Denton Nevius.
Right: Nevius with banker William West of Centralia

Nevius started in 1872 as rector of Trinity, Portland, where he found the congregation building a new church. Federal Judge Matthew Deedy, domineering leader of Trinity, considered Nevius not suitable for Portland's elite middle class. Bishop Morris persuaded Nevius to visit miners in eastern Oregon, where he started a remarkable career as a missionary. Under his leadership 36 congregations sprouted in eastern Oregon and Washington Territory.

Depression struck in 1873, slowing development of the Northern Pacific Railway, which chose Tacoma as its western terminus after a visit by Charles Wright, Philadelphia banker and railroad developer, who surveyed Tacoma with other executives.

Tail Wind

In 1880 the wind shifted. Western Washington and the Church soon sailed ahead with a tail wind.



General Convention elected the Rt. Rev. John Adams Paddock (1880 – 1894) to be the first Missionary Bishop for Washington. He started with four priests and 237

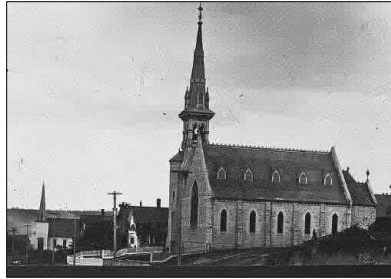
communicants in 8 congregations. At his death in 1894, there were nearly 2400 communicants in 45 congregations. With improved transportation, immigrants founded many towns. Roads, railroads, lumber, and fish powered economic development. Soon the missionary district funded schools, including Annie Wright Seminary for girls. The bishop's wife, Fannie, raised money in New York for a Tacoma hospital. (Mrs. Paddock became ill after the trip across Central America and died before reaching Tacoma.) Hospitals, along with schools, had the vital function of strengthening the human capital of communities.

In 1892 the western half of the missionary district of Washington became the district of Olympia, and the eastern half the district of Spokane.





The Wrights: Annie and her father Charles



St. Luke's Memorial Chapel, Tacoma



The first Annie Wright Seminary for girls



St. Mark's founders first met in rented quarters. Later the parish occupied the building above in a wedge-shaped lot adjacent to what is now Macy's in Seattle.



The Rt. Reverend William Morris Barker (1894 – 1901) who had taught school in Philadelphia before his election as Bishop of Western Colorado, transferred to the District of Olympia in 1894. As a major depression struck the country, he focused on the district's finances and recruitment of teachers for Annie Wright Seminary.

Make-over: Re-inventing a Denomination

As the 1800s came to a close, American industry began using engineers to improve performance. “Efficiency” became a universal goal, sought by churches as well as business.



The Rt. Rev. Frederic Keator, 1902 – 1924

Bishop Keator, who gave up a career as a lawyer in Chicago for the priesthood, became a leader in Tacoma, joining civic and fraternal groups and supporting the seminary. He sponsored the transition of the Fannie Paddock Memorial Hospital to Tacoma General, under independent management. Keator led the district in its drive to become a diocese and emphasized the importance of the church to the broader community:

First we are citizens of a commonwealth, endowed with certain rights and privileges, but also with corresponding duties and responsibilities. Our Church life is primarily a community life....

-- Bishop Keator, 1922



Annual Convention at St. Luke's Memorial Chapel in Tacoma, 1922

Depressions and war constrained church growth from the late 1890s until the 1940s. Communicant numbers grew slowly. In the 1890's, St. Mark's, Seattle, joined the Settlement House movement, and encouraged other churches to cooperate in aiding those in need. Diocesan as well as national Church leaders adopted a management model invented by corporate America. Abandoning the weak executive structure in effect since the 1780's, the national church closed the Board of Missions and created a council to advise the Presiding Bishop, who began to function as a CEO. Thus the Episcopal Church came to resemble more closely the U.S. government, which had moved to a strong executive system with the U.S. Constitution in 1792. The new "scientific" management of the business world provided a model. The diocese, still directed from Tacoma and led by Bishop Keator, followed suit. The diocese, slowed by headwinds, grew slowly until 1940.



St. Mark's Cathedral under construction, 1930



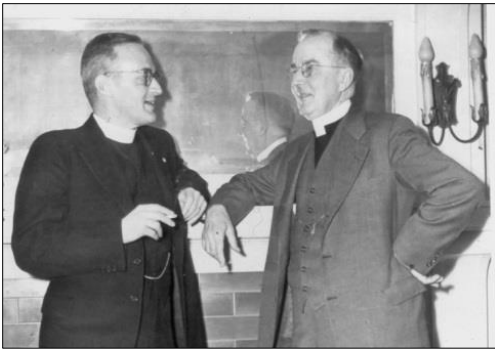
The renovated cathedral in 2018

(Photo by author)



Camp Harmony, Puyallup, 1942. Round-up of Japanese immigrants and Japanese-American citizens for internment camps.

In 1942, the U.S. government required Japanese in Washington State to move to internment camps. The Revs. Joseph Kitigawa and Gennosuke Shoji and Deaconess Margaret Peppers moved to Minidoka, Idaho, to aid the families interned there.



Bishops Bayne (L) and Huston

Priests served as military chaplains in World Wars I and II. The Rt. Rev. S. Arthur Huston (1925 – 1947) started his term by moving diocesan headquarters to Seattle and sponsored summer camps for children. Volunteers erected permanent facilities in Gold Bar and

Spirit Lake. The diocese sponsored congregations among minorities, including African Americans and Japanese.

The Wind Shifts, 1940 – 1960

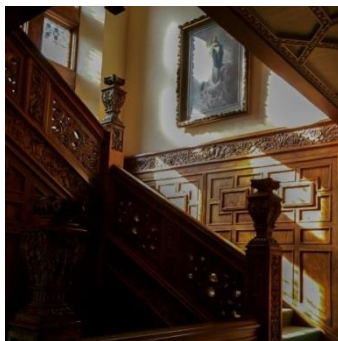
Before the end of World War II the birthrate began to rise, kicking off a period of rapid growth, 1944 – 1965. Congregations sprang up in new suburbs radiating outward from cities, notably in Vancouver, Tacoma, and Seattle. The Rt. Rev. Stephen Fielding Bayne Jr. served during the explosive growth of congregations and members, from 1947 to 1959.

We have inherited, thanks to our ancient roots in England, much of the “feel” and bearing of the Church spirit. We act theologically, as if everybody were an Episcopalian, which is an attitude we come by naturally from the time when most everybody in England was, at least officially. It is part of the Church spirit to be inclusive and generous—if there is only one Church, then the emphasis must be not on how to keep people out of it, but how to make room for them, with their varying opinions and problems, within it. It is the hardest thing in the world to define what an Episcopalian is. There is almost no doctrinal test; you don’t have to do anything except be baptized; the way you become an Episcopalian, by our laws, is by going to an Episcopal Church and paying your freight. You will be asked no questions about your morals or your mind. It is not a school of thought or a party or a set of orthodoxies you are joining but a *community* of people.... That is the “feel” of our Church.

–Bishop Bayne, 1949.

Bayne’s leadership and communication skills led to his appointment as the first Executive Officer of the Anglican Communion.

Bayne moved diocesan headquarters from the American Bank Building in downtown Seattle to the Leary mansion near the cathedral.



James Hodges

The need to house new congregations required capital, and Treasurer James Hodges, a leader in the plywood industry, guided the diocese in building a good credit record with banks.

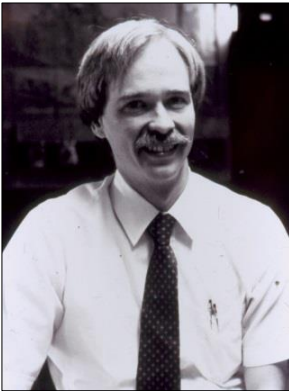
Canon Peter Hallock, Music Director at St. Mark's Cathedral (1951 -1991) won international recognition for composing, performing, and recording distinguished church music. As creator of the Compline Choir, he became the Episcopal equivalent of a rock star.





As refugees streamed into the U.S. from Southeast Asia and other areas, the diocese joined the resettlement effort that continued through several foreign wars. Moved

as a teen by the internment in 1942 of Japanese-Americans, including a third of his fellow students at Seattle's Broadway High School, the future priest John Huston became a tireless advocate for Japanese and other immigrants.



Greg Hope (pictured) has directed the Refugee Resettlement Office, a diocesan ministry, for over 30 years.

Baby Boomers brought about a new church with new priorities. Members embraced new interests and practices. The 19th century aim of “extending” the Kingdom of God gave way to many forms of spiritual community: Benedictine discipline, healing touch, Kairos prison ministry, labyrinth, ethnic ministry, earth ministry, and many other ministries of service. The Boomer generation, as it entered retirement from about 2010 on, continued to hold many leadership positions.



The Rt. Rev. William Fisher Lewis (1959 – 1964), previously missionary bishop of Nevada, succeeded Bishop Bayne. Known for his pastoral skills, Lewis served at the tail-end of the Baby Boom “bump.” He arranged to have consultants study the diocese. In their report, completed in 1962

just as the Baby Boom peaked, the Booz, Allen, Hamilton firm projected continued growth. Lewis succumbed to leukemia as the “boom” came to an end. A turn-around would soon shift attention to declining membership.

Headwinds Again

The decline in members that came with the falling birthrate alarmed diocesan leaders as membership dropped back to a level consistent with the pre-Baby Boom growth rate. Although historian David Sumner published an article in 1987 calling attention to the role of birth rates, explanations instead focused on conflict over revision of *The Book of Common Prayer*, ordination of women, and welcoming of homosexuals. Several attempts to reverse the trend began with vision statements.



The Rt. Rev. Ivor Curtis (1964 – 1976) launched an ambitious program on many fronts. He emphasized education of lay members by expanding adult spiritual development at Camp Huston (which became Huston Camp and Conference Center) and St. Andrew's House. Early signs of decline in members and budgets showed up as the 1970's became a time of turmoil. The diocese funded programs to address poverty and struggled to understand the causes of apparent decline. The term "extending God's Kingdom," a common touchstone of the growth-oriented 1800's and 20th century corporate-style management would soon give way to troubling reports of decline.

Episcopalians nevertheless continued addressing the general needs of communities. At the General Convention held in Seattle in 1967, lay, clergy, and episcopal representatives from the nation

voted to allocate funds at the national level to local anti-poverty efforts. In Seattle, Trinity Parish aided Northwest Harvest in founding a major food bank. A diocesan school of theology and a management institute prepared members for parish leadership.



The Rt. Rev. Robert H. Cochrane (1976 – 1989), addressing conflicts over Prayer Book revision and ordination of women, attempted to reconcile opposing views by appealing to the ideal of the church as the unified Body of Christ.



The Rt. Rev. Vincent W. Warner (1989 – 2007) visited communities in the diocese as part of a “vision project” and urged congregations to work with local officials to solve community problems. He cared deeply about oppressed minorities and revealed a wide knowledge of the controversy over decline in church membership.



The Rt. Rev. Bavi Edna "Nedi" Rivera

The difficulty of providing care to the large territory of the diocese, led to election of the Rt. Rev. Bavi Edna "Nedi" Rivera (2005 - 2010) as Suffragan Bishop, first Hispanic bishop of the Episcopal Church. She joined Assistant Bishop the Rt. Rev. Sanford "Sandy" Hampton (1996 - 2004) in extending Bishop Warner's reach. Ministry to minority communities, of special concern to Bishop Warner, benefitted from her attention, and she aided many congregations with planning by "Appreciative Inquiry."

Steady As She Goes



The Rt. Rev. Gregory H. Rickel (2007 -) began his term calling attention to three major priorities: attracting members under 35, stewardship, and congregational growth. The College of Congregational Development attracted national attention, and the three priorities focused efforts to build membership and improve congregational life.

As of 2010, attendance figures appeared to be leveling out. Aging of the Boomers, the generation that built the twenty-year “bump” in numbers, poses a new challenge: return to a church of slow but steady growth, as the post-Baby Boomers, including members with young families, assume leadership of congregations.

The diocesan ship sails on.

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