A SHORT HISTORY OF

TRINITY

1854 - 1979

COMPILED by

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September 23, 1979
TRINITY'S HISTORY

A reader of history must begin with curiosity about certain influences:
- from what vantage point in time is it being written?
- from whose pen?
- for what reason is the task undertaken?
- and admitting what bias?

The bias is probably the most important here - because we are celebrating an anniversary whose venerable age impresses one - 125 years. And the celebration carries with it a certain amount of pride. I am certain pride cannot be exorcised from this history - though to some extent, we must always shy away from being "prideful" about our church; and yet the very nature of this long-standing fellowship literally demands that we pay some attention to a tradition of ministry in a church that serves more than itself, and in fact, has earned a reputation as pioneering with mission efforts in the city and throughout the world. For this we are proud, but also thankful for our foremothers and forefathers who gave us this tradition, and God who enables us to continue being at work in the world.

Secondly, we must remember that historicising a church is more akin to telling about a loved one. Rarely do sources of information about a church arise from a critical source, an indifferent one, and almost never are "facts" remembered apart from warm and loving memories. To that extent, objectivity is of another sort; its sources are biographical, autobiographical; remembrance and reminiscence.

Research arises from several sources:

A Compilation of History 1854-1935 by a church committee who used people, letters, Evangels, Atlanta Journal articles and accounts of history of the city, Under the pastoring of Luther Bridgers.


Conversations with Joyce, Guy and Whit Hutchison, Reverends Norman Manning, and Cecil Myers.

Institute paper by John Yntema and Gary Nims "The Actual Ministry of Trinity U.M.C. and Central Presbyterian Church in the Capitol Homes Housing Project. . .

A collection of Memorabilia - Jane Baumgartner.

First called properly, Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the effort was born in a schoolroom in the house of Green and Martha Haygood. Martha had educated her four children and had opened a school in her own house which soon developed into a high school for girls. In her schoolroom the Sunday School, that later became Trinity, was organized.

A mission S. S. in a little house on McDonough Street, the school was "made in the interest of Methodism on the south side of the railroad" and prospered so well that its founder determined to build a church. The Haygoods, their young son, Atticus and Willis Peck worked in this mission school, and in the summer of 1854, they moved into the basement of the new structure.

As a mission effort from Wesley Chapel (now First Methodist) the "substantial brick structure" on Mitchell Street immediately south of the new capitol, was finished in September 1854. Reverends J. P. Duncan and J. M. Austin were ministers the first year, followed by Reverend Sam Anthony and Dr. Jesse Boring, who became well-known names in early Methodism. These pastors were shared with Wesley Chapel until 1856 when Reverend Lewis Davies became the first pastor of the separate charge.
Methodism itself was less than a hundred years old then. Atlanta had about 6,000 residents. There was no public education; the city was a railroad center. And a war was on the horizon.

In July of 1864, Sherman’s army was approaching the city, and for two Sunday’s the church was closed and the pastor and his family were fugitives. In August, Reverend Atticus Haygood, who was then a missionary in Johnston’s army, held services twice each Sunday. Trinity was the only Protestant Church that remained open during the siege. During the evacuation of the city, Trinity was used as a storehouse for furniture.

After the exile, the congregation that Sunday consisted of eleven persons and the text was “Trials of Faith”. The following Sunday the Sunday School was reorganized by Frank Richardson; (who helped establish Sunday School’s all over the city); instrumental music was introduced in September. By 1876, membership was 257 with 300 enrolled and teaching in the Sabbath School.

In 1869-70, a newer "larger, more convenient and handsome church" was envisioned, and purchasing a lot on the corner of Whitehall and Peters streets for $6,000, the church broke ground on June 17, 1871. General Reverend C. A. Evans preached the first sermon from Ephesians 5:23, "I speak concerning Christ and the Church." Expected cost of this "tastefully decorated" church was $60,000, "an edifice worthy of the membership and an elegant ornament of the city."

In the coming years, the congregation grew in numbers and in vision, helping to build other churches, St. Paul's, St. John's, Peachtree, and Pierce Chapel. When General Reverend Evans delivered his farewell speech to Trinity in 1874, he records that the membership increased from 350 to 530 with 300 others transferring to the other churches around the city as they emerged. These folk, flowing through Trinity, helped shape the muscle of other churches in the city. Reverend Crumley is named a founder of the Decatur Orphan’s Home during this time.

1871-- St. Paul "one of the first churches organized by Trinity Membership" Hunter St. It originated at the old fair grounds, Fair St.

Evans Chapel, Stonewall St. later Walker St. Church.

1878-- Trinity promoted and helped build Asbury Church on Davis St.

1879-81--The Girls' Society bought a lot on Rawson St., built a chapel for Sunday School on Sunday afternoons. (Later Pierce Chapel 1886-1889). Recorded history of the chapel effort predicts its growth. "It is in the nature of all things in this active, moving town to go forward, and the religion of the city seems to be as progressive as its commerce. By an ultra-aggressiveness is the only way in which the Christian church can reach millions of heathens...almost at our doors, who present a sadder and more pitiable spectacle."

1882-85-- Park St. Church in the West End was built. Sunday School and night worship was held in the old U. S. barracks, now the work known as Trinity Home Mission. "The services are now held in a house built by Trinity Church. For years a day school has been held in this mission." (recorded in 1902)

1890-- Sunday Schools were established on Capitol Avenue and on the west side. The West Side Church emerged. And the Capitol Sunday School joined Pierce Chapel to become St. John's, moving to Georgia Avenue near Pryor.

"Reverend Haygood, president of Emory College 1875-1884, Editor of Wesley and Christian Advocate, and author of The Man of Galilee; and Bishop, had "advanced views especially on the race problem...but lived to witness a radical change of sentiment on this line, and to inaugurate a new era in the South."
McDonough St. Mission School "far out on McDonough St." was introduced by General Reverend Evans at the conclusion of his sermon. He had visited the school and met the children, all poor, and in attending a boys class and asking their names, where they lived, how they were situated, "he found that every member of the class, without exception, had no father - all the sons of widows who were poor." He urged the congregation to send gifts and enter into the work with the school.

Women's Foreign Ministry Society was organized by Dr. John Heldt, the pastor in 1879, with Mrs. Dennis Hammond, its first president, and 61 pioneer members. In 1880 they financed an organ for Trinity Church, China, at the request of Dr. Young Allen; that same year the temperance movement was inaugurated. In 1880 Miss Anna J. Muse offered herself for missionary work and two years later left for China.

In a speech by Miss Muse, she recalled her decision to go to China at the tender age of 23 long before there were studies of missions, booklets of instruction or language schools. Immediately she began teaching English to Chinese boys in Dr. Allen's Anglo-Chinese School for Boys in Shanghai and in the afternoons, studying Chinese herself with a New Testament, hymn book, and church ritual for prayers. Then she became matron in charge of Clapton School. After a furlough in the U.S. she returned with her husband to Nantzhang, carrying their belongings in wheelbarrows (trains arrived 20 years later).

1884 was a year when Trinity urged the extension of mission work to Mexico which then had no representative. Miss Eva Foreman went to Korea; other members had missionary relatives in Japan and China. (The David Andersons)

A missionary love feast marked the send-off of Miss Laura Haygood to Shanghai, where she soon had two day schools, a boarding school, and a training school for teachers. In 1894 she became sole agent for the Woman's Board in China; later they named a school for her in Soochow. It was to this school that Olive Anderson came after she graduated from college.

Organized for the systematic aid to the poor "especially of Trinity", the first Home Mission Society began in 1882; an industrial School was established, and the following year the Executive Board opened a home on Forsythe St. to care for helpless women, orphans, and young children whose mothers needed work - a pioneer day nursery." The Home Mission also held a series of "cottage prayer meetings" in the homes of the invalids and others unable to attend church.

Also in 1884 a missionary society of 20 small girls was organized, called "The Little Workers". They cared and clothed six of the children in the Barracks Mission and gave money for a stained glass window.

In 1895 seven women organized the Young Women's Missionary Society "in connection with the adults." The second president, Miss Daisy Davis, member of the old Foreign Missions Board and field secretary of the new Board of Missions, was Director of Relief for Poland and later went to Poland, Czechoslovakia and Belgium for evangelistic work (1920's).

The Home and Foreign Auxiliaries merged in 1910; they gave scholarships in China, Vashon, Brevard, and Cuba, and sponsored theological students from Brazil, China, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Poland, and Switzerland. The Business Women's Circle sponsored Dr. V. L. Patterson in China when the Board of Missions had no money to send him. He had been the first in several years when he left, August 1925. A medical missionary, he was with Soochow and Huchow hospitals.

History of the Trinity Sunday School, beginning again after the "mess" left by Sherman includes a gradual development of first the Primary Department, then later the Junior, in 1922 the Intermediate Senior Department, and 1930 the Senior Department.

The Young Women's Class began in 1893, receiving its formal name in 1904. They had a library of 200 volumes in 1909. Other classes: Young Men Helper's Class (membership of 250 with Gov. Slaton as teacher), Stranger Visitor Class (taught by Major William Slaton, Superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools); two classes for "old men and women who still liked to come to Sunday School"; the Laura Rawson Hammond Class, young women who were all absorbed into working in other Sunday School departments. Harwick Class "organized to hold some unruly scouts" which later also absorbed young girls; the Sunshine Class (still in existence); Rosa Herman Class, which began as graduating primary group and ended as young men and women; W.C. Mansfield High School
graduates; Crusader Class, residents of the churches Home for Girls which was then located near the church.

Several of these classes worked actively, singing regularly in the Kings' Daughters Hospital Home for the Incurables for years, organized Sunday Schools at Wesley House and at Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills, contributed to Methodist Orphan's Homes in Decatur, and City Mission's, and visited the sick, bereaved, and the prisons. The women cooked meals for folks at the polls to compete with the liquor men who were giving away liquor - and helped to defeat it.

The Junior Church department began as a class which gathered "neglected children" from around the town. Its effort came from assistant pastor Starnes.

Early in 1889 the pastor of Trinity, Dr. J. W. Lee and official board members began the Young People's Christian League, and by October there were 124 active members. Five years later the General Conference of the Methodist Church endorsed this group which now called itself the Epworth League, forming a union of Atlanta churches. For about 15 years, they were an active and powerful movement of the city and in the South, and again in 1919, it was reorganized. Later by decree of the General Conference, Epworth League, was divided into four groups, and in 1935 the original group was called Wesley Fellowship.

The other three groups were the Intermediate Department for ages 12-14, Senior Department 15-17 (eleven teachers were needed for these two), and Young People's Department, age 18-23. The division boasted 140 members.

Also under Dr. Lee, a Boys Club for "news boys and waifs about the streets of Atlanta" was organized in the basement of the church house until their size forced them to relocate and rent the old Guard Armory on Houston St.; later they merged with the boys department of the YMCA. When the Boy Scout movement began, Trinity, in the new building, again used the basement, and with a former Boy's Club member Sam Swilling, the founding charter listed 20 boys on opening 1913. It swelled to over 100 troop members. The church supported these organizations with committees, money, and encouraging openness to other denominations.

The Atlanta Journal describes Trinity's new building, the present site, in the October 27, 1912 issue:

BEAUTIFUL WINDOWS

The triumph of the whole construction, however, are the windows and their design. On these long slits of opaque glass are pictured, in a series of simple symbols, the whole history of the church from the creation to the union of the Trinity. The conception and execution are the work of Walter Downing, the architect.

The upper windows on the north side of the building, the cold, cruel, inhuman side, portray the history of the Old Testament. The first symbol is that of a ray of light shot through red chaos of the creation. It with its other symbol, the flood, goes to make up the legendary window. The next two show the beginning of the Jewish race and the origin of sacrifice, and the beginning of law and priesthood in the symbols of Moses and Aaron, David and Solomon; the start of literature and of the kingdom is another, while the prophets, Isaiah and Elijah, typify the last. In each of these windows is the symbol of God. The Trinity is not yet formed.

The lower windows on the northern side, still the ignorant, dark side, are made up of the Ten-Commandments. They are shown as originally printed as Exodus.

The south side of the church, the sunny, open, liberal side, is taken up with the New Testament history. The upper windows are a series showing the Twelve Apostles with Christ present in each one and on the lower windows are the Beatitudes.

The south side of the interior, the whole history of the church is summed up in three windows. One in the center is of three symbols, the ancient Jehovah, the Holy Ghost, and Jesus Christ. The window on the left shows the two apostles to the Gentiles, Paul and Chrysostom, Paul the messenger to the Roman world, of law and order, and Chrysostom, the ordainer, to the Greek world of aesthetics and philosophy. The window on the right typifies Martin Luther, the inaugurator of the Reformation, and Wesley, the leader of evangelism.

The symbols are simple, yet beautiful and complete with all, and set in the dim green glass of each window form a neat and rather awe inspiring design.
John Hynds gave the Dedication Speech, and spoke lovingly of the new building:

"To the stranger within our gates and to every man and woman in this community who would worship at our altar, we extend a special welcome. We would have them feel this is their Father's house, therefore, their own. This church was not built for any one class or for this generation alone, but for the humble and contrite heart in every walk of life so long as the foundation stands and the roof tree offers shelter to the rich and to the poor, to the young and to the old, to the learned and to the unlearned, our pews and our hearts are equally open. If this old altar were a violin, it could sound every note of human happiness, of human hope, and of human grief. From its inspiring influence, have gone out consecrated men and women to tell the great story throughout the world."

Bishop W. A. Candler preached the Dedication sermon, October 27, 1912, and an afternoon service at 3:30 featured special music, and an evening service was also held. The organ is an Austin containing 41 ranks and over 3,000 pipes of wood and metal. It's five horsepower blower provides the wind for all the pipes.

Chairman of buildings committee: Judge W. R. Hammond; pastor Dr. J. B. Robbins, and architect Walter Downing. The altar rail, chairs, pews, and organ were brought from the Whitehall location. The bells, which had rung from 1871-1911, were contributed to Druid Hills Methodist Church.

The Jubilee Celebration, April 16-21, 1929, marked 75 years of Trinity church, and began with the Women's Missionary Society "Out of the Heart of Trinity" pageant. Dr. Luther Bridges was pastor of the church of 800 then. His hymn "He Keeps Me Singing" is included in the Cokesbury Hymnal. Dr. Frank Goland was Chairman of the Board, there were about 90 stewards, among them newly elected Ellsworth Race, and the membership rolls include Gordon and Elizabeth Race, who continue as members now.

The Sunday School had these departments: Nursery, Primary, Junior, Intermediate, Senior, Young Peoples, and the Adult Division had 5 classes. The Women's Missionary Society had 20 officers and seven circles.

During World War I, Trinity supported two Red Cross Units, and worked at Fort McPherson and Camp Gordon giving programs, parties for soldiers, and knitting and serving war supplies. Another unit worked on Peachtree Street.

Under the pastoring of Dr. Homer Thompson, Trinity opened a Soup Kitchen during the Great Depression. Staffed chiefly by the church women, this project served the city when there were long lines the world over. One year of this service cost $2,000; a time when the church was also struggling financially.

The Centennial Celebration, 1954, was a resurrection period for a now inner-city church surrounded by freeways in the making, government buildings, boarding houses and slums. The financial crises, loss of members and decline of Sunday School had disheartened some, but also had increased the determination of others on a hot July afternoon in 1951. Through unselfish giving their budget that year, the officials voted to double it - and almost met that commitment! Air conditioning and renovation of buildings, along with the evangelistic commitment of T. Cecil Myers and the Fisherman's Club who visited every member they could find - 600 people joined in six years. A counseling and referral service saw 3,000 individual cases in four years; a Golden Age Club brought 100 in, and an intensive youth ministry to "potential delinquents" swelled MIF to 100, and offered sponsorship of various ball teams in a rented gymnasium. Evening services were revived and nearly filled the house.

The history reports: Trinity's future is still ahead of her and not behind her...lonely people by the hundreds at the heart of any city, elderly people, youth who are confused, young families struggling to get started...from other hands we have received the torch of faith...in the Master's name, we move forward.

The early sixties, under the pastoring of Bill Holt and Norman Manning, saw another phase of transition as Trinity sought to sustain its membership and family orientation - and also discover ways to serve the community. One vision, which would have led to the moving of Trinity from downtown to the residential community, was a combination community center, church, and offices - proposed by Ray Moore, after whom the Moore Fellowship Class is named. An outpost class of street boys from Capitol Homes, Cabbagetown and West End was ongoing in the Parish House, a choir of children from Capitol Homes was started and Lunch Lift - lunch and worship for "office people" was inaugurated every Wednesday. Trinity worked cooperatively with Immaculate Conception and Central in this new "urban ministry" focus, and members came to Trinity as part of the Neighborhood Two Program. In 1964 the Methodist Inner City Mission or Parish House
was ministered to by Ike Powell and Bruce Donnally and some families began their relationship with Trinity. In 1967 membership was at a low 200 with 50 attending, and officials were considering selling the church.

The Ken Jones era is often described as the time of integration for Trinity, and includes a number of mission efforts. Again the church elected to remain in the city and focus its energy working to meet the needs of the now majority black Capitol Homes and other downtown folk. The Parish House offered mid-week programming for children and youth, Camp Trinity was begun and 200 elementary age children attended in the summers. The Atlanta Recovery Center was developed first in conjunction with a prison release program. Now incorporated, it serves 250 homeless daily, and helps them find employment. The Steel Band came out of a youth focus, and a special trip to St. Croix to help build a Sunday School building, was a feature for the group. Other efforts realized by this congregation include the Literacy Action Program, continuing to be housed in the church, the Good Neighbor Club, an outreach in Cabbagetown, Task Force, summer program for youth, and others.

Between pastors, Trinity entered into an exciting "search" period and for about five months, laity upheld the ongoing ministries of the church, with preaching by most of the twenty ordained affiliate members of the church.

Currently, Sammy Clark is pastor. Coming to Trinity from his mission in Chimbote, Peru, Sammy has given strong leadership during a transition period for mission endeavors in the city. Trinity has had three consecutive church-wide retreats; membership grows at a rate faster than most churches in the city. The 125th Anniversary finds the Moore class investigating the adoption of a Vietnamese family; a full-time staff person works at the Parish House; the Joint Committee coordinated effort between Central Presbyterian and Trinity.