

The New Church - from an engraving

1906- 1966 — The Church

ON Friday, 12th January, 1906, the second Milngavie Parish Church was dedicated at a special service, the sermon being preached and the " hallowing prayer " offered by the Moderator of the General Assembly, the Right Reverend Andrew J. Milne, LL.D., Fyvie, and the Presbytery holding a special meeting thereafter to declare the new building the church of the parish. " Opening services " on the following Sunday, 14th January,

were conducted by the Rev. Archibald Fleming, M.A., of St. Columba's, London, in the morning, and by the Rev. J. H. Dickie, M.A., of Springburn (afterwards at New Kilpatrick) in the evening. There was also an afternoon service for the children.

When they were about it, Mr. Edgar and his congregation built well. The competition for the design of the new church was won by Messrs. Leadbetter and Fairley, Edinburgh, and

when built it was described by a foremost authority as " the finest ecclesiastical building in Dumbartonshire." Of rough-hewn red sandstone, and standing on a rising site above Strathblane Road at Baldernock Road, the building impresses by its relatively large size, by its deep and wide twin-gabled transepts, by a semi-octagonal apse of rare beauty, and by the unusual shape and tracery of the windows. Those of the clerestory in the nave perhaps deserve special mention, being reminiscent of their much-admired counterparts in Sweetheart Abbey, Kirkcudbrightshire, though not directly reproduced from them. Had the high tower originally planned to rise above the main door been added, the completed edifice would have had an appearance of real distinction.

The expectation aroused by the exterior is not disappointed on entering. The sense of spaciousness, the solidity yet warmth of the stone, the symmetry and grace of the pillars, arches and windows, all combine to give an effect of beauty and strength which is entirely right in a building designed for worship, if the style is recognisable as " Scottish gothic," it is no slavish copy or imitation of the

past, but a modified version tending towards modern functionalism in its chaste simplicity.

Fittings and furnishings are in every way in keeping with their setting, and are well adapted to the essential requirements of worship in the Church of Scotland, the emphasis on Word and Sacrament being paramount. Thus the fine oak Pulpit, given by the Woman's Guild in 1906, is in a prominent and convenient position standing out from the western arm of the chancel arch, and the Communion Table is placed centrally in the lovely shallow apse where it is visible from almost every seat in the nave and transepts, and not, as in so many good churches of the period, in a long chancel where it is remote from the worshippers. A prayer-desk and lectern, at the base of the chancel arch on the east side, provide for their respective functions in worship, but it has to be admitted that the Baptismal Font, which stands temporarily to the east of the lectern, has still to find a fixed and permanent place where it will be truly " in face of the congregation."

John Edgar must have had a fine devotional sense, for not

only did he inspire the erection of this worshipful sanctuary, he also sought to use it worthily. There are hints everywhere of the order and seemliness he sought to impart to the services Sunday by Sunday, and for special occasions he drew up printed orders of service which show an informed regard for structure and content. Further, at a time when such things were little regarded in Scotland, he held services on Christmas Day and observed Easter and the other greater festivals of the Church.

It was 1912 before the total cost of the church (£7,500) was met, and this despite the most strenuous efforts of a witting congregation, but at once the minister began to take steps to enrich the praise of the sanctuary by having a good organ installed. A bazaar to raise money for this and other purposes was held in the St. Andrew's Halls, Glasgow, on three days in December, 1912, the target set being £1,750. Two years later, in December, 1914, a fine two-manual organ by Binns of Leeds was dedicated by the Rev. Professor Cooper, and an inauguration recital

given by Mr. Herbert Walton, organist of Glasgow Cathedral. By then it was becoming apparent to all that the war which had begun on 4th August would not be "over by Christmas." All the tributes paid to Mr. Edgar mention his "unbounded patriotism" and his anxiety to see service as a "fighting padre." His age prevented this, but he did go overseas for a time to act as chaplain behind the lines, and his concern for the welfare and comfort of the men at the front and their dependants was untiring.

But for the Great War and the rising costs which followed it the tower would most likely have been built and the church completed, for this was very much in the minds of minister and office-bearers and indeed a "tower fund" was started with a gift of £500. One addition to the building was made, however, at this time—the central stained glass window in the apse which commemorates those who gave their lives in the war. There is no record of the artist's name,¹ but he has produced, in fairly good modern glass, a detailed representation of the

¹ (Note)—A note added to an inventory list says "Strachan," but comparison with his other work in many parts of the country makes one doubt whether this can be the very distinguished artist. Douglas Strachan.

Crucifixion scene which can be very moving and which is a constant reminder of the spirit of sacrifice that lies at the heart of the Christian Faith: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Mr. Edgar had one more ambition for his congregation—to see the old church converted into a thoroughly equipped suite of halls. This was realised, though he did not live to see it. He was already in failing health when another bazaar was being organised to raise money for this project and was held in Milngavie Burgh Halls in October, 1924. He died in July, 1925; the "parish church halls" were dedicated five months afterwards.

John Edgar was buried in Baldernock Kirkyard, a spot he loved. Those who remember him speak with a full appreciation of the great work he did for Milngavie Parish Church and in terms of the highest regard for him as a minister and friend. He was obviously fond of a good joke, for he published a little collection of humorous stories entitled "The Dew of Youth: Humour of Pulpit, Pew and Parish." A few years after his death a stained glass window was erected to his

memory in the apse of the church. It is on the left or west side of the war memorial window, and the subject chosen is appropriately the Sermon on the Mount. In addition to the principal figures of Christ and His disciples, there is an effective symbolic use of vine, angels, cherubs, star and crown, covering not only the two main lights but also the smaller openings in the tracery. The inscription reads: "Erected by the congregation in loving memory of John Edgar, M.A., minister of this parish, 1898-1925." Messrs. William Meikle & Son of Glasgow designed and executed the window.

It was in the 1920's that the new St. Joseph's Church, painted white and prominently situated in Buchanan Street at the top of Moor Road, was opened to serve the growing R.C. community'.

The Rev. **Duncan McCorkindale**, B.D. (1925-1940), formerly minister at Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire, was inducted to the parish of Milngavie on 22nd December, having been elected by a majority of 303 votes to 41. He came "well-equipped, full of vigour and promise, and rich in experience. Everything augured well for a long and fruitful ministry, but



Rev. DUNCAN McCORKINDALE
1925- 1940

it was otherwise ordained. Failing health overtook him, and after struggling bravely against it ... he was at last compelled to resign, to the great regret of all who knew him."

These words of tribute, spoken after his death in 1947 by one who knew him well, tell in brief the story of Mr. McCorkindale's ministry. Its later years were as difficult and depressing as any in the history of the congregation, but always the courage and friendliness of the minister won the admiration and affection of his office-bearers and people, and even in

adversity some notable developments took place.

The outstanding event was the historic Union of the Churches in 1929, when after long and painstaking negotiations the United Free Church, main offspring of almost 200 years of dissent and disruption, joined with the "Established" Church to form the new Church of Scotland, spiritually free as never before and embracing the vast majority of non-Roman Catholic Christians in the country. In the local context this meant that the three principal congregations (Cairns, St. Luke's and "Parish") became sisters in the same family,¹ and one of the first steps taken was to divide the ecclesiastical parish of Milngavie into three "parish areas" and allocate one to each church. Strangely enough, this meant that before long the original parish church, named "St. Paul's" as from 1929, was left with responsibility for the smallest and least populous "third" of its former parish. but this probably reflects the relatively weak state of the congregation in 1930.

¹ (Note)—Milngavie was one of the places where a small minority of members in the United Free Church felt they could not accept the Union and went out to form the "United Free Church (Continuing)"; this was the origin of the present church in Craighdu Road at Lennox Avenue.

There were enthusiastic united services in the three churches to celebrate the 1929 Union, including a memorable Communion Service in St. Paul's, and a general spirit of harmony and amity prevailed. But one matter of dispute did arise, and was finally referred to the General Assembly of 1931 for decision: to which Presbytery of the re-united National Church should the Milngavie (and Bearsden) congregations belong? The former United Free Kirk Sessions preferred Glasgow, and pled its nearness and greater convenience; New Kilpatrick and St. Paul's argued for the maintenance of the historic tie with the County and with Dumbarton and resented "being evicted from our ancient ecclesiastical home."¹ The latter view prevailed.

It was a brave decision, in the then circumstances of the congregation, to install electric light in the church, which was originally lit by gas, but this was accomplished in 1931. Further, no matter how low financial resources might sink, sight was never lost of the

obligation to complete the church by building the tower. Time and again the kirk session discussed ways and means of doing this, but always the obstacles seem insuperable.

At the end of 1930 Mr. McCorkindale received a communication which must have served to lighten his burden, it was from a firm of solicitors, and was to the effect that a legacy had been made by Mrs. Jessie B. Robertson for the erection of a window in the church in memory of her husband and herself. Thus the stained glass in the apse was completed. This newest window, on the east side, bears the inscription: "To the Glory of God and in Memory of Dr. Peter France Robertson, V.D., and His Wife, Jessie Blackwood -1931." Dr. Robertson had been the devoted, esteemed and trusted family physician of the burgh for a life-time, a staunch churchman, and a faithful elder, and Mrs. Robertson had given practical and personal service alongside her husband in the Church and to the whole community.

¹ (Note)—On it being claimed that it was difficult and expensive for Elders to attend meetings in Dumbarton, it was retorted that: "The majority of members in the Kirk Sessions who are appealing for the Glasgow Presbytery are business men, in good financial positions, having very much the command of their own time, and indeed are much better circumstanced to attend Dumbarton than those of St. Paul's, which is essentially a working class congregation."

It is fitting that this commemorative window should have as its theme the healing of the epileptic boy (St. Matthew XVII, 14). In the two larger lights the scene is strikingly portrayed - - the distraught father kneeling down to Christ the Great Physician and pleading, " Lord, have mercy on my son," with the faithless disciples and the bystanders looking on. The smaller lights above show the shield from the coat-of-arms of Milngavie, where Dr. Robertson exercised the ministry of healing, and other badges and insignia. The artist is not known. When the window had been dedicated, everyone felt that the sanctuary had taken on something of the fullness of beauty for which it was designed, and one elder spoke of it as being now " veiled with a hallowed peace."

Continued deterioration in his health and then the outbreak of war in September, 1939, brought Mr. McCorkindale to see that he could carry on no longer. When he intimated his decision to retire, an effort was made to effect a union between St. Paul's and St. Luke's congregations, but despite several meetings between office-bearers and congregations, some attended by Presbytery repre-



Rev. DONALD M. MACDONALD
1941 - 1949

sentatives, nothing came of this. It was June, 1940, before the minister retired and permission was given to fill the vacancy.

On 23rd January, 1941, the Rev. **Donald M. Macdonald**, B.D. (1941-1949), became minister of St. Paul's. A young man, coming to his first charge after an assistantship in Dunblane Cathedral, he brought new life and hope. A daunting task awaited him, and in all directions he was hampered by the restrictions, tensions and frustrations of war-time. But by the freshness of his preaching, his diligence in visiting, and his lively approach to re-organising and building up the life of the congregation, good results were soon apparent.

An immediate need was to strengthen the Kirk Session, which had fallen to under 10 members. Then the manse in Mugdock Road—built, sold and re-bought with so much effort some 80 years before but now sadly become a burden to repair and maintain -- was sold: Mr. Macdonald, a bachelor for all his years in Milngavie, occupied several residences until in 1946 a smallish house in Glasgow Road was obtained as manse. The Sunday School, of which the minister himself acted as Superintendent for a time, was revitalised; the Congregational Board (controlling financial affairs) was restored to its rightful function; a new emphasis was placed upon the use of the Weekly Freewill Offering system; and the organisational life of the congregation was strengthened through the Woman's Guild,¹ the Girls' Association and the Badminton Club and by the formation of a Youth Fellowship.

Two projects deserve special mention. In June, 1944, a Congregational News-Sheet was published, at first twice a year but soon quarterly. (John Edgar had begun a "Miln-

gavie Parish Supplement" in March, 1906, but so far as is known only one issue ever appeared.) And it was not enough that such a magazine should be produced; Mr. Macdonald saw to it that a corps of lady visitors was recruited to deliver the News-Sheet and maintain contact between the church and the home! For some time the heating of the church had been felt to be unsatisfactory, and repairs were needed to the roof and the main steps of the building. So in 1946 an appeal was made to the congregation for £1,000 to cover these needs. This was a marked success, with the result that St. Paul's Church was one of the first to be equipped with a modern, oil-burning, thermostatically - controlled heating boiler. With slight modifications, the system worked well for the next 20 years.

This was a period too when the Milngavie churches began to work more closely together. There had been united services during the summer holidays for some years, and from at least 1945 such services were held throughout Holy Week. But in 1946 a Milngavie Churches' Expansion Movement was

¹ (Note)—During the Second World War the St. Paul's Woman's Guild knitted 4,076 woollen " comforts " for men and women on service.

launched, including "Open Door" meetings in the local picture house, and house-to-house visitation. Following upon this, a permanent Church of Scotland Joint Committee was formed in 1947 to foster co-operation among the three congregations and co-ordinate existing joint activities—one of the first local groupings of the kind in Scotland.

Mr. Macdonald fully valued having so dignified a place of worship in which to minister, and did everything possible to maintain and use it fittingly. The placing of flowers in church each Sunday became a regular care, in which some ladies of the congregation delighted to help. A pedestal Baptismal Font, "in oak to match the existing furnishings of the church," was gifted anonymously in 1948 by a member in memory of his wife, thus supplying a long-felt want.

The most hampering circumstance of Mr. Macdonald's ministry—and of his successors' until 1962—was the being deprived of the use of part of his congregation's birthright, their church halls. As already mentioned, these were used as public halls by the Town Council after the old Burgh Hall was destroyed in 1940, and the



Rev. THOMAS A. DOWNIE
1950 - 1955

church had only a very limited access to its own premises for most of 21 years, much to the detriment of its work and at no little financial loss.

When the Rev. Donald M. Macdonald was called to be minister of the Old Parish Church at Nairn in the autumn of 1949 (he was translated to Inverleith, Edinburgh, in 1960), he took with him not only a Milngavie lady as his new wife but the knowledge that the membership of the "parish" church of that burgh had grown during his years there from the 700 (approximately) at which it had stood for 40 years to 850, and that the annual givings of its people had risen from under £900 to some £2,000—

that, and the affection and regard of a congregation re-born.

The interest and worship of the congregation were well sustained during the vacancy that ended with the induction of the Rev. Thomas A. Downie, M.A. (1950-1955), on 6th June, 1950. He had been minister of the North Church, Dunfermline, for the previous nine years. Mr. Downie soon formed a deep attachment for the church and people of St. Paul's, and he devoted himself earnestly to their service.

During 1951 several important steps forward were taken—a Social Guild was formed to foster the family spirit among the members; the organ was overhauled, an electric blower replacing the old hydraulic; and the Fallen of the 1939-45 War were commemorated by the installation of a Hearing-Aid System in the church with a brass plaque affixed to the existing War Memorial.

Also in 1951 further stained glass was placed in the church. It was in the western clerestory, and was gifted by Mr. William C. Hutchison, headmaster of the local school, as a memorial to his wife, Jessie S. Hutchison, who died in January, 1951. The window is the work of the

Abbey Studios, Edinburgh, and shows " the Tree of Life with a most colourful foreground of choice flowers. The Vine (symbolic of Christ) is also depicted with the Lamp of Life, the Heart, and Victor's Crown portrayed on its branches."

The agencies and organisations of the church continued to flourish, and in particular the Sunday School grew apace, having a total of 216 boys and girls at the end of 1951; and with a view to future development several money-raising efforts were successfully held. It had all along been felt that a more commodious manse would probably be required, and in 1953 a particularly fine house in Craignillar Avenue was acquired for this purpose, the congregation turning with characteristic industry to the task of liquidating the considerable debt thus incurred. One outstanding event was a garden fete which realised £160.

What many nowadays would consider a controversial decision was taken when, after a kind of referendum of the members had been held, individual cups were introduced for Communion in April, 1954, though the rights of those who preferred to continue using the Common Cup were specifically

preserved. There was no doubt, however, about the need for the parish mission embarked upon jointly with the other local churches in connection with the "Tell Scotland" Movement in February, 1955, and which called for much careful planning and organisation and for a dedicated team of house-to-house visitors. On 22nd May that year the jubilee of the laying of the Memorial Stone of the church was marked by special services.

In November, 1955, Mr. Downie left, amid many expressions of regret, to become minister of St. Luke's Church, Edinburgh. He wrote, "I believe that just as a minister is called *to* a charge he may be called *from* it," and that this, much to his sorrow, seemed to have happened for him.

For the past ten years, from 8th May, 1956, the Rev. **John T. Peat**, M.A., until then at Lawson Memorial Church, Selkirk, has been minister at St. Paul's. He arrived at a time when, thanks to the work of his immediate predecessors, the office-bearers and congregation were ready to respond to a call for advance.

1956 was the jubilee year of the opening of the church, and a beginning had already been



Rev. JOHN T. PEAT
1956-

made towards celebrating this in a worthy way by forming a Jubilee Fund, some £500 having been gathered. (A special service to mark the event was held during the vacancy, on Sunday, 15th January, the preacher being the Very Rev. Alexander Macdonald, D.D., Moderator of the General Assembly in 1948 and father of the Rev. Donald M. Macdonald.) Now a Jubilee Scheme was launched with a target of £8,000 to be raised in three years, the money to be used in carrying out necessary repairs and renovation of the church building and providing halls accommodation.

This scheme was completed in two parts—(1) when in the summer of 1957 the church

building was repaired, cleaned and renovated, the organ console resited, and carpets and cushions fitted throughout; and (2) when the Jubilee Hall, including kitchen and toilet premises, was erected adjoining the church, the dedication in January, 1961, being by the Rev. James McCardel, D.D., formerly minister at New Kilpatrick. The total cost reached nearly £10,000, mostly direct giving by the congregation, though the effort was topped off by the "Auld Mulguy Fair," held in the local school in October, 1959, when £1,500 was raised in a single day.

Thoughtful anonymous gifts which helped to complete the improvements made at the 1957 renovation, included a cross in gilded oak for the central panel of the reredos screen, a specially made and embroidered white linen cloth for the Communion Table, and an exquisitely-worked blue pulpit fall, with Bible markers to match.

Meantime, steps were taken to develop fellowship and service in the congregation by the formation of new organisations — Men's Association (December, 1956), Young Wives' and Mothers' Fellowship (November, 1957), Girls' Guildry (now Girls' Brigade) (January, 1960),

Youth Club (January, 1961); by meetings for group Bible study; by the holding of a Mission of Friendship, including an exhibition of the work of the Church, in April, 1957; and by the arrangement of At-Homes for the members from groups of elders' districts. Two experiments that did not meet with success were mid-week services in church one evening per month, held for the benefit of Sunday workers; and the institution of a drama group (St. Paul's Players), which did stage several well-produced plays between 1958 and 1962, but then perished for lack of support.

In the winter of 1959-60 a parish mission was held, close attention being paid to house-to-house visitation, especially as residents arrived in the new Barloch housing estate, the first extensive post-war building development in St. Paul's parish area. "Christian Stewardship," a world-wide movement, came to Scotland at about this time, and in March, 1960 a campaign — on the lines of what is now known as a "parish development programme" — was carried out in St. Paul's, one tangible result being an increase in the regular week-by-week givings of the congregation



War Memorial Window

amounting to more than 70%. One high-point of worship was the united service held in October, 1960, to commemorate the fourth centenary of the Scottish Reformation, the stirring singing of the 16th century psalm-tunes being particularly memorable. The decision by the Kirk Session to have more frequent celebrations of Holy Communion—quarterly instead of half-yearly, with additional services at Christmas and Easter — dates from this 400th anniversary year.

With a new Milngavie Town Hall at last being built, the congregation had to decide what ought to be done when the old

church hall was returned to their full possession. As often, the boldest plan also appeared the wisest. Hence, though with great reluctance at parting from the scene of their origin, a special meeting in June, 1960, agreed unanimously that the old building should be disposed of and a new hall erected beside the church. Some hearts quailed at the thought of raising the large sum involved, but the New Halls Fund, launched in May, 1962, has grown spectacularly from the first. Helped by grants from some trust funds, it is confidently expected that the total cost of some £17,000 will be met by Novem-

ber this year (1966). The hall itself, which can seat about 400 and has a spacious stage, dressing rooms, and a porch connecting it with the church, was begun in April, 1963, and opened and dedicated by the Very Rev. A. C. Craig, M.C., D.D., on 3rd April, 1964.

1961 saw three developments of note. First, the hour of meeting for all departments of the Sunday School was changed from afternoon to forenoon, thus linking Sunday School with church worship and encouraging the conception of the "Family Church": this could be fully realised only after the opening of the halls adjacent to the church. Then the quarterly News-Sheet became a monthly congregational magazine, "St. Paul's News," which has proved an indispensable medium for keeping everyone informed. And thirdly, thanks to attendance being given by a number of retired gentlemen, it was possible to open the church for private meditation and prayer each week-day forenoon. Unfortunately it cannot be said that much advantage has been taken of this, but the "open door" is seen as an act of witness.

During 1962 a compact house in a more central and convenient situation in Buchanan Street was acquired and modernised to be the manse, the change being effected with some financial benefit to the congregation. A Flower Guild of church ladies had for many years seen to it that flowers adorned the worship of the sanctuary and were afterwards delivered to the homes of the sick, and this service was now greatly enhanced by the donation of two tastefully designed pedestal flower stands in wrought iron. Another generous and anonymous benefaction saw the church beautifully illumined by modern light fittings, dedicated in February, 1963; and in the following month a set of eight silver-plated Communion Patens, something for which there was real need, was gifted by Mr. John M. Breadie.

When Kirk Street church extension hall, Milngavie, was dedicated in March, 1963, St. Paul's members, and especially those who remembered "Milngavie Parish Church," took a lively interest in this first step towards founding a new parish church to serve the growing west side of the original parish. This new cause is meantime



The New Church Interior, 1940

under the tutelage of the minister and kirk session of St. Luke's congregation, and substantial progress has been made.

The goodly number of new members who had come into the fellowship of St. Paul's over some years pointed to the need for action which would at once consolidate the life of the congregation and realise more of its potential for Christianism. Campaign was felt to be the answer. It was held in the Spring of 1965, with a "family meal" attended by some 750

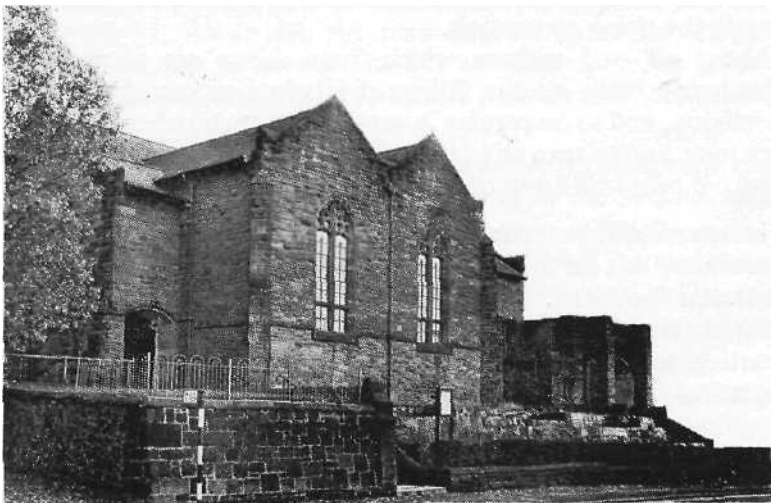
people in Crossmyloof Ice Rink, Glasgow, on 30th April, and an inspiring service of Dedication on Sunday, 30th May. More than 200 willing workers organised and ran the mammoth undertaking. Results ranged from increased attendances and givings at public worship to many additional members for organisations and almost 500 promises to take part in some form of "Christian action." All this is still being followed up.

Recent ventures have been a Nursery Club, begun in April, 1965; a Creche for babies and

young children during the forenoon service every Sunday (there had been such a creche on Communion Sundays for some years); and the introduction of a" Pathfinders "scheme, an extension of the Young Worshippers' League begun in the 1940's to encourage boys and girls to attend church worship, preferably with their parents in the family pew. There is also a Youth Council which seeks to co-ordinate the work of the various youth organisations, and to encourage the young people of the congregation to take a responsible interest in Church affairs a " Junior Kirk Session " has just been formed.

When the 125th anniversary of

the founding of the congregation, together with the diamond jubilee of the opening of the " new " church, was commemorated at a social gathering on Friday, 7th, and by special services on Sunday, 9th January, 1966, it could be stated that the communicant membership of St. Paul's was in excess of 1,200, there were 49 elders, 372 children in Sunday School and Bible Class, and the regular annual income exceeded £6,000. Statistics like these are never the only or even the best measure of the health of a Christian congregation, but they may serve as some indication of what the struggling infant church born in 1840 has become.



The New Church from N.W.