

# Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church

## Somerset Parish

30513 Washington Street  
Princess Anne, Maryland 21853

### **A PROPOSAL FOR THE SALE OF OLD MONIE CHURCH**

May 2009

The Vestry of Somerset Parish is considering the following proposal: Due to financial realities, Somerset Parish cannot continue to maintain Old Monie Church and as such proposes to survey and mark off for sale the Old Monie Church building and land immediately adjacent to the church for parking and possible future outbuildings. Somerset Parish desires that this building continue to be used as a spiritual center and as such proposes to arrange to sell the church and the marked off land to the current user of the facility. Somerset Parish will retain ownership of the cemetery and the woodlot and seeks to improve the cemetery with the addition of a fence to help delineate the cemetery boundaries and a sign identifying it as the "Old Monie Episcopal Cemetery" under the care of Somerset Parish.

#### HISTORY OF OLD MONIE

Old Monie Church is located in the community of Venton in Somerset County, Maryland on Venton Road. The original Old Monie Church is the second church erected in Somerset Parish, a parish established in 1692 and part of the Episcopal Diocese of Easton. The original Old Monie Church was built in 1710. The current 28 acre property in Venton includes the church building, a cemetery, and a 24 acre wood lot. The property was part of a 50 acre bequest given to Somerset Parish on February 17, 1756 by the estate of Thomas Dashiell, Sr. of Somerset County for "the use of the said Church and Parish forever." The property has been part of Somerset Parish for more than 250 years.

Old Monie became the parish church when the first parish church (circa. 1697) located on the Almodington estate was destroyed by the encroachment of the Manokin River. Old Monie remained the parish church until the mid-nineteenth century when St. Andrew's Church in Princess Anne was recognized as the primary church of Somerset Parish. On November 10, 1845, Old Monie Church was consecrated by the Bishop of Maryland, William Rollinson Whittingham, as All Saints Church.

On July 31, 1879, the church was completely demolished by a violent windstorm, throwing the church on its side. A new church building was erected on the foundation of the old structure and was consecrated for use by the Bishop of Easton, Henry Champlain Lay, on May 5, 1881.<sup>1</sup>

Around 1950 there was a fire at Old Monie church. In 1953 and again in the 1990s the church was reroofed. There is electricity but no indoor plumbing in the church.

Regular weekly Episcopal worship services have not been held at Old Monie since the 1920's. The last wardens for Old Monie were elected in the 1950's.<sup>2</sup> An annual worship service was conducted at the church through the 1990's, when the congregation worshipped at Old Monie for one Saturday evening a year followed by a picnic, usually around All Saints Day in November. In 2004 Somerset Parish entered into an agreement with Eastside Mission Ministries Church to use the Old Monie church building for their worship services and they have been faithfully meeting in the church on Sundays to this day.

In 1990 Old Monie Church was listed on the National Register for Historic Places. It was cited for "its architecture as a remarkably well preserved example of a small, rural Gothic Revival church taken from the designs of Richard Upjohn, a prominent mid-19th century architect. Upjohn published a series of designs for rural churches, parsonages, and schools which were copied or adapted widely by many small parishes nationwide. This church is one of nine known examples of this type of religious building still remaining in Maryland, one of the last of this group of nine structures built in the 19th century and is the only one to have horizontal siding. The interior of All Saints Church retains most of the original furnishings and decorative detailing. The building possesses a high degree of integrity of historic character."<sup>3</sup>

Besides the church, the property contains a cemetery more than 200 years old and a 24 acre woodlot that has been harvested many times throughout the years with the proceeds being used for the benefit of Somerset Parish. The parish pays property taxes on the woodlot portion of the property. The Fitzgerald Family has been very active for more than 20 years in the maintenance and upkeep of the cemetery and grounds.

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<sup>1</sup> The Rev. Clayton Torrence, *Old Somerset on the Eastern Shore of Maryland*, pp. 180-182.

<sup>2</sup> *Of Ancient and Apostolic Lineage: Somerset Parish 1692-1992*, p. 119.

<sup>3</sup> From the Maryland Historic Trust website:

<http://www.marylandhistoricaltrust.net/nr/NRDetail.aspx?HDID=1065&COUNTY=Somerset&FROM=NRCountyList.aspx?COUNTY=Somerset>, accessed 5/4/09.

## WHY SELL OLD MONIE?

At the 2009 Annual Parish Meeting on January 18, 2009, questions were asked about the state of the Old Monie property and the Vestry was pledged to look into this matter. The Vestry at its February 16, 2009 meeting tasked the Property Committee to investigate and report back to the Vestry on the state of the property and any recommendations for its future.

The Property Committee, in its report at the April 20, 2009 Vestry Meeting, reminded the Vestry that it had previously identified critical repairs and maintenance needed on St. Andrew's Parish Hall totaling tens of thousands of dollars. This is in addition to the replacement in the past year of St. Andrew's Church heating system. These necessary repairs and maintenance are being taken out of the parish's endowment fund. With the decline in the market Somerset Parish's endowment has decreased, meaning there are fewer funds available for these projects.

St. Andrew's Church and Parish Hall are vital properties for the life and the mission of the parish, so attention to these properties is a first priority for the church leadership.

Old Monie Church is not being used for worship or any other parish activities, and hasn't been for years. Yet it requires funds as well to maintain the church and to pay the electric bill. A survey of the church by the Property Committee in March 2009 found the need for an immediate outside paint job, plus issues with flooring and the foundation, roof and exterior wall work, and insect infestations – all estimated to cost thousands of dollars as well.

Because Old Monie Church does not play a role in the mission of the parish, it will more than likely be a last priority when funds for maintenance and repair are tight, as they are currently. This will mean that the building will continue to suffer from deferred maintenance.

It makes more sense to sell the church to the current tenants who consider this structure their home. They have a stake in keeping up the church -- it will be their first and only property priority. They have been doing what they can to keep up the structure and the church has fared better than if no entity were using it, as was the case for many years.

Somerset Parish would continue to own the woodlot, since the revenue derived from that could help finance the work of the parish, and it would continue to own the cemetery, since it is obligated to provide perpetual care for those saints from the parish who have gone before us. The proposal would also look to improve the cemetery property, from fixing markers to adding a fence and a sign clearly identifying the cemetery as belonging to Somerset Parish.

This proposal would allow more effective investment of the parish's financial resources in its remaining properties that actively serve the parishioners of Somerset Parish and provide

outreach to the community. The parish would continue to honor its commitment to the perpetual care of the cemetery by retaining and improving it. The proposal would also transfer the Old Monie Church to a church community which would be more motivated to maintain the historic structure, and the church after many decades of non-regular use would once again be an ongoing center of spirituality in that part of Somerset County.