

# St. Mark's Church and dignitaries open arms to Rev. William Freeman with induction ceremony

By Gordon B. Seavey  
Eagle correspondent

In a colorful ceremony Thursday evening, Rev William H Freeman was instituted as the fourth rector of St. Mark's Episcopal Church. Celebrant was Bishop David Birney, recently named assistant bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Boston.

A native of Deerfield, Rev Freeman is the fourth rector to be installed in the local church, founded 19 years ago. After serving in several parishes, Fr Freeman was involved in parochial ministry as well as economic and human service development on the White Earth Indian Reservation in Minnesota for 14 years.

He succeeds Rev Michael J Marone, now rector of St John's in Duxbury.

Rev James Diamond of Christ Church, Andover, gave the sermon. Readers were Frank Strauss, Barbara R. Seavey, Alene Bonner. His son, Rev Bruce Freeman, Rector of St John's, Athol, read the gospel.

Rev Victor H. Kazanjian, assistant rector of St. Michael's, Milton, was the bishop's chaplain.

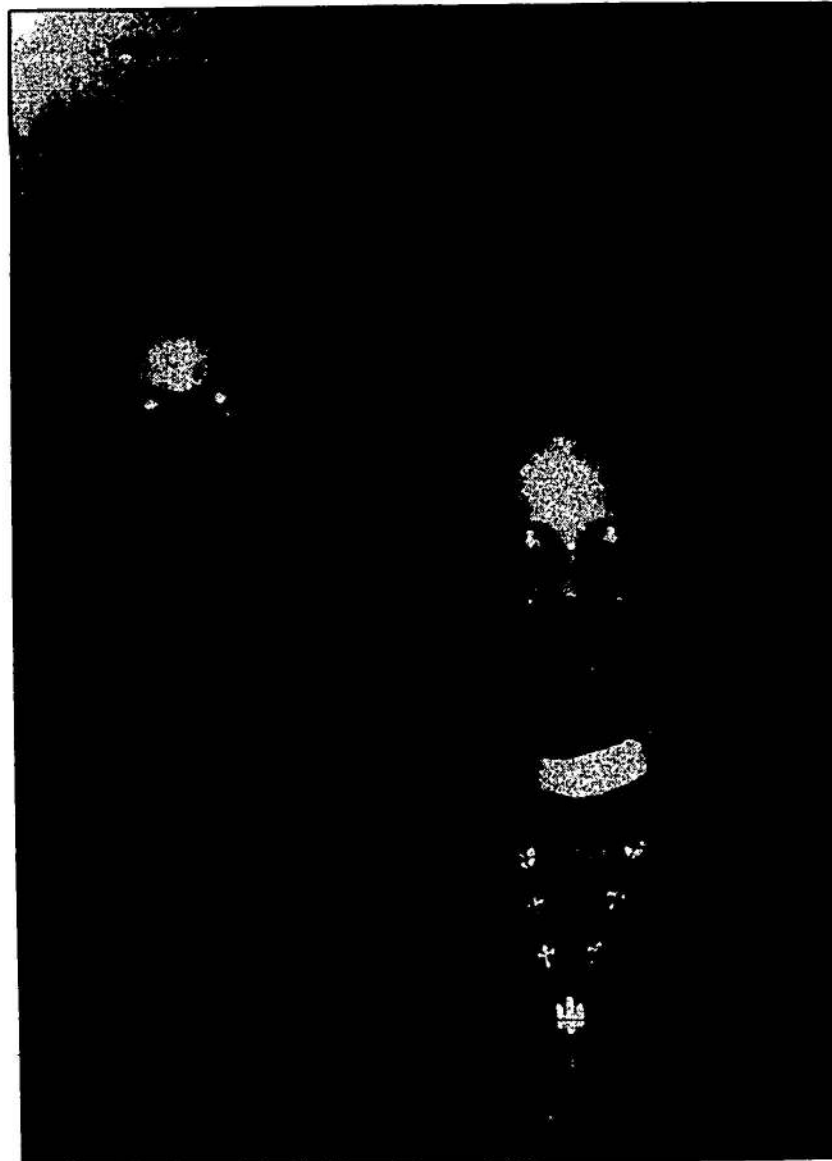
Representing local churches were Rev George E. Downey of the First Parish Church, United, Rev Richard D. Pittinger of United Methodist Church, and Fr Richard Buntel of St. Catherine's Catholic Church.

Others were Rev David Barney of Trinity Church, Concord, Rev Nancy Shepherd, vicar of Trinity Chapel, Shirley, and Rev Gordon White, rector of St. John's, Lowell.

Unable to attend the institution was Right Rev Barbara C. Harris, suffragan bishop of Massachusetts, originally scheduled to be celebrant. She was in attendance at the funeral of Bishop John T. Walker in the Washington National Cathedral.

Others attending the Westford ceremonies was Rev William Mawhinney, rector of Christ Church, Waltham, first rector of St. Mark's. Also, Rev Bailey O. Whitbeck of Emmanuel Church, Boston, who preceded Rev Freeman as interim pastor.

The new rector served for three years on the staff of St. Stephen's, Lynn, until 1962, where upon he became priest-in-charge of three rural congregations in North Dakota. He returned to his native state



Staff photo by Hillary Levin

David Birney, assistant bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Boston, gives a reassuring pat on the shoulder to Rev William Freeman, who officially became the fourth rector of St. Mark's Church after a ceremony last week.

to serve eight years as rector of Trinity Church, Marshfield.

Rev Freeman was graduated from the Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, in 1959. He is married to the former Carol Brickett, whom he met while at Bowdoin. She is at Mt. Holyoke. They are making their new home at Blanchard Farms.

## History of congregation

As one of Westford's newer parishes, St. Mark's has grown steadily along with the phenomenal growth of the community. It has gained a reputation as an inclusive church community with strong ministry with children. It now has

125 students in its Christian education school for young people to high school age, plus crib care.

Diving into the history of the formation of an Episcopalian congregation in Westford, a small group of English immigrants, mainly from one county in England, came to Forge Village to work in the mills of the Abbot Worsted Company, man-

ufacturers mainly of woolen yarns for carpets. This was before 1900.

The group met to form a 'general committee to secure services of the Episcopal church.' Under the sponsorship of St. Andrew's in Ayer, the little congregation met in Abbot Hall and were encouraged in many ways by Abbot Worsted.

During this period, a variety of fundraising activities took place and at a cost of \$3,579.30 the group was able to erect an edifice in the village. In addition to local efforts, notable assistance in funds and materials came from personnel at Groton School, an Episcopal preparatory school in the neighboring town.

The succeeding years saw several clergy come as vicars of the parish. One was Angus Dun, a vicar for only a year, who later was to be dean of the Episcopal Theological School and then bishop of Washington.

Other vicars were Hugh Wilson in 1939, who served for ten years. After an interim vicariate, Rev Henry Mattocks was elected in 1947.

This was a turning point in the evolution of the congregation. This action signified the end of the direct oversight of the parish by Groton School headmasters and the institution of full-time rectorship replacing the previous vicars.

By 1957, the parish had grown to the point of adding a curate to assist the rector, Rev Donald Isaac. For the first time, the church in Forge Village had a resident minister.

From the outset, new facilities were needed for the growing parish. Five acres of choice land was purchased at the junction of Graniteville and Cold Spring roads and by mid-summer 1963, ground was broken for a new edifice.

The move to a more central location and a large building complex to care for the needs of the parishioners was completed with the dedication of the present church and parish hall on Dec. 15, 1964.

Gordon Seavey is a native of Westford and a retired newspaper publisher.