FORCING PROGRESS:
THE STRUGGLE TO INTEGRATE SOUTHERN EPISCOPAL SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

In 1955, the Episcopal Church challenged its congregants to stand up to an unjust social norm. In that year, the Episcopal Church called for the racial desegregation of Episcopal institutions: parishes, seminaries, and schools. Did Episcopalians live up to this challenge? Did the Episcopal Church translate its stated ideals into the harsher world of reality? Nowhere are these questions more clearly answered than with the integration of Episcopal schools. The story of Episcopal school integration provides a microcosm for the Episcopal Church’s effectiveness in persuading its laity (school trustees, parents, and alumni) to live up to Episcopalian ideals of social justice.

This thesis examines the integration of seven Episcopal schools in the American South. The schools were chosen because each had a different relationship with the Episcopal Church. The available resources pertaining to integration varied from school to school. Board minutes, letters from parents, letters between administrators and trustees, newspaper articles, annual school reports, memoirs of school heads, and interviews all help answer an essential question: to what extent did the Episcopal Church (bishops, deans, rectors, and clergy serving as school administrators) push for integration?
The research produced a consistent theme across each of the seven schools: the closer the ties that the school had to the Church, the more quickly the school integrated. The greater the influence that parents and alumni had over the schools, the more likely the school was to fight integration. Paradoxically, in order to affect change, schools needed to first and foremost be independent from parents and alumni, but the schools relied on parents and alumni for funding. The question of integration, therefore, forced a choice upon school administrators and trustees between financial strength and theological consistency.

The Episcopal Church served and continues to serve an important role. It checks the power of parents. It provides schools with a mission greater than the self-interests of parents and the nostalgic self-preservation of alumni. Ultimately, the experience of Episcopal schools during integration reaffirms the importance of independent schools remaining independent, not from the Church, but from their own clientele.
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TO MEGAN
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INTRODUCTION

*Parents must be made to realize that no strong school can be operated by a Board of Trustees which is at the mercy of the majority of parents... We have insisted that the schools belong to the Church and not to the parents.*

- John Page Williams, July 16, 1963

At times, organized religion perpetuates unjust social norms. At others, religious institutions challenge their members to stand up against such injustices. In 1955, the Episcopal Church offered such a challenge to its congregants. In that year, the Episcopal Church called for the racial desegregation of Episcopal institutions: parishes, seminaries, and schools. Did Episcopalians live up to this challenge? Did the Episcopal Church translate its stated ideals into the harsher world of reality? Nowhere are these questions more clearly answered than with the integration of Episcopal schools. The story of Episcopal school integration provides a microcosm for the Episcopal Church’s effectiveness in persuading its laity (school trustees, parents, and alumni) to live up to Episcopalian ideals of social justice.

The Episcopal Church was born in the wake of the American Revolution. The war left American congregants of the Church of England without a church hierarchy or a system of funding. From 1782 to 1789, American Anglican priests met in Philadelphia to organize the theology and governance of a new Protestant Episcopal Church.¹ Doctrinally, the Episcopal Church remained as close to the Church of

England as possible. In 1789, the Episcopal Church released its own Book of Common Prayer that, except for removing prayers for the King, followed nearly the same liturgy as its Anglican predecessor.\(^2\) In terms of governance, the Episcopal Church gave congregants the authority to elect their own vestry, who in turn could choose their own rectors. But the Episcopal Church added new layers of authority, dividing the United States into dioceses. Diocesan conventions made up of clergy and laity chose each bishop, who in turn served for life or until retirement. The 1780’s produced yet another layer of authority of the Episcopal Church. Every three years, the Church held a General Convention, which had the power to establish official theology and pass Church resolutions. The founders of the Episcopal Church divided this General Convention into two chambers: the House of Bishops, which consisted of all living Episcopal bishops, and the House of Deputies, made up of four clergy and four laity from each diocese.\(^3\) Finally, the Church created a Presiding Bishop, elected by the General Convention for nine year terms. The Presiding Bishop’s power was and is limited to developing Church policy and “speaking God’s word to the church and to the world.”\(^4\)

A historian of the Episcopal Church joked that “those who drafted the Constitution of the United States walked across the street and drafted the Constitution


\(^3\) Gundrum, “Understood Authority or Ecclesiastical Chaos,” 6-13.

of the Episcopal Church.” The General Convention is obviously modeled after Constitutional Convention’s bicameral legislature. Like the U.S. government, the Episcopal Church has a system of federalism. The dioceses within the Episcopal Church are, to a large degree, autonomous. The central governing body (the General Convention) does not choose bishops, just as the federal government does not select state government officials. Yet authority can overlap between the dioceses and the General Convention. Institutions within the Church do not always comply with the General Convention’s resolutions. Within this tension, between central authority and local autonomy, the story of Episcopal school integration plays out.

The tension between the Episcopal Church’s stance on racial justice and its schools began just a few months after Brown v. Board of Education. In June 1954, a 28-year-old Episcopal priest in Mississippi, Duncan M. Gray, Jr., authored the first Episcopal Diocesan response to the court-ordered desegregation of public schools. He did so under the authority of the Bishop of Mississippi, who also happened to be his father. “The Court’s ruling is more than a matter of law and order, it has to do with the will of God and the welfare and destiny of human beings,” Gray wrote. “[Based on] religious faith and democratic principles, the Court’s decision is just, right, and necessary.” Less than a year later, in 1955, the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, Arthur Lichtenberger, pushed the General Convention to adopt Gray’s language as the Church’s official stance to court-ordered integration. “Social

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5 Gundrum, “Understood Authority or Ecclesiastical Chaos,” 1.
discrimination and segregation are contrary to the mind of Christ and the will of God,” the 1955 General Convention of the Episcopal Church resolved. Theologically, the Episcopal Church had made its statement. Most Episcopal schools in the South, however, remained segregated for more than a decade.

The federal structure of the Episcopal Church made the integration of Episcopal schools unusually complex. Some schools were diocesan schools, under the jurisdiction of the bishop. Yet, by the 1960’s diocesan schools typically had independent Boards of Trustees, and the bishops tended to serve as mere ex officio members of these Boards. Episcopal schools could also be parish schools, where authority ultimately lay with a church vestry and its rector. Some parish schools established independent Boards which sought higher degrees of autonomy from the Church. Some theological seminaries created secondary schools, with the same Board of Trustees governing the seminaries and the high schools that were designed to feed into the seminaries. Seminaries typically fell under the jurisdiction of the bishops. In one case, an order of Episcopal monks established a missionary school for the education of America’s rural poor and the Episcopal monks shared dual governance responsibilities with an independent school board. Bishops, parish rectors, parish vestries, seminaries, and Episcopal monasteries all make up what this thesis refers to as “the Episcopal Church.” The relationship between Episcopal schools and the Episcopal Church varied, making each school’s story of desegregation unique.

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7 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race: Civil War to Civil Rights*, 68.
This thesis examines the integration of seven Episcopal schools in the American South. The schools were chosen because each school had a different relationship with the Episcopal Church. Reconstructing how these schools integrated and what role the Episcopal Church played was a challenge. The available resources pertaining to integration varied from school to school. Board minutes, letters from parents, letters between administrators and trustees, newspaper articles, annual school reports, memoirs of school heads, and interviews all help paint a picture of what happened within each school community.

St. Albans in Northwest Washington, D.C. admitted its first African-American student in the spring of 1957. The prestigious all-boy’s school was established in 1909 and shares a fifty-seven acre “urban oasis” campus with the Washington National Cathedral, the all-girls National Cathedral School, and the elementary school known as Beauvoir. Each of the three schools had its own independent Board of Governors, but all three schools were linked to the National Cathedral by a Cathedral Chapter, chaired by the Bishop. The Bishop, the Cathedral Chapter, and the Headmaster of St. Albans, who at the time was an Episcopal priest, all joined forces to pressure St. Albans parents and Board to accept integration. The first of the seven schools to integrate had the

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8 In cooperation with the administration of the seven schools, this thesis avoids mentioning the names of any parents and alumni of those schools, both in the text of the thesis and in the footnotes. When footnoting letters and other documents from the era, the name of the parent/alumnus is replaced with a number.

9 Lovett, Virginia Episcopal School, and Episcopal High School all have extensive archives with several folders dedicated to the subject of racial integration.
closest ties to the Episcopal Church and the most assertive Bishop in promoting integration.¹⁰

St. Stephen’s in Alexandria, Virginia, integrated in May 1961. At the time, the all-boy’s school was seventeen years old, a product of the post-World War II boom in the Washington, D.C. suburbs. St. Stephen’s was considered a “Diocesan school,” as it was created with the financial support of the Bishop of Virginia, who was headquartered in Richmond. The Church Schools of the Diocese of Virginia (CSDV), an association of six Episcopal schools in Virginia each with their own Board of Trustees, claimed the authority to govern all six schools. Yet the Bishop and the President of the CSDV established a tradition of abdicating direct authority of school governance to local school Boards. Until 1961, neither the CSDV nor any other institution of the Episcopal Church had ever directly interfered with the governance of St. Stephen’s.

The Lovett School, in suburban Atlanta, refused admittance to Martin Luther King, Jr.’s son in February 1963, testing the lengths that the Episcopal Church was willing to go to pressure its schools to desegregate. Founded in 1926, Lovett originally did not have ties to the Episcopal Church. In 1955, the school merged with the Cathedral of St. Philip’s and began building a new campus for a new high school. However, the degree of control that the Episcopal Church had over Lovett was unclear even to the people involved at the time. Officially, the Bishop of Atlanta sat on the

Lovett Board. Yet none of Lovett’s surviving Board minutes ever recorded the Bishop in attendance. While the school held weekly Episcopal chapel services, and while Lovett’s head was an Episcopal priest, the school still decided to challenge the General Convention’s stance in favor of integration, resulting in a break between Lovett and the Episcopal Church in July 1963.

St. Andrew’s School in Sewanee, Tennessee, integrated in September 1965. The Order of the Holy Cross, a monastic order, established St. Andrew’s in 1905 on the same plateau in rural Tennessee as the University of the South. The Order hoped to create a “school for mountain boys” in order to “break that cycle of poverty through education grounded in a Christian world-view.”

Like St. Albans and St. Stephen’s, St. Andrew’s also had a system of dual governance. One Board of Directors consisted of “five, life-professed monks” based in upstate New York and the other, a local Board of laymen, met in Tennessee. The Order, unlike the bishops in Virginia and in Atlanta, seemed to keep a closer watch on its school and showed particular interest in the issue of integration. It was the Order that ultimately forced the Prior of St. Andrew’s (TN) to integrate.

St. Andrew’s School in Jackson, Mississippi, integrated in September 1966. St. Andrew’s (MS), established in 1947 as a parish school, held its original classes in the basement of the downtown Jackson church. The founders of the school, two laymen, felt that Jackson’s post-war population boom overwhelmed the city’s public schools.

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11 Author unknown. “The Early History of St. Andrew’s School.” (Sewanee, TN: A study commissioned by the St. Andrew’s School Board of Trustees, 1980), 19. St. Andrew’s School Archives, Sewanee, TN.
While governance of the school fell to an independent Board, the Rector of St. Andrew’s Church served as Chairman of that Board. Unlike Lovett, the Rector/Board Chair went to nearly all the meetings. The St. Andrew’s Church vestry also reserved the right to veto school policies outlined by the St. Andrew’s School Board, creating a relatively close tie between the Episcopal Church and St. Andrew’s School. Like Lovett and St. Stephen’s, St. Andrew’s (MS) was in the process of expanding into a high school and a new campus when it dealt with integration.

Virginia Episcopal School (VES) integrated in September 1967. The school began in 1916 as a Diocesan school on a 160 acre campus on the outskirts of Lynchburg. The Bishop of Southwestern Virginia held a permanent position on the VES Board, as bishops did with St. Stephen’s and Lovett. Unlike St. Albans, St. Stephen’s and St. Andrew’s (TN), the Bishop held no veto power over the VES Board, and was not a vocal proponent of integration. VES relied on its Headmaster, a layman from New York, to be the catalyst for change. The Headmaster’s efforts to integrate ultimately made him the most controversial administrator in VES history.

In September 1968, Episcopal High School (EHS) became the last of the seven schools to integrate. Founded in 1839 on 80 acres of land, EHS had 129 years of history and tradition by the time it integrated. Over the course of those 129 years, this all boys boarding school had grown increasingly independent of the Episcopal Church. In the 19th century, the school served as a preparatory academy for the Virginia

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Theological Seminary, which is adjacent to the EHS campus. Originally, a single Board of Trustees governed both the Seminary and EHS. But, in 1923, EHS separated from the Seminary Board and from the Diocese of Virginia. By 1968, EHS had been independent from the Episcopal Church for more than forty years. Neither the Virginia Theological Seminary, nor a parish, nor the Bishop of Virginia could directly influence the policy of the school. It is no coincidence that EHS, which had the highest degree of autonomy out of the seven schools, was also the last of the seven to integrate.

The study of Episcopal school integration reveals a fundamental paradox of private school education in the 1960s. The desegregation of public schools caused a “white flight” to private Episcopal schools, which led to increased enrollment and physical expansion. This contradiction between official Episcopal theology, which promoted integration, and the “white flight” that spurred Episcopal school growth, was not lost on people at the time. The question of integration forced a choice upon school administrators and trustees between the financial strength of the institution and theological consistency.

This thesis analyzes such choices and reveals the nature of the relationship between the Episcopal Church and its institutions. Did the Episcopal Church pressure its schools to integrate? The answer depends on the relationship between the specific school and the Church: the closer the ties to the Church, the more quickly the school integrated. Yet there was not a coordinated effort by the Episcopal leadership to force its schools to integrate. The Church played a more inchoate role, with leadership  

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13 Interview with a former head of Episcopal High School, December 16, 2008.
coming from multiple groups and multiple perspectives. In some cases, clergymen pushed for integration to the detriment of their careers. Episcopal congregants and Episcopalian organizations publicly protested the failure of Episcopal schools to integrate, which provided a nation-wide network of pro-integration pressure. Finally, bishops, including the Presiding Bishop, consistently called for the desegregation of the schools.

This is a study of leadership in the midst of institutional change. Successful integration to some extent depended on parent demographics, school tradition, financial stability, and the broader racism of the local community. Was there a successful blueprint for leading a school through radical change? The answer is once again complex. Some school administrators tried to build consensus transparently. Some were more abrasive, demanding change. Others did not build consensus at all but instead quietly and unilaterally integrated. Other leaders failed to foresee and prepare for integration altogether, with embarrassing and harmful results in one case.

Finally, this is a study of the purpose of the Episcopal Church within the political life of its schools. The more control that the Episcopal Church had over its schools, the easier the transition was from segregation to integration. As one Church official put it, “parents must be made to realize that no strong school can be operated by a Board of Trustees which is at the mercy of the majority of the parents.” The Episcopal Church must insist, the clergymen added, “that the schools belong to the
Church and not to the parents.\textsuperscript{14} The greater the influence that parents and alumni had over the schools, the more likely the school was to fight integration. Paradoxically, in order to effect change, schools needed to first and foremost be independent from parents and alumni, but the schools relied on parents and alumni for funding. The Episcopal Church therefore served and continues to serve an important role. It checks the power of parents. It provides a moral compass that parents and alumni may lack. It provides schools with a mission greater than the self-interests of parents and the nostalgic self-preservation of alumni. The Episcopal Church carries political weight – whether through a parish vestry, a diocese, or the General Convention – and has the self-confidence to stand up to the occasionally shortsighted interests of parents and alumni. Ultimately, the experience of Episcopal schools during integration reaffirms the importance of independent schools remaining independent, not from the Church, but from their own clientele.

\textsuperscript{14} John Page Williams to David Mallery, July 16, 1963, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, The Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.
CHAPTER 1

Mrs. Lovett showed me the new site of the school and your marvelous buildings as they neared completion... But I was sobered by her explanation that the buildings were possible largely because wealthy Atlantans feared integration in their public schools.

- Lovett Alumnus, March 27, 1963

In the wake of Brown v. Board of Education a phenomenon known as “white flight” took place across the South. In order to avoid integrated public schools, white families enrolled their children in private schools. To meet the demand, white communities created private schools where such schools previously did not exist. Existing private pre-schools and elementary schools expanded into high schools. Existing Southern boarding schools experienced a boom in applications. In the ten years between 1961 and 1971, private school enrollment nationwide doubled from 700,000 to 1,400,000 students.\(^1\) The highest rate of growth in the history of Episcopal schools also coincided with the aftermath of Brown v. Board. From 1955 to 1960, Episcopal school enrollment grew by 24%. Although the post-war baby boom accounted for much of this growth, an examination of specific Southern Episcopal schools shows the predominant role of white flight in the growth.\(^2\)

White flight affected five of the seven Episcopal schools that this thesis examines. The evidence is both circumstantial and specific, but the paradox was

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unavoidable: Episcopal schools benefited from white flight while at the same time the Episcopal Church favored integration. School administrators, trustees, and parents in all five schools rationalized this contradiction on multiple levels. Some framed the question of integration as a practical matter of school survival. The potential loss of funding and decreased enrollment, they argued, could destroy private schools. Other opponents of integration resorted to semantics, arguing that because their school had never had a black applicant, it therefore could not qualify as a segregated school. Proponents of the desegregation of public schools insisted, at the same time, that segregation in private schools was a constitutional right. Conservative anti-integrationists disdained the prospect of outside forces dictating change to private institutions. When rational arguments broke down altogether, a more obvious racism emerged. Episcopal school parents and alumni were not above voicing their fears that desegregation would lead to racial intermarriage. Resistance to integrating Episcopal schools was not monolithic. Parents and alumni opposing integration could be practical, sometimes even rational, and at other times blatantly racist. Regardless, they all had to deal with the very obvious contradiction between Episcopal principals and the growth of Episcopal schools as a reaction to the desegregation of public schools.

**WHITE FLIGHT TO EPISCOPAL SCHOOLS**

There is circumstantial evidence that all of the schools except St. Albans and Episcopal High School, both of which were already well established by 1954, benefitted from the court ordered desegregation of public schools. The fact that schools expanded their enrollment at the moment that local desegregation took place is too substantial of a
coincidence to ignore. Evidence also comes from the words of those who lived through it. Letters have survived from school administrators who admit that their school’s success was a result of white flight and from parents who explain that they sent their children to private Episcopal schools in order to avoid associating with black students. Evidence also comes from interviews. Forty years after the fact, those who were involved do not deny the importance of white flight in the expansion of private Episcopal schools in the South.

**St. Stephen’s School & White Flight**

The Diocese of Virginia did not create St. Stephen’s School in Alexandria, Virginia, as a white flight school. The growth of the Washington, D.C. metro area during World War II was the impetus for the creation of St. Stephen’s. Led by an Episcopal priest, Rev. Edward E. Tate, the Diocese of Virginia chartered the school in 1944, blending traditional Virginia families with wartime boom families. However, there is circumstantial evidence that St. Stephen’s expanded because of desegregation. In the 1953-1954 school-year, St. Stephen’s experienced a 13% decrease in enrollment from previous year, dropping to 167 students. Then in 1954-1955, in the immediate aftermath of *Brown v. Board*, enrollment jumped 33.5%. Growth in enrollment then climbed steadily for the rest of the decade: 20.6% in 1955-1956, 17.7% in 1956-1957,

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and 8.3% in 1957-1958. In the 1957-1958 school-year, St. Stephen’s expanded from a one-house campus to a 35 acre site across the street from the Virginia Theological seminary, where the current upper school of St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes still sits.

The “local” board of trustees of St. Stephen’s as well as the “general” board of the Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia (CSDV) understood that the school benefited from white flight. Before making the move to the new campus in 1957, one of the local board members voiced concerns about the new campus’ proximity to a black neighborhood. Another St. Stephen’s trustee wondered aloud whether or not the Supreme Court would force integration on the school. Dr. John Page Williams was the president of the CSDV, the Richmond-based “general” board that had dual governance responsibilities with the local St. Stephen’s board. In articulating the predicament facing Virginia’s Episcopal schools, Williams admitted that white flight benefited his schools. “The schools, because they are Church schools, cannot become refuges from integrated public schools,” Williams wrote at the time. However, prior to St. Stephen’s integration in 1961, Williams had no basis to claim that the school was anything but a “refuge from integrated public schools.”

**The Lovett School & White Flight**

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4 Author compiled numbers by examining St. Stephen’s yearbooks located at the St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes School Library.


6 Williams, *A History of the Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia*, 182.

7 D. Ralph Davison, Jr., “Roots: St. Stephen’s In the Diocese of Virginia (Part 3),” *The Deacon*, April 1983.
The Lovett School in Atlanta also benefited from white flight. As Michael Gannon explains in his master’s thesis, prior to *Brown* only four private schools existed in Atlanta. By 1971, that number had expanded to fifty-nine schools. In 1970, whites made up 50% of Atlanta’s population but accounted for only 23% of the city’s public school students. Gannon argues that Lovett, which moved into its new campus the same year that Atlanta schools desegregated, embodied this broader trend of white flight:

[Lovett] was able to exploit an opportunity provided by public school turmoil and develop into a much larger institution. 1960 was the apex of the showdown over school closing in Atlanta, and Lovett was able to provide certainty for parents afraid that massive resistance legislation would go into effect.

It is hard to imagine that Lovett’s expansion from the 7th grade to the 12th grade, its increase enrollment to nearly 1,100 students, its development of an 82 acre campus, and finally its raising of $1,250,000 would have been possible in just eight years were it not for white fears of desegregation.

Few people associated with Lovett during its expansion denied the link between the school’s growth and white flight. Eva Edward Lovett, the founder of the school in 1926, even admitted the connection. Sometime in the early 1960s, in the midst of the school’s rapid expansion, Eva Edwards Lovett and the former student visited the new site of the Lovett School:

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9 Gannon, "From White Flight to Open Admissions," 33.

10 Gannon, "From White Flight to Open Admissions," 46.
Mrs. Lovett showed me the new site of the school and your marvelous buildings as they neared completion. We joked about the tricks her failing eyesight played on her as she looked along the large glass areas. But I was sobered by her explanation that the buildings were possible largely because wealthy Atlantans feared integration in their public schools.¹¹

Watching this transformation must have caused mixed emotions for Eva Edwards Lovett. She was proud to see her life’s work grow into a stable, prosperous institution that would undoubtedly carry on after her death. Yet Lovett also understood what made this growth possible.

James Sibley, the Chairman of Lovett’s board and the man who oversaw the decision not to admit Martin Luther King, III, did not deny the connection between Lovett’s growth and white flight. “Lovett was in this little world,” Sibley remembered almost half a century later. “It was competing against Westminster [a rival high school in North Atlanta] which had a strong foundation. It was competing against private schools that were popping up around here all over the place, obviously to avoid integration.”¹² Integrating Lovett, people said at the time, meant threatening the school’s massive growth. In a 1963 letter to the Bishop of Atlanta, Sibley explained that, “integration now would be financially ruinous.”¹³ Parent letters to Sibley and Lovett’s headmaster, Rev. James R. McDowell, reinforce the notion that Lovett benefitted from white flight. “My children are in Lovett School primarily because I did

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¹¹ Lovett Alumnus 1 to Rev. James R. McDowell, March 27, 1963, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.


¹³ James Sibley to Randolph Claiborne, April 26, 1963, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.
not want them in integrated schools,” one parent explained. There was little to no effort to hide the fact that financial security depended on maintaining segregation.

**St. Andrew’s School (TN) & White Flight**

The evidence linking St. Andrew’s School in Sewanee, Tennessee to white flight is more speculative. For one, St. Andrew’s (TN) was much older than St. Stephen’s and Lovett. An order of Episcopal monks established St. Andrew’s (TN) in 1908. The school, unlike St. Stephen’s and Lovett, did not move to a new and improved campus in the wake of *Brown*, nor did it expand its enrollment. St. Andrew’s (TN) also did not save parent letters and the correspondence of administrators, unlike Lovett. Such communication as to why parents were sending their children to the school in the 1950’s and 1960’s do not exist. There is, however, evidence that St. Andrew’s (TN) benefitted from white flight. The annual “Prior’s Reports,” in which the head of the school, Julien Gunn, reported to Order of the Holy Cross, have survived. The 1958 report states:

> At a recent meeting of Southern educators [I] heard an authority in the field say that independent education was showing decided advance over the entire country. After some years of stagnation there is a revival of interest in private schools. In the Episcopal Church there has always been leadership in this field. In recent year the growth in parish day schools has reflected this interest on the local level.

14 Lovett Parent 1 to James M. Sibley, March 26, 1963, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.


Without making the connection to *Brown*, Gunn links his school’s increased applications to this national move toward private schools. While Gunn never admitted that the school benefitted from white flight, Rev. Bill Wade, head of St. Andrew’s (TN) from 1981 to 2008, did make this admission. “[White flight] was happening all over the South, which was where St. Andrew’s got its students from. So it was integration, frankly, that scared people into our school,” Rev. Wade explained. Wade pointed out that the school experienced a boom in applicants in the 1950s before new day schools such as Lovett and St. Stephen’s could establish themselves. Rev. Wade remembered that, “in the late ‘50s early ‘60s it was going gangbusters. Part of the reason for that was integration.” The application boom at St. Andrew’s (TN) was in fact a bubble that burst. By the mid 1960s, Rev. Wade explained, “the boarding market in the South collapsed.”

In the midst of the application bubble bursting, St. Andrew’s (TN) integrated.

**St. Andrew’s School (MS) & White Flight**

St. Andrew’s in Jackson, Mississippi was not created as a white flight school. Jackson, like Washington, D.C., experienced a population boom during and after World War II and, like St. Stephen’s, St. Andrew’s (MS) stepped in to fill a demand for smaller, more intimate schools. The school began in 1947 in the basement of a parish

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church with just 45 students, first through fourth grades.18 The growth of the school increased steadily after Brown, with an increase in 1958 to 194 students.19 Court ordered desegregation of Jackson schools, however, did not come until the late 1960s. In the 1969 landmark case Alexander v. Holmes County, the Supreme Court ordered over thirty school districts in Mississippi to desegregate, after which 20% of Mississippi’s white students enrolled in private schools.20 While St. Andrew’s (MS) did not keep school correspondence from the time, there is one document from the era which makes a remarkable admission. The 1969-1970 report to the board from the headmaster stated that:

Due to the turmoil produced by Court decisions, the school was faced with the problem of over-demand. Standards for admission were established belatedly, for they had never been needed before – at least with reference to over-demand. At least one “good” came of this situation – the demand for facilities of the school, coupled with increased tuition, produced a balanced budget for the first time in its history.21

Before Jackson integrated, demand for the school was so low that St. Andrew’s (MS) did not even have basic standards for admission and the school did not have a balanced budget until the influx of families from public schools. Alexander v. Holmes County

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caused, for the first time in its history, “over-demand.” In effect, St. Andrew’s (MS) was a struggling parish school until court-ordered desegregation came to Mississippi.

**Virginia Episcopal School & White Flight**

Letters from the 1960’s have survived linking Virginia Episcopal School (VES) to white flight. Like St. Andrew’s (TN), generations of students graduated from VES before *Brown*. There were no major physical expansions of the school in the 1950’s nor was there an expansion in enrollment. The evidence that VES benefitted from white flight is found in the letters of parents, alumni, and school administrators in the 1960’s. In 1964, the Headmaster of the school, Austin Montgomery, wrote to a pro-integration alumnus saying, “I am deeply concerned that if so-called ‘Christian’ schools do not pursue the question of integration actively they will in short order find themselves in the unhappy moral position of being de facto escape schools.”

Montgomery’s school did indeed provide families with an “escape” from desegregated public schools. An alumnus succinctly put it, “I want to send my son away from, not into integration.”

One smoking gun is found in a joint letter from a group of angry alumni over the school’s decision to integrate:

> Until 1954 Mr. Gannaway beat the bushes in North Carolina recruiting boys for V.E.S. Then came the U.S. Supreme Court decision striking down segregation in the public schools and V.E.S. has had more applicants than space ever since.

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22 Austin Montgomery to VES Alumnus 1, August 28, 1964, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

23 VES Alumnus 2, “Excerpts from Comment of V.E.S. Alumni Concurring with Raleigh Alumni Letter to the Headmaster,” Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.
That decision enabled V.E.S. to pick and choose and it has never had it so good. Based on the response that integration provoked from parents and alumni, VES appears to have benefitted from white flight.

RATIONALIZING THE CONTRADICTION

Trustees, school administrators, and parents recognized the contradiction of white flight in Episcopal schools. For the most part, they were aware of the Episcopal Church’s stance against segregation, and they could not deny the absence of black students in their schools. The result of this seemingly irreconcilable contradiction was a fascinating effort to justify the exclusion of black students from Episcopal schools. Many admitted that integration would happen in the future, but argued that the right moment had not yet arrived. Some fell back on the “freedom of association” argument, claiming private institutions had the right to discriminate. Others feared that integration would mean financial ruin, whether because of a drop in enrollment or because of fewer contributions from donors. Others refused to be coerced by outside forces, regardless of right and wrong. Finally, there was unabashed racism – even among the respected and educated.

Recognizing the Contradiction

The leaders of Episcopal schools recognized the paradox. James Sibley, chairman of Lovett’s board, wrote to the Bishop of Atlanta that, “we face on the one hand the possibility of integration, which the Trustees do not think the school can stand

24 VES Alumnus 3, “Excerpts from Comment of V.E.S. Alumni Concurring with Raleigh Alumni Letter to the Headmaster,” Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.
financially, or we face the severance from the Church.” Another man, Lovett’s biggest fundraiser at the time, also saw the contradiction between the Episcopal faith and the school’s opposition to integration. The fundraiser originally advised Sibley to admit Martin Luther King, Jr.’s son. After changing his mind, the man explained that his original opinion “was based on my concept of what I considered my duty to be as a Christian.” In Richmond, a member of the Church Schools of the Diocese of Virginia general board took issue with the idea that the CSDV would be guided by “the principles of our faith,” while they dealt with the political consequences of integration. The Episcopal faith, the board member implied, would make it more difficult to oppose integration in their schools. In Washington, D.C., the St. Albans Board of Governors passed a resolution stating that “the practice of segregation is fundamentally unchristian,” and in the next sentence admitted that “the admission of negroes might create serious economic problems.” None of the leaders of the seven schools could claim ignorance of the Episcopal Church’s belief that segregation was morally wrong, nor did they.

Parents recognized the contradiction, as well. Dr. John Page Williams, president of the CSDV, observed this fact. In a letter from 1963, Williams wrote:

25 James Sibley to Rev. Randolph R. Claiborne, April 26, 1963, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

26 Lovett Fundraiser 1 to James Sibley, June 10, 1963, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

27 Author unknown to Dr. John Garland Pollard, January 22, 1955, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

28 “Minutes of the Twenty-First Meeting of the Governing Board of St. Albans School,” April 3, 1960, St. Albans School Archives, Washington, DC.
At least some of our parents are resigned to the idea because they recognize either that the Church has a particular responsibility for virtue in this field or because they are inclined to think that the Church is a little starry-eyed or eccentric.  

While Williams complained that parents dismissed the teachings of the Church as too idealistic, at least parents were aware of those teachings. The Episcopal Church, parent letters argued, was either moving too fast, was part of liberal conspiracy to impose itself on local communities, or was not connected to the realities of life in the South. One VES parent dismissed all of the Episcopalian faith when he wrote, “of course with the Episcopal vestry showing a decided preference for a black face, your decision doesn’t surprise me at all.” One alumnus from EHS blamed his school’s integration on “the hysteria that has been sweeping the country, especially among clergy and intellectuals.” The dismissal of Episcopal clergy as too radical and therefore as irrelevant was fairly common in the letters of frustrated parents and alumni.

The “Let’s Wait” Argument

The most common argument against integration involved the timing for such a radical change. Proponents of the status quo frequently began with the clarification that they favored integration, just not yet. “The schools will be better schools when the color line is no longer drawn,” one CSDV board member in Virginia wrote as early as

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29 John Page Williams to David Mallery, July 16, 1963, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

30 VES Parent 1 to VES Alumnus 4, April 5, 1967, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

31 EHS Alumnus 6 to A.R. Hoxton, April 24, 1968, Episcopal High School, Alexandria, VA.
1954. “It seems to me personally that the realities of the situation indicate a slow change,” he added.32 At the same time that the CSDV first grappled with the question of integration, St. Albans began to discuss the issue in its Board meetings. Based on the minutes of those meetings, no St. Albans trustee favored indefinite segregation, but trustees delayed the issue for five years with Admissions Committee reports calling for more time. In October of 1954, when the St. Albans Board voted on a three year plan for the gradual integration of the school, trustees in opposition argued for “no definite action” in favor of giving parents more time to adjust to the idea.33

Parents, trustees, and administrators used the “let’s wait” argument against integration well into the 1960’s. One Lovett father wrote to the Headmaster in 1963, “I am sure the integration of the races will come at Lovett, and it should at the proper time.” That time, the father immediately added, should be when the “school is even stronger and could better withstand the turmoil such action would have caused.”34 In 1961, the St. Andrew’s (MS) Board used the “let’s wait” argument when they stated that they “did not want to place our church [school] in the position of assuming the leading role in the active promotion of racial integration.”35 By the mid-1960s, however, over a decade after public schools began to integrate nationwide, the “let’s

32 Author unclear to Warren H. Turner, Jr., December 21, 1954, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

33 “Minutes of the Sixtieth Regular Meeting of the Governing Board of St. Alban’s School,” October 4, 1954, St. Albans School Archives, Washington, D.C.


wait” defense seemed to be wearing out. The VES board members who cautioned Headmaster Montgomery in September 1966 to “proceed very slowly,” seemed at that point to be stalling. This caution came nearly twelve years after the Episcopal Church publicly condemned segregation. The “let’s wait” argument, by that time, had given way to much more specific arguments against integration.

**The De Facto vs. De Jure Argument**

Other opponents of integration proposed the idea that the schools were not, in fact, segregated. John Page Williams, President of the CSDV, made this assertion for several years. The fact that a school does not have any black students, Williams argued, “does not make the school a segregated school.”\(^{36}\) Two years later, Williams’ CSDV board repeated the claim that “negro children are not to be denied admission to the schools solely on the basis of their race,” while at the same time the general board outlined a special procedure for black applicants. Father Gunn, the prior of St. Andrew’s (TN), repeated Williams’ claim. Beginning in 1958 and extending into 1963, Gunn justified the fact that “no Negroes had been admitted to St. Andrew’s School,” with the fact that, “there had never been applications from this source.”\(^{37}\) While the denials of Williams in Virginia and Gunn in Tennessee lacked credibility, in the case of Lovett such denials seemed almost delusional. Just two years after Lovett denied a black applicant on the sole basis that he was black, the school’s Headmaster argued that

\(^{36}\) John Page Williams to Edward M. Gregory, September 14, 1962, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

\(^{37}\) Julien Gunn to Parents and Guardians, December 10, 1963, The Archives of the Episcopal Church, Austin, TX.
since “there is no fixed and permanent policy which will exclude any qualified applicant from the school,” the school was therefore not segregated.\textsuperscript{38}

**The Double Standard of Class**

Opponents of integration also claimed that because Episcopal schools were “private,” they were justified in denying black applicants. A CSDV board member pointed this out in the immediate aftermath of *Brown*. “Integration is inevitable and in fact probably desirable in the public school system,” the trustee explained, “but I think that private schools should be able to adopt their own policies independently of the public school system.” He went on to state flatly, “private schools should be run on a segregated basis and this should apply to our schools.”\textsuperscript{39} This stance embodies a phenomenon that Kevin Kruse labels a “double standard of class” in his book, *White Flight*.\textsuperscript{40} An EHS parent reiterated the double standard when he wrote in 1968:

> We have elected to incur considerable personal expense in order to provide an educational opportunity and atmosphere in which we want our sons to pursue their education. If we wanted to force upon these boys popular social reforms, it would have been considerably cheaper and easier and far more pleasant to have kept them at home with us and let them continue on at a local public school.\textsuperscript{41}

This parent made two references to the idea that money can buy segregation for their children: the first, that it was a “considerable expense” to pay for a segregated

\textsuperscript{38} Rual W. Stephens to James M. Sibley, August 19, 1965, Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

\textsuperscript{39} Author unclear to John Page Williams, May 3, 1955, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.


\textsuperscript{41} EHS Parent 1 to A.R. Hoxton, March 21, 1968, Episcopal High School Archives, Alexandria, VA.
education, and the second, that they could have saved their money if they had known EHS was about to integrate.

The “double standard of class” mentality extended to school officials. Father Gunn of St. Andrew’s (TN) used the argument in a 1963 letter to school parents. In the letter, Gunn argued that the government had no legal basis to force a private school to integrate.\(^42\) Lovett’s board chair made the same claim six months earlier.\(^43\) One VES trustee outlined the “freedom of association” perspective:

V.E.S. is not a public institution; it has no public responsibility; it derives no income from taxes or support from any governmental body, State or Federal, and, therefore, has no responsibility for taking any citizen or the child of any taxpayer who lives within the area served by it.\(^44\)

This trustee did in fact practice law. Yet despite the best legal arguments, the Supreme Court disagreed. Schools could continue to discriminate, the Court ruled, but they could not do so and still maintain their tax exempt status. By the very fact that the schools did not have to pay taxes, the Court explained, schools like VES received taxpayer support. This 1970 landmark case, \textit{Green v. Connolly}, silenced the attempt to protect the “right” to discriminate.\(^45\)

\textbf{The Financial Fear}

\(^42\) Julien Gunn to Parents and Guardians, December 10, 1963, The Archives of the Episcopal Church, Austin, TX.

\(^43\) James Sibley to the Parents and Patrons of the Lovett School, July 22, 1963, Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

\(^44\) VES Board Member 8 to Austin Montgomery, December 5, 1968, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

The potential for a drop in enrollment, and the subsequent loss of revenue, was a more pragmatic argument against integration. If parents sent their children to Episcopal schools in order to avoid integration, then it seems logical that they would pull those same children out of the school when it integrated. In a 2008 interview, James Sibley, Lovett’s former board chair, insisted that racism did not motivate the Board’s decision to deny Marin Luther King, III admittance. Instead, he argued, practical concerns governed the Board’s decision making. “We thought it would cost so many students that it would destroy the school,” he explained.\textsuperscript{46} His memory is corroborated by parent letters, especially one angry parent who stated flatly that if the school integrated, he would then “withdraw my child, after five years of pleasant association.”\textsuperscript{47} “It was a money issue,” Sibley said. “It wasn’t strictly a race issue. [None of the trustees] made much of that. We were just afraid that we would lose our student body over [admitting Martin Luther King, Jr.’s son] and all the tuition money that came with it.”\textsuperscript{48} For a new school like Lovett, the fear of decreased enrollment seemed justified.

Unlike Lovett, St. Albans and VES had existed for more than a generation before \textit{Brown v. Board of Education}. Yet both schools expressed financial fears. In 1950, “the general consensus” of the St. Albans Board was “that the admissions of negroes might create serious economic problems.”\textsuperscript{49} Two years later, the St. Albans

\textsuperscript{46} James Sibley, interviewed by author, Atlanta, GA, July 7, 2008.

\textsuperscript{47} Lovett Parent 4 to Rev. James R. McDowell – June 6, 1963

\textsuperscript{48} James Sibley, interviewed by author, Atlanta, GA, July 7, 2008.
Board created a committee to examine integration’s potential “effect on the enrollment and consequently upon the financial position of the School.” Like St. Albans, VES was an established school but still felt financial insecurity over the prospect of integration. One VES alumnus was so “shocked” to hear about his alma mater integrating that he hesitated to send his “two boys” to the school. Another alumnus wrote, “I have two sons who I have planned to enroll at V.E.S., but not if the school becomes integrated.”

St. Stephen’s decision to integrate in 1961 caused a ripple effect of financial fear to other CSDV schools. One financial supporter of St. Margaret’s Hall, a sister school to St. Stephen’s, threatened to withhold further support from the school until the CSDV assured her that St. Margaret’s would not integrate. This prompted a letter from John Page Williams, president of the CSDV, who assured her that the “admission of a negro student [at St. Margaret’s] would not be good for the individual or for the school,” and that the CSDV would make no effort to push for integration. Even those in favor of

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49 “Minutes of the Twenty-First Regular Meeting of the Governing Board of St. Alban’s School,” April 3, 1950, St. Alban’s School Archives.

50 “Minutes of the Thirty-Ninth Regular Meeting of the Governing Board of St. Alban’s School,” April 7, 1952, St. Alban’s School Archives.

51 VES Alumnus 5 to Austin P. Montgomery, March 7, 1967, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

52 VES Alumnus 6, “Excerpts from Comment of V.E.S. Alumni Concurring with Raleigh Alumni Letter to the Headmaster,” Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

53 John Page Williams to Mrs. Alfred I. DuPont, November 22, 1961, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.
integration were required to sacrifice their principles for the financial realities facing private schools.

Based on the letters from parents and alumni, the fear of financial ruin seemed justified. Even though Lovett decided not to integrate in 1963, the fact that the Board even considered the idea prompted one Lovett father to write that he would “not pay a dime if Lovett School is integrated.”54 Another parent pointed out that if Lovett integrated, then the school would have violated its “responsibilities to the families of Atlanta who have helped to build the school.”55 The responsibility, the letter implies, was to maintain a segregated school in exchange for financial support from parents. To support the Lovett board’s decision to resist integration, one parent rewarded the school with 200 shares of Coca-Cola stock.56 In VES’s case, the threat of financial ruin was even more obvious. The school’s Raleigh alumni chapter organized a campaign in 1967 against the headmaster’s decision to integrate, which included threats to withhold financial support. The Raleigh chapter wrote the following a public statement:

We want to make crystal clear that we intend to make no future gift or solicitation whatsoever to an integrated V.E.S. It seems poor business judgment to underwrite an integrated education at V.E.S. when it is free in all public schools and available in college and the business world.57

54 Lovett Parent 5 to Lovett Board of Trustees, June 11, 1963, Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

55 Lovett Parent 6 to Rev. James R. McDowell, June 6, 1963, Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

56 Lovett Parent 7 to James M. Sibley, June 9, 1963, Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

57 “Excerpts from Comment of V.E.S. Alumni Concurring with Raleigh Alumni Letter to the Headmaster,” March 9, 1967, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.
The Raleigh chapter presumed that financial threats would dissuade the institution from following the decrees of the Episcopal Church. In VES’s case, the threats failed. In Lovett’s case, financial fear deterred integration for three years.

The Loss of Tradition

Episcopal High School, founded in 1839, did not fear financial ruin. The all boy’s boarding school was the most financially stable of the seven schools, and the only one that could claim not to have benefitted from white flight. EHS alumni thus advanced a unique argument against integration: it would violate school tradition. “The closeness and almost family-like loyalty of Old Boys [EHS alumni referred to themselves as “Old Boys”] who become and remain loyal to the High School is a phenomenon rarely witnessed in today’s society,” one EHS alumnus wrote. He added that integration would destroy that sense of tradition, forcing “Episcopal High School to become just another institution.”

Another EHS alumnus feared that such integration would “so radically change the caliber and composition of its student body.” The alumnus went on:

Having drawn through the years largely from boys, either from Southern states or with Southern backgrounds, the school has, up to this point, maintained a continuity of pattern that has become more and more precious in the midst of the many changes that are facing us today.

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58 EHS Alumnus 1 to A.R. Hoxton, March 14, 1968, Episcopal High School Archives, Alexandria, VA.

59 EHS Alumnus 2 to A.R. Hoxton, March 28, 1968, Episcopal High School Archives, Alexandria, VA.
In many ways this alumnus, or “Old Boy,” articulated classic conservative thought. Change, according to him, was inherently dangerous, and should therefore be resisted. The fact that the world had changed around EHS was all the more reason to maintain a segregated school. In this alumnus’ eyes, EHS would be more valiant for resisting the social changes of the 1960’s. Tradition, not the fear of financial harm, drove this constituency to resist racial change.

**Disdain of Outsiders**

Many opponents of integration showed an intense disdain of outsiders as they resisted the desegregation of their schools. The Lovett School was a case in point. The Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity (ESCRU), an organization made up of Episcopal clergy that fought for the integration of Episcopal institutions, publicly pressured Lovett for three years to integrate. ESCRU sponsored Martin Luther King, III as an applicant to Lovett, and ESCRU later picketed the school when it refused to admit him. And it was ESCRU that some members of the Lovett community most disdained. One Lovett administrator described ESCRU’s presence as a “persecution of the school.”

Rev. James McDowell, headmaster of Lovett from 1961 to 1963, still holds a grudge against ESCRU’s leader, Rev. John Morris. “I had no respect for John at all,” Rev. McDowell said forty-five years after their clash. “I thought he was nothing but a real rabble rouser in the Episcopal Church.” Rev. McDowell also voiced his frustration over the King family. “[By publicly applying to Lovett] Coretta Scott King

60 John Rabbe, “Talk to entire Lovett School faculty and staff,” January 30, 1964, Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.
forced the issue,” McDowell remembered. “The trustees got their back up about that, and quite rightly so. Why should Mrs. King dictate the policies of the board?” Even the Lovett faculty participated in the ESCRU bashing. “I have no respect for you or your underhanded tactics,” a Lovett teacher wrote to John Morris. “It grieves me to see a lot of trouble makers stir up so much damnation.” In the midst of the hysteria, Lovett’s comptroller, John Rabbe, issued a word of caution to the board:

Some would go along with [integration], but don’t like to have it rammed down their throats by the John Morrises, et. al. Many of you don’t like the way the Bishop is trying to push the school into it. I doubt if there is any sincere and serious Christian whose conscience is completely clear and resting easy… Gentlemen, I know you are incensed over the Bishop’s actions and furious over John Morris’ pressure. So am I! But think – do we cut off our noses to spite our face? Do we wreck a School’s future to satisfy our own momentary wrath? I feel we do and it is this I plead for a way to avoid.

Mr. Rabbe gives insight into the pressures on the Lovett board that denied admission to Martin Luther King, III. He acknowledges their feelings: “Incensed,” “furious,” “wrath.” But Rabbe was also prophetic. The Episcopal Church soon broke off relations with Lovett. While Lovett survived and now prospers, the school acknowledges that its refusal to admit Martine Luther King, III was a low point in its history.

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62 James H. Dumas, Jr. to John Morris, no date, Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

63 John Rabbe to Members of the Board of Trustees, no date, Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

For Virginia Episcopal School in Lynchburg, the outsider was the Headmaster, Austin Montgomery. Montgomery’s greatest flaw, several alumni letters point out, was that he was a New Englander.\textsuperscript{65} One letter was extreme:

It is most unfortunate that we have a New England Headmaster at our school. Knowing nothing about the Negro race except what he read in Uncle Tom’s Cabin, and in the violently anti-Southern-White Northern press controlled by the Jews, he wants to integrate VES. We have suffered bitterly by these Northern Crusaders who want to teach the South a lesson. After the Civil War they turned our State Government over to the illiterate Negroes, and even made one of a state governor.\textsuperscript{66}

Thus this alumnus equated the Headmaster of VES with the Northerners of another generation who imposed Reconstruction on the South. Other letters reflect similar fear of outside influence. “Is it then that your northern influence drives you into an action that will level our southern institutions to what has for some time now been going on in the North?” one VES employee asked.\textsuperscript{67} “I do not hate negroes, nor the well meaning do-gooders from up North who come South with the mantle of self-righteousness draped about them, to prove to the benighted Southerners that they and only they are on the side of the angels, and that they have come with Messianic (self-annointed, of course) zeal to save the sinful Southerners from the error of their ways,” another alumnus added.\textsuperscript{68}


\textsuperscript{66} VES Alumnus 7 to Raleigh Chapter of VES Alumni Association, March 3, 1967, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

\textsuperscript{67} VES Employee 1 to Austin Montgomery, March 21, 1967, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

\textsuperscript{68} VES Alumnus 8 to Austin Montgomery, March 28, 1967, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.
Parent & Alumni Racism

Some of the parents and alumni of these seven Episcopal schools at times exhibited the lowest forms of racism, and the most extreme racism typically returned to the idea of interracial marriage. “I am a segregationist,” wrote an Episcopal priest from Richmond in response to the CSDV integrating its schools, “as are so many integrationists when it comes to dating and marriage.”69 One VES alumnus captured the thoughts of a number of letters:

With integration we cannot prevent the sexual relations between races. The end result is tragic – honestly, do you feel Virginia Episcopal School should pioneer such a drastic social custom? Do you believe that residents of Lynchburg will send their daughters to your dances?70 To some parents and alumni, mixing students of both races in a school meant the destruction of the white race. One EHS alumnus reiterated that point in a letter to the school’s Headmaster. “Race mixing, which unquestionably leads to intermarriage,” the alumnus argued, “will not elevate the human race to lofty heights but will degrade mankind as was never intended.”71 In a letter to VES’ Headmaster, another alumnus worried that VES was falling into a communist plot to destroy the United States from within. He related a story from his days stationed in France after World War II, in which an alleged communist told him that, “we [communists] are going to conquer you

69 John Woodward to John Page Williams, July 23, 1963, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

70 VES Alumnus 9 to Austin Montgomery, March 9, 1967, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

71 EHS Alumni 3 to AR Hoxton, April 5, 1968, Episcopal High School Archives, Alexandria, VA.
because you have fourteen million niggers in your country and we are going to rot you out at the core.”72 These alumni represented an extreme, but the fear of the mixing of the races was widespread enough to be openly discussed.

CONCLUSION

Good, decent people made poor decisions in the Episcopal Church’s fight to integrate its schools. John Page Williams, President of the Church Schools of the Diocese of Virginia, on the one hand pushed for the integration of St. Stephen’s. On the other hand, for six years he argued that his schools were not ready for desegregation and when threatened with a loss of funding from parents he reversed himself. Father Julien Gunn, Prior of St. Andrew’s (TN), devoted his life to the Episcopal Church, yet he also asserted that his school had the legal right to discriminate based on race. VES’ alumni – respected businessmen, bankers, and lawyers from across Virginia and North Carolina – united in opposition to what they saw as a Northerner high jacking their school. Their fear of outsiders exaggerated their fear of integration. Lovett’s Board Chair, James Sibley, and its Headmaster, Rev. James McDowell, were decent, reasonable young men in 1963. Yet events overwhelmed both of them, and while not a single racial slur can be found in any of their correspondence, they allowed their financial concerns to dictate their actions – the denial of admission to the son of an American icon.

One cannot help but feel some sympathy for school leaders who found themselves in the middle of a social revolution. The story of Episcopal school

72 VES Alumnus 10 to Austin Montgomery, March 7, 1967, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.
integration reveals no true heroes, nor pure villains, but instead paints a more complex picture. The Episcopal Church denounced segregation, but its schools benefitted from and even became dependent upon “white flight.” This created the paradox which led to a predicament that, in turn, caused good people to perpetuate an unjust system.
CHAPTER 2

_The Church Schools became the forum in which clergy and laity struggled together in their time consuming effort to translate their Christian faith into concrete institutional terms._

- John Page Williams, _A History of Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia_

Episcopal school integration was a microcosm of how the Episcopal Church translated its principles into institutional reality. How did the Episcopal Church (bishops, rectors, and vestry members) handle resistance to their calls for progressive change? What methods did Church officials use in pushing Episcopal institutions to live up to their calls for social justice? The Episcopal Church did indeed pressure all seven of the schools to integrate, and did so in multiple ways. The Church created an unofficial nation-wide network of pressure in favor of integration. If the press publicized a school’s pro-segregationist policies, Episcopal clergy and laypersons bombarded the school with letters of protest. The unofficial network also supported administrators who favored integration, which came as an important source of reassurance to administrators who faced vehement resistance to desegregation. The Episcopal Church also pressured its schools to integrate through the Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity (ESCRU). ESCRU had no official standing with any diocese or the national church. It was an interracial group dedicated to integrating the institutions of the Church, and it was willing to use the tactics of the Civil Rights movement to achieve those goals. Over the course of the 1960’s, ESCRU sponsored the applications of black students, held meetings across the South, openly confronted school administrators, picketed schools, held “prayer-ins”, and even went on hunger
strikes to force compliance between Episcopal schools and the policies of the Episcopal Church.

The greatest pressure was placed through the mechanisms of control that the Episcopal Church held over its schools. Whether the pressure came from the bishop of a diocese, the rector of a parish, or even the Presiding Bishop, this was the primary cause of change. The closer that the ties were between the Church and the school, the smoother and quicker was the integration. Bishops did not issue decrees or hand down orders, but the Church gradually pushed school leaders, trustees, parents, and alumni to integrate. While the process was far from perfect, the Episcopal Church can, in the end, claim that it actively sought to integrate its schools, despite the resistance of many parents and alumni.

**NETWORKS OF SUPPORT AND PRESSURE**

Unofficial networks of Episcopal clergy and laypersons felt that they were called to write letters of protest to schools resisting integration. Most of these people had little to do with, or even had prior knowledge of, the schools. For administrators taking the unpopular stance in favor of integration this provided an important network of support. Colleagues from other Episcopal schools and Episcopal priests were the closest confidants of those in favor integrating.

In the spring and summer of 1963, letters flooded into the Lovett School from across the country. One-hundred and fifty-four letters written either to Lovett’s Board of Trustees, the Headmaster McDowell, or other school officials have survived. Of those letters, eighty-one (53%) argued that Lovett should integrate. Forty-six of those
eighty-one letters in favor of integration (57%) mentioned the teachings of Episcopal Church as a basis for criticizing Lovett’s decision to deny Martin Luther King, III admittance. The letters came in from across the country: Austin, Texas; Lemon Grove, California; New York City; Boston, Massachusetts; Helena, Montana; Cedar Falls, Iowa; Columbus, Ohio.¹ Most of the people unaffiliated with Lovett mentioned that they felt compelled to write because of their Episcopalian faith. One woman from California with no affiliation to the school and seemingly little official association with the Church wrote that, “as a life-long Episcopalian, I am bitterly ashamed of the action of the board (of which Board apparently fourteen are members of the Episcopal Church).”² An Episcopal priest from North Carolina explained that Lovett’s refusal to integrate “does (or should) concern me, if for no other reason than that I am a priest in this Church.”³ Another Episcopal priest from New York pointed out the “tremendous harm you have done to the spreading of the Christian Faith by not allowing Martin L King III to enter your school. Your Board of Directors certainly must be fearful, timid men.”⁴ While the authors of these letters were affiliated with the Episcopal Church, the Headmaster and Board Chair of Lovett did not personally know them. That was not the case with letters from devout Episcopalian parents from Lovett.

¹ The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.
² Lovett Critic 1 to The Board of Trustees, March 25, 1963, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.
³ Lovett Critic 2 to Rev. James McDowell, March 27, 1963, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.
⁴ Lovett Critic 3 to Rev. James McDowell, March 25, 1963, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.
The majority of the parents who wrote letters criticizing Lovett’s refusal to integrate mentioned the Episcopal faith as a justification for their criticism. “We have hopefully expected our child to be instructed in the Christian Faith as interpreted by the teachings of the Episcopal Church,” one parent wrote. Another parent refused to support the school further “unless – and until – Lovett meets this challenge in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ.” Even a Lovett student added his voice to the criticism. “Your decision will not preserve Lovett, but will produce a situation so unhealthy that Lovett cannot survive,” the student prophesized. “If the principles of the [Episcopal Church] are to be cast aside, then what principles will the school be run upon?” One husband and wife explained that, “with Lovett under the influence of the Episcopal Church, we felt confident our son” would “learn early the basic principles of our church.” The letter added:

Now that Lovett has rejected desegregation and pushed itself away from Christian principles in this respect we wonder what effect this will have on our son’s education. We ask if a school which takes this action can teach honesty and Christianity without a tinge of hypocrisy.

It is likely that a good number of these parents acted on their moral conviction. From the 1962-1963 school year to the 1963-1964 school year, Lovett’s enrollment decreased by ninety students. While one cannot determine precisely how many parents withdrew

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5 Lovett Parents 8 to James Sibley, March 20, 1963, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.
6 Lovett Parent 9 to James Sibley, June 17, 1963, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.
7 Lovett Student 1 to Mr. Sibley, June 15, 1963, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.
8 Lovett Parents 10 to Board of Trustees, October 3, 1963, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.
their students for religious and moral reasons, thirty-eight surviving letters indicate that a core group of Lovett parents did just that.

While an unorganized wave of Episcopalians criticized Lovett in 1963, Virginia Episcopal School’s Headmaster, Austin Montgomery, could rely on a steady stream of Episcopal support in his efforts to desegregate VES. Of the 77 surviving letters supporting Montgomery, 45 of those letters either mention the Episcopal Faith or came from Episcopal clergy (58%). One such clergyman was in fact an alumnus who wanted to know VES’s admissions policy before donating money:

If V.E.S. should ever have a racially exclusive policy then I could not help but think that that is a contradiction both of the Kingdom and of this Church. Certainly if is not too much to expect that the policies of a school bearing the name Episcopal should be in line with the “official” stand of the Episcopal Church. The issue, to me, is whether a school can maintain integrity or whether it lives in hypocrisy. One I will gladly support – the other isn’t worth saving.10

This is the most forceful stand by an alumnus in favor of integrating that has survived.

The majority of Montgomery’s support came not from parents and alumni but from Episcopal priests or other Episcopal school heads. A few days after Montgomery announced that VES would integrate, he received a letter from the Chaplain of Chatham Hall, a nearby Episcopal school. “I have always loved you, but now I admire you, too,” the Chaplain wrote. “What you are doing will make it easier for Chatham Hall and a number of other Virginia schools to follow. I hope you shame us all into taking the

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9 “Report of Director of Administration the Board of Trustees, The Lovett School,” April 29, 1964, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

10 VES Alumnus 1 to Romney Watkins, June 15, 1964, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.
same courageous step. Strength and power to you!”

Montgomery also corresponded with R. W. Trusdell, the Headmaster of St. Catherine’s School in Richmond, who said that he appreciated the idea that Church schools should not be “the last bulwark of resistance to this profound change in our world.”

The Headmaster of St. Christopher’s School in Richmond added praise for Montgomery, writing that, “I do not take some small comfort in knowing that you, too, have held your head upright, even though it’s a little bloody.”

Despite the attacks from parents and alumni, Montgomery could rely on fellow Episcopal school heads for moral and emotional support.

A.R. Hoxton, the Headmaster of Episcopal High School, could also count on support from Episcopal priests. After he announced in March 1968 that EHS would integrate, Hoxton received fourteen letters from Episcopal priests from across the country. One priest, who was also an alumnus, thanked Hoxton for “reestablishing the Christian traditions of Episcopal High School.”

Some of the most powerful people in the Episcopal Church agreed. The Four Bishops wrote personally to Hoxton – the

11 William W. Yardley to Austin Montgomery, no date, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

12 R.W. Trusdell to Lawrence B Blanchard, Jr., March 14, 1967, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

13 Warren P. Elmer to Austin Montgomery, February 25, 1967, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

14 See folder “Correspondence in Support for Policy Change” at Episcopal High School Archives, Alexandria, VA.

15 EHS Alumni 4 to AR Hoxton, March 14, 1968, Episcopal High School Archives, Alexandria, VA.
Bishops of Georgia, Texas, Mississippi, and Missouri. The list also included the
Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, John Hines. Hines wrote to Hoxton:

I read in the *New York Times* the other day with keen interest the decision of
Episcopal High School to admit two Negro boys for the 1968-1969 session. I
just want to say that I believe your personal concern about this must have been
the decisive factor in the attitude of the Board and in the result.16

None of the other six schools received as much praise and attention for integrating from
Episcopal priests as EHS.

For John Page Williams, President of the Church Schools in the Diocese of
Virginia, the Episcopalian support network was less emotional and more practical.
Williams used his Episcopal school contacts to find the most efficient way to integrate
the CSDV. As early as March 1955, Williams corresponded with Headmasters from
schools in Delaware, Kentucky, and New Orleans.17 In these letters, Williams traded
policy proposals for integrating, a “delicate and intricate matter,” as one Headmaster
described it.18 One Headmaster went into great detail about possible ways to integrate:

The plan for St. Albans and the Cathedral School, as I understand it, is that they
will be open at the fourth grade only this coming September for colored day
students. And in September, 1956, both of them will be open in all grades for
colored day students. In September, 1957, the boarding departments of all three
of the schools will be open for boarding school and day students.19

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16 Presiding Bishop John E. Hines to A.R. Hoxton, March 26, 1968, Episcopal High School
Archives, Alexandria, VA.

17 Rev. Walden Pell to John Page Williams, March 14, 1955; The Sister Rachel, OSH to John
Page Williams, September 16, 1955; Ellsworth O. VanSlate to Branch Spalding, October 31, 1955,
Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

18 Rev. Walden Pell to John Page Williams, March 14, 1955, Church Schools in the Diocese of
Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.
Williams’ foresight and willingness to communicate across Episcopalian jurisdictions paid off. St. Stephen’s School in Alexandria probably would not have integrated so smoothly if it were not for the policies that Williams created in the mid-1950s, and Williams probably would not have created these policies without the supporting network of Episcopal school heads.

**ESCRU AND THE POWER OF ORGANIZED EPISCOPAL PRESSURE**

Aside from individual clergy and laymen, the Episcopal Church produced an organization that demanded racial justice within the Episcopal Church: the Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity (ESCRU). Founded in 1959 in Raleigh, North Carolina, ESCRU sought to “promote increased acceptance and demonstration of the church’s policies of racial inclusiveness in its own life, as well as leadership in the community and nation in establishing full opportunities for all persons without racial discrimination in fields such as education.”

John Morris, a Georgia native and Emory University graduate, became the director of ESCRU. Over the course of the 1960’s, ESCRU toured the South demanding that the institutions of the Episcopal Church, whether schools or parishes, integrate. Through sponsoring black applicants to Episcopal schools, petitioning, picketing, and even hunger strikes, ESCRU played a pivotal role in Episcopal school integration across the South.

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19 Rev. D.C. Loving to John Page Williams, March 28, 1955, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

ESCRU was involved in the integration of St. Stephen’s, the second of the seven schools to desegregate. John Page Williams, President of the CSDV, admitted as much in his book, *A History of Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia*. The CSDV, under Williams’ leadership, formed a Racial Study Committee in 1960 to study the possibility of integrating the six Diocesan schools. Williams mentioned that ESCRU lobbied his committee to push for a more active policy towards integration. Williams was even invited to attend a meeting of the Richmond chapter of ESCRU in 1963. It is unclear from surviving records if Williams attended the meetings, but ESCRU did have a direct impact on Virginia’s Church Schools. John Davis, a black Episcopal priest and member of ESCRU, sponsored the first black applicant to St. Stephen’s School, Tony Lewis. Lewis, who is now an Episcopal priest himself, explained that Davis first suggested St. Stephen’s as a possible choice of high schools. “John [Davis], before he came to Alexandria, had been in Cleveland,” Lewis explained. “He was a very aggressive member of the NAACP and the Urban League, and the Episcopal manifestation of these things, which was called the Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity. So he was well aware of the changing nature of institutions in the Washington Metropolitan area in Virginia.” In addition to engaging policy makers, ESCRU recruited qualified


22 Rev. Walter F. Hendricks, Jr. to Members and Friends of ESCRU, November 13, 1963, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.


24 Tony Lewis, interviewed by author, Alexandria, VA, June 5, 2008. Also see Williams 186-189.
black applicants and their families in order to force the schools to choose between integration and the affirmative exclusion of black students.

ESCRU appears to have even travelled all the way to rural Tennessee to protest the lack of integration at St. Andrew’s (TN). According to the memoirs of Julien Gunn, the Prior of St. Andrew’s (TN), “a civil rights group” visited the remote boarding school sometime in 1962 or 1963:

> During the course of the academic year we had a civil rights group to visit the school and demand why we had no Black students. We met up at the Priory and I listened to them without committing myself to any demands. One member of the group suggested that perhaps the school would have to be sacrificed during the racial struggles in the Episcopal Church.25

The fact that Gunn recounts the “civil rights group” emphasizing the role of the Episcopal Church suggests that it had an association with ESCRU. Morris’ organization was in fact active in the area. The University of the South, an Episcopal university and seminary, is a few miles from St. Andrew’s (TN). Beginning in February 1962, ESCRU called for the desegregation of public facilities at the University. The controversy remained in the headlines of a Chattanooga newspaper from February to April 1962.26 During those months, members of ESCRU led sit-ins at a University-owned and segregated restaurant. It is quite possible that these members of ESCRU made the ten minute drive to St. Andrew’s (TN) and confronted Gunn.

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ESCRU also had a presence in Jackson, Mississippi, the location of St. Andrew’s (MS). There are two incidents that connected ESCRU to St. Andrew’s (MS). In 1960, Jackson police jailed an ESCRU member and Episcopal priest. The Dean of the Cathedral of St. Andrew’s and Chair of St. Andrew’s School Board, Edward Harrison, went to the jail and conducted mass for the jailed ESCRU member. Four years later, the Cathedral of St. Andrew once again associated with ESCRU when it agreed to host ESCRU’s annual conference. The Dean at that time was Chris Keller, who continued Harrison’s displays of open support for the civil rights organization. Therefore, the school that the Cathedral controlled, St. Andrew’s School, associated itself with ESCRU through the actions of its vestry and priests.

ESCRU also found itself at the center of the Lovett School integration crisis. Morris, the director of ESCRU, was acquainted with Martin Luther King, Jr. and his family. Morris was also a Lovett parent. According to most secondary accounts of events, Morris recruited the King family to apply to Lovett, serving the same role that John Davis played with Lewis at St. Stephen’s School. On January 30, 1963, Morris explained the situation in a letter to Rev. James McDowell, the Headmaster of Lovett:

Several months ago Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr., asked me about the quality of instruction and general atmosphere at the Lovett School. I could have nothing but praise for its academic excellence and other assets… On the question of the admissions policy I told her that I knew of no discriminatory policy, but that I didn’t think this had been clarified through any Negroes making application.28

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27 Wise, *The Cathedral of St. Andrew’s*, 144.

Martin Luther King, III would probably have never applied to Lovett had it not been for Morris’ initiative.

Even after July 1963, when Bishop Claiborne removed the “official” connection between the Lovett School and the Episcopal Church, ESCRU continued to protest Lovett’s admission policies. Morris justified the protest of Lovett because the school continued its links with the Episcopal Church despite official separation. As ESCRU’s “Statement of the Executive Committee” from September 17, 1963, pointed out, Lovett’s charter still required fourteen board members to be Episcopalian, the Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip still sat on the Board, and the school continued to hold Episcopal chapel services every Wednesday. 29 ESCRU therefore picketed the school throughout the fall of 1963. “Episcopal laymen and laywomen from the Atlanta area will initiate the protest action that will be continued on an indefinite and periodic basis so long as [Lovett] remains a Church-related school that segregates,” ESCRU’s press release announced in October 1963. 30 ESCRU’s picketing made national headlines. “Atlanta’s Racial Church Dispute,” ran a headline from the New York Herald Tribune. Time magazine drew attention to ESCRU and Lovett with its November 1963 article titled, “Faith & Prejudice in Georgia.” “Anti-segregation placards marched outside the fashionable, privately run Lovett School,” Time wrote. “It was the kind of civil rights protest that the South has grown used to – except that this time the pickets included

29 “Statement of the Executive Committee of the Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity on the Lovett School Situation,” September 17, 1963, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

Episcopal priests, and their protest was aimed at a school with Episcopal ties.\textsuperscript{31} Not only did ESCRU force Lovett’s hand by recruiting black applicants, it drew national attention to the school after the Lovett Board refused to integrate.

ESCRU fought Lovett’s connection to the Episcopal Church and its admissions policies for four years. In February 1964, John Morris wrote an open letter to the Lovett community explaining his reasons for continuing to protest:

Claims have been made that Lovett would integrate someday… but left to stand without reference to when, this kind of statement becomes only an instrument for assuaging the parents and faculty planning to leave Lovett in its present circumstance…. Lovett has now run the full gambit in classical terms of the intransigent South refusing to live in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, let alone abide by accepted Christian teaching.\textsuperscript{32}

Reflecting the same argument that Martin Luther King, Jr. used in his famous “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” Morris refused to accept pleas for patience. In May 1964, Lovett and ESCRU once again made the headlines of the \textit{Atlanta Journal} and the \textit{Atlanta Constitution} by protesting Lovett’s Baccalaureate services held in the Cathedral of St. Philip.\textsuperscript{33} While Rev. Alfred Hardman, Dean of the Cathedral, stated that “Lovett is not in any way an Episcopal or Church School,” he not only allowed the school to hold graduation services at his Cathedral but also officiated over the service.\textsuperscript{34} Despite protests, the annual service continued for three years. In 1966, two ESCRU members

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{32} John B. Morris to Lovett Parents and Faculty, February 26, 1964
\bibitem{34} Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity, “ESCRU Newsletter: Lovett School Baccalaureate Service,” August 6, 1964, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.
\end{thebibliography}
went on a ninety-nine hour fast in the sanctuary of St. Philip. “As the Lovett graduating class filed into the church, the priests sat in opposite naves with opened Bibles in their laps,” *The Atlanta Constitution* reported.\(^{35}\) Despite three years of protest, Lovett was still unofficially connected to the Episcopal Church and it was still segregated.

John Morris tried a new tactic in the summer of 1966. In a June 20 letter to Lovett’s new Headmaster, Dr. Rual W. Stephens, Morris explained his new approach. While “not wanting to exacerbate tensions between [ESCRU] and the Lovett School,” Morris told Stephens that he invited “representatives of concerned organizations to confer with me on how the Board of Trustees of Lovett might receive the maximum identification and exposure within the community.” Morris did not name specifically who the “representatives of concerned organizations” were, but he did attach a list of the businesses Lovett’s Trustees were associated with, and he implied that these businesses would be targeted for protest. He also provided copies of the letter to the Board members.\(^{36}\) Despite the fact that Morris invited a response from Stephens and the Lovett Board, no response has survived. However, the Lovett Board minutes from September 8, 1966, have survived. It was a “special meeting” in which the Board only discussed and voted on one issue: admissions policy. The Board passed a resolution that students “will be admitted without regard to race or religion.”\(^{37}\) A headline


\(^{36}\) Rev. John B. Morris to Dr. Rual W. Stephens, June 20, 1966, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

\(^{37}\) Minutes of Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Lovett School, September 8, 1966, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.
appeared four days later in the *Atlanta Journal* that read, “Lovett School To Accept Negro Students Next Year.” When Lovett integrated for the 1967-1968 school year, ESCRU ended its protest.

Did ESCRU speed up the process of integration at Lovett? By all accounts, John Morris lobbied Coretta Scott King to have her son apply to Lovett. Without that, the notorious Lovett incident probably would never have taken place. ESCRU also deserves some of the credit, or blame, for Lovett’s break with the Episcopal Church in the summer of 1963. In a speech to the Lovett faculty in January 1964, the interim Headmaster argued that ESCRU’s “efforts have resulted in complete separation of the school from the Episcopal Church,” despite the efforts of the Trustees and Bishop Claiborne to work out a compromise. Did Morris’ subtle threat to protest the businesses of Lovett’s trustees have an effect on the Board’s decision to integrate two and a half months later? Nearly fifty years later, James Sibley, Lovett’s Board Chair from the time, downplayed Morris’ role. Regardless, Lovett in 1963 had never had a black applicant, and it was comfortably connected to the Episcopal Church. Four years later, Lovett no longer had official connections to the Church, and it was also integrated.

THE EPISCOPALIAN IMPACT ON SCHOOL INTEGRATION

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39 John Rabbe, “Talk to entire Lovett School faculty and staff,” January 30, 1964, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

40 James Sibley, interviewed by author, Atlanta, GA, July 7, 2008.
The success and speed of each school’s integration depended on who had more influence over school policies: the Episcopal Church or parents and alumni. Evidence indicates that when the Episcopal Church had the mechanisms for direct control over the school, then the school adopted a pro-integrationist position earlier and with less controversy. In the schools where the Church had less influence and where the parents had more, there was stronger resistance to integration. In some of the more established Church schools that had generations of alumni, resistance was the most extreme. Ultimately, the Episcopal Church mattered in the integration of its schools but only in relation to the power of the Church versus that of parents and alumni.

The Integration of St. Albans School

St. Albans integrated in 1957 after years of pressure from the Episcopal Church. The pressure came from the Bishop of Washington and the “Cathedral Chapter” that he chaired. This Cathedral Chapter had ultimate governing power over the school, despite the creation of an independent St. Albans Board of Governors in 1948. The Chapter, made up of Washington National Cathedral’s vestry and various clergymen, had “control of all [school] funds,” it approved of the hiring of the school’s Headmaster, and the Chapter could refuse “a recommendation or action” of the school Board.\(^\text{41}\) Of the seven schools researched, St. Albans was the most closely linked to any diocese of the Episcopal Church. It was also the first of the seven schools to integrate.

The process of integrating St. Albans began in 1948, when Canon Albert Hawley Lucas, the Headmaster and an ordained Episcopal priest, presented the idea of

an “open admissions policy” to the Board of Governors. One trustee worried that
“negroes applying for admittance… are doing so not as individual American citizens
but as members of subversive groups.” Another added, “such an action would have an
unfortunate effect upon the community and the school’s clientele.”42 The Board did not
act on integration at that meeting, but two opposing factions began to emerge – the
Board of Governors and the school’s parents versus the Headmaster, the Bishop, and
the Cathedral Chapter. Canon Lucas retired as Headmaster the following year, but
before stepping down he told his successor, “I haven’t had the courage to bring black
kids into the school.”43

Throughout the 1950’s, Angus Dun, the Bishop of Washington, pressured the
Board of Governors and the parents of St. Albans to create an open admissions policy
for all races. Born in New York City with deformed feet and hands, Dun had one of his
legs amputated at the age of eleven.44 After graduating from Yale in 1917, Dun made a
name for himself at the Episcopal Theological Seminary in Cambridge, Massachusetts,
where he eventually became the Dean. In 1944 and at the age of fifty-one, he became
Washington’s Bishop. “If there’s a hard or difficult aspect to a situation,” Dun once
said, “I believe in plunging into it directly.”45 Dun plunged into St. Albans’ admissions

42 “Minutes of the Seventh Meeting of the Governing Board of St. Albans School,” March 17,
1948, St. Albans Archives, Washington, DC.


44 Robert Tate Allen, “Dr. Dun Elected Bishop But May Not Accept Post,” The Washington
Post, November 24, 1943.

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policy in June 1951 when he ordered the school Board to create a committee to “explore the problem” of segregation and then report back to his Cathedral Chapter. Nearly a year later in March 1952, the Board still had not produced a plan to integrate, so Dun held a meeting with St. Albans’ faculty and trustees to “afford an opportunity for question and discussion” about racial integration. Dun became more open about his views on segregation after the Brown v. Board decision. In an October 1954 sermon, Dun stated the following:

Because the Kingdom is one and the King is one, His people are called to make no peace with racial segregation and discrimination. So long as there is a single congregation of Christ’s flock in which a son of a man is unacceptable because of race or color, there is an offense against sovereignty among the King’s own people.

Out of all the leaders associated with the seven schools in this thesis, Dun made the earliest and boldest statement against segregation.

Meanwhile, Canon Charles Martin, the school’s new Headmaster, was pushing for Board members to come up with a specific plan to integrate. While the Board agreed as early as 1950 that segregation was “unchristian,” the trustees refused to act on that principal. In March 1952, Martin proposed the creation of yet another committee

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46 “Minutes of the Thirty-Second Meeting of the Governing Board of St. Alban’s School,” June 4, 1951, St. Albans Archives, Washington, DC.


to work out the details of how the school should integrate. At this point the Cathedral Chapter seemed to have lost patience. In a unanimous vote, the Chapter adopted Bishop Dun’s resolution calling for St. Albans to open its admissions policy to “children of all races.” The Cathedral Chapter chose to force the St. Albans Board to conform to its ideals. Yet nearly two years later, the school still did not have an open admissions policy. In June 1954, the Bishop called for representatives from St. Albans to report to the Cathedral Chapter and he gave a deadline for the fall. In the October 1954, just a few weeks before Dun’s sermon denouncing segregation, the St. Albans Board approved a plan to integrate the school over the course of three years, beginning in its Lower School. The open admissions policy took effect in 1957.

Only the influence of school parents explains the Board’s nearly decade long delay in creating and then enacting an open admissions policy. Trustees mentioned fear

49 “Minutes of the Twenty-First Meeting of the Governing Board of St. Alban’s School,” April 20, 1952, St. Albans Archives, Washington, DC.

50 “Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Governing Board of St. Albans School,” March 20, 1952, St. Albans Archives, Washington, DC.

51 “Minutes of the Fiftieth Meeting of the Governing Board of St. Albans School: Report of the Headmaster,” June 1, 1953, St. Albans Archives, Washington, DC.


53 “Minutes of the Fifty-Ninth Meeting of the Governing Board of St. Albans School,” June 7, 1954, St. Albans Archives, Washington, DC.

54 “Minutes of the Sixtieth Meeting of the Governing Board of St. Albans School,” October 4, 1954, St. Albans Archives, Washington, DC.
of parent retribution at meetings in March 1948, April 1950, March and April 1951, November 1952, December 1953, October 1953, and June and October 1954. There are nearly a dozen total references to potential negative parental reactions in the Board minutes.\(^{55}\) In November 1952, as rumors circulated that St. Albans was about to integrate, the Board composed a letter to parents admitting that they had “been studying the problem” while also promising that “parents and alumni will be consulted and given opportunity to give the Board the benefit of their views.” When the promised consultation did not come, the school’s Father’s Club wrote to Martin in protest. The Father’s Club threatened to send out their own questionnaire to parents. The Board voted not to perform their own survey of parents.\(^{56}\)

It took a combination of several forces for St. Albans to overcome the influence of parents. It took the Bishop Dun to focus the community’s attention on the “problem” of integration. It took the efforts of the Canon Martin, who “was convinced there was only one attitude possible from both a Christian and democratic point of view, and that was to open the school at once to all races.”\(^{57}\) Most of all, it took a system of Episcopalian control over the school. Only when the Cathedral Chapter demanded an open admissions policy did the Board of Governors concede. In the process, St. Albans became the first integrated school in the Interstate Athletic Conference, a group of

\(^{55}\) See minutes of the meetings from those months in St. Albans School Archives, Washington, D.C.


equally prestigious D.C.-area private schools.\textsuperscript{58} Left to the St. Albans parents and without the strength of the Episcopal Church, that would not have happened.

\textbf{The Integration of St. Stephen’s School}

Like St. Albans, St. Stephen’s School only integrated in 1961 after the Episcopal Church forced it to do so. The mechanism for the Episcopal Church’s control over St. Stephen’s was the Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia, a collection of the six schools across Virginia associated with the Bishop. John Page Williams, President of the CSDV and an ordained priest, created an admissions policy in the mid-1950’s that gave the CSDV Board veto power over each school’s decision regarding integration. “There is agreement,” the CSDV resolved in March 1955, “that if integration becomes the practice for churches, Sunday schools, parish organizations, parish and diocesan institutions and all church activities, it will be the responsibility of the schools to conform to the practices of the parishes.”\textsuperscript{59} This initial caution gave way in June 1956 to the CSDV claiming the authority to intervene and overrule local school boards in their admissions process.\textsuperscript{60} St. Stephen’s School board first tested this policy in April


\textsuperscript{59} CSDV Trustees, “Suggested Statement – Second Draft,” March 31, 1955, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

\textsuperscript{60} Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia, October 24, 1961, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA. These board minutes make a reference to the policy first outlined on June 19, 1956. The board voted to uphold that policy at this meeting.
1961. The Board of Trustees, made up mostly of school parents, voted seven to six against admitting its first black applicant, Tony Lewis.61

Tony Lewis was the perfect applicant to break the CSDV color barrier. Lewis had previously attended a respected integrated school, Burgundy Farms and he met St. Stephen’s academic requirements.62 “[My parents] really nursed my ability to be an academic,” Lewis remembered. “When I went to St. Stephen’s that was the thing that I consciously did the most. I mean I went there to get an education.”63 Throughout the admissions process that took place in the spring of 1961, neither administrators nor Trustees denied Lewis’ academic qualifications. When the St. Stephen’s Board rejected Lewis, they did solely on the basis of race.

On May 12, 1961, the CSDV overruled the St. Stephen’s School Board. The meeting was sufficiently important that the Bishop of Virginia, Robert Gibson, attended. Bishop Gibson began the meeting with a prayer and then spoke from a prepared text. “The unprecedented application to St. Stephen’s School of a qualified member of the Negro race has been for me a cause of deep concern, study and prayer, as is no doubt equally true for other members of this Board,” Bishop Gibson began. He went on to outline the arguments for both denying and accepting Tony Lewis. At the close of his remarks, Gibson stated:

61 Williams, A History of the Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia, 187; “The Proposal for a Memorandum from the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia to the Local Board of St. Stephen’s,” May 4, 1961, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.


If... we reject this applicant solely on the ground that he is of the Negro race, and there appear no other grounds for doing so, then... relationship with Church will of necessity be jeopardized. Indeed and I say this advisedly, I believe that such a decision will begin the separation of the schools from their official relationship with the Diocese of Virginia, so that in time they will no longer be the “Church Schools.”

Unlike Bishop Dun with St. Albans, this was a noticeably amoral argument. Gibson gently pushed the CSDV Board towards overriding the local St. Stephen’s School Board, not because it was the morally right thing to do, but because it was most practical thing to do politically. He ended with a clear statement: “To deny admission to the Church’s schools solely on the grounds of race is contrary to the declared policy of the Protestant Episcopal Church and of the Diocese of Virginia.” The CSDV Board voted fourteen to nine to take the unprecedented step of overruling a local school board.

The nine CSDV Board members who voted against overriding the St. Stephen’s Board were all laypersons. In his book, Williams alludes to the struggles between Episcopal clergy and laypersons over integration of the schools. “The Church Schools became the forum,” Williams explains, “in which clergy and laity struggled together in their time consuming effort to translate their Christian faith into concrete institutional

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64 Bishop Randolph Claiborne, “Bishop’s Statement to Board of Church Schools of the Diocese” May 10, 1961, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

65 Bishop Randolph Claiborne, “Bishop’s Statement to Board of Church Schools of the Diocese” May 10, 1961, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

66 Williams, A History of the Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia, 187.

67 Williams, A History of the Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia, 186-189.
In a letter to another priest, Williams was more direct. While “trying to follow our policy faithfully,” Williams wrote, “I would say that our most difficult problem is with some of the leading laymen of the Diocese. A number of who hold or have held key positions on Diocesan committees.” Williams added that “we have had magnificent support from the Bishops and the Clergy who are on our board.”

Despite the clergy versus laity factions on the CSDV board, Williams successfully pushed for the Church ordered desegregation of St. Stephen’s. It required the weight of the Bishop and a slim majority of clergymen to override the decision of the St. Stephen’s Board comprised mostly of parents. Without the clergy, without the influence of the Bishop and without the mechanisms for the CSDV control over its schools, St. Stephen’s would not have desegregated in 1961.

Reflecting on the desegregation of St. Stephen’s two years later in July 1963, Williams recognized the key to CSDV overruling the school board without controversy – St. Stephen’s weak base of alumni and disjointed parent body:

> It was fortunate that St. Stephen’s School was new enough not to have a strong body of alumni and had such a heterogeneous constituency that it could not easily be mobilized in opposition by violent people.

Williams recognized an inherent quality of alumni – nostalgia and resistance to change. St. Stephen’s, founded in 1944, graduated its first class of seniors in the early 1950’s.

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68 Williams, *A History of the Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia*, 183

69 John Page Williams to Rev. Samuel B. Chilton, June 21, 1963, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

70 John Page Williams to David Mallery, July 16, 1963, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.
The oldest alumni, therefore, were in their late twenties by the time the school integrated, not yet established enough to hold sway over the school. The demographics of Alexandria, Williams noted, were much more fluid than in the rest of Virginia. Here, Williams recognized that when parents act cohesively, they are emboldened in numbers. The metro-D.C. area was a transient place. St. Stephen’s parents had neither grown up together nor did they all live in the same neighborhoods. As a result parental opposition was more difficult mobilize than in other Episcopal school communities. The weak alumni base and scattered parent network were key to the successful integration of St. Stephen’s.

Attempts to Integrate the Lovett School

The failure of the Lovett School to integrate in 1963 in many ways is attributable to the lack of control that the Episcopal Church had over the school. Prior to 1955, Lovett had no relationship with the Church. After Eva Edward Lovett retired, the school merged with the Cathedral of St. Philip. Trustees rewrote the charter to require that fourteen of the Board members had to be Episcopalian, that the Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip held a permanent position on the board, and that the school would conduct weekly chapel services based on the Book of Common Prayer. Lovett also became the Lovett Episcopal School, even though the school used the “Episcopal” title infrequently. Unlike St. Stephen’s School, the Diocese of Atlanta did not clarify any admissions policy nor did the vestry of the Cathedral of St. Philip have any power to veto decisions made by the Lovett School board.
The events that led to the official break between Lovett and the Episcopal Church occurred rapidly. On January 30, 1963, John Morris wrote the Headmaster of Lovett, Rev. James McDowell, notifying him that Coretta Scott King planned to have her five-year old son, Martin Luther King III, apply to Lovett. On February 25, the Lovett Board voted nineteen to one to deny Martin Luther King III’s application. On March 24, *Living Church*, an Episcopal newspaper, ran a story detailing Lovett’s rejection of Martin Luther King III. Protest letters from across the country then flooded into Lovett. On April 5, the Lovett Board appeared to backtrack when it passed a resolution recognizing that segregation contradicted the teachings of the Church. Yet when two more black students applied to Lovett in late April the Board refused, once again, to consider their applications. On April 22, Bishop Claiborne held the last recorded meeting with Lovett’s Chairman, James Sibley. The Bishop spoke publicly on the issue for the first time on June 4, claiming that the Episcopal Church had no control over Lovett’s policies. Ten days later on June 14, the Lovett Trustees passed a resolution that called for all pending applications of “Negro students” to be denied and stated that the school would not accept future applicants from black students. Just over two weeks later on July 2, Claiborne officially cut ties between the Lovett School and the Episcopal Church. On July 22, Lovett’s Headmaster wrote a letter to parents announcing his resignation. On August 8, the interim Headmaster of Lovett, John Rabbe, wrote to parents explaining that the school would be governed independently of the Episcopal Church but that it would still hold weekly Episcopal chapel services. ESCRU’s protests then began and continued through the summer of 1966.
Press releases, letters between Trustees and Lovett administrators, and interviews with James McDonald and James Sibley all indicate that the Bishop of Atlanta, Claiborne, attempted in good faith to resolve the controversy. On the other hand, as the official Chairman of Lovett’s Board, Claiborne oversaw Lovett’s “white flight” growth from 1959 to 1963 without clarifying its relationship to the Diocese. Prior to 1963, he apparently did nothing to ensure that the school complied with the policies of the Episcopal Church, and Claiborne only became actively involved with desegregation of Lovett when the public demanded action. The Bishop did not cut all Episcopal ties with Lovett as he indicated in the summer of 1963. Lovett continued to hold weekly Episcopalian chapel services as well as its annual Baccalaureate service at the Cathedral of St. Philip. Claiborne had the authority to stop both.

This ongoing connection between Lovett and the Episcopal Church was not lost on observers at the time. Ralph McGill, publisher of The Atlanta Journal and an Episcopalian, indicated that Claiborne could have done more. In the fall of 1963, McGill criticized the Bishop in the Episcopal newsmagazine, Diocese. McGill “said it was ‘hypocrisy’ to say Lovett was not still an Episcopal school.” McGill’s criticism caused a scandal in itself when a Church official at the Diocese ordered 13,000 copies of the newspaper destroyed to cover up McGill’s comments. The incident, while having little effect on the integration of Episcopal schools, shows the Church’s lack of candor in its handling of the Lovett crisis.

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As awkward as their efforts were, Claiborne and the Episcopal Church do
deserve credit for pushing Lovett towards integration. In 1955, eight years before the
Lovett controversy began, Claiborne took a bold stand against segregation when he
signed the “Minister’s Manifesto” in the wake of the Brown decision.\(^{72}\) The Living
Church, following its mission to be “a weekly record of the news, the work, and the
thought of the Episcopal Church,” did not hide from the Lovett crisis. In fact, the
official Episcopal newspaper was the first news organization to publicize Lovett’s
decision to reject Martin Luther King, III.\(^{73}\) Atlanta’s two major newspapers, The
Atlanta Journal and The Atlanta Constitution, did not run their first story on Lovett
until June of 1963.\(^{74}\) In meetings with Sibley at the beginning of the crisis in March and
April, Claiborne threatened to cut ties with Lovett unless the Board agreed to an open
admissions policy.\(^{75}\) The Lovett Board’s April resolution that, “segregation on the sole
basis of race is inconsistent with the Christian religion” and that, “the Board of Trustees
has no policy of segregation on the sole basis of race,” confirm Claiborne’s influence.\(^{76}\)
The fact that the Lovett Board backtracked on that resolution just a few weeks later,
when two more black students were denied admittance, gave credibility to Claiborne’s

\(^{72}\) Kruse, White Flight, 174.

\(^{73}\) “Church School Turns Down Negro Child,” The Living Church, March 24, 1963.


\(^{75}\) James Sibley to Bishop Randolph Claiborne, April 26, 1963, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

\(^{76}\) Minutes of Special Meeting of Board of Trustees of the Lovett School, April 5, 1963, The
Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.
June assertion that Lovett was “subject to no ecclesiastical control by the Bishop of or Diocese of Atlanta.”  Claiborne apparently tried to change Lovett’s policies and failed. Lovett’s Trustees mention in their correspondence with each other that Claiborne’s pressure made them hesitate in voting to remain segregated.  Rev. James McDowell, Lovett’s Headmaster and an Episcopal priest, pushed for integration, but Lovett’s Trustees rejected McDowell’s proposals to create an open admissions policy and also to integrate over the course of several years.  When the Lovett Board created a policy that refused to accept black applicants, an openly segregationist policy, McDowell resigned.

The Episcopal Church, whether through its priests within the Lovett administration or through the Bishop of Atlanta, could not persuade Lovett’s Trustees to move towards desegregation. The Trustees chose instead, to accede to the demands of a majority of the school’s parents to remain segregated. Lovett was the case study of what happens when the balance of power shifts from the Episcopal Church to the parents of a school. The Board, acting on the interests of Lovett’s parents, created a short-sighted, self-destructive policy that the school, nearly forty years later, still deals with.

The Integration of St. Andrew’s School (TN)

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77 Bishop Randolph Claiborne, “Statement by the Bishop of Atlanta,” June 4, 1963, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

78 Lovett Trustee 1 to James Sibley, June 10, 1963, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

79 Bishop Randolph Claiborne, “Statement of the Bishop of Atlanta,” July 1, 1963 The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA. The interview with James McDowell corroborates this story.
St. Andrew’s (TN) integrated only after the intervention of the Order of the Holy Cross. Evidence indicates that the Prior of St. Andrew’s (TN), Julian Gunn, resisted integration. Each year, Gunn traveled to the monastic headquarters of the Order of the Holy Cross in upstate New York to give his school report. His memoir recounts his visit during in the summer of 1962:

Upon arrival, I was informed that I would have to give account for why no Black boys were enrolled at St. Andrew’s School. An obvious reason for this absence was the fact that we had never received and application from a prospective Black student. My explanation did not seem to satisfy those who questioned me. At the same time I became aware of personal hostility from members of the Order such as I had never before experienced… In pursuing the way towards integration… the plan was sketched for members of the Order, so now all we had to do was to implement that plan.80

Gunn did not deal with integration until he felt “personal hostility” from his fellow monks, and the Order used its connections to a mission in Liberia as a means of pushing the school towards integration. From that mission in 1965, the Order brought a Liberian teenager, Dunstan Tegli, to become one of St. Andrew’s (TN) first two black students to integrate the school.81 Through the Order of the Holy Cross, the Episcopal Church dictated policy to St. Andrew’s (TN).

Gunn still had to deal with the parents of the school. In a letter dated December 10, 1963, after Gunn’s visit to upstate New York, the Prior explained to school parents that, “the basic policy at St. Andrew’s is determined by the governing body of the Order of the Holy Cross.” He went on, saying that “last summer the question was raised as to


why no Negroes had been admitted to St. Andrew’s School.” Gunn, an Episcopal monk, openly conceded responsibility for integration to his monastic Order. The implication in this letter to the parents and in his memoirs was that the initiative for desegregating rested with the Order of the Holy Cross. The school, left to govern itself, would not have changed its segregationist policies in 1963, and it probably would not have accepted its first black students in 1965. While Gunn suggested that, “If any parents of boys presently enrolled honestly feel that they cannot accept our policy, it will mean that they can place their sons in other schools and still allow for two years before graduation.”82 There is no evidence that St. Andrew’s (TN) lost a large amount of students over integration. St. Andrew’s (TN) did not receive a significant amount of critical mail, nor did the parents and alumni launch a campaign to resist and undermine the decision to integrate. As a boarding school, St. Andrew’s (TN) parents were geographically spread across the South. The Order of the Holy Cross dictated policy, not parents and alumni; because of that, the school successfully and smoothly integrated in September 1965, without incident.

**The Integration of St. Andrew’s School (MS)**

The Cathedral of St. Andrew in Jackson, Mississippi had ultimate control over the policies of St. Andrew’s School (MS). In April 1961, a group of laymen Trustees challenged that control. The Board of Trustees passed a resolution calling for Edward Harrison’s resignation, who served as Board Chair and also as Dean of the Cathedral.

82 Father Julien Gunn to Parents and Guardians, December 10, 1963, The Archives of the Episcopal Church, Austin, TX.
Harrison committed the sin, in the eyes of his opponents, of holding several biracial meetings in order to establish a dialogue between the black and white communities of Jackson. In calling for the St. Andrew’s vestry to remove Harrison, the school Trustees co-authored a letter that argued that they did not want St. Andrew’s School (MS) to be “in the position of seemingly assuming the leading role in the active promotion of racial integration within our community.” The vestry of the Cathedral refused to remove Harrison. In June 1961, the anti-integrationist group within the Board then tried to change the charter of the school in an effort to remove the Dean’s permanent position on the Board. The Trustees feared that Harrison’s continued presence on the Board “would hamper any fund-raising drive” because of his open sympathy for the Civil Rights movement. The St. Andrew’s vestry held veto power over changes to the St. Andrew’s School charter, and the vestry refused to accept the removal of the Dean from the Board. This eliminated the last attempt of the school’s Trustees to control the school’s policy of open admissions. Four of the trustees resigned in frustration.

The conflict between the Cathedral of St. Andrew’s and the St. Andrew’s School Board continued for another decade. According to Sherwood Wise, the original founder of the school and periodic member of the school Board, Harrison’s replacement as Dean, Chris Keller, pushed for the integration of the school in 1966. In March 1966, Keller sought the opinions of the vestry before the board “voted positively” in favor of

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admitting a four-year-old black applicant. The initiative to desegregate, Wise reveals, came from an Episcopal clergyman. The same year that this desegregation occurred, Rev. John Stone Jenkins replaced Keller as Dean of the Cathedral. It was during Jenkins’ tenure that the city of Jackson started the process of court ordered desegregation in the late 1960’s. “That was when things really began to get rough in the whole city,” Jenkins remembered. “[Jackson] is essentially a Baptist and Presbyterian town and those two churches took the viewpoint that integration of public schools was a great tragedy and should be resisted.” The result was a wave of applications to St. Andrew’s School (MS) as well as requests to expand into a high school. The Board and the school Headmaster favored an expansion of the school to accommodate white flight, while Jenkins, on principle, opposed it. Jenkins ordered the school’s Headmaster, Marshal James, to put a freeze on all new applicants while he also refused to create a high school. “The school board was willing to go along because they had no choice, the Cathedral owned the school,” Jenkins explained. “But there were certain people on the Board who opposed integration by the school, but they mostly kept quiet.” Only after Jenkins left in 1972 did St. Andrew’s School (MS) expand into a high school, after the height of the white flight fervor had subsided.

Like Lovett, St. Andrew’s School in Mississippi experienced a conflict between laymen on the school board and representatives of the Episcopal Church. Unlike

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85 Wise, The Cathedral of St. Andrew’s, 177.
Lovett, the Episcopal Church won. The process began with Edward Harrison taking a public stand in favor of civil rights, which led to resignations among the Trustees. This probably caused financial losses for the school. However, Harrison’s actions laid the groundwork for a quiet integration of the school in 1966 under the leadership of Chris Keller, another Episcopal priest. Not only were Harrison and Keller active at school board meetings, but the Cathedral vestry held the power to override the Trustees.

Neither was the case with Lovett. When, in 1968 and 1969, John Stone Jenkins refused to take advantage of white flight, the school had already experienced ten years of sacrificing self-interest for the sake of Episcopalian principles.

The Integration of Virginia Episcopal School

While Harrison and Keller increased their control over St. Andrew’s (MS), the Bishop of Southwestern Virginia, William Henry Marmion, gave up his control of the Virginia Episcopal School. This allowed a twelve year delay in integration. In January of 1956, Marmion publicly forfeited his influence over the issue of school integration in deference to VES’s trustees. An article at the time explained that, “although he is president of the VES Board of trustees and also head of the corporation which operates the school, Bishop Marmion emphasized that he could not speak for the board concerning the removal of racial barriers at the privately operated church school.”

After Marmion abdicated his influence in school policy, VES’s trustees established an admissions policy that openly contradicted the General Convention. In June 1959, the VES trustees passed a resolution that stated:

While race shall not be a controlling factor in determining eligibility for admission to the School, it may be considered among other factors bearing upon the adaptability of the child and the best interests of the school.89

VES therefore became the most obvious case of a school contradicting Episcopalian policies, without opposition from the Bishop. One trustee from the late 1950s and 1960s remembered that, “in my six years on the Board, the Church has never either officially or through Bishop Marmion, exerted any pressure on the Board with respect to this issue [integration].”90 The VES Board took pride in its autonomy and independence from the Episcopal Church, and the leadership of the Diocese sacrificed Episcopalian teachings in granting that independence.

That changed on December 19, 1966 when the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, John E. Hines, asked VES’s Headmaster, Austin Montgomery, to attend a meeting in New York City. VES had not yet made specific plans to integrate. The school’s explanation was the same as that of Prior Julien Gunn of St. Andrew’s (TN) in 1963 – the school had not yet received a black applicant. The Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church took an active interest in changing that. At the meeting Hines discussed “the implications for (VES) of a potential grant of scholarship funds to finance the education of qualified Negro applicants.”91 The Episcopal Church, from the very highest level, connected VES with the Stauffer Foundation, which recruited

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89 Virginia Episcopal School Board of Trustees, “The Enrolment Policy for The Virginia Episcopal School” June 3, 1959, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

90 VES Board Member 3 to Friends of V.E.S., March 9, 1967, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

91 Joseph E. Hines to Austin Montgomery, December 2, 1966, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.
qualified black applicants for Southern private schools and then paid for their tuition. Austin Montgomery adopted Hines’ suggestion and sparked a debate at VES that made him the most controversial Headmaster in school history.\textsuperscript{92}

Immediately, VES parents, alumni, and trustees protested the recruiting of black students. “I can see no need to go out and look for boys of the negro race and ask them to attend V.E.S.,” argued one trustee. “I can see many ramifications involved that will touch every phase of the school, the alumni, the social life, the financial, etc.”\textsuperscript{93} Another trustee advised the school to “graciously decline this invitation” to even meet with the Presiding Bishop.\textsuperscript{94} Every letter that has survived from the trustees in December 1966 opposed the use of the Stouffer Foundation in recruiting black students. Montgomery did it anyway, and it cost him his career as Headmaster of VES.

Throughout the controversy that consumed VES from December 1966 until the fall of 1967, Bishop Marmion provided steady, albeit private, support to Montgomery. As early as 1965, Marmion gave Montgomery “a note to express my appreciation for what you are doing.” Marmion added that, “[the trustees] seem to be trying to rise to the vision you have and the requests you are making of us.”\textsuperscript{95} Marmion wrote that Montgomery was making requests of him, and not vice versa. Thus, in this case, the

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\textsuperscript{92} Phil and Lyn n Hadley, interviewed by author, Lynchburg, VA, September 20, 2008.
\textsuperscript{93} VES Board Member 4 to Colonel B.M. Gilliam, December 5, 1966, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.
\textsuperscript{94} VES Board Member 5 to Professor B.M. Gilliam, December 5, 1966, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.
\textsuperscript{95} Bishop William H. Marmion to Austin Montgomery, October 11, 1965, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.
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clergy followed the layman. Making reference to the attacks on Montgomery from alumni and parents in the wake of announcing desegregation in April 1967, Marmion explained to Montgomery that, “I wish I could field some of these line drives for you, interpose myself between you and the flak which is coming from all directions or in some way cushion blows.” There is no evidence, however, that Marmion did anything to publicly cushion the blows directed at Montgomery.

While the Bishop played a minimal role in integrating VES, an organized opposition to integration developed. The Raleigh Chapter of the VES Alumni Association led the protest against Montgomery’s use of the Stauffer Foundation to integrate the school (see chapter 1). While Montgomery succeeded in integrating VES in the fall of 1967, his experiences with the alumni and parents led him to resign as Headmaster less than a year later. In the end, neither the Bishop nor the Headmaster could stand up to the well organized and highly entrenched parents and alumni of VES.

The Integration of Episcopal High School

The Episcopal Church played practically no role in the integration of Episcopal High School, nor could it. EHS’s move away from the control of the Church culminated in 1923, when the school separated itself from the Virginia Theological Seminary. Until the 1920’s, the Seminary and EHS shared a Board of Trustees. Yet even in the school’s first decade of existence in the mid-19th century, EHS’s administrators voiced their frustration at the system of governance. EHS’s first

96 Bishop Williams H. Marmion to Austin Montgomery, April 10, 1967, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.
Headmaster complained that the school’s Trustees were “often more devoted to things spiritual than to things temporal. They were poor businessmen.”

From 1839 to 1923, EHS and the Seminary entered into “a curious financial arrangement,” as one principal put it, where EHS leased its campus from the Seminary’s Board of Trustees. In exchange for use of the campus, EHS provided a number of scholarships for sons of clergymen each year. The arrangement limited the school’s financial growth, and EHS’s administrators became increasingly frustrated.

In 1890, EHS’s Headmaster threatened to resign unless the Board of Trustees allocated funds for improving the grounds. That changed in 1923 when the school established itself as a non-profit corporation with its own Board of Trustees. The result was a unique relationship between the school and the Church. After eighty-four years of direct control from an institution of the Church, EHS became completely autonomous. Neither the Virginia Theological Seminary nor the Bishop of Virginia had the authority to set policy at EHS.

There is also no evidence that the Church or its clergy tried to pressure EHS to integrate. ESCRU never made EHS a target of its protest. No letter has survived from the Bishop of Virginia leading up to EHS’s decision to integrate, nor did the CSDV play any part in the school’s decision making process. Of all of the Episcopal schools that the President of the CSDV, John Page Williams, communicated with, EHS was not one of them. There were a flood of letters in support of EHS’s integration in 1968, but that

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was after the decision had been made. Even the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, John Hines, seemed to have taken a hands-off approach to EHS’s admissions policies. Two letters have survived between Hines and EHS’s Headmaster, A.R. Hoxton. Both letters were written in March 1968, after Hoxton announced EHS’s integration in the coming fall. The letters are cordial. In one, Hines praised Hoxton’s leadership. Yet Hines mentioned that he found out about the integration of EHS through the *New York Times*. 100 Apparently, Hoxton did not feel it was necessary to inform the Church leadership of this decision. Hoxton, in his response, mentioned that he and Hines had lunch sometime in 1967. 101 Perhaps integration came up at that lunch, but if so neither participant mentioned any prior conversation on the topic. Regardless, in the 1960’s EHS showed remarkable independence from the Episcopal Church, not only from the official mechanisms of Church control, but also from the unofficial Episcopal networks.

Based on the surviving letters, EHS alumni and Trustees viewed the Episcopal Church with suspicion, and Hoxton went out of his way to explain that the Church’s theology had no effect on the school’s policy. “Episcopal High School has been a thorn in the side of churchmen since 1954,” one alumnus stated with pride. Implying that the Episcopal Church was the root cause of the EHS’s integration, the misinformed alumnus wrote to Hoxton that “I would certainly propose that you break whatever weak

100 Presiding Bishop John E. Hines to A.R. Hoxton, March 26, 1968, Episcopal High School Archives, Alexandria, VA.

101 A.R. Hoxton to Presiding Bishop John E. Hines, March 27, 1968, Episcopal High School Archives, Alexandria, VA.
ties, if any, that may still exist with the Protestant Episcopal Diocese. What have they
done for the school all these years?"102 Another alumnus complained that the school
was getting wrapped up in “the hysteria that has been sweeping the country, especially
among clergy and intellectuals.”103 The Episcopal Church was the mistrusted outsider
at EHS. Hoxton attempted to allay these fears. In his letter to parents and alumni
announcing the school’s integration, Hoxton went out of his way to state that the
Episcopal Church “exerted no pressure” on the school.104

Even more revealing about the Church’s lack influence on EHS is the fact that
nowhere in Hoxton’s dozens of letters does he cite Episcopal theology as a justification
for integration. In the letter to parents and alumni, Hoxton explained that the school
was integrating in order to “provide leadership” to “Southern Negro boys” and to “build
bridges between potential white and black leaders in the South” which would be
“fulfilling a duty to our country and to the boys.”105 Thus, civic duty and patriotism
motivated the change, not the theology or policy of the Episcopal Church. Despite the
fact that the school held Episcopal chapel services, despite the fact that the school bore

102 EHS Alumni 5 to A.R. Hoxton, March 25, 1968, Episcopal High School Archives,
Alexandria, VA.
103 EHS Alumni 6 to A.R. Hoxton, April 24, 1968, Episcopal High School Archives, Alexandria, VA.
104 A.R. Hoxton to Parents and Old Boys, March 9, 1968, Episcopal High School Archives,
Alexandria, VA.
105 A.R. Hoxton to Parents and Old Boys, March 9, 1968, Episcopal High School Archives,
Alexandria, VA.
the name “Episcopal,” the school ignored the Episcopal Church’s call for desegregation for almost fourteen years.

The Board, not the Church, gave Hoxton the authority to integrate. In one letter to a frustrated alumnus, Hoxton emphasized how closely he had worked with the Board and the Chairman. Hoxton explained that he “made a complete and full report of [the acceptance of two black students] to the Board at the April meeting.” Hoxton also pointed out in several letters that the EHS alumni made up a vast majority of the school’s Trustees, and therefore had the final say on when and how to integrate. In correspondence to an alumnus, Hoxton noted that eighteen Trustees who voted in December of 1965 to open admissions to black students were graduates of EHS. Hoxton’s response reveals who had power at EHS – the alumni. Alumni dominated the Board, Hoxton himself was an EHS graduate, and the Episcopal Church had no means to check that influence. The alumni, through the Board of Trustees, could therefore dictate the process of integration. The Church had no means to speed the process along, and apparently Church officials did not even attempt to do so. Due to all of these factors, EHS delayed integration for fourteen years.

CONCLUSION

In spite of the lack of coordination in the Episcopal Church’s efforts to desegregate, in spite of the Church’s sometimes subtle and slow influence, the Church

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106 A.R. Hoxton to EHS Alumni 7, June 25, 1968, Episcopal High School Archives, Alexandria, VA.

107 A.R. Hoxton to EHS Alumni 8, March 23, 1968, Episcopal School Archives, Alexandria, VA.
did indeed matter. With St. Albans, the Bishop, the Cathedral Chapter, and an Episcopal priest acting as Headmaster, all forced the Board of Governors to overcome their fears of parents and accept integration. With St. Stephen’s, a branch of the Diocese of Virginia directly intervened to force integration. With Lovett, the Bishop of Atlanta severed the Church’s connection with the school in favor of ideological consistency. With St. Andrew’s (TN), the Order of the Holy Cross ordered its school administrators to integrate. With St. Andrew’s (MS), parish priests and the vestry successfully resisted efforts of the Board to make the school a segregationist academy. Virginia Episcopal School desegregated only after the urging of the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. The last of the schools to integrate, Episcopal High School, had the most powerful alumni base and the weakest connection to the Episcopal Church. Each of the schools had to overcome opposition from parents, alumni, and trustees. The Episcopal Church, from one degree or another, helped the schools overcome that opposition.
CHAPTER 3

I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me.

- Abraham Lincoln

Individual leaders – bishops, rectors, and headmasters – translated the ideals of the Episcopal Church into reality. While the 1955 General Convention proclaimed its policy of racial justice, the Convention gave its institutional leaders no instruction on how to carry out that policy. In the quintessential Episcopal way, the Church relied on the initiative of local leaders for progressive change to take shape. To what extent did leadership matter in the process of integrating Episcopal schools? How much did their personality and background affect the process of integration? How did school leaders prepare for the challenge of integration? The lessons for school leaders are four-fold. First, schools only integrated smoothly after careful planning. Second, leaders needed the support of the perceived “insiders” of the school community. Third, gradual change occurred when a confrontational leader was followed by a conciliatory one. Finally, school leaders had to be fearless. In order to push for integration, leaders sometimes faced massive opposition from the most influential trustees, parents, and alumni. To really fight for integration, a headmaster had to be willing to sacrifice his job.

PREPARING FOR INTEGRATION:

LOVETT, ST. ANDREW’S (TN) & ST. STEPHEN’S

School leaders who were caught off guard by the issue of integration placed their institutions at risk. Lovett’s administrators and trustees, who were unprepared for
black applicants, led their school into a public relations disaster in 1963. Like Lovett, Father Julian Gunn of St. Andrew’s (TN) took a reactive approach, neither preparing for nor fighting against the integration of his school. The result was an embarrassing encounter between Gunn and a civil rights group followed by his dismissal as the school’s Prior. St. Stephen’s in Alexandria, Virginia represents the opposite end of the preparation spectrum. With the Church Schools of the Diocese of Virginia, St. Stephen’s worked out a detailed system on how to integrate five years before it received its first black applicant. The result was a smooth transition from segregation to integration. Careful preparation proved crucial.

James Sibley, Board Chair of the Lovett School in the 1960’s, does not deny Lovett’s failure to prepare for integration. “I don’t think we were thinking about it,” Sibley admitted forty-five years after the Lovett integration crisis.1 “We were completely caught off guard by Coretta Scott King’s application for her son,” Sibley continued. “We definitely were not expecting the issue to become so public.”2 Sibley also admitted that the trustees of the newly expanded Lovett “didn’t know anything about running a school.”3 According to the Lovett board minutes, prior to the spring of 1963, the trustees did not once address the issue of integrating the school. The 1961 admissions policy did not refer to race at all.4 Six months later, when the trustees

1 Sibley, interview.
2 Sibley, interview.
3 Sibley, interview.
revisited the admissions policy, they once again made no reference to race.\(^5\) Until Martin Luther King III applied to Lovett in February 1963, the Board of Trustees had not gone on record to discuss integration.

James McDonald, Lovett’s new headmaster in 1961, also failed to work out a plan to integrate Lovett before King’s application. In 2008, looking back on events, McDowell insisted that he did indeed have a working plan to integrate the school:

I was working on a plan with the trustees with the idea of starting two or three very small pre-school kids in our pre-school and bringing them up in our system where it was sort of routine to have black students every year. Well, Coretta [Scott King] was not satisfied with that, and her son was a little older than what we planned for. But she forced the issue anyway.\(^6\)

Based on the evidence, it appears that Rev. McDowell’s memory is incorrect. There is no written record of McDowell’s pre-1963 plan to integrate Lovett – the board minutes do not mention it nor have any letters survived between Sibley and McDowell that make reference to them. McDowell also claimed that Martin Luther King III was beyond pre-school age when he applied to Lovett. But Martin Luther King III was five years old in February 1963, when he applied to Lovett.\(^7\) If accepted he would have entered Lovett’s pre-school, perfect for McDowell’s plan.

The evidence shows that McDowell did outline a plan for the integration of the preschool. However, he only submitted his plan after the rejection of King became

\(^4\) Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Lovett School, August 28, 1961, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

\(^5\) Minutes of Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Lovett School, January 1962, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.


public. This is likely what McDowell referred to in the 2008 interview, as he probably forgot the chronology of events. McDowell proposed gradual integration to the Board in June 1963, five months after King’s application. On June 14, the board of trustees voted unanimously to reject that proposal. 8 The Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church was even involved in the process, writing to McDowell to insist that the trustees “work along with you towards desegregation within a very definite time limit.”9 A few weeks later, on July 1, Bishop Randolph Claiborne cited the rejection of McDowell’s integration plan as the deciding factor in cutting ties Lovett. “The advice of the Headmaster, the Rev. James R. McDowell, was declined when he presented to the Trustees a plan for admissions without regard to race, which would conform to the principle of the Episcopal Church,” Claiborne stated publicly.10 In hindsight, a lack of preparation laid the groundwork for the integration crisis. James McDowell bears some responsibility for waiting two years and not until after Lovett’s first black applicant to prepare for integration.

Father Julien Gunn, Prior of St. Andrew’s School (TN), waited until 1963 to deal with integration, and this delay may have cost him his job. A group of “Freedom Riders,” perhaps ESCRU, caught Gunn off guard before he had made specific plans to

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8 Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Lovett School, June 14, 1963, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.


10 Bishop Randolph Claiborne, “Statement of the Bishop of Atlanta,” July 1, 1963, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.
desegregate St. Andrew’s (TN). According to Gunn’s memoirs, the group drove through campus sometime in either the fall of 1962 or the spring of 1963. Gunn writes in the memoirs:

During the course of the [1962-1963] academic year we had a civil rights group to visit the school and demand why we had no black students enrolled. We met up at the Priory and I listened to them without committing myself to any demands. One member of the group suggested that perhaps the school would have to be sacrificed during the racial struggles in the Episcopal Church. They left and I was unaware of any further developments.11

St. Andrew’s avoided a public embarrassment like Lovett’s, but the school was not prepared. Gunn was fortunate that the media did not pick up on the “Freedom Rider” incident. The Episcopal Church’s newspaper, *The Living Church*, never made a reference to it, nor did the local Chattanooga newspapers.12 Gunn may have been saved by the remote location of St. Andrew’s (TN), the lack of persistence on the part of ESCRU, as well as the lack of a high profile black applicant, such as Martin Luther King III.

Even after the standoff with the “Freedom Riders,” Gunn still waited until he was ordered by the Order of the Holy Cross to come up with a plan to desegregate. The situation at St. Andrew’s (TN) was actually the opposite of that at Lovett. At Lovett, the Board of Trustees rejected the Headmaster’s plan for integration. At St. Andrew’s, the governing body of the school, in the form of the Order of the Holy Cross, forced the

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12 This assertion is made based on a lack of newspaper clippings dealing with the incident at St. Andrew’s-Sewanee, the lack of clippings on the incident at the Chattanooga City Library in the St. Andrew’s School file, as well as the comments of Vance Wilson, author of *They Took Their Stand*, which describes the incident.
Headmaster to prepare for integration. By Gunn’s own admission, he did this only reluctantly. The Order confronted Gunn on the issue at a meeting held in the summer of 1963, several months after the Freedom Riders incident. At the meeting, Gunn “became aware of personal hostility from members of the Order such as I had never before experienced,” and finally, “the plan [for integration] was sketched for members of the Order.”

Gunn announced his plans to integrate to St. Andrew’s (TN) parents in a letter from December 1963, almost six months after the meeting with the Order. The letter stated that the school would integrate in September 1965, over a year-and-a-half later. This, Gunn pointed out, would not affect current juniors and seniors who would graduate before integration took place. The parents of sophomores and freshman therefore had time to “place their sons in other schools and still allow for two years before graduation.” While reluctant to integrate, Father Gunn’s plan worked smoothly. According to his memoirs, there were no withdrawals, and the school only received positive letters in response. Gunn’s policy of openly declaring the integration of the school nearly two years in advance paid off.

St. Andrew’s (TN) smooth transition to integration did not save Gunn’s job. Before the school integrated in September 1965, the Order of the Holy Cross removed

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14 Julien Gunn to Parents and Guardians, December 10, 1963, The Archives of the Episcopal Church, Austin, TX.

Gunn as Prior. “I received a short letter from the Superior to inform me that he was planning to relieve me of the priorship at the close of the academic year, 1964-’65,” Gunn wrote. “Previously I had not had any indication that Fr. Taylor [the Father Superior of the Order] was entertaining this move.” Without openly stating it, Gunn implied that his initial reluctance to plan for and promote integration caused the dismissal. Evidence indicates that this was the only issue of tension between himself and the New York based Order. The memoirs show Gunn’s frustration over being a lame duck, and it was in this last year that Gunn’s temper got the best of him. The student body even gave him the nickname “Bazooka” because “he would just blow up once in a while.” When asked if he thought that Julien Gunn did a good job handling integration, the Headmaster of St. Andrew’s (TN) from 1982 to 2008 was not so sure. “I don’t know,” Rev. Bill Wade responded. “I think he did what he had to do.”

No school leader spent more time and effort preparing for integration than John Page Williams, President of the Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia. Born in Richmond, Williams followed the typical educational path of the Virginia elite. He graduated from the prestigious St. Christopher’s School in Richmond before earning a BA from the University of Virginia in 1931. He studied at Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria and then “read theology” at Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar.

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Scholar from 1935-1937. Williams spent the prime of his career as President of the CSDV from 1951 to 1975. While Williams was an insider in Virginia private school circles, he also recognized that Episcopal schools needed to be integrated, and he worked tirelessly to prepare for the moment when that change would happen. “The schools will be better schools when the color line is no longer drawn,” Williams wrote as early as 1954. Austin Montgomery, the Headmaster of VES and the opposite of a Virginia insider, gave Williams an interesting compliment in 1968. In a letter to a colleague, Montgomery called Williams a “remarkable liberal.”

Throughout the 1950’s and 1960’s, Williams worked to build consensus among the Virginia Episcopal private school community that integration was not only necessary and unavoidable, but also morally right. In a letter to a reporter in May 1954, prior to the Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, Williams admitted his fear that CSDV schools would “allow themselves to be thought of as refugees” for families avoiding integrated public schools. Yet Williams did not operate by decrees. Instead he sought to build consensus among the trustees of the CSDV. In September 1954, he established the “Interracial Commission on Race Relations” to begin a dialogue on how and when CSDV schools should integrate. Under Williams’

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19 Williams, *A History of the Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia*, editor’s preface.

20 John Page Williams to Warren H. Turner, Jr., December 21, 1954, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

21 John Page Williams to John Leard, May 13, 1954, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

22 Bob Seiler to the Rectors and Vestries in the Diocese of Virginia, September 7, 1954, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.
leadership, the CSDV became one of the first Episcopal institutions, let alone school systems, to craft its own policy on integration. In March 1955, with the cooperation of lay trustees, Williams crafted the official statement of the CSDV that tried to draw a balance between the economic realities of schools and the “principles and obligations” of the Episcopal Church.23 While the document might disappoint a modern reader in its failure to clearly call for the integration of Virginia’s Episcopal schools, Williams deserves credit for taking such a proactive stance while other school leaders avoided the issue altogether.

Williams’ greatest contribution to the integration of CSDV schools in general, and St. Stephen’s School in particular, was his quiet refusal to allow local school boards to assume sole responsibility for deciding whether or not to integrate. His policy, in which the CSDV could override local school boards on integration, required a year to develop, and Williams had to wait five years to implement it. From March 1955 to May 1956, Williams communicated with schools in Delaware, Kentucky, and New Orleans to develop ideas on the best system for integration.24 In June 1956, after months of writing and rewriting drafts, the CSDV adopted a policy in which local school boards had to refer all student applications “for which there is no precedent” to the CSDV for final approval.25 This was a remarkable achievement. Williams convinced a group of

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23 CSDV Board of Trustees, “Suggested Statement – Second Draft,” March 31, 1955, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

24 Letters from Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.
elite Virginians to agree to a policy that usurped the autonomy of schools. The policy had a potential to drive a political wedge between local schools and the Diocese.

Without Williams’ preparation and planning in the 1950s, the Episcopal Church would not have had the authority to force St. Stephen’s to integrate. The decision of the St. Stephen’s School board to deny Tony Lewis’ application in the spring of 1961 probably would have stood, which, in turn, could have caused the Church to cut its ties to the school as it did with Lovett. Williams never ordered any of his trustees to accept his policy nor did he publicly confront local school trustees. But Williams was patient, believing in slow, progressive change. By preparing for integration, Williams pushed the process along, and, in so doing, he demonstrated the importance of foresight and planning.

CONFRONTATION & CONCILIATION:

THE LEADERSHIP OF ST. ANDREW’S (MS)

The two men who deserve the most credit for the integration of St. Andrew’s School in Jackson, Mississippi – Edward Harrison and Chris Keller – could not have had more different styles of leadership. Together, the men served as parish rectors of St. Andrew’s Church from 1958 to 1967. According to the school’s by-laws at the time, the church’s rector also served as the designated board chair of the school. Harrison, who preceded Keller as rector, was confrontational and abrasive. Keller, who became rector in 1961, was conciliatory and soft spoken. Their collective leadership established

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25 Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia, June 19, 1956, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.
an enlightened and progressive Church and school in the racially turbulent Jackson community of the 1960’s. In the process, St. Andrew’s School (MS) quietly integrated several years before Jackson’s public schools.

By all accounts from the time, as well as current recollections of witnesses, Rev. Edward Harrison was a confrontational man. In his book, *The Cathedral Church of St. Andrew*, Sherwood Wise wrote that while Harrison focused on a message of Christian love, his “methods [were] often controversial and sometimes brash.”

The Mississippi rector had the audacity to publicly state that he was glad that the North won the Civil War. Harrison even used his pulpit to attack the St. Andrew’s School Board of Trustees in 1961 over racial justice issues.

As a parishioner from the time said:

[Harrison] came right at you, and you knew where you stood. There was no question of where he stood. That manner upset a lot of people and created several years of turmoil within the parish because integration was such a hot topic. But of course when the [civil rights activists] came in and tested the churches in Jackson, he opened the doors up.

Harrison openly supported civil rights activists who were protesting in Jackson. In June 1960, he visited an Episcopal priest who was jailed for protesting Jim Crowe laws, and he shared Communion in prison with his fellow cleric. A year later, Harrison held

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29 Joseph Wise, interviewed by the author, Jackson, MS, June 14, 2008.

several biracial meetings at the parish house, which ignited a controversy that brought about his resignation.\textsuperscript{31}

The confrontation between Harrison and the school trustees came to a head at the April 11, 1961, meeting of the school board. After discussing a pension plan for teachers, one board member proposed a resolution that would have ousted Harrison as chair of the St. Andrew’s School (MS) board. In the debate that ensued, the same trustee “prepared to play recorded tape conversations” allegedly incriminating Harrison as a pro-integrationist.\textsuperscript{32} The resolution removing Harrison passed, only to be later overruled by the St. Andrew’s parish vestry which reserved the right to veto changes to school by-laws. The tapes would later be proven fraudulent, and the man who submitted the tapes belonged to the segregationist Citizens Council. “[Harrison] was pushed out,” Bishop Duncan Gray, Jr. remembered. “Now [St. Andrew’s Church] never officially asked for his resignation, and his vestry supported him all the way through. But there were members of his congregation that made his life miserable.”\textsuperscript{33} But Harrison laid the foundation for the integration of St. Andrew’s (MS) in 1966.

The man who oversaw that process of integration at St. Andrew’s (MS) was Harrison’s successor, Rev. Chris Keller. Sherwood Wise wrote of Keller:

\begin{quote}

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\textsuperscript{32}Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of St. Andrew’s Episcopal Day School Held in Lieu of the Regular Meeting, April 11, 1961, St. Andrew’s School Archives, Jackson, MS.

\textsuperscript{33}Duncan Gray, Jr., interviewed by the author, Jackson, MS, July 15, 2008.
While Mr. Keller was firm in the right, he was also kind, compassionate, patient and understanding. He loved the congregation through all of these trial [of the civil rights movement]. He was a great conciliator and a great reconciler. He enabled the congregation to do those things that it knew in good conscience it must do.\textsuperscript{34}

As Duncan Gray explained, Keller was “not as much of an activist” as Harrison, but he held the same ideals and positions as his predecessor.\textsuperscript{35} Keller led not only with conciliatory sermons but also with his actions. In June 1963, he allowed a “kneel-in” at his church without incident.\textsuperscript{36} Two years later, in 1965, he welcomed John Morris’ controversial ESCRU to St. Andrew’s, inviting the organization to use the parish for its regional meeting. Keller used the event to further his congregation’s dialogue on race relations.\textsuperscript{37} The integration of St. Andrew’s School (MS) was just another chapter in Keller’s gentle push for racial justice. As chairman of the board of trustees, Keller was central in the March 1966 decision to admit a 4-year old black student into the preschool. Wise wrote that Keller not only made sure that the trustees voted positively, but he also cleared the decision with the church vestry.\textsuperscript{38} None of the local newspapers mentioned the integration of the school, no letters have survived protesting the decision, nor does anyone remember the decision to integrate as a particularly controversial

\textsuperscript{34} Wise, \textit{The Way I See It}, 86.
\textsuperscript{35} Gray, interview.
\textsuperscript{36} Wise, \textit{The Way I See It}, 83.
\textsuperscript{37} Wise, \textit{The Way I See It}, 86.
\textsuperscript{38} Wise, \textit{The Way I See It}, 88.
Integration of the school seemed like the logical next step under Keller’s leadership.

The two parish rectors provided a combination of leadership that allowed racial progress to take place. Harrison laid the groundwork for the success of Keller’s tenure. Keller acknowledged this with a farming analogy: “The deep plowing [Harrison] gave the parish,” Keller wrote, “enabled [me] to cultivate, plant and bring at least some things to fruition.”

Joseph Wise, Sherwood Wise’s son, explained that Harrison “pricked enough consciences” to prepare the congregation and the school for the changes that Harrison saw coming with the civil rights movement. Harrison was the “gadfly” and Keller was the “healer.”

The Rev. John Stone Jenkins, who succeeded Keller in 1968, was even more specific about the leadership of Harrison and Keller. Jenkins points out that by confronting the racial issues head on, Harrison ran off the “hard core racists” from St. Andrew’s Church and School. “That opened up more supportive people to fill their voids,” Jenkins explained. The change in the parent population explains the transformation of the school board. In 1961, the board voted to remove Harrison from his chairmanship for merely holding integrated meetings. Five years later, in March 1966, the board voted to integrate the school without incident.

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39 Based on the lack of newspaper clippings at St. Andrew’s School Archives as well as the lack of article clippings in the “St. Andrew’s School” file at the State of Mississippi library in Jackson.

40 Wise, The Way I See It, 85

41 Wise, interview.

The transformation was remarkable and it was achieved through confrontation followed by conciliation.

**INSIDERS VS. OUTSIDERS:**

**VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL VS. EPISCOPAL HIGH SCHOOL**

Virginia Episcopal School integrated in 1967 and it cost the headmaster, Austin Montgomery, his job. Episcopal High School, six hours north of VES in Alexandria, Virginia, integrated in 1968. The headmaster of EHS at the time, A.R. Hoxton, had served in his position for only a few months and yet the responses from EHS parents and alumni were overwhelmingly positive. Both schools used the Stouffer Foundation to integrate. Both were traditional boarding schools that educated the sons of the Southern elite. How does one explain the different reactions to integration? Ultimately, the difference involved who the headmasters were. Montgomery was an outsider at VES, while Hoxton was the ultimate EHS insider.

Austin Montgomery was born in New York City and, after leaving the Air Force and earning a Master’s Degree from Columbia University, he spent fourteen years at the elite St. Paul’s School in New Hampshire. Montgomery had never worked, studied, or lived in the South and the Montgomery family was well aware of their status as “outsiders” at VES. “During their first year in Lynchburg,” the VES’ alumni magazine wrote of the Montgomery family, “their oldest daughter, Susan, returned home from her elementary school one day and asked, ‘Mommy, I know it’s bad, but what is a

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Yankee?'' The new headmaster did not make his situation any easier by being the man who integrated VES.

Parents and alumni were quick to point out Montgomery’s status as an outsider. As one alumnus from Raleigh wrote to his fellow VES graduates:

It is most unfortunate that we have a New England Headmaster at our school. Knowing nothing about the Negro race except what he read in Uncle Tom’s Cabin, and in the violently anti-Southern-White Northern press controlled by the Jews, he wants to integrate VES. We have suffered bitterly by these Northern Crusaders who want to teach the South a lesson.  

Another alumnus wrote directly to Montgomery, labeling him as one of the “well-meaning do-gooders from ‘Up North’ who come South with the mantle of self-righteousness draped about them, to prove to the benighted Southerners that they and only they are on the side of the angels, and that they have come with Messianic (self-anointed, of course) zeal to save the sinful Southerners from the error of their ways.”

Another letter wondered whether Montgomery’s “northern influence drives you into an action that will level our southern institutions.” These alumni, presumably, had little contact with Montgomery. Their assumptions about Montgomery were therefore based on the fact that he was from the North.

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45 VES Alumnus 7 to Raleigh Chapter VES Alumni Association, March 3, 1967, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

46 VES Alumnus 8 to Austin Montgomery, March 7, 1967, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

47 VES Employee 1 to Austin Montgomery, date unknown, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.
The constant labeling of Montgomery as an outsider seems to have taken its toll on the Headmaster. In a 1964 letter to an Episcopal clergyman, Montgomery made reference to the “cost to myself and family” to move to Lynchburg, all for the sake of a “challenge”.48 Three years later, in 1967, Montgomery wrote about his frustrations with working with “an exclusively southern and largely alumni Board of Trustees.”49 One of Montgomery’s students who later became VES’s Dean of Admissions thinks that Montgomery’s defensiveness about being an outsider in Lynchburg took a physical toll. “My guess is that he stopped being Headmaster at VES because he was physically worn out,” the 1965 graduate of VES explained.50 A former Headmaster of EHS who knew Montgomery agreed with that analysis. The fact that Montgomery was from the North, the former Head believes, in itself offended a lot of people. For integration to run smoothly the person to instigate it and see it through had to be an insider.51

A.R. Hoxton, or “Flick” as he was known, was actually born on the campus of EHS in 1916. Hoxton was the son of the school’s longest serving Headmaster and the grandson of the school’s 19th century Assistant Headmaster. His father, Headmaster from 1913 to 1947, led the school during its break with the Virginia Theological Seminary. Hoxton graduated from EHS in 1935 as the valedictorian as well as the “Head Monitor,” the highest position of student leadership at the school. After

48 Austin Montgomery to VES Alumnus 1.
49 Austin Montgomery to Hugh Sudduth.
50 Interview with Bobby Watts.
51 Interview with a former Head of Episcopal High School, December 16, 2008.
graduating from Yale and serving in the Navy during World War II, Hoxton joined the faculty of EHS as a Math teacher and coach. He left EHS in the late 1940’s to become Headmaster of a school in Connecticut and then at another school in New York.

Hoxton continued his relationship with EHS during these years as a trustee. In the fall of 1967, Hoxton returned to Episcopal High School as the school’s ninth Headmaster. During Hoxton’s first year on the job as Headmaster, he accepted EHS’s first two black students.\(^52\)

Hoxton did not, in fact, handle the integration of EHS much differently than Montgomery at VES. Both men received little if any pressure from the Episcopal Church to integrate. Both Headmasters worked with similar admissions policies that stated that the school was open to black applicants, policies that the Boards of both schools changed in 1965. Both Boards also warned their Headmasters not “recruit” black applicants, and yet both Headmasters used the Stouffer Foundation to do just that.\(^53\) EHS, unlike VES, made its admissions policy change public. In the fall of 1965, before Hoxton became Headmaster, the school published the admissions policy change in its alumni magazine. The school was discreet, not mentioning the policy until page three of the magazine, behind the librarian’s report and listing of new courses.\(^54\) In


\(^{53}\) A.R. Hoxton, “Memoranda to the Board of Trustees; Subject: Admission of Negro Boys,” March 5, 1968, Episcopal High School Archives, Alexandria, VA. In the memo Hoxton quotes the minutes from the December 1965 Board meeting in which “the school was advised not to seek out Negro students, but to accept them if candidates appeared who met specifications.”

March 1968, Hoxton wrote to all parents and alumni informing them that the school would integrate that fall. The VES community, on the other hand, learned of the school’s integration either through rumor or through the Raleigh Alumni Chapter’s letter complaining about the decision. While Montgomery received an avalanche of angry letters, the letters to Hoxton were overwhelmingly positive. One hundred and sixty letters of the letters to Hoxton were positive and only thirty-eight letters were critical of the integration of EHS. Thus, over 80% of EHS letters supported integration. While Hoxton’s letter home may have made a difference in preempting criticism, it does not fully explain the discrepancy between the two responses of the two school communities.

Flick Hoxton’s status as an EHS insider best explains his success in integrating the school. The letters that have survived reveal an interesting theme among EHS alumni: they did not necessarily support the idea of integration, but they would continue to support Hoxton and EHS. “As you yourself are one of the Old Boys, you should know without assurance from anyone that without acceptance we [alumni] want you to do what you think is right,” one EHS alumnus, or Old Boy, wrote. “The Old Boys will never fail to support you,” he added. Another Old Boy echoed the sentiments of many when he wrote:


56 EHS Alumnus 9 to A.R. Hoxton, May 31, 1968, Episcopal High School Archives, Alexandria, VA.
I am really not sure just how I feel about the substance of the issue set forth in your letter of March 9 to the parents and Old Boys. I am certain, however, that I have never seen the issue handled with such dignity and impressive leadership.

Despite the fact that Hoxton was Headmaster of EHS for only a few months at the time, alumni still trusted him. Even those who strongly opposed integration were deferential to the new Headmaster. One Old Boy, after ranting about “these conscience trotters, image breakers, draft dodgers, and bums” who were giving him a “grueling nauseous sickness,” the Old Boy concluded by saying, “I know you rank with the finest Flick, in doing what you think is right, but what in heaven’s name is going on?”

These Old Boys knew Flick Hoxton. He was not an outsider pushing change onto a reluctant school community. Hoxton, in the alumni’s eyes, was one of them, and he was merely reacting to an irreversible social change.

Flick Hoxton was not just any alumnus. He was also the son of the most legendary and beloved Headmaster in the school’s history. Dozens of letters at the time mention this fact. “I spent my days at Episcopal High School while your father was Headmaster,” one graduate from the class of 1927 wrote. “There was never a finer man and I am delighted that you are now the guiding spirit of our school.”

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57 EHS Alumnus 11 to A.R. Hoxton, March 19, 1968, Episcopal High School Archives, Alexandria, VA.

58 EHS Alumnus 5 to A.R. Hoxton, March 25, 1968, Episcopal High School Archives, Alexandria, VA.

59 EHS Alumnus 12 to A.R. Hoxton, March 18, 1968, Episcopal High School Archives, Alexandria, VA.
Another Old Boy thanked the new Headmaster for “bringing back the great name of Hoxton to Episcopal High School.” One of Hoxton’s classmates from the 1930s took the integration controversy as an opportunity to praise the Hoxton family:

I am happy to have a reason to welcome you to your father’s seat of honor and I am sure that you will bring Episcopal High School the same inestimable gifts of character and courage which made [your father] an unforgettable influence on all of us who were lucky enough to be there in his time.62

An overwhelming sense of nostalgia permeates the nearly 200 letters written in response to EHS’s integration. Granted, Hoxton was much more cordial than Austin Montgomery. He did indeed handle the crisis with more care than his VES counterpart, including, for example, writing cordial letters to those who opposed him. But Hoxton’s last name stirred nostalgia in the Old Boys, some of whom admitted that they otherwise would have opposed integration. The contrasts in the reaction of the school communities to Austin Montgomery and Flick Hoxton reveals that what a leader does may make little difference. The difference may lie in who the leader is and where he comes from.

FEARLESSNESS: CONFRONTING PARENTS AND ALUMNI

60 EHS Alumnus 13 to A.R. Hoxton, March 12, 1968, Episcopal High School Archives, Alexandria, VA.

61 EHS Alumnus 14 to A.R. Hoxton, March 14, 1968, Episcopal High School Archives, Alexandria, VA.

62 EHS Alumnus 15 to A.R. Hoxton, March 20, 1968, Episcopal High School Archives, Alexandria, VA.
In order to desegregate a private Episcopal school in the 1960’s, headmasters had to be willing to confront the people on whom they relied for the funding and health of their institutions: trustees, parents, and alumni. The leaders of Lovett made the conscious, calculated decision that the risks of this confrontation were too great. From that decision the Lovett integration crisis emerged. The Headmaster of St. Stephen’s School, Rev. Emmett Hoy, made the opposite decision. He had no adult alumni to confront and his parent base was spread across Northern Virginia, and Hoy’s stand in favor of desegregating St. Stephen’s was just one of a series of confrontations with parents. Not only did Hoy desegregate the school, but he is also remembered as one of St. Stephen’s finest headmaster. Austin Montgomery, Headmaster of VES, seemed to thrive on confronting the establishment at his school. His push for integration reflected his combative personality. While Montgomery did indeed integrate VES, his efforts ultimately led to his resignation as well as his legacy as the most controversial headmaster in VES history. The integration of Episcopal schools required a certain amount of fearlessness from its leaders, despite the potential for that fearlessness to become self-destructive.

James Sibley, Lovett’s Board Chair in the early 1960s, was not a fearful man. As a child, Sibley survived a car accident that killed his mother. After graduating from Episcopal High School and Princeton in 1941, Sibley flew B-24 bombers during World War II. Sibley was shot down in December 1943 over France, and he hid with the French Underground for two weeks until, as he said jokingly, “the Germans liberated me from the French Underground.” Sibley spent the rest of the war in a German
prisoner of war camp. By the time the integration crisis struck Lovett in 1963, Sibley was a relatively young lawyer of forty-four.\(^{63}\) It is perhaps ironic that a man of such personal bravery conceded to the institutional fear of integration.

Sibley’s concession was purely based on his calculation of the financial costs of integrating Lovett. “The possibility of integration,” as he wrote in an April 1963 letter to Bishop Claiborne, “the Trustees do not think the school can stand financially.”\(^{64}\) Sibley formed his opinion after seeking the advice of not only the trustees but also Lovett’s largest fundraisers, one of whom explained that, “from its inception the effort given Lovett by many was for the express reason of having in Atlanta a private segregated school.”\(^{65}\) To desegregate would strike at the heart of Lovett’s recent financial success, an institutional risk that Sibley was not willing to take. Nearly forty-five years later, Sibley’s memory corroborates the records from the time.\(^{66}\) Unfortunately, a personally courageous, thoroughly decent man would forever be associated with one of the most notorious racial incidents in private school history.

Rev. James McDowell, Lovett’s Headmaster, also failed to stand up to the pressure from Lovett’s parents and trustees. Based on letters from 1963, McDowell seemed to be a man with split loyalties: one as the Headmaster of Lovett who carried out the wishes of the Board, the other as an Episcopal priest, who believed in the

\(^{63}\) Sibley, interview.

\(^{64}\) James Sibley to Right Rev. Randolph Claiborne, April 26, 1963, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

\(^{65}\) Philip Alston to James Sibley, June 10, 1963, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

\(^{66}\) Sibley, interview.
Church’s teachings. As mentioned earlier, in the middle of the crisis McDowell proposed a plan to gradually integrate Lovett. When the trustees rejected that plan, Bishop Claiborne forced McDowell to resign as Headmaster. The fact that McDowell did not resign on his own initiative is an important distinction. McDowell’s sympathies lay with the trustees, not with the anti-segregation stand of the Church. When asked how he remembered Bishop Claiborne’s role during the integration crisis, McDowell responded:

Weak. Very weak. In the heat of the controversy, Bishop Lichtenberger in New York put pressure on Claiborne. Claiborne had an assistant who became involved, but Claiborne was no help. Well, the only help he was to me was that he shipped me off.

In his letter to Lovett’s parents announcing his resignation, McDowell wrote, “I state emphatically that they [Lovett’s trustees] acted sincerely for the Lovett School according to their beliefs.” Even forty-five years after McDowell’s resignation, the former Lovett headmaster remembers that, “Jim [Sibley] and I were good friends at the time,” revealing the close personal relationship between Lovett’s Board Chair and Headmaster. McDowell took a conciliatory approach with parents and trustees, and his approach failed to move Lovett towards integration.

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68 McDowell, interview.

69 James McDowell to Lovett Parents, June 22, 1963, The Lovett School Archives, Atlanta, GA.

70 McDowell, interview.
Rev. Emmett Hoy, St. Stephen’s Headmaster from 1955 to 1975, built his career on standing up to parents and trustees. Born in Petersburg, Virginia, Hoy stayed in Virginia for his entire academic and professional life. He graduated from Hampden-Sydney College in central Virginia and moved to Alexandria to study at the Virginia Theological Seminary. After his ordination, Hoy became the rector at Christ Church in Middlesex County where he also served as the chaplain at Christ Church School. Hoy became headmaster of the relatively new St. Stephen’s School in 1955, which was about to expand into an upper school and new campus. Tony Lewis, St. Stephen’s first black student, said of Hoy:

He was a Christian gentleman. He had absolute integrity… Imminently fair and his commitment to his faith and what he believed in and being able to run a school that was unabashedly a church school not just an independent school, but an independent Church school, was something to be admired.

Hoy seemed to have a deep sense of right and wrong, and perhaps his faith gave him the self-confidence to administer his school based on those convictions, repeatedly confronting St. Stephen’s parents in the process.

The St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes School archives contain very few documents from the Hoy era. But a few speeches survived, and in each of them Hoy challenged parents. In April 1967, Hoy called a meeting of the Parent-Teacher Association to discuss an influx of honor code violations. Hoy laid the blame with the parents. Speaking directly to the parents, Hoy said:

71 Bishop Robert Gibson, “Virginia Theological Seminary Honorary Degree,” 1968, St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes School Archives, Alexandria, VA.

72 Lewis, interview.
Students are thrown mercilessly into tension when their parents conspire with them to circumvent rules. They [the students] are gravely hurt when falsified or ambiguous excuses are written for them… In no way are boys strengthened in respect for proper authority when parents ignore the simplest regulations regarding dress and appearance… Our students are intelligent enough to suffer gravely when they observe that their parents operate with convenient disregard for ethics and morals.  

Hoy concluded his speech with an ultimatum: either parents would support the school honor code or their children “should be schooled in another place.” Four years later, Hoy once again blamed parents for the misbehavior of their children, this time over the issue of drug use. What infuriated Hoy was not necessarily the fact that some boys were caught with marijuana, but parent willingness to cover up for their children in “the most appalling series of lies I have ever met.” Hoy repeated his encouragement for parents to withdraw their sons in a 1973 letter home that discussed parental dishonesty. Only three documents from Emmett Hoy survive in the St. Stephen’s archives, and in each one the St. Stephen’s headmaster dares parents to withdraw their child. This was a man for whom confronting parents was routine.

It is therefore no surprise that Hoy continued to push for integration, despite the fact that his Board of Trustees voted against it. In a 1962 memo from John Page Williams, President of the CSDV, to Bishop Gibson, Williams mentions in passing how


74 Emmett Hoy, “Remarks at the PTA Meeting,” April 27, 1971, St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes School Archives, Alexandria, VA.

75 Emmett Hoy to Parents, October 13, 1973, St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes School Archives, Alexandria, VA.
“hard” Hoy’s efforts were in making a “strong case” to the CSDV Board to override the St. Stephen’s board.  
Perhaps in the ultimate sign of conviction, Hoy went to the meeting in which the CSDV made its decision to integrate St. Stephen’s prepared to resign as headmaster if the CSDV had voted otherwise. According to David Charlton, current President of the CSDV, Hoy had his letter of resignation in his coat pocket, ready to deliver. Hoy’s handling of the integration of the school in the fall of 1961 is consistent with speeches and letters to parents a decade later: Hoy confronted a father who he thought might oppose such a move and told him to remove his son if he could not comply with school policy. What made this so remarkable was that the man Hoy confronted was a United States Senator, James O. Eastland from Mississippi.
Eastland’s son remained in school, and St. Stephen’s integrated without further incident. Other members of the CSDV marveled at Hoy’s successful integration of St. Stephen’s. “No notice was given [about desegregation],” one CSDV board member wrote in a letter, “even to the patrons of St. Stephen’s until the time of opening of school and ten it was too late [for people to oppose].” Hoy stood up to the school’s parents, opposed the board, threatened to resign, and led the first Episcopal school in Virginia to integrate.

76 John Page Williams, “Memo to Bishop Gibson,” June 14, 1962, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.
77 David Charlton, e-mail message to author, April 25, 2008.
78 Williams, A History of the Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia, 186-187.
79 Gordon Lewis to “Viola”, December 21, 1961, Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia Archives, Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.
Austin Montgomery shared Hoy’s fearlessness, but he was a much more abrasive leader. Even those who admire Montgomery emphasize this point. “Austin was a man of character, honesty. He was a direct man, but he could be abrasive with a capital ‘A’,” one alumnus recalled. Montgomery’s direct style came out in his letters. “The school [VES] has a long way to go to be a distinguished one,” VES’s head wrote to one trustee. Montgomery’s frustration with VES’s Board of Trustees sometimes got the best of him, responding to one trustee’s criticism that his letter “doesn’t deserve a reply.” Montgomery’s abrasiveness also extended to headmasters from rival schools. In his last month as VES’s headmaster, Montgomery attacked the head of Woodberry Forest School for the “pirate act” of recruiting VES teachers away to Woodberry Forest. Accusing Woodberry Forest of following “a blatantly dog-eat-dog” policy, Montgomery concluded his letter with the “hope that you will inveigh against the law of the jungle with your staff.” The evidence paints a picture of a principled man, with an abrasive style that left him unsuited to guide VES through a smooth transition to integration.

In early December 1966, Montgomery wrote to VES’s trustees soliciting their opinions about the Stouffer Foundation, an endowed scholarship program established

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80 Bobby Watts, interviewed by author, December 13, 2008.

81 Austin Montgomery to VES Board Member 6, February 21, 1967, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

82 Austin Montgomery to VES Board Member 7, April 7, 1967, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

83 Austin Montgomery to A. Baker Duncan, July 8, 1968, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.
specifically for black students attending southern private schools. The letters trustees wrote in response were overwhelmingly negative. One trustee pointed out that the Foundation actually discriminated against white applicants, and that, “we should not specifically solicit negroes either directly or indirectly by creating scholarships restricted to them.”

“I see no need to go out and look for boys of the negro race and ask them to attend VES,” another trustee wrote. One trustee attempted to be more tactful, asking Montgomery to “move slowly” and to “graciously decline this invitation.”

It was therefore no surprise that the board voted unanimously against the Stouffer Foundation’s offer during its December 9, 1966 meeting. At the same time, the board passed a resolution reaffirming VES’s “open-door admissions policy.” This was a clear statement to Montgomery to delay integration for a few more years, but just a month later Montgomery authorized the acceptance of VES’s first black applicant. Furthermore, the Stouffer Foundation paid for the applicant’s tuition.

Montgomery claimed that he had no contact with the Stouffer Foundation and that he simply followed school policy which gave him the authority to deny and admit students

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84 VES Board Member 8 to Austin Montgomery, December 5, 1968, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

85 VES Board Member 4 to Colonel B.M. Gilliam, December 5, 1966, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

86 VES Board Member 5 to Austin Montgomery, December 5, 1966, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

87 Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees of VES, December 9, 1966, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

88 Austin Montgomery to VES Board Member 6, February 21, 1967, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.
without seeking the advice of the Board. This gave Montgomery’s opponents the opportunity to pressure the Headmaster to resign.

One trustee launched a public letter writing campaign in opposition to Montgomery. The trustee, with the support of the Raleigh Alumni Chapter, mailed over 1,800 letters to all the known living VES alumni, accusing Montgomery of dishonesty and of endangering the financial health of the school. Montgomery responded with a seven-point rebuttal, asking the trustee to “not do yourself the injustice of indulging in untruth.” In the letter, Montgomery stated that he would not dignify the trustee “tak[ing] off like a captain of a vigilante group” with his resignation. In another letter to one of his opponents, Montgomery signed it “With all of the decency I can muster.” Thus, Montgomery handled the challenges to his authority with characteristic aggressiveness, abrasiveness, and even sarcasm.

Austin Montgomery also knew how to hold a grudge. Over a year later, in his final report to the board as departing head, Montgomery wrote:

I should say that my decision [to resign as headmaster] would have been more difficult had the recent conduct of the Trustees been otherwise. Obviously, any difficulty in this conduct stems first from my making the administrative decision to admit Negro students… Repeated stories were deliberately circulated as to the Trustees “getting rid of” this man as headmaster [Montgomery himself]. The man has survived, thank you, and his decision to leave he believes is right for himself and his family, though he is less sure of its rightness for the School.

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89 Austin Montgomery to VES Board Member 7, February 23, 1967, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

90 Austin Montgomery to VES Board Member 7, April 7, 1967, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.

91 Austin Montgomery, “To the ’68-’69 Trustees of V.E.S.,” July 8, 1968, Virginia Episcopal School Archives, Lynchburg, VA.
This final report is rich with the bitterness of a man who sees himself, perhaps correctly, as a martyr. The document is the culmination of a year and a half of intrigue between the Board and its Headmaster, of letters with threatening tones, and of a leader who attacked with a literary flare and smugness that surely infuriated his opponents.

Although some factors were out of Montgomery’s control, his aggressiveness and fearlessness ultimately led to his demise as Headmaster. Montgomery could not control the fact that Virginia Episcopal School was located in southwestern Virginia with conservative parents and alumni. He could not control the fact that he was born in New York City and was a product of the New England boarding school system. Nor could he change the fact that VES had a well-organized network of alumni across the South, consisting of men who believed that their school embodied the traditions of the Old South, such as segregation. Yet Montgomery’s personality was the spark that ignited the firestorm. “He was definitely the most controversial Headmaster this school has ever had,” the current headmaster of VES explained.92 The story of Austin Montgomery proves that bold action in the face of powerful parents and alumni can lead to constructive social change – in this case, the integration of VES. However, when such boldness is not tempered, it most assuredly can also shorten one’s tenure as Headmaster.

92 Hadley, interview.
CHAPTER 4

St. Albans exists to help boys not into the Kingdom of Harvard but into the Kingdom of Heaven.

- Canon Charles Martin, Headmaster of St. Albans School, 1949-1977

In the 1960s, the Episcopal Church helped schools check the influences of parents who opposed integration. In the four decades since the desegregation of Episcopal schools, parents continue to exert pressures on school policies that are reflective of our times. Mothers and fathers of private school students have become more anxious about grades, extra-curricular activities, and above all about the college admissions process. Many parents also are frightened by the social and cultural changes of our era – especially those involving homosexuality, diverse religious beliefs and the willingness of institutions to embrace differences in sexuality and faith. As a result, parents are intervening in school policies involving student behavior, parent-teacher relationships, multicultural issues, and even the integrity of the institutions. At times, the schools contribute to the problems by, for example, overselling themselves as college preparatory institutions. Thus, an overemphasis on the college admissions process can come at the cost of character education. In the competition for a limited pool of full-paying families, many schools are compromising their independence from parental influences which can erode the school’s institutional integrity.

The Episcopal Church may provide a counterbalance to negative parental influences along the lines suggested by Robert Evans, an organizational psychologist from Wellesley College. Evans argues that schools need to make firm, clear statements
about their core values. Schools then need to hold all members of its community –
students, teachers, administrators, and especially parents – to the standards that have
been articulated. Evans believes that schools should use their values to stem the rising
tide of parental anxiety and influence. The Episcopal Church provided the moral and
spiritual values that overcame the racist sentiments of parents and alumni in the 1950’s
and 1960’s. Now, over four decades later, the Church’s moral weight is needed more
than ever.

THE PROBLEM: PARENT ANXIETY

Everyone seems to see the problem. Veteran teachers have noticed it in their
day to day interaction with students. Administrators recognize it in dealing with
discipline problems. Coaches notice it with controversies over playing time. Child
psychologists and sociologists have written books about the problem. The popular
media, from the New York Times to small-town newspapers, have published articles
about it. The problem is that affluent parents are becoming increasingly anxious about
their children’s future. They put more and more emphasis on the college admissions
process, while pushing their children towards academic and extracurricular
achievements. Some parents also fear that, by exposing students to diverse beliefs,
schools may erode their children’s moral values. As a result, parents are becoming their
children’s advocates in the classroom and, in some cases, critics of school policies on
inclusivity. This leads to distrust of school policies and discipline, and at times
dishonesty with school administrators.
In his book *Family Matters*, Robert Evans places the problem within a broader historical context, which he calls the “Paradox of Liberation.” The “liberation,” or Civil Rights Movements of the 1960’s, did indeed “free individuals from the dictates of traditional social norms and moral rules that were seen as unfairly limiting their options and opportunities.”¹ The liberation movements culminated, however, in what Evans calls the “human potential movement,” where pop-psychologists encourage people to define themselves based on their own pleasure and usually in opposition to their communities and families. Delayed-gratification, personal sacrifice, self-denial, and communal responsibility therefore went out of style.² Now, Evans argues, the moral norm is for people to give time, energy, and resources to an institution or a relationship as long as their needs are fulfilled. If the person becomes unhappy or bored, they can seek their needs elsewhere.³ “The very same emphasis on self-determination that fosters innovation and undermines authority in the workplace,” Evans writes, “subverts the ties of family and neighborhood (and nation, for that matter).”⁴ The subversion of ties to school communities and the authority of school administrators is an extension of this broader trend.

Madeline Levine, a child psychologist, reinforces Evans’ argument that there has been a major shift in values as a result of the liberation movements of the 1960’s.

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² Evans, *Family Matters*, 133.
³ Evans, *Family Matters*, 134.
She cites a survey of incoming college freshman over the last forty years. The survey showed that in the 1960’s through early 1970’s the main reason students went to college was “to become an educated person,” or “to develop a meaningful philosophy of life.” Beginning in the mid-1990’s the primary reason was to “make a lot of money.” Levine goes on to argue that the change manifests a shift in American values away from emphasizing community and towards individuality, competition, and materialism.5

Evans cites the case of a suburban mother to show how the emphasis on competition affects a family. She drives her son every day, “still sweaty from soccer practice,” to classical guitar lesson and then to a tutoring center to improve his test-taking skills. “I should just ignore what everybody else is doing,” she admits, “but we are competitive, overachieving parents. I look to the left and I look to the right and I panic.”6 Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot, a Harvard sociologist, also studies the phenomenon of parent competitiveness. “Parents are their youngsters’ eager sponsors, protecting, demanding, and pushing for better performances from their adolescents,” Lawrence-Lightfoot wrote, causing parents to make unreasonable demands on their children as well as their teachers.7 The values that shape this parent mentality, she argues, are not “wisdom and grace” but “competition and expediency.”8 Parental focus is on the

6 Evans, *Family Matters*, 103.
means rather than the ends, or on the product their child should become rather than on the process of their child becoming an adult.9

Why is all of this a problem? Are not demanding parents, within reason, a positive influence on their children? The problem arises when parental love becomes conditional on a child’s success.10 That is the line that some parents are now crossing and the consequences can be devastating to a child’s growth. Patricia Lyons, a teacher and Episcopal theologian, writes:

At a developmental stage when most adolescents are able to think more about others, to take the perspective of others, and to reach out to form bonds of voluntary association leading to loyalty, they are simultaneously asked by adults in our culture to do the reverse: to act independently from peers, to compete with others in scholarship, sports, and performances, and to distinguish themselves in glory apart from and above their peers.11 Lyons observes that when parents should be fostering empathy in their children they, instead, foster competition.

Underneath the overemphasis on competition is a tangible fear and anxiety among parents. Lawrence Cohen sees it in his private practice as a psychologist. Parents carry around “a pile of worries, embarrassments, and helplessness about [their] children and [their] parenting,” Cohen writes. Parents have “a secret dread of being discovered as being bad or inadequate parents.” This fear manifests itself with a

9 Lawrence-Lightfoot, The Essential Conversation, 34.


parental need to “be fed” by schools, “fed with reassurance, with information, with strategies, with promises and guarantees, with something.”

Robert Wilder, a longtime English teacher and author, sees parental fear “in meetings with high maintenance parents where their list of demands was longer than my syllabus.” Underneath all of the anxiety is a fear about an increasingly unpredictable future for their children. Hence the phenomenon of the helicopter parent, a parent who hovers around their child smothering them with their own fears and anxieties of the future.

Such competitiveness and anxiety frequently lead to an institutional distrust among parents. Once again, Evans captures the issue:

> Embedded in America’s rising individualism is a growing distrust of other people and institutions and a consequent fragmentation of our society and a disabling of communal institutions – including our schools. The relationship between individualism and trust is reciprocal: a glorification of personal freedom both reflects and promotes a breakdown in personal relationships and a diminishing sense of mutual responsibility; a widespread distrust of others and of institutions inclines people to look out for themselves.

With an emphasis on individuality and personal identity, we have moved from shared responsibility toward individual achievement. Parental focus on the individual achievements of their children embodies this shift in values. Beneath this is anxiety for their child’s future. Parents feel compelled to do everything they can to ensure their child’s success in an increasingly free, competitive, and unpredictable world. This culminates in conflicts between parents and their children’s schools. Ironically, many

\[\text{Source 13: Evans, Family Matters, 100.}\]
parents no longer trust the schools that they have chosen, at significant expense, for their children.

**THE EFFECTS: THE FIGHT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF SCHOOLS**

The effects of the problem – parental emphasis on competition combined with their fears and anxieties – have the potential to devastate school communities. The effects begin with the children themselves. Some children are emotionally damaged which leads to self-medication through drugs or alcohol. Teachers are faced with increasingly rude student behavior and with demanding and disrespectful parents, who frequently side with their children in discipline issues. The effects of parent anxiety go beyond the well-being of children and beyond the relationship of parents and teachers. What is now at stake is the integrity of independent schools.

The first casualty of parental excess is the emotional well-being of the child. Evans cites several studies that show students who are academically stressed are more likely to abuse drugs, and that drug use is “higher among upper-income suburban youth than among their low-income urban peers – and to be most likely among youth who felt strong pressure to achieve academically and in extracurricular activities.”\(^\text{14}\) Madeline Levine has come to the same conclusions – the wealthiest and most educated children in the country “experience among the highest rates of depression, substance abuse, anxiety disorders, somatic complaints, and unhappiness of any group of children in this country.”\(^\text{15}\) According to Levine, rates of depression among affluent high school girls

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\(^{14}\) Evans, *Family Matters*, 105.
reaches as high as 22%. Over 30% of affluent boys and girls show signs of anxiety disorder.\(^{16}\)

Another effect is the breakdown of school discipline. In *Family Matters*, Evans chronicles in detail the connection between student misbehavior and parent anxieties. According to Evans, surveys show that parents are failing to establish basic guidelines for their child’s behavior, seeing their child’s discipline as something to be negotiated with the child. It then falls on the teachers to deal with the effects:

At school, teachers must spend more and more time teaching students the basics of social comportment and consideration of others, beginning, as principal told me, “with ‘please’ and thank you,’ with taking off your hat when you’re inside, with looking at someone when you speak to them.” A first grade teacher adds, “We’re continually surprised by all this, despite how much of it we now see. We still can’t get over the way the kids speak to each other, and to us – and then we hear how they bawl out their parents. Right in public, they disagree and complain and order their parents around.”\(^{17}\)

Evans gives anecdotes about parents asking for help from schools in disciplining their children, such as using the school to establish rules about weekend drinking or pleading with an administrator to tell their daughter to break up with an older boyfriend.\(^{18}\)

Schools thus are left to deal with the failures of parents.

On the other hand, many parents interfere with the manner in which teachers are educating their children and, ultimately, the way teachers are trying to help their children. Lawrence-Lightfoot wrote an entire book on contentious parent-teacher

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\(^{15}\) Levine, *Price of Privilege*, 17.


\(^{17}\) Evans, *Family Matters*, 84.

\(^{18}\) Evans, *Family Matters*, 86.
encounters. She notes that teachers feel that their authority is being questioned, that the parents are no longer parenting their children but instead are advocating for them. One teacher complained that parents “talk down” to her and treat her like a “servant.” “Their child is their most valuable possession,” the teacher explained, “as well as a reflection of who they are,” and when “something seems to turn in the conversation that threatened their kid’s advantage, [parents] become competitive and demanding.”

Michael Thompson sees something deeper in the parental bullying of teachers. In acting aggressively toward teachers, parents reveal that “they do not believe that their children are being taught in a loving community; they demonstrate that they really understand the school to be a dog-eat-dog environment.”

The breakdown of the teacher-parent relationship is therefore a manifestation of wider problem between the parent and the school itself.

The popular media has picked up on the parent versus school phenomenon. The St. Petersburg Times ran a story in 2006 about the change in parents over the course of one school administrator’s career. “Parents in the 1960s, ’70s, and even in the ‘80s were predominantly pro-teacher,” the administrator recalled when asked about the biggest change over the course of his career. “The kid would come home and say that the teacher was unfair and the parents would say, ‘Wrong.’ …When I [started] I dealt with kids 90% of the time and now I’m dealing with parents 70% of the time, and in

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19 Lawrence-Lightfoot, The Essential Conversation, 117.

adversarial role many times.” In 2004, *The New York Times Magazine* ran a story about the change in parental attitudes towards schools. In it, the Headmaster of a private school in New Orleans stated:

The parents’ willingness to intercede on the kids’ behalf, to take kids’ side, to protect the kid, in a not healthy way – there’s much more of that each year. It’s true in sports. It’s true in the classroom. It’s only gotten worse.

The media has also observed the “separation-anxiety” among affluent parents and their children as they leave for college. *The Washington Post* reported that “[college] officials are no longer surprised by parents who try to register their children for classes, argue about a grade or look up a future roommate on Facebook and demand a switch.” Or as *USA Today* reported in 2007, “it’s not unheard of for an undergrad to flip open his phone after an impasse [at a professor’s office hours] and say, ‘Here, dude. Talk to my mom.’”

No author, however, records more outrageous anecdotes of parent behavior towards schools than Robert Evans. He begins *Family Matters* with a bold statement:

Over the past ten years I have spoken with educators from several thousand schools across the country… Without exception, teachers and principals report that… parents are increasingly anxious about their children’s success, yet

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Evans proceeds to chronicle stories of parent misconduct. Parents of a second grade daughter sued a school when it wanted to hold their child back a grade. Two sets of parents went to a board of trustees when a teacher gave their children zeroes for plagiarizing a paper off the internet. When students were suspended for downloading pornography at school on school computers, parents hired lawyers and sued. These are extreme cases, Evans admits, but they are increasingly common. As one school administrator explained, “We used to see serious behavior problems as teachable moments, where the student could learn an important lesson. No longer. Now they are potential legal confrontations where the parent downplays the student’s misbehavior and attacks our policies and procedures.”

In the pressure of the competitive college admissions process, parents are willing to lie for their child, to attack a school’s policies for their child, and to dismiss or rationalize their child’s actions.

**SCHOOLS FOSTERING THE ANXIETY**

After *Brown v. Board of Education*, some private schools profited from parental fears of integration (see Chapter 1). Over fifty years later, schools are still benefitting from parental fears, this time over the college admissions process. Robert Evans, Lawrence Cohen, and Madeline Levine all recognize this paradox. “Competitive schools,” Evans writes, “are not just passive observers of drivenness and anxiety among

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students and parents; they foster it.” Teachers continue to push the quantity and quality of their students’ work. According to one headmaster, if a student went to his or her extracurricular practice while also doing homework for all five academic courses, then that student would never go to bed before 1:00 am.27 School faculty and administration complain about parent anxiety but they also “give lots of demanding homework, rank students based on grade differences of a hundredth of a point, and maintain escalating standards for admission.”28 Thus, knowingly or unknowingly, private schools capitalize on the pressures of the college admissions process. Without such pressures would parents make the financial sacrifices to send their children to private schools?29 With this question in mind, Michelle Gall, an educational consultant, proposes that schools concede to parental anxiety:

Schools have to identify, shape, and exceed parental expectations if they want parents to view tuition as a terrific value instead of as an exorbitant expense… It’s parents who vote “yea or nay” with their checkbooks. Therefore, now more than ever, it’s essential that independent schools understand what parents want.30 Gall reinforces the parental notion of school as an investment that should wield results. She reinforces the emphasis on product, not process, for children. Parents send their children to independent schools because of their anxiety over their children’s futures, and schools frequently play to those anxieties.

27 Evans, Family Matters, 102.


29 Levine, “Challenging the Culture of Affluence.”

The fear over the college admissions process is grounded on parental misconceptions. The first misconception is that the future of their children rests with college admissions. The second misconception is that a private school’s college counselor has the ability to control a student’s admittance into a particular college. As Michael Thompson writes:

Independent schools encourage – or at least don’t discourage – parental delusions in the early years of schooling and then in the junior and senior years come to regret having colluded with unrealistic parent hopes and dreams. We’re often in the situation of letting the air out of parents whom we’ve helped pump up.\(^{31}\)

Thompson makes a point. A typical school mission statement mentions preparing students for college, tours of schools usually tout their qualified college counselors, and teachers typically justify their assignments by the fact that “this is what you will do in college.” It should come as no surprise when parents say that they wasted their money after their child does not get into the college of their choice. It should also come as no surprise that Thompson found that 95% of the ninth graders at one school said that, “My parents are sending me here so I’ll get into a good college.”\(^{32}\) All too often, schools subtly reinforce these concepts.

**THE SOLUTION**

Robert Evans seems to have the most pragmatic solution. Schools have to stand for something, he argues. Only by defining a clear, direct set of core values can a school reduce problems with parents. While Evans was not writing about Episcopal

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\(^{32}\) Thompson, “Fenced in by Delusions.”
Church schools in particular, the solution he promotes is one that Episcopal schools already seem to use. Based on interviews with current Heads of the Episcopal schools researched in this thesis, it is apparent that the Episcopal Church still provides the foundation for their schools’ values. The Church, the Heads explained, provides a bulwark of support for schools in their institutional stand against the rising tide of parent anxiety and fear.

Robert Evans suggests in *Family Matters* that schools should not assume that parents will be supportive, cooperative, and trusting of faculty and administrators. Schools should instead anticipate parental misconduct. To prepare for confrontations with parents, schools must clearly define and articulate their core values to parents. This requires a restructuring of the relationship between schools and families, one that is built upon mutual consent:

> Strategy begins with a systematic effort to build and sustain consensus throughout the school community about purpose and conduct. (By “conduct,” I mean behavior but also roles and responsibilities.) In my experience, the schools that preserve the best relationship with students and parents and encounter the fewest boundary-breaking problems are those that are clearest about what they stand for and what it means to be a member of their school community.  

Above all, schools must determine what the “conditions” are for becoming a member of their school community and then clearly communicate how these requirements relate to parent behavior.

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33 Evans, *Family Matters*, 159.

34 Evans, “Changing Families Changing Schools.”
Choosing unique and meaningful core values can be challenging, even for Episcopal schools. Schools run the risk of trying to stand for everything. As Michael Thompson pointed out in 1993, “even Saddam Hussein could write a good mission statement,” with most mission statements becoming a “wish list” of unattainable promises and “clichés.” As with overbroad mission statements, Episcopalian theology has a reputation for trying to stand for too much. David Hein and Gardiner H. Shattuck make this criticism in their book, The Episcopalians. “The spirit of comprehensiveness [a blend of Catholic and Protestant traditions],” Hein and Shattuck explain, “has sometimes masked moral laxity, doctrinal confusion, and the very exclusion of the minority views it is intended to protect.” One Episcopal priest estimated that 80% of Episcopalians are converts from other faiths, evidence, he believes, that the Episcopal Church tries to be everything to everyone. If the role of Episcopal faith is not clearly defined within a school community (as it was in the 1950’s and 1960’s regarding integration), then the values of the Church may become diluted and lose their meaning.

The Heads of many Episcopal schools, however, believe that the Episcopal faith provides the perfect set of values for adoption by their schools. They point out that the


36 Evans, Family Matters, 165.


Episcopal Church prides itself for its inclusiveness as well as its spiritual and intellectual freedom. The Archbishop of Canterbury, the figurehead for the worldwide Anglican community, articulated this commitment to inclusiveness when he said, “If the Church has a calling to participate in education, then it must be in a bold and decisive manner, [while] not seeking to impose its faith.”\(^{39}\) Bill Wade, the recently retired Headmaster of St. Andrew’s-Sewanee School, mirrored the Archbishop’s calls for education to be “bold and decisive” without imposing faith. Wade pushed the school to adopt the phrase “inclusive Christian community” in its mission statement because he “wanted to make it clear that we weren’t just for Christians.”\(^{40}\) The 2003 General Convention of the Church adopted a resolution encouraging Episcopal schools to be places, “where open, passionate, and respectful deliberation of challenging, contemporary issues is expected and encouraged.”\(^{41}\) George Penick, the Headmaster of St. Andrew’s School in Jackson, Mississippi, not only emphasizes Episcopalian inclusiveness at his school, but also the intellectual freedom that the General Convention encourages. “One of the important things about the Episcopal Church is that it’s not about whether someone is right or wrong,” Penick explains, “it’s whether or

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\(^{40}\) Rev. Bill Wade, interviewed by author, July 9, 2008, Sewanee, TN.

“not you’re in a dialogue.” Daniel Heischman, President of the National Association of Episcopal Schools, sees the ambiguity of Episcopalian theology as crucial for creating inquiry and discussion within school communities. “I think that the magic of the Church is the ambiguity,” Heischman said. “We’re moving into a world that is increasingly ambiguous. The world is going to be less responsive to an overly authoritarian or an overly clear picture of reality.”

The key to Robert Evans’ solution is communicating school values to the community and, especially, to parents. Evans insists that schools publicize their, “values and expectations in the broadest array of forums,” including assemblies, PTA meetings, newsletters, and especially new parent orientations. Evans even cites one school that created a “values contract,” that articulates “What the School Stands For,” “What You Can Expect from the School,” and “What the School Can Expect from You [the parent].” The Head of School is critical in defining and in communicating school values. As Michael Thomp...
community. Thus, parents may disagree with the school and with its faculty, but they must do so appropriately and in a respectful manner.

Whether in chapel services or in letters home to parents, Heads of the Episcopal schools researched in this thesis emphasize Episcopal values while communicating school values to parents. Dr. Phil Hadley allowed his school to use Episcopal chapel services to establish a dialogue about the issue of sexuality. Hadley received a complaint from a parent and, in response, Hadley provided the parent with a copy of the sermon that dealt with sexual orientation in accordance with Episcopalian principles of inclusivity and acceptance. The parent dropped his complaints.\(^{45}\) Similarly, a student at St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes in 2008 announced during one of the school’s weekly chapel services that he was gay. The student received a standing ovation from his fellow students.\(^{46}\) Rev. Bill Wade at St. Andrew’s-Sewanee used his Episcopal faith as the foundation for dealing with two student pregnancies. Wade allowed one of the students to remain in school, and he asked the other to leave. The flexibility of the Church’s teachings, Wade wrote in letters home, gave him the ability to make the apparently contradictory determinations. For the student who did not stay in school, Wade concluded that St. Andrew’s-Sewanee “was not an emotionally safe place.” In other words, in Wade’s view, it was not in that child’s best interest to remain in school. While many parents disagreed or complained about the inconsistencies, “the nice thing

\(^{45}\) Phil Hadley, interviewed by author, Lynchburg, VA, September 20, 2008.

\(^{46}\) Based on the author’s observations. The author witnessed the chapel talk as a teacher at St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes in the spring of 2008.
is that you have the power to interpret and make an impact based on the authority of the Church,” Wade explained.⁴⁷

A theme emerged in interviews with current Heads of Episcopal schools: school administrators look to the Episcopal Church to help establish a dialogue on homosexuality. As with integration in the 1960’s, two sides emerge, generally speaking: parents, board members, and alumni on one side and the Episcopal Church on the other. “Right now people don’t want to talk about it. Parents don’t want to talk about it. I don’t think the board wants to talk about it,” George Penick, the Headmaster of St. Andrew’s (MS), explained.⁴⁸ Daniel Heischman, the current President of the NAES and former administrator at St. Alban’s, recognized the parallel between integration and talking about sexual orientation:

I think back to St. Alban’s, when we introduced the whole issue of what it’s like to be a gay student at the school, we did that by bringing in parents of former gay students. And the parents were both Church people. One was a rector of a parish in NY and another in Washington, DC. We decided that we were going to take this issue through the religious identity of the school. It provided a large framework and in some cases support.⁴⁹

Virginia Episcopal School, St. Stephen’s & St. Agnes, St. Andrew’s (MS), and St. Alban’s, schools that used the Episcopal Church to integrate in the 1960’s, once again are using the Episcopal Church to deal with the controversial topic of the 1990’s and 2000’s: sexual orientation.

⁴⁷ Rev. Bill Wade, interviewed by author, July 9, 2008, Sewanee, TN.

⁴⁸ George Penick, interview by author, July 16, 2008, Jackson, MS.

⁴⁹ Dr. Daniel Heischman, interviewed by author, January 5, 2009, Alexandria, VA.
CONCLUSION

While Evans does not claim that his solution can actually reverse the tide of “helicopter” parenting, he does believe that schools should make a stand. In the process of boldly asserting their identity to parents and children, Evans urges schools to become countercultural institutions. They must resist, fundamentally, all of the trends that surround them:

The steps I recommend do, in essence, require schools to resist strong currents in American life, a role they have rarely played. Historically, they have always reflected society more than they have shaped it... The ultimate message of this book is not that educators should give up; it is rather that they should hold on, that they must be simultaneously realistic and hopeful.50

Schools obviously cannot remake a society that focuses on financial and business successes and, hence, on college admissions and high test scores for their children. But, schools can find a way to counterbalance the behaviors that arise from these pressures (and from pressures of sexual choices, for that matter). This comes by an insistence, backed by enforcement, on openness to differences, respectfulness, character, and honesty by all members of their school’s community.

The Episcopal Church is, at its best, a countercultural institution. Just as many religious institutions become more dogmatic and evangelical, the Episcopal Church’s teachings have become more inclusive and accepting. Just as the popular media approaches issues with an increasingly confrontational style, the Episcopal Church has been bold enough to engage sensitive issues with open and honest dialogue. Just as private schools have become more focused on the “product” of a child, Episcopal

50 Evans, Family Matters, 224.
schools can take a firm stance on focusing on process. Instead of defining themselves around the college admissions process or by “conservative family values,” Episcopal schools have the theological foundation for defining themselves around tolerance, honesty, respectfulness and character. Tony Lewis, the first African-American to attend an Episcopal school in the state of Virginia, recognized this in a recent interview. “If it’s a Church school and follows what the Church understands, demographics and parent wishes take a second place to what the imperative of the Gospel is, even if the Gospels end up being countercultural.”

The Episcopal Church gives its schools the moral authority to be countercultural.

CONCLUSION

I still see a power dynamic between parents and the Episcopal Church, but it’s no longer over the issue of integration...

- Rev. Daniel Heischman, President of the National Association of Episcopal Schools, 2009

In 1955, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church denounced segregation as contrary to the teachings of Christ. Bishops, clergy, and some laypersons then began an uncoordinated effort to integrate Episcopal schools, a process that continued well into the 1960’s. The success of their efforts depended on the assertiveness and conviction of school administrators, the demographics of a specific school community, and, most importantly, on the degree of Episcopalian control over the schools. Several themes emerged in the seven schools researched in this thesis. First, the closer the ties to the Episcopal Church, the more quickly the school integrated. The Church, whether through a bishop, through a dean of a cathedral, or through an order of monks, caused four of the seven schools to integrate – St. Albans from 1954 through 1957, St. Stephen’s in 1961, St. Andrew’s (TN) from 1963 through 1965, and St. Andrew’s (MS) in 1966. The fifth school, Lovett, severed its ties with the Episcopal Church in 1963 rather than comply with the Bishop’s order to desegregate. The Episcopal Church had insufficient influence to change the policies of the sixth and seventh schools, Virginia Episcopal School and Episcopal High School. By the 1960’s, these two schools were Episcopalian in name only, without governance ties to their
respective dioceses. Virginia Episcopal School and Episcopal High School were also the last of the seven schools to integrate -- in 1967 and 1968.

The second theme is the parental response at the schools. Each school had administrators or trustees who feared that desegregation would antagonize parents. Letters and board minutes show that these fears were typically based on accurate perceptions of parental attitudes. The conflicts between the pronouncements of the Episcopal Church and the demands of parents (and alumni) played out differently at each school, but each school experienced the conflict. The most successful schools in countering parental fears of integration were those with leaders who forcefully used the moral and political authority of the Episcopal Church. Bishop Angus Dun and Canon Charles Martin did so at St. Albans. Rev. John Page Williams and Rev. Emmet Hoy, with the steady support of Bishop Robert Gibson, did so at St. Stephen’s. The Order of the Holy Cross did so at St. Andrew’s (TN). Rev. Edward Harrison, Rev. Chris Keller, and Rev. John Jenkins all stood up to pressures from St. Andrew’s (MS) parents. The Episcopal Church was the major tool in effecting the desegregation of these schools.

Today, Episcopal schools face more subtle moral challenges than that of integration. The challenges are rooted in the broader cultural trends of an affluent and rapidly changing society that involve, for example, competition for college admissions, financial pressures and emerging multicultural influences. Solutions will not come from a single mandate from a bishop, a decision by a headmaster, or a vote of a board of trustees. But the primary source of the problem is the same as in the Civil Rights era: parental fears and insecurities. And, of course, Episcopal schools still rely on parents
for their institutional livelihoods. Despite the differences in the causes of parent-school tensions, Episcopal schools can look to their own histories for solving the challenge. If they do, the Episcopal Church will continue to moderate counterproductive influences on its schools arising out of the sometimes short-sighted demands of school parents.

The current heads of the schools in this thesis seem to understand that. George Penick, the new Headmaster of St. Andrew’s (MS), proudly points out that his school’s mission statement “doesn’t talk about colleges.” Instead, Penick emphasizes “the relationship to your community, leadership, all of the things that are beyond athletic and academic excellence.” The key to success, Penick explained, is the “spiritual underpinning” that the Episcopal Church provides.1 Rev. Bill Wade, who had twenty-five years of experience as the Headmaster of St. Andrew’s-Sewanee School, said that “the Church is the fundamental understanding of who we are,” and that “any principle evolving out of the Church impacts us and we try to live up to that.” Whether discipline issues, teen pregnancy, or the discussions of human sexuality, Wade used the Episcopal Church as the starting point for dealing with the real controversies of school life.2 Phil Hadley, the current Headmaster of Virginia Episcopal School, sees the Episcopal Church as the basis for his school’s ability to deal with controversial issues:

What I really love about Episcopal schools is that we invite diversity in the community – intellectual diversity, racial diversity and ethnic. Intellectually, we can go to our core values and say that we’re going to live this out with a fair discussion… What does the Church mean to us? It means everything in terms of

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1 George Penick, interview by author, July 16, 2008, Jackson, MS.

2 Rev. Bill Wade, interviewed by author, July 9, 2008, Sewanee, TN.
our basic values. That’s something that we’ve made a conscious effort to establish a dialogue about.³

When asked what role the Episcopal Church plays in their school, each Episcopal school head interviewed spoke in the “core values” language that Robert Evans suggests. Each Episcopal school head could refer to specific, controversial moments where the Church provided the moral framework for their decision.

However, if parental interference is the problem, then the Church needs to play an even deeper role in the life of its schools. In an era where parents increasingly emphasize academic and athletic competition, Episcopal schools must instead emphasize responsibility to community. If parents over emphasize the college admissions process, Episcopal schools should focus on spiritual growth. When parents lie for their children and attack the institutional integrity of schools on their child’s behalf, Episcopal schools should just as aggressively demand moral accountability from all members of its community. While Episcopal school leaders take pride in the role the Church plays in defining its values, the Episcopal Church can do more through, for example, the involvement of bishops, rectors, deans, and clergy associated with the schools. Episcopal school “values contracts” should be employed. With vigilance, Episcopal schools can live up to the promise Episcopalians make in their Baptismal Covenant:

_Bishop:_ Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

_People:_ I will, with God's help.

³ Phil Hadley, interviewed by author, Lynchburg, VA, September 20, 2008.
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