

**A Brief History of the Church of the Holy Comforter
Monteagle Tennessee
By Warren Leigh Starrett, Jr.
Edited by James David Jones**

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See attached pages for complete text.

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William P. DuBose is remembered today primarily for the contributions that he made to the study of theology. Yet, it has come recently to light that Dr. DuBose was also a very energetic missionary in his general area. His founding of the church in Monteagle was but one of such activities. The story is told that Dr. DuBose used to ride horseback up to Gruetti, a distance of some twenty miles from Sewanee, twice a month for services for the Swiss inhabitants in the area. One Sunday he would conduct the service and preach in German and the next Sunday he would do the same in French. During the earlier days before he moved to Monteagle, Dr. DuBose and his students either walked or rode horseback the six miles separating Sewanee and Monteagle each Sunday for services in the Chapel of the Holy Comforter.

In 1878 Dr. DuBose married Mrs. Yerger at a service held in the parlor of the Fairmount School and thereafter spent even more time in Monteagle as he performed his duties as chaplain to the school and priest in charge of the chapel. Upon his retirement from the faculty of the university, Dr. DuBose lived at Fairmount College and cared for the religious needs of the school and of the townspeople. It was during this period of his life, while caring for the little chapel in Monteagle, that Dr. DuBose wrote some of his greatest books. After his retirement in 1908, he wrote *High Priesthood and Sacrifice*, *The Reason of Life*, and an autobiography, *Turning Points in My Life*, from his study in Monteagle. Here he remained as priest in charge until his death in 1918.

The Reverend Haskell DuBose, the son of the elder Dr. DuBose, succeeded his father as priest in charge of the chapel in September 1918. The Fairmount College was closed during World War I and the facilities were not used until 1921, when the site was reopened as the DuBose Memorial Church Training School (regular Sunday services had continued during the interim period). The

school was originally designed to prepare men for the seminaries of the church and later it also prepared men for ordination. The DuBose students used the Chapel of the Holy Comforter for their daily services and on Sundays the townspeople came to worship. This may have been the greatest period of the chapel's service to both the students and residents of Monteagle, for in this period there was much active co-operation between the town and the school, and the chapel was the focal point for all of it. The *Living Church Annual* for 1923 lists thirty communicants for the Chapel of the Holy Comforter, and in those days this was a proportionate segment of the community. In 1929, the Reverend Haskell DuBose retired and the faculty and students of the school took over the complete care of the chapel.

From 1929 onward there was an increased weakness developed in the relations between the townspeople and the school due to a series of regrettable incidents, which cause the chapel to suffer. The records of the *Living Church Annual* from 1938 to 1946 reveal an average yearly membership of some sixty-five members, but these statistics do not show the tragic fact that the majority of these people had ceased to attend regularly, if at all. To this day there remain quite a few people who are still living in the town, but because of the harsh feelings that grew up in the later days of the school do not attend any church at all.

The DuBose School died a natural death in 1944 and for two years students under the direction of the Reverend Robert McQueen Grant, of the School of Theology at Sewanee, cared for the chapel. The buildings had burned down once in the winter of 1924 and have been rebuilt with a more modern plant. The chapel burned down in 1950 and since then has been located in the Oratory adjacent to the DuBose buildings.

In 1946 the school buildings reopened as the DuBose Episcopal Conference Center—a much-needed meeting place and summer conference site for the Diocese of Tennessee. The Reverend Leonard Nelson was the first warden of the new center and served as priest in charge of the chapel from 1947 until 1949. The Right Reverend Frank A. McElwain, the retired Suffragan Bishop of Minnesota, succeeded Mr. Nelson in 1949 as the warden of DuBose and minister in charge of the chapel. The present warden of DuBose and priest in charge of the chapel of the Holy Comforter, the Reverend A. P. Chambliss, came to Monteagle in 1953 as the successor to Bishop McElwain.

The present picture of the Chapel is not an encouraging one, but the potential influence of the chapel in the community of Monteagle must not be underestimated. Since over one-third of the people of Monteagle do not attend any church and since there are also many former church members who could be back, the future of this mission could, in time, be a very fruitful one. What is needed is a renewed and concerted effort by all concerned.

Anyone with suggestions, comments,
or additional items for the history,
send to Jim Jones, 126 Belmont Rd.



Little Church Of The Holy Comforter -
DuBose Conference Center - Episcopal Church - Monteagle, Tenn. 1-T-121



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