

## AN AMERICAN CHURCH:

### *Preface*

*Old Trinity is a thoroughly American Church. Although it was established as a Church of England, it was rooted in and shaped by the American experience. It is part of, but not controlled by, a worldwide communion of other “Anglican” churches. Our story here may help those of other denominations and those who know the Anglican Church in other countries discover how the Church of England established here in 1692 became a uniquely American Church. This is the story of “Old Trinity” in America.*

*The Church of England was born during that period of ferment we call the Reformation. The advent of printing was allowing more people to read the Bible and translators were putting it into English. The first English Book of Common Prayer was printed in 1549. That was a time it was still felt that all the people of a country should worship in the same way, following the lead of their monarch. England was torn between Protestant and Catholic. Finally, Elizabeth I came to the throne. She said she “did not seek a window into men’s souls” but only outward conformity to the Book of Common Prayer. Her Prayer Book of 1559, containing both Protestant and Catholic elements, has remained essentially unchanged to the present.*

*Protestant and Catholic elements would again fight during the period of the English Civil War, roughly 1640 to 1660. By that time however, Maryland was already a place where “Papists, Quakers, Baptists, Dissenters” and Church of England men were required to tolerate one another. For ease of use, we begin to refer to those loyal to the crown and church of England as “Anglicans” at this point, although that use may be anachronistic. The modern use of the word developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, by which time there were many people using the Book of Common Prayer (BCP) who did not live in England. Most of these worshipped in English, but today the BCP exists in many languages. Nonetheless, we call all who use it “Anglicans.”*

*Today there are those who would like to restrict the label “Anglican” to those who hold certain tenants or who are recognized by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Other people would like another term entirely, such as the label “Protestant Episcopal” chosen by our American forebears. In any case, here is the story of how one seed of the Church of England grew in this soil and became a thoroughly American Church.*