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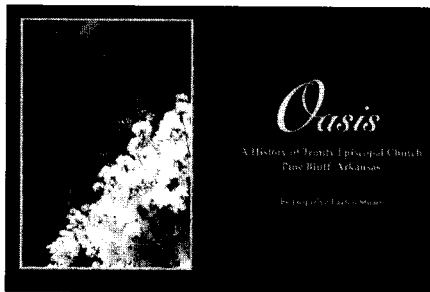
## OASIS: A History of Trinity Episcopal Church, Pine Bluff, Arkansas

By Jacquelyn Layton Stuart

Trinity Episcopal Church, PO Box 8069, Pine Bluff, AR 71611  
(Pp. 161, hard cover \$20.00)

Trinity Episcopal Church held its first service on Christmas Day, 1870. Bishop Leonidas Polk had passed through this part of Arkansas in 1838 and strongly recommended appointing a missionary to serve the Episcopalians in and around Pine Bluff. But it was not until 1859, when the Rev. Robert Trimble arrived, that a congregation was organized. It met in various churches and homes until the outbreak of the Civil War. In 1865, the Rev. Mr. Trimble returned to Pine Bluff and reorganized the congregation. He bought a lot for the church building and ordered 31 stained glass windows. Trinity Episcopal Church was underway.

In 2003, Jacquelyn Layton Stuart, parish historian and retired school teacher, began gathering Trinity history for storage and preservation. In 2004, the rector “suggested” that all this information should be put into a book—to include everything: personal stories, the history of the windows, biographies of the rectors, founders, organizations, and everything else that might be relevant to a complete story. As the author humbly points out, this project was not hers alone. She enlisted researchers, proofreaders, a business manager who oversaw the design of the book and gathered contributions for its publication, an editor, and volunteers to record parishioner memories and contributions by members of the Pine Bluff community. More than 60 “saints” and patrons are listed as contributing to the publication of the book.



What finally came from this endeavor is a coffee-table size book with more than 100 photographs, including a middle section with color pictures of the church’s interior on Palm Sunday, 2007, the five sanctuary windows, and the gardens and grounds. One of the book’s best features is the larger-than-usual type, which makes it much easier to read, particularly for aging reviewers! Divided into 18 chapters, the book concludes with a “reflections” column by the Rev. Walter Van Zandt Windsor, whose “suggestion” began the project.

The first five chapters offer a detailed history of Pine Bluff and the slow but steady evolution of Trinity into a functioning and active congregation. *Oasis* then shifts to a different format, with chapters on early vestrymen, the first woman’s participation in church governance, and short biographies of the early rectors, followed by short—and sometimes lengthy—reminiscences by present and former members of the altar guild, choir, garden and grounds committees, school personnel, organists, and those involved in special events. These vignettes are nicely placed to coincide with the author’s telling of the story and add a welcome change of pace from the narrative.

The author and her helpers do an admirable job of presenting a readable and fact-filled story of Trinity Church and its members. Anyone writing, or preparing to write, a parish history should read *Oasis* for a number of reasons—its decidedly different format, its oral history pieces, its in-depth biographical information on the rectors and their families, the number and placement of photographs, and the layout and production of the final book. *Oasis* shows what can be done by mobilizing a number of people to work on specific tasks, each contributing to the overall publication.

*Michael Strock*  
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