



Blue Bell, Pennsylvania

St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church

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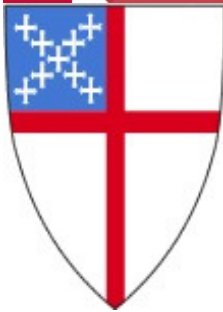
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Much of the earliest history of St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church was recorded and/or preserved by founding member Betty Longcope. Paul & Betty Longcope were founding members of St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church. Two chronologies preserved by Betty Longcope are used here:

- a signed document titled "Chronology ST. DUNSTAN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH Blue Bell, Pennsylvania," hereafter referred to as LC1;
- an unsigned document on stationery of Rev. Robert Bradley Cook, Vicar called "A BRIEF HISTORY," hereafter referred to as LCII. LCII was likely written by Reverend Cook between April 23, 1964 and September 15, 1964.

Although the church's name was not final at the time, the earliest mention of what would become St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church is this from LCII:

"In May 1963, Bishop Armstrong, appointed a three-man bishop's committee. This committee was, and still is, made up of Mr. C. Cresson Wistar. Mr. Donald E. Hogeland and Col. James D. Campbell. All of these men live in Blue Bell." - [LCII]

In another copy of this document, the words "May" were crossed out and replaced with "10 June." The next significant events in the church's history are these.

"June 10, 1963 - Rt. Rev. J. Gillespie Armstrong officially establishes an Episcopal mission in Blue Bell, PA." - [LCI]

"June 19, 1963 - Organizational meeting for the new mission held at Church of the Messiah in Blue Bell." - [LCI]

According to Betty Longcope (in a private conversation with her on June 5, 2005) the name of St. Dunstan's was chosen because it was Reverend Cook's personal choice.



"The Garage", July 10, 1963

This is the oldest known photograph of St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church. It was apparently taken by William E. Buehler, Jr. in February 1966 of an earlier photo dated July 10, 1963. Below the photo is this loving, handwritten caption --

"Our Church [illegible] [illegible]

July 10, 1963"

At the time the original photo was taken, this was still a garage. It is likely this photo was taken by one of the founders of St. Dunstan's on the day it was first acquired as our new home. Looking at this photo, I am struck by the faith, hope, and love of those adults whose dreams made St. Dunstan's happen from such humble beginnings.

From July through early September, 1963 this 3-car garage, previously owned by Mr. and Mrs. John L. Black was converted into a church. The garage church was opened and dedicated September 15, by Bishop Armstrong. At 8 AM on September 15, 1963 Bishop Armstrong celebrated the first Holy Communion at St. Dunstan's. On October 27th, 1963 our church school opened with 5 teachers and 21 pupils. Classes were held in a second floor room over the nearby Frank & Eddie's Blue Horse Tavern Restaurant.



Our first Holy Communion

September 15, 1963 in front of The Garage

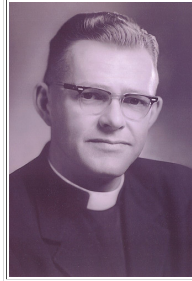
Mary Lou Blair, Rev. Robert Cook, Bishop Armstrong, Betsey Blair, Mr. Thomas A. Blair

Other firsts for St. Dunstan's church -

- first baptism October 20, 1963
- first marriage January 31, 1964

- first annual meeting April 13, 1964

On June 26, 1966 the final service was held in "The Garage."



The Reverend Robert B. Cook, first vicar of St. Dunstan's Episcopal church, June 10, 1963 - April 1965

Reverend Robert Cook was, even to this day, one of the most beloved ministers St. Dunstan's has ever had. His memory still evinces great sadness and love from the few members left who remember him. His departure in April 1965 was traumatic to the congregation.

"His [Reverend Cook's] last sermon, preached in the Garage was so beautiful. Everyone cried who heard it that day." - private conversation with Betty Longcope, June 5, 2005.

"On April 23[1964] there were 118 baptised members, and 71 communicants. Our parish has 52 families and 13 individuals total 205 baptised persons of all ages."- [LCII]

In November, 1963 title was acquired to a nine and a half acre site on Skippack Pike that had been owned by Mrs. Clarence Doan. On June 20, 1965 ground was broken for the new cathedral.



The new church building was formally dedicated on December 11, 1966.

