

HISTORY OF TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH 1917-2012

IN THE BEGINNING, GOD
CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH . . . AND TRINITY
The Early Years (1917-1936)

Trinity Baptist Church grew out of a Sunday School that began in June 1917 in Normandie Hall, then located at Normandie Avenue and Jefferson Boulevard, with fifteen children and three adults. The three adults were Mrs. Mary Porter, Mrs. Willa E. Williams, and Rev. Archie J. Williams. Rev. Williams was elected superintendent and served in this capacity until the church was formed five months later.

Trinity was officially organized on the afternoon of Sunday, November 11, 1917. In addition to those attending Trinity's Sunday School, pastors and members from several community churches were present when the church was established. Among these were Tabernacle Baptist Church (Rev. J. D. Gordon, pastor), Mount Zion Baptist Church (Rev. F. H. Davis, pastor), and Friendship Baptist Church in Watts (Rev. A. O. Ramsey, pastor). Reverends J. D. Gordon served as moderator, and A. O. Ramsey was secretary at the official organization. Other ministers in attendance included Reverends A. Lively, W. H. Gozier, and Archie J. Williams.

When Rev. Williams was asked to give the church a name, he decided on Trinity Missionary Baptist Church. Four persons became members of Trinity with letters on that day: Mrs. Helen Smith was given her letter from Tabernacle; Miss Ethel Walton borrowed her letter from Pleasant Hill; Mr. A. Luther was given his letter from St. Paul; and Mrs. Mary Porter already had her letter. Once the letters were accepted, the church was officially organized. **Rev. Archie J. Williams** was called as Trinity's first pastor, and the following persons were named as officers: Deacon A. Luther, chairman of the Deacon Board; Mrs. Mary Porter, church clerk; Mrs. Helen Smith, treasurer; Mrs. Willa Williams, superintendent of the Sunday School; Miss Meredith Carter, secretary of the Sunday School.

The following year, a lot at West 36th Street and Normandie Avenue was purchased from Mrs. Mary C. Martin of South Hollywood. Services were held in a small house on the property for a year. Later, a church building, located at 15th Street and Santa Fe Avenue, was purchased from the Los Angeles Trust and Savings Bank for \$250.00 cash. The Kress House Moving Company charged \$700.00 to move the building to the church property on West 36th and Normandie, but the building had to be moved in stages. When Kress House moved the church building to Washington Boulevard and Grand Avenue on the first night, this caused quite a stir in the city. On the next day, a Los Angeles newspaper reported: "Somebody was kind enough to bring a church building to the baseball park. The Los Angeles team was playing the Portland team and was losing, but when they remembered that somebody had brought the team a church, the Los Angeles boys rushed into the church and prayed and then sent the Portland team home defeated."

Trinity thrived during her first year. On the third Sunday in November 1918 (the Sunday following the signing of the Armistice), the church had exactly 100 members. At the meeting of the Western Baptist Association in San Diego in 1918, Trinity had one of the largest Sunday Schools from the Los Angeles area. When the congregation moved into the new building in 1919, Rev. John H. Eldridge was elected assistant pastor. In the following year, February 1920, Rev. Williams resigned, having served as pastor two years and eight months. His pastorate was short but memorable. Some of the church members during this period included Evelyn Eldridge, Beatrice Hammond, Roberta and Bassie Hardiman, Minnie Johnson, Jeanne and Letitia Patrick, Mrs. Porter's family, and the Smith family.

In March 1920, **Rev. F. H. Davis**, one of the ministers who had been present at the church's founding, was called to become the second pastor of Trinity. He served until January 1922, a period of one year and ten months. Not only was Rev. Davis' pastorate one of the most colorful, it was a successful period; most regretted to see him leave so soon. Many members were added to the church and great financial and spiritual progress was made. Several groups came into existence: the Sunshine Band, sponsored by Mrs. Wilbur Dyson, as well as the Senior and Junior choirs, led by Mr. Amos Lassiter. A loyal, hard-working and lovable person, Mr. Lassiter also served as superintendent of the Sunday School. The Junior Choir was the first choir to wear robes. Mrs. Octavia Green was the pianist. Some of the Senior Choir members included Mrs. Cora Frye, Miss Ollie Green, Mrs. Miller Jones, Mrs. Lott, Mr. and Mrs. Middleton, Mrs. Patterson-Robinson, Mrs. Powell, and Mrs. Wade. Members of the official Board of Deacons were Brothers Brandon, Dugan, Lassiter, Luke, Newby, Raper, and A. H. Smith. Deacon I. H. Henry served as secretary and treasurer of the church.

The third pastor, **Rev. John A. Eldridge** (a former assistant pastor), was called in February 1922 and remained until January 1926. Rev. F. C. McCall was assistant to Rev. Eldridge. During this period, several new ministries were started. Mrs. Eldridge did much with the Junior Missionary Society. Mr. Larney Jones organized the first Usher Board, and became chairman. When Mr. Lassiter resigned as Director of Music, Mrs. Mozelle Te Outley took his place, and Mr. Luther Carpenter followed her. New members who joined the church included Mrs. Fannie Carpenter, Mr. Luther Carpenter, Mr. William Gibbs, Mr. and Mrs. Harold Garrison, Mr. and Mrs. John Holliday, Mr. and Mrs. Hoard, and Mr. and Mrs. Byrd Stanley. In 1926, when Trinity became shepherd less again, many of her members despaired and left to join other churches. Three pastors had come and gone in eight years.

The church did not remain without a pastor long. **Rev. W. H. M. Dickerson** was called and accepted the pastorate in February 1926. He stayed with the church until June 1932, serving longer than any other minister since the church had been established. The letterhead of the church during his period reveals the following officers: P. J. Farley, chairman of the Deacon Board; J. S. Bowman, chairman of the Trustee Board; O. W. Brown, church clerk; James Harvey, tally clerk; R. F. Green, treasurer; Mrs. L. Stanley, president of the Women's Home Foreign Mission Society (WHFMS); Mrs. Anna Harvey, superintendent of the Sunday School; Mrs. Cora Frye, president of the Baptist Young People's Union (BYPU); and Mrs. C. W. Brown, president of the choir. In 1930, Mrs. Marguerite Hoard Fletcher became the fourth director of the Senior Choir.

Although Trinity experienced significant growth, this was a period of great trials. The church, then at 36th Street and Normandie, was destroyed by fire and the congregation had to move temporarily into the Seventh Day Adventist Church on 36th Place. Mr. Robert Frederick Green, who became one of Trinity's most distinguished laymen, led the re-building of the church edifice. He and others on the building committee served untiringly and performed an outstanding piece of work. When the church was completed, it seemed that Mr. Green's work was done because he died shortly afterwards.

After the departure of Rev. Dickerson, the church spent its longest period without a minister. During this time, many members left the church. **Rev. Arthur J. Johnson**, the fifth of Trinity's pastors, came in May 1933 and left in August 1935. Although the youngest of her pastors, he was a good leader. Many persons united with the church; the membership grew to about 500. Mrs. Johnson was dearly loved and was a tremendous aid to her husband. The Usher Board, under the leadership of Mrs. Sarah Moore, did much to support his program. Under the direction of Mrs. Fletcher, the Senior Choir also supported him faithfully. Beginning in 1934, Rev. Johnson and the Senior Choir participated in a weekly program on Angelus Temple Radio Station, making Trinity one of the first African American church choirs in Los Angeles to have a weekly radio broadcast.

Rev. Johnson made many worthwhile contacts for the church. His stay was short, like a flashing meteor, but outstanding.

ON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH The Caston Years (1936-1962)

In January 1936, **Dr. Jonathan Lyle Caston** was sent by God to be the sixth pastor of Trinity Baptist Church. He accepted the call in March 1936 and served for twenty-six years. Dr. Caston was born in Springfield, Illinois, the first-born son of John T. Caston, a well-known physician, surgeon, and minister, and Leota Caston, a teacher. He died in Los Angeles on June 11, 1966.

Dr. Caston was educated at Lincoln University, Western College (now known as Western Baptist Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri), and the University of Chicago; he did post-graduate work at the University of Oregon and the University of Southern California (USC). He held the B.S.D.; B.A., M.A., and D.D. degrees. Dr. Caston was ordained a Baptist minister in March 1916 by the Fifth Baptist Church of St. Louis, Missouri, and served as a missionary preacher from 1916 to 1919. Before coming to Trinity, he held pastorates at Broadway Baptist Church, Columbia, Missouri (1919-25); Hill Memorial Baptist Church, Winnipeg, Canada (1925-27); Mount Olivet Baptist Church, Portland, Oregon (1927-31); and Second Baptist Church, El Centro, California (1931-36).

His wife, Mrs. Ineze Cordelia Caston, a sincere and prepared Christian worker who joined Trinity in 1938, ably supported Dr. Caston. She served many years as the Sunday School's superintendent of the Beginners Department, and played an important role in helping to develop Trinity's music department.

Prior to his arrival in Los Angeles, Dr. Caston had established a distinguished career in religious, political, and social affairs as a member and leader of many organizations in Missouri, Oregon, and California. During his pastorate at Trinity, he continued his work in the civic and religious community. Between 1944 and 1945, Trinity purchased the parsonage (Sheltering Arms) at 3601 South Arlington Avenue and ten lots at Cimarron Street and Jefferson Boulevard with plans to build a church. After Dr. Caston and several members moved into homes near the proposed church site, the white-controlled West Jefferson Improvement Association filed a suit against blacks for moving in the area. Dr. Caston was a leader in the legal battle to break down barriers imposed by restrictive covenants. Because of the United States Supreme Court's ruling of 1948, which supported the banning of restrictive covenants, all African Americans who now own homes west of Western Avenue and south of Jefferson Boulevard are beneficiaries of his work.

In addition, Dr. Caston was a pioneer candidate for City Council (Seventh District) in 1947; president of the Baptist Ministers Union of Southern California; president of the Interdenominational Ministers Alliance of Los Angeles; executive board member of the Los Angeles NAACP and Los Angeles Urban League; president of the Western Baptist State Convention; dean of Christian Leaders of the Western Baptist State Convention; secretary of the Joint Committee Los Angeles Baptist City Mission Society and Western Baptist State Convention; delegate to the Baptist World Alliance that was held in London in 1955. (Trinity sent Dr. and Mrs. Caston on a tour of the Holy Land and the Middle East).

During his long tenure at Trinity, Dr. Caston, like all of God's great leaders, saw burning bushes, encountered opposition, suffered disappointment, and met detours in the road. All of these things, however, served as stepping stones to build a greater Trinity as he added to the firm foundation laid by the former pastors. He did not do it alone but was blessed with dedicated deacons, officers, associate ministers, and faithful members. Some of the ministers who assisted, attended, or were ordained at Trinity during this period include Raymond Bowens, Earl Cotton, William

Dickerson, J. T. Elias, H. Foster, Chalmers Gaither, Ambrose Glen, Sylvester Kelly, L. B. Lane, Horace Mays, Ulysses I. McDonald, Jesse Moses, Oscar J. Mullen, Warren Sams, Howard Swancy, Isam Taylor, Maynard Turner, and Percy Williams.

Rev. S. H. Jennings, the first assistant to the pastor, served faithfully from 1936 to 1939. Rev. E. S. Redd, a life-long friend of Dr. Caston who moved to Los Angeles from Missouri (the fathers of these two men had been pioneer builders of God in Missouri), served as assistant to the pastor from 1946 to 1957. For eleven years, Dr. Caston and Rev. Redd stood side by side as they labored together with God in a program of steady progress in Kingdom building.

Trinity was blessed with many great works and accomplishments during Dr. Caston's pastorate. With the assistance of Dr. Ralph Mayberry, the executive secretary of the Los Angeles City Missionary Society, Dr. Caston introduced a new constitution for the church, secured articles of corporation, and published the same in 1936. The membership in April 1936 was 100; in April 1962, it was 1750. In 1936, the offering was about \$20.00 a week. In 1962, the year previous to his retirement, the total receipts were \$78,452.46. Trinity's foreign missions continued to thrive in such places as Africa and the West Indies.

To accommodate the growing numbers that were attending Trinity during World War II, Dr. Caston led congregants into the Japanese Methodist Church (located at 35th Street and Normandie Avenue) on the first Sunday in September 1942. During this period, the Japanese had been sent to Internment Camps in various parts of the United States. When the Japanese returned, Trinity was led back to the building at 36th and Normandie in April 1945.

Because the membership had outgrown its quarters, in 1945 Trinity decided to build a new church on the ten lots purchased near Jefferson and Arlington. Trinity commissioned the world-renown architect Paul Williams, a Los Angeles resident who had designed many buildings in the city, to create the designs for the new structure. According to the plans, the church would include three units – a recreational building, an educational building, and the sanctuary -- that would be built in phases. An article in the *Los Angeles Times* (December 20, 1946, p. 4) provides details:

Construction of the new, three-unit Trinity Baptist Church, will start next spring [1947], Dr. Jonathan L. Caston, pastor, announced yesterday in disclosing the \$250,000 funding campaign.

The structure, which will front Jefferson Blvd. and Cimarron on 35th Sts., will serve the needs of Negro, Japanese and white residents of the area, Dr. Caston said.

According to plans prepared by Paul R. Williams, architect, the structure will have a sanctuary seating 3000, a church school, a recreation center, outdoor playground and numerous facilities. First of the three units to be built will be the recreational center, Dr. Caston said. One of the prime functions of the new church, Dr. Caston explained, will be to use its facilities to combat disease, crime and delinquency in an area where such facilities are now lacking.

The fourth of April 1948 was a great day in the life of Trinity. A colorful parade (with church leaders, church members, and community members marching a total of twelve blocks) from Old Trinity to the new site took place with a motorcycle escort, a color guard from the National Guard and the Christian flag, the band of the Golden West Lodge, and the grand marshal of the day (Major L. J. Brooks of the California National Guard). This grand occasion included a groundbreaking ceremony signaling the beginning of construction of the recreational building (first unit) of the new church at Jefferson Boulevard and Cimarron Street. Many hearts were filled with joy as leaders and department heads of Trinity took their places with spades in hand to turn the ground, a token of thanksgiving to God for having led the church thus far. The recreation building, a 10,000 square foot structure that seated 1,100 worshippers, was completed and the cornerstone was laid in October 1948. Similar to the groundbreaking, the cornerstone laying

ceremony was preceded by a grand parade from Old Trinity to the new church (at 3421 South Cimarron) on Sunday, October 17, 1948. Permanent use of the new structure for worshipping began on the first Sunday, November 7, 1948, and an open house (one week of services featuring ministers, choirs, ushers, officers, and members of the city's foremost churches) was held December 6-10, 1948.

Although church leaders hoped to begin constructing the second unit (education building) of the church in March 1949, work did not begin until the mid-1950s because of lack of funds. The groundbreaking ceremony signaling construction was held on Sunday, September 27, 1953. An article in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* (September 3, 1953, p. A5) provides details: "The ground breaking will signalize the beginning of construction in the near future of the second unit of a three unit building program begun five years ago with the erection of a Recreation unit at a cost of \$100,000. This second unit will be the Educational Building and will house the Sunday School, the Vacation Church School, a Day Nursery, a Prayer Chapel, club rooms for young people and administrative offices." Deacon Aaron C. Lacey served as chair of the Building Committee, and all construction was performed by members of Trinity: Paul Cassell (general contractor), William and Thaddeus Dillard (plumbing), Willard Moore (heating), Hiawatha Garrett, the father of Earl Garrett (flooring), Frank Brown (glass work), Bill Gibbs (electrical installation), and the Henry Brothers (plastering).

Similar to other ministers of his era, Dr. Caston believed in a pay-as-you-go system in financing the construction of church buildings. While Trinity members had raised some funds needed to complete the construction of the second unit, it was not enough. Because of delays, some members grew weary and expressed that they wanted to build the sanctuary next instead of the education building. As a result of these varying perspectives, plans for the education building were revised with the help of Lester Oliver Bankhead, a member of Trinity and one of the few African American architects of note in the city. Yet, the construction of the second and third units (education building and sanctuary) of the original plans was never completed during Dr. Caston's tenure. As the church continued to grow spiritually, numerically, and financially, other dreams and realities were fulfilled: the organ, baby grand piano, and furnishings for the church and pastor's study were purchased. In 1959, a well-to-do donor presented thirty-five acres of land in Pheland, California, near Victorville, as a gift to Trinity.

During Dr. Caston's tenure, Trinity became known as a leader in the performance of music for the Black Church. Because of the diverse and excellent skills of his wife, Mrs. Ineze Cordelia Caston, she became a central figure in the development of Trinity's music department. In addition to organizing and directing the Children's Choir, she established the Celestial Choristers (a young people's group that sang gospel) in 1941, organized the Organ Guild (a support group) in 1942, and served as pianist and organist for several groups: the Cathedral Choir (formerly the Senior Choir – the name change occurred in 1948) directed by Marguerite Hoard Fletcher, and the Choral Ensemble directed by Mrs. Virides Shortridge. From 1952 to 1989 and 1998 to 2004, Mrs. Caston was director of the Ineze C. Caston Gospel Chorus, a group originally called the Gospel Choir that had been organized by Henry P. Markham on October 25, 1951. During the 1950s and 1960s, she was responsible for the Gospel Chorus releasing several recordings. Modern Records published two 78 records: (1) *Let Jesus Fix It for You* and *Each Step of the Way* and (2) *Lord Keep Your Hand on Me* and *Witness*. Sacred Records also released a 78 recording: *Since I Met Jesus* and *Think of His Goodness*. During the 1960s, Ball Records published two albums: (1) *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism* that included speeches by Dr. Caston, and (2) *Father We Come to Thee* with lyrics by Dr. Caston. Other groups integral to Trinity's expanding music program during the Caston years included the Youth and Young Adult Choir and Laymen's Male Chorus.

Among the many holiday celebrations and special events that took place at the church during the Caston years, one is significant, although Trinity's groups did not perform. Probably signifying

the church's social activism against restrictive covenants and the high regard that many people in the community had for the music department, Trinity hosted a concert (on Easter Sunday, 1948) of the combined choirs of two Los Angeles White churches -- Highland Park Christian Church and Arlington Christian Church -- performing the Easter portion of George Frideric Handel's *Messiah* under the direction of Toni Roelosfma, organist for the Los Angeles Philharmonic. This performance is also important because it foreshadowed Trinity's pioneering role in bringing the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, whose members tended to be White, and other European oriented musical groups to churches in local Black community. In other words, Trinity became a site where residents of different ethnic and racial backgrounds met for cultural exchange.

When Dr. Caston thought of an assistant to replace the devout Rev. Redd and someone who might serve as a successor to himself, it was Dr. Horace N. Mays who suggested Rev. Elliott J. Mason. After much correspondence, earnest prayer, and guidance, Rev. Mason came to Trinity from Third Baptist Church in Toledo, Ohio, in April 1959. While Dr. Caston continued to plan for his retirement, he and Rev. Mason worked together as a special team. During these years, work continued on the educational building and the steel structure was erected for the new sanctuary. Deacon Paul Cassell, chairman of the Trustee Board, continued to serve as contractor during much of this period and was given credit for guiding the church on a "pay-as-you-go" basis.

On January 15, 1962, Dr. Caston gave Trinity his resignation message. Having served for over a quarter of a century, church members agreed that it was not easy to say good-bye to those you love. He also noted that the Lord had truly blessed Trinity for she had prospered in every way. With gratitude to God and a sincere thank you to all, Dr. Caston expressed a desire to always look upon Trinity as his church home and indicated that he could never remove his name from the church roll or ask for his church letter.

MAGNIFY THE LORD FOR HE IS GREAT The Mason Years (1962-1985)

Dr. Elliott James Mason, Sr. was unanimously elected as the seventh pastor of Trinity Baptist church on April 5, 1962, to succeed Dr. Caston. He had submitted a letter of resignation as assistant pastor to allow the church to call a pastor of its choice without his actual presence influencing the church or having the church obligated in any way to call him as pastor. After sincerely seeking the will of God in regard to his call, Dr. Mason read his letter of acceptance to the congregation on April 22, 1962 (Easter Sunday morning). He held the pastorate for twenty-three years.

Dr. Mason was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, on January 13, 1922, and died in Los Angeles on March 23, 2010. At the age of 16, he received the minister's license to preach from the First Free Mission Baptist Church. In 1942, he obtained the B.A. degree (magna cum laude) from Dillard University where, from 1940-42, he also received the Thornhill Award as the ranking student in religion and philosophy. Dr. Mason obtained the Bachelor of Divinity degree from the Oberlin Graduate School of Theology in Ohio in 1944, at which time he was awarded the James I. Monroe scholarship, the highest honor of the graduating class. He received the Master of Sacred Theology (S.T.M.) degree from Oberlin College in 1953. In 1955, Dr. Mason was granted a Fulbright Scholarship to study at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. He received the Ph.D. degree from USC with a major in new testament language and literature in 1968, and the D.D. degree from Dillard University in 1979.

In 1944, Dr. Mason was called to the pastorate of the Third Baptist Church of Toledo, Ohio, where he served for fifteen years. During that time, he held many important leadership positions within the religious community and was actively affiliated with various civic and community

organizations in the state of Ohio and on the national level. In 1944, Dr. Mason joined in holy wedlock with the former Geraldine N. Page of New Orleans. They became the proud parents of four children: Elliott Jr., Wanda Jannell, Wayne Irvin, and Reginald Don.

Dr. Mason, a deeply spiritual man led by God, provided excellent leadership to the members of Trinity. Through his leadership abilities, Trinity was able to magnify the Lord and continue to perform great works. Many accomplishments were made in 1) church building and the acquisition of property, 2) community and cultural affairs, and 3) church administration and the creation of new ministries.

Church Building and Acquisition of Property. When Dr. Mason became pastor, the educational wing of the new church was incomplete. One of the experiences that will be long remembered is the manner in which scores of volunteers came to the church week after week to share in completing the educational building. Flooring and tile were laid, walls were sanded and painted, plumbing was installed, the electrical wiring was completed, kitchen and dining room facilities were upgraded, administrative offices were completed, furnishings were purchased for the various rooms, and many other jobs were done by the members as Deacon Paul H. Cassell supervised the work and Deacon Otis Griffin served as chair of the Building Committee. When the volunteers came, there was great rejoicing as church members labored together; various women auxiliaries and volunteer groups provided everyone with lovely meals. A certificate of occupancy was issued by the City of Los Angeles in 1963.

With a loan secured from Fidelity Union Bank and \$70,000 saved by Trinity members, work on the new sanctuary was begun and completed between 1964 and 1965 using the "revised" architectural designs created by Lester Oliver Bankhead. In addition, debts in the total amount of approximately \$51,000 that had been borrowed from various lending institutions and members of Trinity were paid off. Several special events were held to commemorate the completion of the new sanctuary. Dedication services were held between October 1, 1965, and November 5, 1965, with visiting churches, ministers, and musicians hosting services in Trinity's recreational building. The first service in the new sanctuary took place on the last Sunday in 1965. On the first Sunday, January 2, 1966, Dr. Caston, pastor emeritus, preached the morning message, presided at the Holy Communion, and dedicated the new sanctuary. The culminating act of dedication for the new sanctuary took place four months later on Sunday, May 8, 1966. At this ceremony, Paul Williams, the architect who created the original designs for the church, presented keys to Rev. Mason. Rev. Harry A. McKnight, Jr., the executive director of the Los Angeles Council of Churches, delivered the sermon. Over 400 new members united with Trinity in the year 1966.

In 1967, Dr. Mason recommended that the recreation building, which had served as the place of worship until the sanctuary was built, be named the J. L. Caston Fellowship Center in honor of Dr. Caston who had died in June 1966. In 1968, the Fellowship Center was equipped with a full-size basketball court and other recreational facilities, and the church kitchen was renovated. Trinity celebrated the burning of the church mortgage in 1981. In that same year, air conditioning was installed throughout the church, and a stained-glass mural was placed inside the sanctuary.

Trinity acquired several new properties during Dr. Mason's pastorate. Between 1969-71, the property at 2070 West Jefferson Boulevard was purchased for parking and the building of an expanded church program. (For many years, this property was leased and known as Roy's Market, but the market was destroyed during the 1992 Los Angeles uprising). In 1976, property at 2000 West Jefferson Boulevard, formerly Giles Service Station was purchased.

Cultural and Community Affairs. Trinity continued to be viewed as a great leader in Los Angeles cultural and community affairs. The musical activities of the Caston years expanded during the Mason years probably for two reasons: the grandeur of the new sanctuary that was available for

public performances, and the high quality and diversity of the music program. Not only were Trinity's choirs known for performing concert spirituals, hymns, anthems, and art (classical) music by composers of African and European heritage, the church also had a gospel choir that was actively involved in the city's gospel music community.

Of the many special events that took place during the Mason years, those that are noteworthy include: sponsoring the annual October opening concert of the season by the Southeast Symphony Orchestra; organizing Trinity's fall music festival that began in 1966 and held annually in September; hosting, in 1975 and 1976, special concerts by the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra (Zubin Mehta, conductor) and the Interdenominational Choir (Joe Westmoreland, director); sponsoring *Selma*, a joyous musical by African American composer Tommy Butler in celebration of Martin Luther King's birthday (January 1976); hosting the Los Angeles performance of the East End Chorale of Bermuda when the group toured the United States in 1979.

In terms of social programs, several items can be noted. Dr. Mason served on the Baptist World Alliance Committee in 1981. Also, Trinity was a site for the Mental Health Family Counseling Services under the joint direction of the School of Social Work and El Nido Services at the University of Southern California (USC). When Dr. Ronald A. McNair, an astronaut who had been selected as a mission specialist for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), became a member of Trinity in 1978, several events were organized in his honor, including "Ronald McNair Day" that took place on April 29, 1984, to highlight that he was the second African American to travel into space. After Dr. McNair died in the January 1986 explosion of the space shuttle Challenger at Cape Canaveral, Florida, the memorial service in his honor was held at Trinity with Rev. Mason delivering the eulogy.

Church Administration and Ministries. Dr. Mason initiated many new ministries and programs, and the custodial staff was expanded. In 1963, Rev. Ulysses I. McDonald was invited to work with Dr. Mason as parish visitor. In 1968, Rev. McDonald became the minister of Christian education and guided the work of the Board of Christian Education for ten years. Through the work of the Board, many significant activities were developed: leadership training classes; an Honor's Banquet, which paid tribute to young people at various stages of their academic careers; a Summer Youth Program in which scores of youth were given summer jobs as they worked with other youth and children; and a Social Action Committee, which educated members about issues affecting the lives of people in the community. From 1979-86, Rev. McDonald served as minister of business and finance. In this capacity, he worked with church officials and auxiliaries in preparing budgets and financial reports.

Other committees and ministries organized during Dr. Mason's pastorate include: Senior Citizen's Fellowship, Drama Guild, Baptist Youth Fellowship, Young Adult Fellowship, Young Adult Choir, New Member Orientation classes, Telephone Ministry, Cassette Tape Ministry, and Young Men's Basketball Team through the OWACA League. Church conferences were held to determine the direction the church should take in addressing community needs. A Scholarship Committee, which provided scholarships to all senior high school graduates on Youth Sunday, was also established. In addition, the Mission Society opened the Thrift Shop as part of its community outreach ministry, and foreign missions were established in the West Indies (Trinidad and Dominica), London, England, and India.

The last ten years of Dr. Mason's ministry at Trinity can be characterized as years of spiritual renewal. Dr. Mason shared with the church a vision he had had in 1975 in which God challenged him to lead Trinity into a deepening of its spiritual life. To proclaim this vision, Dr. Mason formed World Renewal Ministries, a ministry rooted in prayer. With an emphasis on the study of

God's word and prayer, he led church members, in 1976, in special Bible studies to bring a greater awareness of their relationship to one another.

Dr. Mason selected as his pastoral assistant, Dr. Dumas A. Harshaw, Jr., a young theologian thoroughly dedicated to God and the vision God gave to Dr. Mason. Dr. Harshaw began to assist Dr. Mason in September 1979. The Spirit of God knitted the two hearts together so that they functioned as father and son. In December 1983, Dr. Mason informed the church that he planned to retire as pastor of Trinity sometime in 1985 and move full time into World Renewal Ministries. Dr. Mason recommended Dr. Harshaw as the minister that Trinity should consider as her next pastor. This gave the church more than a year to pray about God's choice for Trinity. On March 14, 1985, Dr. Harshaw was called to become Trinity's eighth pastor.

God led Dr. Mason to celebrate his upcoming retirement with six weeks of prayer and praise. Church members and all who shared in these services were to speak of JESUS ONLY, as the church addressed the theme, "Looking Unto Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2). The weeks of prayer were a perfect preparation for Trinity's selection of a new pastor and for Dr. Mason's moving into World Renewal Ministries. On Sunday, March 31, 1985, God left an encouraging and challenging word to Trinity through Dr. Mason's last message as pastor: "I Give You Jesus" (Isaiah 42:1-4, Acts 4:7-10).

LORD PLANT MY FEET ON HIGHER GROUND The Harshaw Years (1985-1993)

On Monday, April 1, 1985, **Dr. Dumas Alexander Harshaw, Jr.**, took over the leadership of Trinity and was formally installed as pastor of Trinity Baptist Church on September 29, 1985. He served for eight years. Dr. Harshaw was born in Springfield, Illinois, October 11, 1950. He received a B.A. degree in theology from the Pasadena branch of Point Loma College (formerly Pasadena Nazarene College) in 1972 and studied one year with Geoffrey W. Bromiley and William S. LaSor at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1973. He received the M.A. degree in theology from Point Loma College in San Diego in 1978 and was awarded the Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees from the School of Theology at Claremont in 1978. Dr. Harshaw began work on his Ph.D. at Claremont Graduate School, majoring in philosophy of religion and theology. In 1988 and 1989, he served as Adjunct Professor at Claremont School of Theology, and in 1992, as Adjunct Professor at Azusa Pacific College. Dr. Harshaw is married to the former Sharon Denise Stringer of New Orleans, Louisiana. They are the proud parents of three children: Denna, Dumas III, and Shanise.

Although his pastorate was short, when compared to the tenures of the Drs. Caston and Mason, Dr. Harshaw invited the congregation to "come share the journey" and, as a result, many new ministries were initiated. His leadership helped Trinity to reach even higher ground in the service of the Lord on the local, national, and international level.

Cultural and Community Affairs. In 1987, Trinity celebrated her 70th anniversary the entire month of November with dynamic speakers and honored guests who visited from far and wide. Among them included the late Dr. Henry T. Gregory of Washington, DC; Dr. J. Alfred Smith, Sr., Allen Temple Baptist Church of Oakland; noted theologian Dr. Deotis Roberts; Drs. Henry and Ella Mitchell; Dr. Gardner C. Taylor, Concord Baptist Church in Brooklyn, NY; and Rev. Lee Johnson, a son of Trinity and pastor of a church in Detroit. In 1991, world leaders (Oliver Tambo and Allen Boesak), national leaders (Jesse Jackson and Barbara Jordan), and renowned authors (Mr. Clinton Taulbert and Dr. Ivan van Sertima) visited Trinity as guest speakers.

Working with the City of Los Angeles, Dr. Harshaw and Father Jerome Schmit of Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church organized the Jefferson Park Improvement Project, whose primary concern

was to bring pride back into the community, its schools, churches, businesses, and homes. Spearheaded by Trinity and other churches in the local community, the Jefferson Park celebration, which includes a parade and rally, is held annually in January. Church members, residents, school representatives, civic leaders and politicians all participate in the parade which begins at Crenshaw and Adam Boulevards and ends at Third Avenue and Jefferson at the Leslie Shaw Park. In 1991, Dr. Harshaw and Trinity were honored with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference Prophetic Witness Award for her outreach ministry in the community.

Under Dr. Harshaw's leadership, Trinity's music department experienced a major reorganization. Initially, Rev. Eugene H. Marzette, Sr., one of Trinity's associate ministers, served as the Minister of Music. However, in 1988, Dr. Harshaw made several changes. A new position, Director of Music Ministry was created, with Shardrick L. Boone (director of Trinity's Young Adult Choir) appointed as director. A new group, the Sanctuary Choir, was also established consisting of new and former members from the Cathedral Choir and Ineze C. Caston Gospel Chorus. In addition, the Children's Choir, Praise Ensemble (former Youth and Young Adult Choir), and Youth Orchestra (organized in 1987) were active during this period.

In addition to annual concerts on special holidays featuring Trinity's ensembles, highlights from the music department under Dr. Harshaw's leadership include: hosting the Eilat Dance Company from Israel in a special Christmas/Hanukkah celebration (December 1987); organizing a special concert by the Ineze C. Caston Gospel Chorus to recognize and celebrate the contributions of Los Angeles Black Gospel Composers to the development of gospel music (March 5, 1989); organizing a retirement musical and celebration on Sunday, September 10, 1989, in honor of Mrs. Fletcher's service as director (1930-1989) of the Cathedral Choir (formerly Senior Choir) and her distinction in being one of the few persons in U.S. church history to serve the *same* choir in the *same* church for fifty-nine years; sponsoring the May 16, 1991, performance of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra (David Alan Miller, conductor) with Trinity's Sanctuary Choir (Shardrick L. Boone, director) in music by Beethoven, Rossini, and the Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's *Messiah*; and organizing a concert, "A Gospel Musicfest," to honor and celebrate Mrs. Caston's contributions to Trinity and the Los Angeles community (November 11, 1992).

Church Improvements and Property Acquisition. Trinity purchased the Security Pacific Bank building (on the corner of Arlington and Jefferson) and, in 1988, installed stained-glass windows in the main sanctuary. Additionally, the sound system in the main sanctuary and fellowship center was upgraded.

Church Ministries. The publication of the church newsletter, "This Month at Trinity," began in 1986. In 1987, Trinity established the Social Service Ministry, which included a food pantry, clothing closet, counseling, and hot lunch feeding program. Meals and spiritual support were given to approximately 800 people monthly. In 1988, Dr. Harshaw began an Expository Teaching Ministry with the implementation of a 7:30 A.M. worship service and radio broadcast (KMAX, 107.1-FM). In 1992, the Good Works Job Training Center was established with funding from a grant from the National Urban and Rural Ministry Project of the United States Ministries of World Vision and Trinity Baptist Church. Other ministries established during this period include: Couples Fellowship, Evangelism, Free-N-One Drug Program, Hospitals, Hospitality, Intercessory Prayer, Jails, New Members, Single Adults, and Young Men of Trinity. In addition, a foreign mission was established in Haiti in 1991.

Trinity also established two additional scholarship funds: 1) the Ronald McNair Scholarship Fund in memory of the Challenger astronaut who was a member of Trinity when selected for NASA (McNair died on January 28, 1986), and 2) the Lillian and Herman Miller Scholarship Fund, started in 1990 and named after the late Rev. and Mrs. Herman Miller.

The ministerial staff during Dr. Harshaw's pastorate included Reverends DePriest Deering, Booker T. Gamble, L. B. Lane, Eugene H. Marzette, Sr., Ulysses I. McDonald, Stephen Murphy, Robert A. Wilkins, and Milton Woods.

In a letter dated January 11, 1993, Dr. Harshaw informed the church of his decision to accept a position he had been offered to join the staff of the Board of International Ministries of the American Baptist Churches. He would serve as area director for Africa and teach ministry at the Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. On February 28, 1993, Dr. Harshaw preached his final sermon as pastor of Trinity.

WAITING ON THE LORD The Church in Transition (1993-1996)

Without the presence and guidance of a permanent spiritual leader, Trinity seemed to be in unsettled waters. For more than half a century, she had been blessed with dynamic pastors. During this period of transition, two capable ministers guided Trinity.

Dr. Eugene H. Marzette, Sr. served as interim pastor for two years. He assumed the position on March 29, 1993, and resigned April 21, 1995. He had been associate minister of Trinity since 1986 and served as chairman of the Music Committee, Minister of Music, and chairman of the Board of Christian Education. Born in Fresno, California, on September 16, 1942, Dr. Marzette graduated from Edison High School in Fresno, in 1960, and received the B.A. degree in political science and minor in music from California State University, Fresno, in 1971. From 1979-81, he attended the American Baptist Seminary of the West, in Berkeley, California. He received the Doctor of Ministry degree from Friends International Christian University in 1995. He has been married to his wife, Erevetta, since 1962, and they are the proud parents of four children: Eugene Jr., Pamela Michelle, Jesse, and Jeffrey.

While Dr. Marzette served as interim pastor, the work of the Lord continued. In May 1994, Trinity launched a Bank Mortgage Burning Drive to pay off the bank building and celebrated the burning of the mortgage on September 18, 1994. Dr. Marzette also brought new life to the children and youth ministry: the Children and Youth Stewardship Committee was organized and young people were encouraged to become more actively involved in Sunday morning worship.

During the transitional years, Shadrack L. Boone continued as Director of Music Ministry. However, Charles Peters, a member of Trinity, served as acting director of both the Sanctuary Choir and the Music Ministry during the two-year period (1993-95) that Mr. Boone was ill. With the passing of Mr. Boone on January 12, 1995, Mr. Peters became permanent Director of Music Ministry and Director of the Sanctuary Choir.

In April 1995, **Rev. Ulysses I. McDonald**, who had worked in several capacities on Trinity's ministerial staff since the 1960s, was asked to serve as minister-in-charge until the selection and arrival of the new pastor. Serving in this capacity for one year, he held the church together during a difficult period of transition. He was responsible for the pastoral functions of the church and worked in close cooperation with church officers and department heads. During his tenure, the church had a Vesper prayer service and 24-hour prayer vigil. Rev. McDonald was born on December 17, 1924, in Ellensburg, Washington, and died January 16, 2009, in Los Angeles. He received the B.A. and Master of Divinity degrees from California Baptist Seminary in Covina, California, in 1953 and 1963, respectively. Rev. McDonald was licensed to preach in 1949 and was ordained at Trinity in 1958. In 1952, he married his wife, Nancy, and they became the proud parents of three children: Brian, Kevin, and Roxanne.

ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS
The Tunstill Years (1996-present)

Rev. Alvin Tunstill, Jr. was called to be the ninth pastor of Trinity on November 16, 1995. He accepted the call on December 31, 1995, and preached his first sermon as Trinity's pastor on Easter Sunday, April 7, 1996. He was formally installed as pastor on October 27, 1996, at a glorious installation worship service attended by members of Trinity, the local community, as well as Rev. Tunstill's family and friends who traveled far and wide to witness the occasion.

Rev. Tunstill was born October 6, 1957, in Louisville, Kentucky. He was the fifth child of seven children born to Rev. Alvin Tunstill, Sr., and his wife, Mildred. Rev. Tunstill, Jr. grew up in a Christian home and accepted Christ at an early age, having been impacted by the strong religious faith and teachings of his great-grandfather, grandfather, and father, who were all Baptist preachers and pastors of churches in Tennessee, Indiana, and Kentucky, respectively.

Rev. Tunstill received the B.A. degree in political science from the University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky, in 1980, and the Master of Divinity degree from the Chicago Theological Seminary in conjunction with the University of Chicago Divinity School in Chicago, Illinois, in 1987. He has pursued studies toward the Doctor of Ministry degree at the New York Theological Seminary. Rev. Tunstill was called to the ministry in 1981 under the pastorate of the late Rev. Dr. J. H. Jackson, who was pastor of the historic Olivet Baptist Church, Chicago, Illinois, and past president of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. He served as assistant to Dr. Jackson for eight years. In January 1990, Rev. Tunstill was called to pastor the Shiloh Baptist Church (the second oldest African-American Baptist church in Jamaica-Queens, New York) and remained there for six years. While at Shiloh, Rev. Tunstill implemented many new programs and developed a stewardship program that dramatically increased the finances of the church. Not only did he establish new ministries and outreach community programs, he served on boards and was a member of numerous organizations in the New York area and Kentucky. Rev. Tunstill is married to Dr. Sandra Mitchell-Tunstill, who is a special needs instructor with the Los Angeles United School District. They are the proud parents of three sons: Alvin III, Michael, and Lloyd.

When Rev. Tunstill arrived, he presented a "vision" rooted in several theological and cultural presuppositions that continue to lead the Christian soldiers at Trinity to do God's work. Then and now, Rev. Tunstill emphasizes that Trinity must be African American in her approach to ministry and mission. This means that we, as members, must have high regard for whom God has created us to be; we must be proud of the rich heritage of African Americans; and we must be informed by the realities of the world in which we live and the word God has for us as a long-disallowed people. Rev. Tunstill also believes that Trinity and her members should be Christ-centered and spirit-filled; joyful and celebratory in worship; Bible-based and biblically-literate; prayerful; affirmed and intensively involved in evangelism; tithers; carers and sharers; politically aware; socially active; and proactive.

The vision that God has planned for the urban church and Trinity continues to unfold under Rev. Tunstill's leadership as numerous innovative programs are developed. Of particular note are initiatives in three areas: (1) church administration and new ministries, (2) community and cultural affairs, and (3) church building and the acquisition of property.

Church Administration and Ministries. In 1996, Rev. Tunstill launched the Army of God Campaign that continues to be an integral part of Trinity's mission. The *spiritual aspect* of the Campaign focuses on motivating the membership's involvement in the spiritual growth of both the individual and the church. Members are encouraged to participate in seven weeks of spiritual progress through prayer, fasting, self-denial, giving, covenant keeping, studying the letters of Paul, and acts of service. In addition, church members give clothes to the homeless on Skid Row,

visit jails and convalescent homes, pray on the grounds of community schools, and participate in other activities. Three goals serve as the foundation of the *financial aspect* of the Army of God Campaign: (1) the Summer Youth Employment Program, (2) Special Projects (monies for disaster relief and other special needs), and (3) the One-Million Dollar Christ Endowment Foundation Fund.

In 2008, Trinity launched the Lifestyle Stewardship Capital Campaign to raise funds to make improvements on the church property and to establish an endowment fund to develop programs that would enhance the spiritual mission of the church. Using the theme, “Re-Energizing for the Journey: Enhancing Our Legacy and Investing in Our Future,” each family was asked to make a sacrificial commitment over and above their regular giving over a three-year period.

Not only has the local, national, and global community benefited, but also Trinity members have witnessed the rewards of these programs. Since Summer 1997, the young people of Trinity and the surrounding community have worked at local businesses and agencies in the city, including Breakaway Technologies, Broadway Federal Savings and Loan Association, Crenshaw YMCA, Eighth Council District Office, Family Savings Bank, Founders National Bank, the *Los Angeles Times*, Merrill Lynch, Radio Stations KJLH, KACE/KHI/KOST, Trinity Baptist Church, and the Urban League. In addition, Trinity’s generosity has funded special projects in the United States (assisted victims of Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana in 2005, and those in need in North Carolina); Côte d’Ivoire (sent shiploads of clothing, health supplies, and other items in 2009-10); Nigeria (helped build four water wells between 2007 and 2010); South Africa; and other parts of the world (assisted victims of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami).

In 1996, Rev. Tunstill initiated several ministries: a training class for deacons; a spiritual women's class for deaconesses; and a special prayer time at each Sunday morning worship service for children and youth. In Summer 1997, Trinity established a Bible Institute with ministers from local churches teaching the word of God. In 2001, “the purpose driven church” became an important topic in re-thinking the mission of Trinity and the discipleship of members in the local and global community. In July 2012, the Men’s Ministry and Board of Christian Education sponsored the Power of Prayer Workshop, which gave an opportunity for the Associate Pastors of Trinity to present on topics that would build, enhance, and strengthen one’s prayer life.

Because Rev. Tunstill strongly believes in the importance of prayer as the life-blood of the church, several groups have been organized around prayer: Love Prayer Group, Prayer and Sharing Prayer Group, Peace Prayer Group, and Meekness Prayer Group. Trinity has several Bible study groups: MIDDAY, Wednesday night and in home, Adult, Youth and Young Adult. Every four months, Rev. Tunstill and his wife ask members to commit to memory a new passage of scripture.

Under Rev. Tunstill’s leadership, several events and programs have become memorable traditions: the Grand Easter Celebration, Men’s Day, Women’s Day, Daughters of Destiny, Angel Tree Project (donates gifts to underprivileged children), and Family and Friends Day. On the second Sunday of each month, we celebrate new members, birthdays, and wedding anniversaries. Other important programs include the New Member Follow-up Ministry, a cheerleading squad for the Young Men’s Basketball team, Women’s Ministry, Men’s Ministry, Harvest Festival, Spanish Class, Friday Night Fellowship, Annual Super Bowl Fellowship, Hallelujah Health Class, Social Action and Community Concerns Committee, and Emergency Response Team.

Cultural and Community Affairs. Trinity is extremely active in community affairs. In addition to establishing a web site, we have Business Owners United to advertise members’ businesses; the Jefferson Park Improvement Project to enhance the Jefferson Park community; the Trinity Community Development Corporation (TCDC) to raise money for community development; the

Excellence in Academic Tutorial Program; Senior Ministry that provides referral services; UCLA Youth Group Program; the American Baptist Girls and Boys Ministry; free prostate screening; computer training program that partners with the Los Angeles Unified School District; and workshops on money management and buying a home. In addition, members' participation in different activities has raised funds for the homeless (Brother Brian Ferguson running in the Los Angeles Marathon) and cancer research (Relay for Life).

Similar to previous years, the music program has been active. Charles Peters continued as Director of Music Ministry and Director of the Sanctuary Choir until Peter J. Roberts, who came to Trinity in 1998, was appointed to these positions in 2000 and 2002, respectively. Recognizing the importance of all types of performing arts in the life of the church, Trinity's music department includes a children's choir, children's orchestra, praise dancers, youth choir, and several adult choirs: Inspirational Singers, Men's Chorus, Praise Ensemble, and the Voices of Trinity (former Sanctuary Choir and Ineze C. Caston Gospel Chorus). Some of the visiting groups that have performed include: Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra (October 1998), Wilberforce University Choir from Wilberforce, Ohio (February 2001 and March 2012), Uganda's Watoto Children Choir (March 2003), Cotton Blossom Singers from Piney Woods School in Mississippi (2004), UCLA's African Arts Ensemble – Envision Vocals (March 2004), UCLA's African American Music Ensemble (May 2004), and Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra (2006). During this period, Trinity's Community Development Corporation (TCDC) sponsored several successful programs, including two musicals: one in 2005 that celebrated the life of Mahalia Jackson (*Hallelujah Mahalia! The Mahalia Jackson Story on Stage*) and another in 2006 that brought attention to the contributions of Paul Robeson.

Church Improvements and Property Acquisition. Since 1996, Trinity has made several purchases and improvements to the church building and property: purchased and installed new carpet in the sanctuary (1997); purchased new organ (June 1998); and purchased the motel property (called the Annex) located next to the church at 2050 West Jefferson Boulevard (2000). In 2002, the church made several improvements: painted the exterior and interior of all buildings on the church property; completed the upgrades of the annex facilities for the Trinity Community Development Corporation (TCDC) Office; remodeled the choir room ladies restroom for handicap access; replaced heating/air conditioning units; replaced the stage curtains in the Caston Center; upgraded the church computer network, including high-speed Internet access; replaced the basketball backboards in the Caston Center; purchased a new van; placed new fences around the church; and placed new doors in the main sanctuary and vestibule as well as the first floor of the education building. On Sunday, November 14, 2010 (the church's 93rd anniversary), we celebrated the Burning of the Mortgage on the Annex (motel property), which completes Trinity's ownership of the entire block between Arlington and Cimarron.

Members of the ministerial staff who have served under Rev. Tunstill's leadership include: Reverends Coston "Jack" Charles III, William Code, DePriest Deering, Booker T. Gamble, Sky Hall, Timothy Harris, Charles Henderson, Julia A. Howard, Euela Lane, Adilifu Martin, Eugene H. Marzette, Sr., S. Damon Mays, Ulysses I. McDonald, Stephen Murphy, L. B. Tatum, George Walker, Alexander Warthen, Fontella White, and Robert A. Wilkins as well as Ministers John Bernard, Jr. and Tracy Williams.

The Trinity family thanks God for blessing and leading us over the past 95 years, and continues to look to Him for spiritual guidance. We know that it is only by His Grace that Trinity will continue to prosper in the 21st century. GOD IS GOOD ALL THE TIME; ALL THE TIME GOD IS GOOD!

Compiled by Jacqueline Cogdell DjeDje