Lafayette Episcopal Church Was Organized by St. Martin Pastor

In the latter part of March, 1845, Rev. Lucius M. Purdy, then resident in St. Martinville, organized an Episcopal parish at Vermillionville, as Lafayette was then called, under the name of St. Luke's Church. On April 14, 1845, the parish was admitted into union with the convention. Thus was the seed of this faith sown in the area.

But an interval of years elapsed before any additional activity was resumed. Breaking this interim of 24 years was the visit on March 22, 1871 of Bishop Warner, who held two services and confirmed six persons during his visit.

The council of 1874 dropped the parish from its register as “non-existent”.

Another interval elapsed ... years—and the Rev. E. W. Hunter in 1885 re-established the services, the first in 40 years of a stated character. The devoted churchmen of this place declared their willingness to renew the work, and under the name of St. Michael's church, the seed of a parish took root at last. The services were held in the Presbyterian house of worship, with seven confirmed persons in the mission.

The services continued in the Presbyterian church until the Parkersons, the Bills and the Cossers commenced the church on Jefferson Street that was used by the congregation for almost 40 years. The debt was raised and the building consecrated about the year 1911.

Reverend C. C. Kramer was the priest in charge during the building of the edifice, and when Mr. Kramer gave up Lafayette, it was joined to Crowley under Rev. Mr. George S. Gibbs, who was in charge of the church in Lafayette when it was consecrated.

When Mr. Gibbs was ill for several years, Reverend R. R. Diggs took over the mission temporarily and continued in “temporary charge” for 32 years. Mr. Diggs had charge of the student work at Southwestern Louisiana Institute from the start until his resignation.

In January, 1945, the Reverend J. Boyes Jardine took charge of the parish here. He continued services in the Jefferson street church until 1949, when he moved to the new parish house at 1030 Johnston st. The new building was consecrated in February of 1949, and its ample quarters have afforded wide expansion of the parish’s activities.

**Had Light Moments**

Reverend Diggs now resides in New Iberia and his memories of his pastorate here are still fresh, and are often amusing.

He tells of the day when after the communion service was over he said to the person who attended to the altar, “Where in the world did you get that wine? It was the strongest wine I ever tasted—indeed it nearly knocked me backward when I consumed it.” The lady replied, “Why it came from the regular bottle that I bring every Sunday”. Then she thought a moment and said, “Angels and ministers of grace, defend us—I brought the whiskey!”

“In order to get to Lafayette from New Iberia for the 9:00 a.m. service on Sunday, a kind appearing taxi driver and his wife took me up and brought me back immediately afterward to be in time for the 11:00 o’clock service in New Iberia”, the retrospective Reverend Diggs relates. “Once when the service ended in Lafayette they failed to appear and one of the kind ladies in the congregation sent me home in her car. This particular couple never came for me again. Upon inquiring I found out that they had been arrested for selling marihuana cigarettes!”

Once when he was marrying a couple from Texas, Reverend Diggs was about to marry the best man to the bride, when the groom stepped up and said “No, Old Boy! That’s my gal!”

Reverend Diggs tells of a transient couple who asked him to perform a marriage ceremony and asked permission to decorate the church accordingly. “I happened to drop in while they were so doing and found them smoking cigarettes in the church,” the minister states. “When I requested them to stop they replied, ‘If we can’t smoke in this church we won’t get married in it either’, so they picked up their wedding trappings and left.”