

Benjamin Martin Washburn

DR. WASHBURN WAS BORN IN BETHEL, VERMONT, IN JUNE, 1887. His parents were Seth Monroe Washburn and Kate Strong Brooks. We know little about his childhood but he received his B.A. from Dartmouth in 1907 and his D.D. degree from there in 1929. There followed a degree from Kenyon College in 1949 and an S.T.D. degree from Hobart College in 1951.

Emmanuel deeded its first Rectory to Dr. Worcester, so a new one was bought for its new Rector at 108 Marlborough Street.

Dr. Washburn came to Emmanuel from St. Paul's Church in Kansas City in July 1929 at a salary of \$10,000 and "free use of the Rectory". This was but three months before the stock market crash and his brief three years were shadowed by this national catastrophe. How lucky for Emmanuel therefore, that it had at the helm a man of great wisdom and ability; one who had also the pastoral instinct, with love for human souls, and deep concern for the "forgotten man".

Following Dr. Worcester with his ministry of spiritual healing for which he had no training, Dr. Washburn believed that the best service he could render would be pastoral care of less specialized nature. As a curate under Bishop Slattery at Grace Church, New York, he had learned "the importance of ringing doorbells". So he diligently called on Emmanuel's parishioners and endeared himself thereby with his keen and ever ready desire to be of service to them.

There is little in the Vestry minutes that gives hint or color to his Rectorship, and alas, only one year book can be found.

But it seems certain he began his ministry on a note of triumph, for he was "invited to sit with the Vestry at all meetings". Hitherto, if the Vestry had something to say to the Rector, or vice versa, he was invited to the meeting.

The Rector apparently was a good organizer for he soon set up "standing committees" among the Vestry and defined desirable duties for each; namely, Finance, House and Grounds, Emmanuel House, Ushering, and the Church Service League. He gave his conception of the duties of the Treasurer, and made suggestions for the better collection of pledges. It was necessary also to adapt the work of the church to the great sociological changes occurring in the Back Bay.

Someone in describing Dr. Washburn said he was "only a little more verbose than Calvin Coolidge". Perhaps he shared in greatness the rugged qualities of Vermont. Certainly it remained for others to point out his many achievements. His constant care for men studying for Holy Orders led to his appointment as lecturer at the Episcopal Theological School. He followed Henry Knox Sherrill after the latter's election to the episcopate, and gave a course in Pastoral Theology to the Senior Class. He recalls that both Bishop Stokes and Bishop Donald Campbell were in his class. Also that Harold Sedgwick, as one of the Harvard students, came frequently to the Sunday morning service at Emmanuel.

It is difficult to think back to the time when, on Good Friday, the service of Morning Prayer was held at the usual hour. It is to Dr. Washburn that we owe the introduction of the Three Hour Service that points up so vividly the meaning of this day.

It may be remembered that early in his Rectorship, Dr. Parks was reproved by the Vestry for some small change in the Chancel, but we are told of a member of the Vestry using his own initiative to "put something over" on the new Rector. Bishop Washburn remembers that at his first service at Emmanuel a crucifer with a processional Cross led the way into the church. He thought nothing of it until he later learned



*The Rev. Benjamin Martin Washburn, D.D.
1929 - 1932*

this had never happened before. Our vestryman had recently presented Emmanuel with a processional Cross. This was his opportunity to see it used!

Curates sometimes presented problems, also. One very active and generous member of the parish called the Rector early one Monday morning asking if he couldn't do something about the kind of soap his curate used. When she received Holy Communion at his hands she found the odor very distasteful!

There was a real sense of loss when Dr. Washburn left Emmanuel after three short years to become Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of Newark in 1932. This was the second time Emmanuel has been so honored.

The ladies of the church presented him with his vestments for his consecration and were delighted when he returned and conducted services for some weeks at Emmanuel wearing his Bishop's robes.

He became the Diocesan Bishop of Newark on October 14, 1935. During his episcopate he confirmed 32,000 persons and ordained 169 to priesthood. He held many important posts in the Church and was active in the Church Pension Fund, later becoming its President.

He remained Bishop of Newark for twenty-three years. Impressive services were held on his retirement in 1958 at Trinity Cathedral and at his own request there was no sermon. He explained that he was tired of listening to his own obituary.

But for Emmanuel the pastoral ministry of Bishop Washburn will always remain one of the shining chapters in its long history.