

Epilogue

For all that has gone on outside, what has happened inside the walls of Old Trinity is most important. Most weeks the worship at Old Trinity begins with words that have not changed since the time of Elizabeth the First: *Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid...*

On other Sundays the words are those of the old General Confession: *"we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts."* Words like these have shaped worshipping generations. For all their embrace of the passing scene, the personal piety of most Anglicans is a "holy worldliness" that knows both that God's world is good and that "men" are sinful. Those Anglicans who wrote the founding documents understood the need for checks and balances in any human system, including the Church. For all of our accomplishments, we stand in need of mercy.

We are committed to preserving the environment but cannot have much impact upon global warming whose results within a century may flood the low-lying churchyard of Old Trinity. We are committed to maintaining partnership relationships but cannot control what happens within the councils of worldwide Anglicanism. However, for as long as we are here we intend to continue gathering as for over three hundred years people have come in the name of Jesus to this "place where prayer has been valid" to worship Almighty God, *"to set forth his most worthy praise, to hear his holy Word, and to ask for ourselves and on behalf of others those things that are requisite and necessary for our life and our salvation."*

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Episcopal Church claims less than 1.5% of the American population and is not a dominant presence. Yet from its history as an established church it carries still some sense of responsibility for public life. Even today Episcopal churches tend to think of themselves as caring and praying for not just those who congregate for worship but for all souls living within the geographic limits of the parish. So even in 2011 the people of Old Trinity continue to praise God and to seek the common good. From an established church, an American Church has grown which is free, respectful of diversity and democratically governed, while still rooted in Scripture, Reason, and Tradition.

This work is dedicated to the memory of Robert G. Stewart, onetime curator of the National Portrait Gallery and benefactor of the Old Trinity Church Association. His ancestors were connected with the church in every period. Stewarts helped drain the marshes, fought in the Revolution, led the militia at the Battle of the Ice Mound, and were “owners” of the slave Harriet Ross Tubman who escaped to lead her people to freedom. (Harriet is now commemorated in the church’s “Lesser Feasts and Fasts.”)

