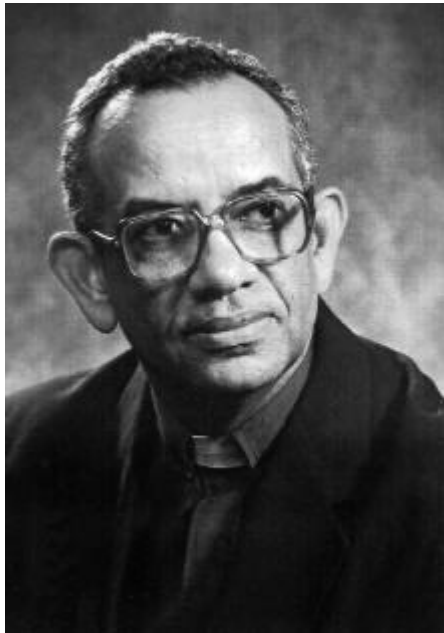


Canon Hill: A Reflection *by Franklin L Foster, Ph.D*

““He was a scholar and a gentleman.” These used to be words of high praise. Now, with both on the endangered species list, they don’t convey the same regard. However, they are certainly true of William Hill, Rector at Lloydminster’s St John’s Minster from 1972 - 1988. The scholarship began in the prestigious [St. George’s College](#), in Kingston, Jamaica, where the Jesuit fathers insisted on strict discipline and a solid classical education. The school motto was *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* (For the Greater Glory of God). Hill’s ministry began nearby in the rural community of Linstead and later in Stoney Hill, now virtually a suburb of Kingston. Then there was further ministry and study in the United States before the new university graduate found himself labouring in the small parishes of Western Canada. Parishioners who knew him still remember his thorough knowledge of The Bible and devotion to Church traditions.



Canon Hill, as he was affectionately known by those in and out of the church, served in Lloydminster during a time of transition - the early years of the Anglican Church’s efforts to adjust itself to attract that elusive social segment known as “the youth”. One example of this was a new prayer book, entitled vaguely *The Book of Alternative Services*. For Canon Hill, schooled in the redolent language of the King James Bible, and the older Book of Common Prayer; the new service seemed to be at a loss of tradition and poetry. In response to the *BAS* omitting the traditional sections for Catechism, he authored a booklet entitled *Manual for Christian Essentials* modeled (with permission) on Catechismal guides in both the United States and the West Indies. This, he stated, was in the hope that “no one would be embarrassed by the question, ‘What is it that

Anglicans believe?’.” Then, as a loyal churchman, he guided the congregation through the seemingly inevitable controversy surrounding the new prayer book.

Reflecting on this ironic penchant for controversy in churches, Canon Hill once wrote:

The trials and tribulations of one period may seem trivialities to people of another time. For years a great debate took place in our parish concerning the wisdom of trying to maintain our present church building. Some were obsessed with the idea that in a short while the building would cave in - even before the Second Coming, while others were equally convinced that even if heaven and earth passed away, St John’s Minster would stand.

Revealed in this quote is that mixture of scholarly detachment, open mindedness, and sense of humour which make up a gentlemanly attitude.

The building controversy was eventually met with a compromise - the building of St. John's Parish Hall - a project that Canon Hill supervised, culminating in its official dedication on November 5, 1975. The hall was to meet the needs of the hoped for church expansion while serving the community as a venue for music, drama and community events. It was at the time, along with the high school auditorium, the only place in Lloydminster that could accommodate a large community gathering.

As the current St. John's Minster Rector, Canon Michael Stonhouse, comments, however:

We mourn the passing of Canon William H. Hill, a well-loved former pastor of Lloydminster and district. Coming first to the Northminster and Lashburn parishes north and east of the city, he moved to the city itself some three years later. Well read and deeply spiritual, Canon Hill initiated a number of new programs at St. John's ... It was during his time at St. John's that the new hall was constructed, and paid for. His legacy here consists not only of buildings and programs, but even more so, of lives refreshed and renewed and lived forth for the glory of Christ.



Current Rector Michael Stonhouse beside portraits of his predecessors (Canon Hill - bottom right)

The larger controversy of how the Church should respond to waning youth membership was not as tractable. The stressful tension between those wanting more modern or enthusiastic ways and those of a more traditionalist bent eventually led to Canon Hill's departure. The departure was not necessarily at the time or in the mode he may have wanted but he went on to serve again in smaller parishes and in replacement roles, eventually making his way to Burlington, ON where he recently passed away from kidney complications. He was, all in all, a scholar and a gentleman - living out his life - "For the Greater Glory of God".

Below is a photo of Canon Hill and his wife Patricia at the time of the "farewell banquet" provided for him in 1988. Perhaps knowing the background that this departure was not necessarily at the time or in the mode he may have wanted helps to explain why he appears to be searching for the proper words to say in this his last message to the Lloydminster Parish.

