

Historically Black Episcopal Congregations in the Diocese of North Carolina: 1865-1959

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1865-1868: A Call to Establish Black Congregations and Schools

In the months following the end of the Civil War, the Church's claim to catholicity became the watchword of diocesan initiatives with respect to the newly-emancipated. Bishop Thomas Atkinson noted that a church claiming catholicity could not in good conscience fail to minister to a large and vulnerable segment of the population. "Let us raise up colored congregations in our towns, and let all our clergy feel that one important part of their charge is to teach and to befriend the colored people, and especially to train, as far as they permitted to do so, the children of that race."

The Bishop's call was seconded by an 1865 convention committee that called for "bold and decisive action." The committee declared that just as the political and social status of African Americans had radically changed, so there must be a corresponding change in how the Church approached its work with those who were newly emancipated. No longer could the Church rest content with consigning them to a subordinate role in predominantly white congregations. Rather, the report called for the Church to take the lead in creating new black congregations and to invest in the cultivation and training of black vestrymen, catechists, and clergy. Moreover, the power to elect clergy for black congregations should reside with their own vestries, and the black clergy of the Episcopal Church should be welcomed to serve in North Carolina. To the committee, the very nature of the Church itself compelled such a response: "As we believe the Church to be Apostolic and Catholic, we feel bound to do all within our power to convey its holy teachings as rapidly and as potently as possible, to every soul committed to our care, whether its casket be Anglican or African." Atkinson, again citing the Church's catholic heritage, insisted that black clergy and congregations be admitted into union with convention on an equal footing.

Bishop Atkinson strongly endorsed the creation of Episcopal Church's Freedman's Commission, and brought its resources to North Carolina. The Freedman's Commission was the 1865 General Convention's response to the needs of the newly-emancipated. It established a third branch of the Board of Missions, alongside the existing Domestic and Foreign Branches. The Commission was organized in December 1865, and declared its primary mission to be the spiritual and secular education of the newly-emancipated. By January 1866, the Commission, through its General Agent and Secretary, the Rev. Dr. J. Brinton Smith, was already sending teachers into the field. At Atkinson's urging, two teachers began work in New Bern; by March, two more teachers were sent to Wilmington. Within a year, Freedman's Commission schools were opened in Fayetteville and Raleigh. Everywhere students flocked to these new schools by the hundreds, and the schools gave rise to worshipping congregations, starting with St. Cyprian's, New Bern in June 1866.



Airplane view of campus of Saint Augustine's School, 1925

The centerpiece of this initial push was the founding of St. Augustine's School in Raleigh. Established in the summer of 1867, it was the product of close cooperation among J. Brinton Smith of the Freedman's Commission, Bishop Atkinson, and General O.O.

Howard of the national Freedmen's Bureau. Once St. Augustine's was incorporated, Smith left his national post to become Principal. He also organized a black congregation encompassing both the school community and ten black members of Christ Church, Raleigh.

The importance of St. Augustine's School lay in the fact that it was intended not simply to instruct black students, but also to prepare black students to become teachers themselves. Dr. Smith intentionally restricted enrollment to students he thought capable of high levels of scholastic attainment, and throughout the 1870s, St. Augustine's steadily expanded its curriculum and its enrollment to the point that it was accepting students for ministerial training. Indeed, St. Augustine's faculty, students, and graduates would provide much of the leadership for the black Episcopal congregations and schools of the diocese.

Alas, the burst of enthusiasm attendant to the creation of the Freedman's Commission was not sustained. By 1869, it was clear that funds were insufficient to expand this work and that the Freedman's Commission would have to rest content with supporting the schools already established. Nevertheless, the work accomplished in this earliest phase was remarkable and durable. The Episcopal Church has retained historically black congregations in all four of the North Carolina communities served by the Freedman's Commission Schools: St. Cyprian's, New Bern; St. Mark's, Wilmington; St. Joseph's, Fayetteville, and St. Ambrose', Raleigh. St. Augustine's University remains the flagship black institution of the Episcopal Church.

1869-1889: The Formation of Black Congregations in Tarboro, Charlotte, and Pittsboro

Given the financial constraints on the Freedman's Commission, it would now be up to the Episcopal Church in North Carolina to expand the work. Within the borders of the present-day Diocese of North Carolina, the first new black congregation to be organized and enter into union with convention was St. Luke's, Tarboro, in 1872.

The Rector of Calvary, Tarboro, the Rev. Joseph Blount Cheshire, Sr., was one of the incorporators of St. Augustine's, and he evidently shared Bishop Atkinson's desire to see black congregations and black leadership encouraged. St. Luke's was started with his blessing and with the active support of his parish, which provided St. Luke's with a building. But the critical need for black clergy leadership was not met. In the 1873 parochial report for St. Luke's, we find the following frank admission:

The congregation is now in charge of the Lay-Reader. They have a very nice and comfortable Church, presented to them by the congregation of Calvary Church; with chancel furniture, except a Sacramental set.

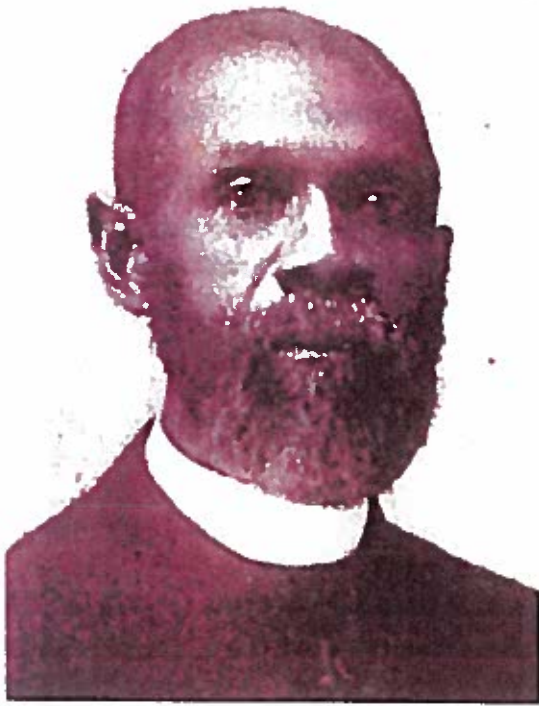
The congregation greatly desires to have a colored clergyman to preach for them, but they are poor and wholly unable to support one to take the entire care of them, but ask that a clergyman be assigned to visit them at least once a month.

I find that the colored people do not like lay reading; they prefer to have preaching. . . . The Rev. Joseph B. Cheshire, D.D., holds service for us occasionally.

[signed] JAS. H. M. JACKSON, Lay Reader

The situation had not materially changed by 1877, when we read that St. Luke's had only been opened for services once during the entire year. Indeed, St. Luke's would have to wait until 1880 to receive the ministrations of a black clergyman. In that year, Charles Cummins, a deacon from Missouri, came to North Carolina and was assigned to Tarboro. But Cummins stayed only two years before returning to Missouri.

Only when newly-ordained deacon John W. Perry came to Tarboro in 1882 did St. Luke's truly begin to grow and prosper. Perry and his wife, Mary Eliza Pettipher Perry, were both St. Augustine's graduates. By 1885 the Perrys had established and were teachers in a thriving parochial day school with 40 boys and 54 girls in attendance.



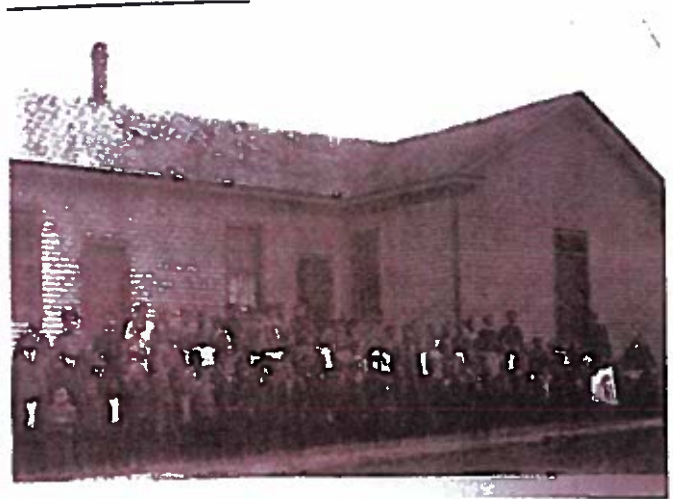
John William Perry (1850 - 1918)



Mary Eliza Pettipher Perry (1854 - 1929)

Perry became a priest in 1887, and in 1889, Bishop Lyman asked him to extend his labors to the neighboring town of Wilson. Lyman made it possible for Perry to spend a month in the North, fundraising for the new mission; Perry returned with sufficient monies to erect a church building in Wilson. He then

shared his time between these two posts for the next twelve years, and he remained in Tarboro, serving at St. Luke's and operating the parochial school, until his death in 1918—a tenure of nearly 37 years. At his death, he gave to the diocese the lot on which his school had stood—and an additional lot besides.



St. Luke's School, Tarboro, also known as Perry School (undated)

About the time Perry was beginning his work in Tarboro, a new black congregation was being organized in Charlotte. In 1881, the Rev. Joseph Blount Cheshire, Jr., son of the rector of Calvary, Tarboro, became rector of St. Peter's, Charlotte. Like his father, Cheshire took an active interest in ministering to the black community, but unlike his father, he made immediate provision for additional clergy to devote to this mission field. He first secured the services of an unmarried white priest named Charles C. Quin, who was enlisted to go north to raise funds for a church building. Work on the church building commenced in 1883, and shortly after it was finished, Quin resigned his post at what was now the mission of St. Michael and All Angels and was succeeded by a black clergyman, the Rev. Primus P. Alston.

Like John W. Perry, Alston trained for the ministry at St. Augustine's. And like Perry, Alston would devote the remainder of his life and ministry to his post. During a tenure of twenty-seven years, Alston oversaw a day school and became founder and principal of the St. Michael's Training and Industrial School, which at the time of his death in 1910 had 200 students and a teaching staff of seven.



St. Michael & All Angels School, Charlotte (c. 1908)
from *An Era of Progress and Promise*, 1910

Alston also supported a mission congregation in Lincolnton, and when Lincolnton became part of the new Missionary District of Asheville in 1895, Alston redirected his mission activities to include the Holy Cross Mission in Statesville.



Primus Priss Alston (1851-1910)

The third black congregation organized in the 1880s was St. James', Pittsboro. The existing parish in Pittsboro, St. Bartholomew's, began intentional mission work with blacks in 1879; a day school opened in 1881 and deacon E. H. Butler was given charge. St.

James' mission was organized Nov. 5, 1883, with 54 communicants and 30 students in the parochial school. Unlike Tarboro and Charlotte, the growth of the school and congregation in Pittsboro occurred chiefly under the leadership of a white priest, Massachusetts native Franklin Bush, who moved to Pittsboro in 1883 and devoted himself to black ministry for the remainder of his life. Bush was given formal charge of St. James in 1887; by 1889 he had a new church built and a school building constructed. Bush teamed with his brother-in-law, the Rev. William Walker, the rector of St. Bartholomew's, who extended his ministry to the rural settlement of Noise in neighboring Moore County, where a black congregation originally organized by the African Methodist Episcopal Zion denomination asked to receive the ministrations of the Episcopal Church and was made a mission congregation. At both Pittsboro and Noise, students from St. Augustine's helped with the teaching.

The work in Tarboro, Charlotte, and Pittsboro in the 1870s and 80s marked significant achievements and followed a common pattern. In all three instances, white congregations and their rectors took the initiative in the formation of black mission congregations. The work flourished, however, when priests dedicated to serving the missions took charge and established schools. Indeed, Perry, Alston, and Bush are aptly regarded as "priest-schoolmasters." Writing in his 1888 parochial report, Alston declared, "[A parish school] is the main lever in building up the Church work among the colored people, and they should be attached to every mission work." Speaking of mission work, it is also noteworthy that all three of these of these places now had satellite missions: Perry was working to start a congregation in Wilson; Alston in Lincolnton, and Walker, with Bush, in Noise.

There were other signs of interest in working with black populations. At St. Philip's, Durham, a vigorous effort was underway to minister in the Hayti community, co-led by the Rector, the Rev. T.M.N. George, and a black communicant and schoolteacher, Miss Rhoda Ledgers. But as yet, there was little concerted effort to support this work across the diocese.

The Challenge of Maintaining Unity and Catholicity in a Segregated Context

As the 1880s drew to a close, North Carolina took an ominous turn as far as black participation in political life was concerned. In 1889 the legislature passed a statute giving local registrars considerable latitude to assess voter qualifications. Blacks knew how white registrars would use this law, and as many as 50,000 African Americans soon departed North Carolina for Kansas, Arkansas, Texas, or Oklahoma. Over the course of the next decade, Jim Crow would become settled law across the South, and here in North Carolina there would be ruthless suppression of black suffrage and the violent overthrow of the duly elected government in Wilmington in 1898. By 1900, white political control of North Carolina was absolute, and racially segregated facilities were legally mandated.

This new context put enormous strain on the Church's efforts to retain any semblance of unity and catholicity. Compounding the challenge was the willingness of Episcopalians in neighboring states to accede to the realities of segregation and racist attitudes and consign black Episcopalians to a separate convocation under the leadership of an archdeacon. Virginia enacted its "Canon XIII" in 1886; in 1887, South Carolina became embroiled in controversy over whether to recognize the Rev. John H.M. Pollard, a black priest, and his congregation of St. Mark's, Charleston, into union with convention.

1891-1928: "An Archdeacon for work among colored people"

In the midst of these profound and disturbing changes in race relations, the Diocese of North Carolina established the position of "Archdeacon for work among colored people" in 1891 and would continue the position until the death of Bishop Henry B. Delany in 1928.

Why was the position of archdeacon created? Apparently, it was not a response to canonical changes, such as had occurred in Virginia. In January of 1891, Lyman requested \$1,500/year from the "Commission on Work among the Colored People" of

the Domestic Board of Missions for the position, and it was approved.

1891-1897: Archdeacon William Walker: A transitional figure

The white priest tapped to fill the Archdeacon position was the rector of St. Bartholomew's in Pittsboro, William Walker, who along with his brother-in-law, Franklin Bush, had been pursuing ministry among African Americans in Pittsboro and in Moore County. As Archdeacon, Walker was expected to nurture ministry with African Americans by supporting existing congregations and helping to establish new ones. Within a month of his appointment, Walker was at work, and he made his first published report to the Board of Missions the following month. On March 13, he filed a communication stating that he was spending the season of Lent in the counties immediately north and northeast of Raleigh, visiting St. Luke's, Warren County, on the second Sunday (February 22); Henderson on the third Sunday (March 1); Louisburg on the fourth Sunday (March 8), and travelling the next day to Warrenton to join Bishop Lyman for his visitation there.

At St. Luke's, Warren County, outside the town of Norlina, Walker found a congregation already organized and being served by George Williams, a St. Augustine's student in training for the ministry. Both Williams and some members of that congregation had been evangelized by a black offshoot of Methodism called The Zion Union Apostolic Church, but they had elected to affiliate with the Episcopal Church instead. Williams was making his way from Raleigh to Norlina once a month to hold services. In Henderson, Walker found a Sunday School being conducted by another St. Augustine's student, Virgil Bond. At Warrenton and Louisburg, Walker found the rectors of the parishes had been holding separate services for blacks on at least an occasional basis, but there was now an eagerness on the part of the black worshippers to have their own congregations. Already Walker was thinking that Louisburg and Warrenton could be linked eventually, and "readily supplied by one man, or, with a schoolmaster in each, who could be a catechist and

lay-reader, good foundations could be laid for building up good congregations.”

The man Walker named to spearhead the work in Louisburg and Warrenton was the Rev. Henry B. Delany, a graduate of St. Augustine’s who had gone on to become an instructor there. Starting in 1892, Delany was expected to spend one Sunday a month in Louisburg, holding services and supporting the work of the teachers in the day school, and to do the same in Warrenton. Delany’s appointment to serve in Warrenton & Louisburg coincided with his becoming a priest in May, 1892. By 1893, with Delany providing monthly ministrations, the black congregation in Louisburg had become the mission of St. Matthias’. The mission congregation was meeting regularly in the court-house, had secured a building lot, and had established a school with upward of one hundred pupils. A year later, thanks principally to the personal exertions of notable local black political leader and newspaper owner John H. Williamson, the church building was completed. In Warrenton, the black congregation had become All Saints’ Mission, and was also doing well, according to Archdeacon Walker. Delany’s primary responsibility, however, was still as a full-time faculty member at St. Augustine’s, so his weekend work in Louisburg and Warrenton represented an additional obligation.



Chapel of Saint Augustine’s School (completed 1895)

Delany supplied ministrations monthly in Louisburg and Warrenton until 1896. 1896 was pivotal because in that year, a campus chapel was completed at St. Augustine’s and students now had their own place of worship. To avoid confusion, the city parish was renamed for St. Ambrose and the Rev. James King was

called as rector. King was deployed to serve in Louisburg as well as Raleigh, while Delany continued with his monthly ministrations in Warrenton, along with serving as an assisting priest at St. Ambrose’.

Concurrently, St. Augustine’s was undergoing a shift in its educational focus. At the instigation of the Church Commission for Work among Colored People, St. Augustine’s gave up its theological department and added a new faculty position in its collegiate department. From this point forward, young men preparing for the ministry would do their advanced work at a separate theological school authorized by the Commission (first in Washington, D.C. and later in Petersburg, Virginia). Whatever the merits of this change, it meant the diocese would henceforth be deprived of convenient access to a pool of advanced theological students to deploy as teachers and catechists in black congregations.

All told, in his seven years as archdeacon, Walker oversaw the expansion of black ministry and congregational development in Raleigh, Littleton, Louisburg, and Warrenton. He also worked to support and maintain existing congregations (in some cases serving as minister in charge), and he was an enthusiastic supporter of this ministry across the diocese, repeatedly urging every parish to extend its work into this mission field.

Nevertheless, in 1897 both Walker and Bishop Cheshire independently reach the same conclusion: the time had come for a black priest to head up this diocesan work. Thus, Walker is best seen as a transitional figure in the development of black ministry in the diocese. As a white priest himself, he worked not only with black congregations, but also with white congregations. And in his tabular accounts of his ministry among African-Americans, he would invariably include a line for “work in white congregations.” In 1892 he issued a general call to every parish to “reach all souls within its borders.” In other words, Walker was still envisioning black ministry as something white churches could and should actively nurture. By 1897, however, bi-racial congregations had become a thing of the past—here and across the South.

**1898-1908: Archdeacon John Pollard:
An advocate for rural ministry**

The priest Bishop Cheshire chose to succeed Walker was the Ven. John Henry Mingo Pollard. Pollard was among the first black priests ordained in the diocese of Virginia, a member of a cohort that included the Rev. George Freeman Bragg, the Rev. Thomas White Cain, and the Ven. James Solomon Russell. At the time of his appointment, Pollard had been serving at St. Mark's, Charleston, South Carolina, where he and his congregation had been forced to endure the indignity of being denied seat and voice in the diocesan convention. Pollard bore the indignity with grace, which contributed to Bishop Cheshire's decision to call Pollard to serve in this diocese.



John Henry Mingo Pollard (1855-1908)

Pollard spent the first year of his tenure getting familiar with the existing black congregations and with the students and faculty of St. Augustine's, reporting that he "spent many hours in the chapel services, in the recitation rooms, and in a social way among the teachers and the students, and have been more than pleased on the one hand with the good examples of the teachers and their aptitude in imparting knowledge to the students, and on the other hand the willingness and readiness of the students to follow the instruction and guidance of their teachers." Pollard could report increases in the number of families and in the amount of contributions from black members of the church. But he underscored the need for more

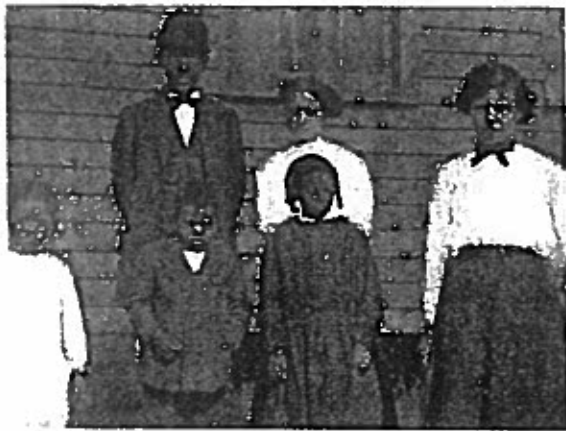
and better church buildings. He hoped to build three new churches and complete ten unfinished buildings, at an estimated cost of \$7,000.

According to Pollard, "Neat, comfortable, and substantial churches would do more for the cause than any amount of preaching. Indeed, we must first get hold of the people and then instruct them, and to do this we must have comfortable houses wherein we can invite them and *then* the way will be easy." Pollard would re-issue the same appeal the following year: "I must report again this year that we need \$7,000 for building purposes and can not make real progress until proper buildings can be secured." That said, Pollard was able to report the 1899 consecration of two handsome and substantial churches: St. Luke's, Tarboro, and St. Michael & All Angels, Charlotte—where Perry and Alston respectively had been working diligently and effectively since the early 1880s.

The centerpiece of Pollard's tenure as Archdeacon was his work in Littleton, on the border of Halifax and Warren Counties. To grasp what Pollard was trying to achieve, one must first appreciate Littleton's cultural and political significance in the 1890s. From 1872 to 1901, the center of black political power and influence in North Carolina was the second congressional district, nicknamed the "black second." By the 1890s, forces were arrayed to curtail, if not destroy, that political power base—and these efforts prevailed by 1900, when a highly restrictive voting rights amendment was passed.

One of the ploys used to restrict black political power was the redrawing of districts, and this is exactly what happened to the second congressional district. It was first drawn in 1872 to put all the black-majority counties in North Carolina into one district, thereby making it easier for the whites-only Democrats to dominate the other districts. The two counties with the highest percentage of black residents in 1880 were Warren and Halifax counties (71.8% and 69.8% respectively). In 1890 the "black 2nd" was redrawn to ensure that it would no longer have a sizeable black majority; Jones, Vance, and Craven (all majority black) counties were removed and Wayne County (majority white) was added.

The Congressional representative for the second district in 1890 was an African-American, Henry Plummer Cheatham; to continue to represent his district, he needed to leave his home in Henderson (Vance County) and take up residence elsewhere. He chose Littleton as his new base of operations. Cheatham brought with him a young St. Augustine's graduate named Virgil Bond, who had been making his home with the Cheatham family and who, along with Mrs. Cheatham (also a St. Augustine's graduate), had been supporting a parochial school in Henderson. Now the Cheathams and Virgil Bond were prepared to do the same thing in Littleton.



Virgil N. Bond with assistants and pupils
St. Anna's School, Littleton 1912

In October 1893 a parochial day school was established, and a St. Augustine's graduate named Clara Leary (a former classmate of Virgil Bond) moved in with the Cheatham family to teach. Within a year, the school had grown from 3 children to 49. Archdeacon Walker provided modest funds and served as the priest in charge, visiting monthly. Virgil Bond would subsequently arrange for the purchase of property for a chapel, and would continue to serve as lay-reader, schoolmaster, and catechist for the new St. Anna's Mission.

When Pollard succeeded Walker as archdeacon in 1898, the initiatives already begun in Littleton greatly expanded. Working closely with Virgil Bond, Pollard gained Bishop Cheshire's approval in 1901 for the purchase of a 31-acre farm on the outskirts of Littleton, had the chapel moved to this site, and began to operate a farm and training school in addition to the already-flourishing parochial school. Pollard

himself moved with his family to Littleton in 1901 in order to be more personally involved in this new initiative.

To understand why this was so appealing to Pollard, it is important to note two things:

1. The confluence of significant black leadership in Littleton. In addition to Bond and Cheatham, there was another prominent figure: G. Ellis Harris. Like Bond and Mrs. Cheatham, Harris was a St. Augustine's graduate. Harris would make a name for himself as an educator in Halifax County. He authored the 1901 *North Carolina Constitutional Reader*—a primer designed to promote black literacy in a valiant effort to counter restrictive voting measures. He and his family were also supporters of this parochial school—and of the local public schools. So, Pollard's move from Raleigh to Littleton begins to make sense when one stops to consider the leadership cadre that was in Littleton at that time.

2. Moreover, we need to consider Pollard's background and training in Southern Virginia and his stated preference for rural life. In 1902, Pollard was invited to make a speaking tour of the North, and he returned more convinced than ever that he had made a sound choice in moving to Littleton. He told the diocesan convention:

I had an excellent opportunity of studying the condition of the negroes in the North and with all the boasted advantages of that section, I saw nothing to change my firm conviction of twenty years' standing that, after all, the South is the place for the negro, and the country, not the towns and cities. To-day the negroes in the country, though deprived of many advantages offered others living in the towns and cities, especially the education of their children, are still a better people in every way. They have accumulated more property, live in better houses, are purer in their lives and superior in morals. They are more independent in character as men and women, and represent all that is best in an uncultured people.

Pollard's way of addressing the educational needs of the rural south was to start what was called an

“industrial training school,” where practical and marketable skills could be gained. This closely paralleled efforts in Southside Virginia where the Archdeacon for Colored Work was an old friend of Pollard’s--the Ven. James Solomon Russell, founder of St. Paul’s Institute in Lawrenceville, Virginia. Pollard and Russell had prepared together for ordained ministry in Petersburg. It could hardly be an accident that both these men were doing very similar work and in close proximity; about 30 miles separate Littleton and Lawrenceville.

Perhaps Littleton would have continued to develop and become an institution as extensive as Lawrenceville. But in 1906 there was a devastating fire that destroyed the school buildings, and in 1908 Pollard died unexpectedly. Cheatham had relocated to Oxford in 1907. That left Virgil Bond and the Harris family to carry on in Littleton.

Also momentous was the 1906 decision of the American Church Institute for Negroes (ACIN) to target three southern Episcopal institutions as the exclusive recipients of northern white philanthropy by Episcopalians. They were: The Bishop Payne Divinity School in Petersburg; St. Paul’s Institute in Lawrenceville, and St. Augustine’s in Raleigh, with the expectation that they would produce “clergymen at Petersburg, farmers and mechanics at Lawrenceville, teachers and nurses at Raleigh.” So, even without the disruptions of fire, death, and removal, there would have been no northern monies available for building and expansion at Littleton.

Pollard, of course, did not limit his work to Littleton. Indeed, he served as priest-in-charge for eight different congregations in addition to the more general oversight he exercised over all the black mission work of the diocese. Starting in 1901, this general oversight also included serving as the co-convener with the bishop of an annual convocation of the black clergy and congregational representatives. At these two-day annual meetings, there were reports from the various clergy and congregations, along with an opportunity for taking up matters of shared concern. In 1903, for example, the convocation endorsed Pollard’s plan for linking the three congregations in Warren County into one mission,

centered in Warrenton. The convocation also endorsed Pollard’s three-fold appeal for funds: 1) For “friends in the North” to give \$5,000 for building chapels and schools at Littleton, Warren County, Oxford, and Salisbury; 2) For “friends in the South” to give \$2,000 for a lot and chapel in Durham, and 3) For “colored Churchmen throughout the country to give me \$1,000 for the building of a chapel at Warrenton to be known as All Saints Memorial, in memory of the Rev. Thomas White Cain, who perished in the great flood at Galveston in 1900.” The Convocation was also instrumental in establishing a mission in Oxford, North Carolina in 1903.

The creation of the Colored Convocation was part of a major restructuring by the diocese of its mission work, which also saw the creation of convocations for Raleigh and Charlotte and the appointment of archdeacons to organize their efforts. It also brought the Diocese of North Carolina into closer conformity with the prevailing organizational structure for black ministry in other southern dioceses, where separate “colored convocations” were the norm. In the rest of the Jim Crow South, the existence of the colored convocation was used to keep black clergy and congregations from full representation in the diocesan convention, and a proposal to do that here was introduced in 1903, but rejected. Bishop Cheshire, like Lyman and Atkinson before him, upheld the unity of black and white congregations in diocesan convention, and his convictions prevailed.



GATHERING OF THE CONVOCATION OF COLORED WORK.

The Carolina Churchman, October 1912

For the black clergy and congregations, the convocation provided opportunities to express racial solidarity and mutual support. Bishop Cheshire relied upon the convocation to provide him with guidance in dealing with issues of import to black congregations.

But for many white Episcopalians in North Carolina, the segregation of black and white congregations allowed whites to remain indifferent to the needs and conditions of their black co-religionists. Throughout the period from 1890 to 1928, white Episcopalians in North Carolina largely ignored appeals for financial support of black congregations, even when issued eloquently and annually by Bishop Cheshire himself. The work of ministry in black communities was almost exclusively supported by northern philanthropists and by blacks themselves.

In his final report to the 1908 diocesan convention, Pollard noted that personal sickness and extra-diocesan work on behalf of the Board of Missions had prevented him from maintaining a full schedule of services and visitations. He did point to the beginnings of a mission in Winston-Salem as an important expansion of the ministry under his supervision, and to the encouraging prospects for new work in Salisbury and Greensboro. Alas, Pollard would not live to see this brought to fruition. He died a few months later, in August 1908.



George Crummell Pollard (1880-1949)
From Franklin County Heritage, Vol. 1, 2008

But the work Pollard initiated would bear fruit, not only in the ministrations of his successor, but also in those of his son. In 1901 Archdeacon Pollard had

installed his son George as the catechist, lay reader, and schoolmaster for St. Matthias', Louisburg, while the father continued as priest in charge. For the next 48 years, George Pollard would serve faithfully in Louisburg and continue the parochial school there. Beginning in 1921, he extended his lay reading to Henderson as well. George Pollard, along with Virgil Bond, deserve recognition for their steadfast commitment to educational and congregational leadership in black congregations that were only intermittently receiving the ministrations of the clergy.

1908-1928: Archdeacon and Bishop Henry B. Delany

Upon Archdeacon Pollard's death, Bishop Cheshire named the Ven. Henry B. Delany to succeed him. By this time, Delany had extensive experience with the black congregations of the diocese. He had been the organizing priest for St. Matthias', Louisburg; All Saints, Warrenton; and St. Simeon's, Satterwhite; he assisted at St. Augustine's and St. Ambrose' in Raleigh, and he supplied throughout the diocese. He was Vice-Principal at St. Augustine's School and had an extensive network of former students upon which to draw.

As Archdeacon, Delany quickly saw to the organization of new congregations in Greensboro (Redeemer, 1909), Rocky Mount (Holy Hope, 1909), Durham (St. Titus, 1909), and Henderson (Resurrection, 1910). In Henderson and Durham, Delany was building upon work that had been started earlier, but had floundered. In all four instances, he was able to utilize his prior associations and the network of St. Augustine's students and alumni to good advantage.

Perhaps the initiative closest to his heart, however, was the building of All Saints', Warrenton, as a memorial to the Rev. Thomas White Cain, the black priest who had perished in the 1900 Galveston flood. This proposal had been broached by Archdeacon Pollard as early as 1901, and Pollard had hoped to raise funds for this project from the black congregations of the entire Episcopal Church. The project languished, however, because the All Saints congregation could not find a building site for a black

church acceptable to the white establishment of Warrenton. By 1910 this problem had been overcome, and in 1913 work commenced on a handsome building of solid concrete blocks, dressed to appear as stone. To underwrite the cost of construction, Archdeacon Delany, with the enthusiastic support of the Rev. George Freeman Bragg and his publication *The Church Advocate*, issued an appeal to the black congregations throughout the Episcopal Church. Bragg suggested that every black Sunday School be told the story of Thomas White Cain and asked to contribute the cost of at least one building block.



Thomas Cain Memorial Church (All Saints' Mission, Warrenton)
The Carolina Churchman, July 1914

Why was the Rev. Thomas Cain so revered? And why was it fitting that his memorial be erected in Warrenton? In part, the answer rests in the fact that Cain was one of a trio of prominent black Episcopal priests who were ordained and served together in Southern Virginia in the 1870s and 80s, all of whom hailed originally from Warren County, North Carolina: Thomas Cain, George Freeman Bragg, and James Solomon Russell. The fourth priest in their cohort was John Pollard. So, for Bragg and Pollard, the connection with Cain was deeply personal. Delany, through his long association with the Warrenton congregation, evidently shared those sympathies. Beyond these personal ties, however, was the fact that Cain had been chosen to represent the Diocese of Texas as a clerical deputy to General Convention, the only black priest so chosen throughout the Episcopal Church. Thus, Cain stood as a symbol of the longed-for equal recognition of black and white priests in the councils of the Church. And his memorial was intended to reflect the vicarious participation of all black Episcopalians in the validation of Cain's leadership. Delany was justly pleased to announce in 1918 that

funding for the building did indeed include \$500 in pledges from the national Colored Conference.

By 1918, Delany had been Archdeacon for ten years. He was now to serve—not only in that capacity—but also as Suffragan Bishop, with responsibility for Episcopal oversight of the black convocations of all the dioceses in North and South Carolina. In 1906 the black clergy and congregations of North Carolina had overwhelmingly endorsed Bishop Cheshire's appeal to remain within the existing diocesan convention and not form a separate organization. But on the issue of the Episcopate, the North Carolina black leadership, clergy and lay, had come to endorse the widespread call for General Convention to create a Missionary District for black convocations and appoint a black Missionary Bishop. In 1913, and again in 1916, the Colored Convocation asked the North Carolina Diocesan Convention to support this proposal, and with Bishop Cheshire's endorsement, the Convention complied. In his 1917 report to Convention, Delany registered disappointment on behalf of the entire Convocation at the defeat of this plan, but then added that he hoped for speedy application of the plan for providing black Suffragan Bishops. Within a year, Delany would find himself nominated and elected to this office.



Henry Beard Delany (1858-1928)

Delany was consecrated bishop in the Chapel at St. Augustine's on November 21, 1918. On December 1, in his first official act outside of Raleigh, Delany held the first public service in All Saints', Warrenton. It marked the culmination of a decade-long endeavor to at last make good on the proposal to have a fitting memorial to the Rev. Thomas Cain in his hometown of Warrenton.

For the next ten years, Delany would be asked to provide Episcopal oversight of the black congregations of five dioceses—three in North Carolina and two in South Carolina—and continue his work as Archdeacon. Clearly, the latter role suffered for the sake of the former. Whereas, in his first decade as Archdeacon, Delany had overseen the expansion of black ministry in Rocky Mount, Salisbury, Greensboro, Durham, Henderson, and Monroe, along with the building of All Saints', Warrenton, substantial congregational development ceased upon his becoming Bishop. By 1925 Delany no longer enjoyed good health, and he died in 1928.

1929-1959: A Declaration of Unity & Equality; A Mission Neglected

For all intents and purposes, the period for developing black congregations in the Diocese of North Carolina was now at an end. Rather than call for the election of a new Suffragan Bishop to succeed Delany, Bishop Coadjutor Edwin Penick took up Episcopal oversight for black congregations in the diocese, and the entire convocational system was overturned in favor of a centralized administration. Henceforth all diocesan mission work would fall under the purview of a single Department of Missions that would answer to Executive (now Diocesan) Council.

Bishop Cheshire was ambivalent about the change; Bishop Penick embraced it, and fully implemented it upon becoming the Diocesan Bishop in December 1932. In 1935 Bishop Penick set forth his understanding of how the change impacted work among African Americans. He began:

For many years, the Negro in North Carolina has been a member of the Diocesan Convention, with

all its rights and privileges. He is a member of the Executive Council, not as a representative of his race, but as a representative of this Diocese, elected by this convention. . . . In other words, the North Carolina Negro Churchman is a constituent part of our Diocesan life and participates, on an equal footing, with others in legislative and administrative affairs. Within the past year, our Executive Council has eliminated the distinction between white and Negro work and has combined the parishes and missions of both races under the one designation, "Diocesan Missions." . . . The time is at hand when we should stop making both white and colored people racially self-conscious by setting up differences within the family of God's children, a family where the white work is considered the normal function of the Church, and the Negro work as a kind of appendix that threatens to weaken the health of the body. What then is the policy of our Diocese towards the Negro? It is to regard him and to treat him in that spirit of comprehensiveness which has always been the genius of the Holy Catholic Church, wherein there is "neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, bond nor free." To this attitude we expect the Negro for his part to respond. He has his contribution to make to the welfare of the body of Christ. Let him make his contribution with pride and self respect, and according to his natural genius and racial talents. . . . There is nothing novel about such a policy in North Carolina. It is as old as the universal Christian Church. The only novel feature about it is that we are putting into practice what we have long professed with our lips.

Penick was sounding the now-familiar note of catholicity and calling once more for the church to practice what it professes. There is much to commend in this effort to normalize mission with African Americans and to do away with parallel structures. As George Esser observed, this change in policy served the diocese well when it came time to desegregate in the 1960s, especially the insistence upon black representation on all governing committees and departments of Council.

But in hindsight the defects of Bishop Penick's policy are also apparent. For in dismantling the diocesan

structure which had supported black ministry for almost forty years, the Bishop made no alternative provision for black congregational support and development. Nor did he make any provision for black leadership within the diocese. After Delany's death in 1928, the diocese would wait forty years before calling another African American to serve on diocesan staff. Moreover, a 1935 report on "Negro Education in our Diocese" declared, "If there are at present Parochial schools in our Diocese, a very brief study of the State Educational System will readily indicate that these Parochial schools have outgrown their usefulness." But as our survey has indicated, parochial schools went hand-in-hand with black missions from the outset and were indeed considered the very lifeblood of congregational vitality. Simply consigning them to irrelevance did nothing to give black clergy and congregations a fresh vision for how to do mission and ministry.

Thus, it is scarcely surprising that the 1930s and 40s saw no substantial investment in black congregations. Promising young black priests left the diocese. Among those to depart were Bishop Bravid Harris, another Warrenton native, who grew up in All Saints', attended St. Augustine's, served briefly in his home parish from 1922 to 1924, and left for Southern Virginia, where he would serve as a parish priest, then Archdeacon, and then as the first Executive Secretary for Negro Work in the National Church, before concluding his illustrious ministry by serving as Missionary Bishop of Liberia. A decade after Bishop Bravid Harris, another Warren County native, the Ven. Odell Greenleaf Harris, would attend St. Augustine's, again briefly serve his home parish, again move to Southern Virginia, and ultimately succeed Bravid Harris as Archdeacon.

By the 1950s the Diocese came to the belated recognition that its black congregations were facing significant challenges: buildings in poor repair, declining membership, and part-time, non-resident clergy. In a 1959 report on the State of the Church, the committee expressed a genuine concern for our Negro Churches, declaring, "It is a tragic sight to see the Episcopal Church in North Carolina, which for some years has spearheaded work among Negro people with such bold advance steps as the establishment of

St. Agnes and Good Samaritan Hospitals, the establishment of St. Augustine's College and even the election of a suffragan bishop, Bishop Delany, now to see this ministry so badly neglected. The shortage of Negro clergy is acute. . . . The last year that a Negro clergyman graduated from the Seminary into this Diocese was 1952."

A candid, historically-informed assessment would have recognized that the symptoms manifest in the 1950s were not of recent origin. Black congregations had often been underserved and under-supported. What sustained black congregations in spite of these disadvantages were the remarkable leaders, many formed for ministry and service at St. Augustine's in Raleigh, who gave generously of themselves. Certainly, Bishop Delany stands at the head of that group, but he is not alone. John W. Perry and Primus Alston did remarkable work over the course of decades as schoolmasters and priests. George Pollard and Virgil Bond were likewise steadfast in their devotion to the roles of schoolmaster and lay reader.



Nannie Logan James Delany, Secretary of the Colored Convocation of the Woman's Auxiliary, 1903-1928

St. Augustine's graduates such as Nannie James Delany, Mary Pettipher Perry, Clara Leary, Catharine Perry Weston, Constance S. Young, Esther Bryan Fountain, Anna Fennell Black, and Anna Burgess

Johnson served as teachers and/or officers of the Woman's Auxiliary Colored Convocation (1903-1934), later called the Negro District (1935-1954).

Indeed, if there is any constant in the story of black congregational vitality in the Diocese of North Carolina, it is the contribution of St. Augustine's School. At the conclusion of a 1959 report calling for immediate attention to the critical need for black clergy to serve black congregations, the Committee on Negro Work offered the following way forward. Pointing to the work then being done by five pre-theological students at St. Augustine's College under the direction of the Chaplain, the Committee observed:

Four students have served St. Matthias, Louisburg with excellent results. Sunday School and Lay Services are conducted regularly each Sunday, with the Chaplain serving one Sunday each month for Communion Services. Confirmation Classes have been trained by these students. It is reported that the whole life of this mission has been revitalized. One student is serving at St. Luke's, Tarboro, and his work there under the direction of Rev. [John] Spong has produced phenomenal results. This is what can be done when an inspiring and enthusiastic leadership is available.

Much the same could have been said of St. Luke's, Tarboro, in the 1880s; or St. Anna's, Littleton, in the 1890s; or All Saints', Warrenton, in the 1910s. There is much to honor in the legacy of our black congregations and their leaders, even as there is much to lament in the conditions under which black congregations and leaders have been compelled to serve.

A Note on Sources

This essay draws principally upon material found in the Journals of Diocesan Convention and in the monthly publication of the Episcopal Church's Board of Missions, *The Spirit of Missions*. Both of these sources are now available on-line:

<http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/serial?id=icepisdionc>

<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/005947667>.

The Reports cited in the essay are found in the Diocesan Archives in Raleigh. Background information on the Episcopal Church in North Carolina comes from Lawrence London and Sarah Lemmon, eds., *The Episcopal Church in North Carolina, 1701-1959*.

For North Carolina culture and politics, see Eric Anderson, *Race and Politics in North Carolina 1872-1901: The Black Second* and Paul D. Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900*. Other books cited include Eric Anderson and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *Dangerous Donations: Northern Philanthropy and Southern Black Education, 1902-1930*, and Worth Earlwood Norman, Jr., *James Solomon Russell: Former Slave, Pioneering Educator, and Episcopal Evangelist*.

For inquiries contact history@episdionc.org

Journal Listings for Historically Black Congregations in the Diocese of North Carolina

Information about history and closing dates for all churches available at: <https://www.dionc.org/short-sketches-of-historically-black-churches.html>

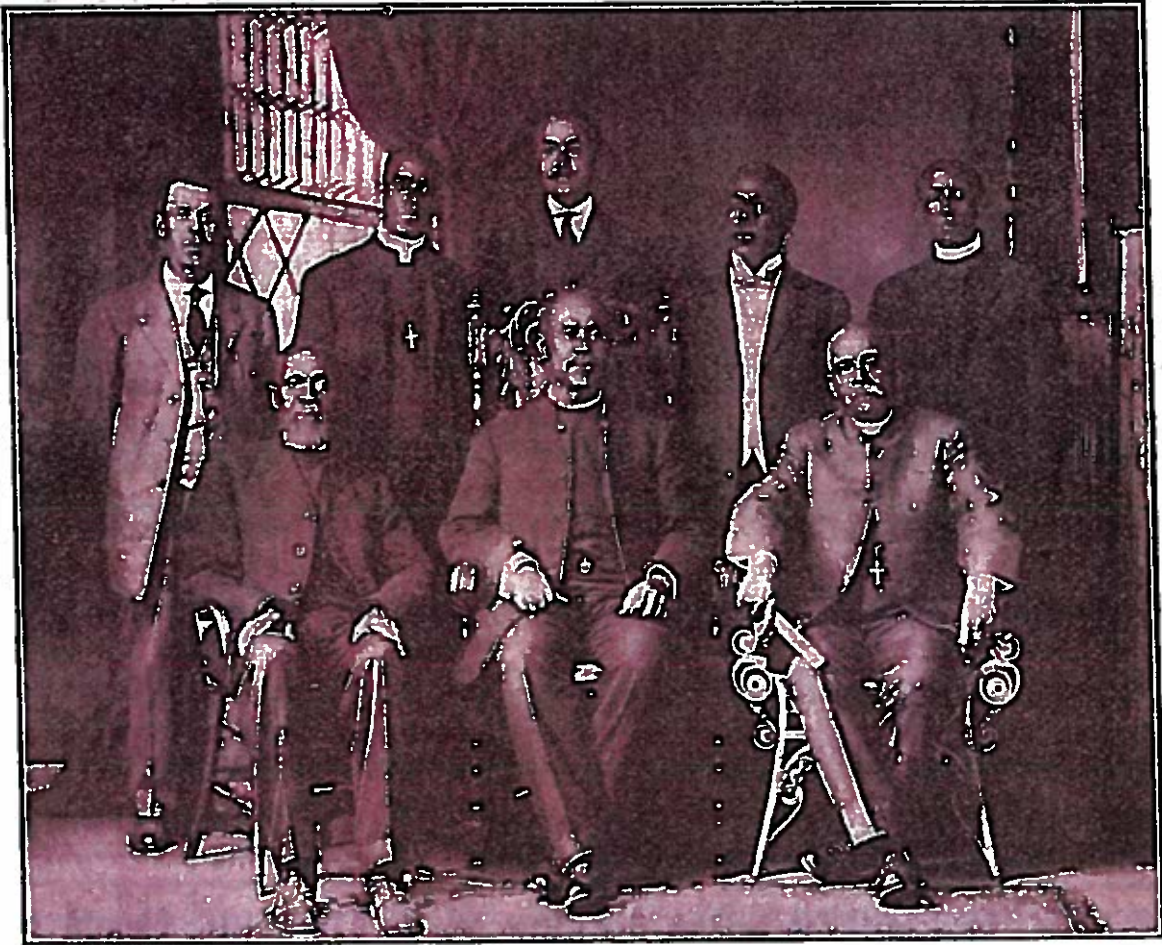
1897 - Archdeacon Walker	1908 - Archdeacon Pollard	1928 - Suffragan Bishop/Archdeacon Delany	1959 - Bishop Penick	2018 - Bishop Rodman
Charlotte, St. Michael & All Angels Concord	Charlotte, St. Michael & All Angels +	Charlotte, St. Michael's (Or)	Charlotte, St. Michael & All Angels (P)	Charlotte, Chapel of Christ the King (M) Charlotte, St. Michael & All Angels (M)
	Durham, St. Titus' (Or)	Durham, St. Titus' (M)	Durham, St. Titus' (P)	Durham, St. Titus' (P)
	Greensboro, Redeemer (Un)	Greensboro, Redeemer (M)	Greensboro, Redeemer (P)	Greensboro, Redeemer (P)
	Henderson, Resurrection (Un)	Henderson, Resurrection	Henderson, Resurrection	
Littleton Mission	Littleton, St. Anna's	Littleton, St. Anna's (Un)	Littleton, St. Anna's (Un)	
Louisburg, St. Matthias	Louisburg, St. Matthias	Louisburg, St. Matthias (Un)	Louisburg, St. Matthias (M)	Louisburg, St. Matthias (M)
Noise, St. Philip's	Noise, St. Philip's	Monroe, Holy Trinity (Or)	Monroe, Holy Trinity	
Pittsboro, St. James	Oxford, St. Cyprian's	Oxford, St. Cyprian's (Un)	Oxford, St. Cyprian's	Oxford, St. Cyprian's (M)
Raleigh, St. Ambrose	Pittsboro St. James	Pittsboro St. James (Or)	Pittsboro, St. James	
Raleigh, St. Augustine's	Raleigh, St. Ambrose	Raleigh, St. Ambrose (P)	Raleigh, St. Ambrose (P)	Raleigh, St. Ambrose (P)
	Raleigh, St. Augustine's +	Raleigh, St. Augustine's (Or)	Raleigh, St. Augustine's (M)	
		Rocky Mount, Holy Hope (Un)	Rocky Mount, Holy Hope (M)	
Satterwhite	Satterwhite, St. Simeon's	Salisbury, St. Philip's (Un)	Salisbury, St. Philip's (M)	
Tarboro, St. Luke's	Statesville, Holy Cross	Satterwhite, St. Simeon's (Un)	Satterwhite, St. Simeon's (U)	
Warren County, St. Luke's	Tarboro, St. Luke's	Statesville, Holy Cross (Un)	Statesville, Holy Cross (M)	
Warrenton, All Saints	Warren County, St. Luke's	Tarboro, St. Luke's (P)	Tarboro, St. Luke's (M)	Tarboro, St. Luke's (M)
Wilson, St. Mark's	Warrenton, All Saints	Warren County, St. Luke's (Un)		
	Wilson, St. Mark's	Warrenton, All Saints (Or)	Warrenton, All Saints (M)	Wilson, St. Mark's (M)
		Wilson, St. Mark's (Or)	Wilson, St. Mark's (M)	Winston-Salem, St. Stephen's (P)
		Winston-Salem, St. Stephen's (On)	Winston-Salem, St. Stephen's (M)	

Note: Southern Pines, Weidon and other white congregations report black members

Note: All churches listed alphabetically by town, with designations of (colored) or (col) used throughout the journal. Missions entitled to representation indicated by +

Note: Each church is designated as a Parish (P), an Organized Mission (M), or an Unorganized Mission (U)

Note: In the 2017 Journal of Convention (now online) the Parochial Reports - Statistical section designates each church as a Mission (M) or a Parish (P)



THE COLORED CLERGY IN THE DIOCESE OF NORTH CAROLINA

The Carolina Churchman, March 1914

Clergy active in 1914, in order of seniority by ordination date:

John William Perry (1887), Rector of St. Luke's, Tarboro (*seated at left*)

Henry Beard Delany (1892), Archdeacon for Work Among Colored People and Priest-in-Charge in Durham, Louisburg, Statesville, Warren County and Pittsboro (*seated in middle*)

James Edward King (1904), Priest-in-Charge, St. Michael and All Angels, Charlotte (*seated at right*)

Charles Henry Male (1905), Priest-in-Charge, St. Cyprian's, Oxford, and St. Simeon's, Satterwhite

Robert Nathaniel Perry (1907), Minister-in-Charge, Wilson and Rocky Mount

James King Satterwhite (1910), Rector, St. Ambrose', Raleigh (*standing far right*)

Josephus McDonald (Deacon 1913), Missions in Greensboro and Winston-Salem

Joseph Hoyle Hudson (Deacon 1913), Missions in Littleton and Warrenton