

Methodist University Community Oral History Project
Methodist University
Fayetteville, NC

Carol G. Oates

Interview Conducted by
Abigail Renee Weisler
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Holy Trinity Episcopal Church

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Above: The original doors to Holy Trinity. Below: The Original building where Holy Trinity Episcopal Church met, built in 1952.



Carol G. Oates

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Abigail Weisler

Descriptive Table of Contents:

- 0:35 [-Entire family went to St. John's Episcopal Church, including herself and all of her friends.
- 1:03 -The creation of Holy Trinity was spurred by the need for another Episcopal Church
- 1:39 -Details of the founding of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, from 1950 to 1951
- Oates was 14 years old when founded
- 2:23 -Original meeting location
- Original building completed in 1952
 - Met at Highland Presbyterian Church for at least 6 months prior
- 3:30 -Oates heard rumors about Holy Trinity sprouting up while she was visiting her grandmother
- she thought there was no way she was leaving her friends and her church
 - she was told Holy Trinity wouldn't last
- 4:57 -She was shocked by the environment Holy Trinity had
- her family fully dedicated themselves to the church
- 05:58 -the church had 26 original members
- 'young people' group
 - Church has grown tremendously
 - Growth of church lead to a new building
- 07:24 -Oates went off to an all girl's boarding school in eleventh and twelfth grade, which really changed her perspective
- After college she knew it was to stay
- 09:07 -Old established members of St.John's is where much of the founding of Holy Trinity came from.
- But other members thought Holy Trinity was doomed to fail
- 10:31- Strong women still have a prominent position in the Church today
- 11:30- Changes in Holy Trinity
- One major change was the introduction of the prayer book in 1972
- 12:26- Community Interactions
- No major Issues
 - AA meetings
 - Pre school
 - Assistant Minister
- 14:33- More about Miss Oates
- Role in the church
 - Her father's role in the Church and the general convention

18:36- Holy Trinity and social issues

- More info and reactions to the changing of the prayer book
- Race relations

21:30 -Interchurch relations

- St. Joseph's Episcopal
- St. John's Episcopal
- St. James' Lutheran
- Beth Israel, A Jewish Church

24:29- Church has had very few road bumps on its journey of growth

- one factor of this is its location
- the youth in the Church has also played a large role in this
- Diocese convention held at Holy Trinity aprx. 5 years after the completion of the original building.

28:07 Closing remarks]

Interview of

CAROL G. OATES

Interviewed by

ABIGAIL RENEE WEISLER

[Skip to 07:54]

07:54

OATES: There was so much enthusiasm. I mean, you will hear many people say that, and I think it was quoted by one of the first women, we had women on the Vestry—

08:12

WEISLER: Oh, wow.

08:13

OATES: —which was one of the first times. But Elizabeth Hutaff, and this will be said throughout this whole story, from others, too, quoting Elizabeth Hutaff, “It was hard work. It was also a thrilling experience and one that has enriched the lives of all of us”—Elizabeth Hutaff. [Elizabeth King Hutaff Edwards was a founding member of Holy Trinity and Diocesan President of the Episcopal Churchwomen from 1965-1968.]

08:42

WEISLER: So, you said there was women in the vestry. How was that different than some of the other churches in the area?

08:49

OATES: Because in Episcopal Churches only men were on the Vestry.

08:52

WEISLER: Oh , wow. So you guys were one of the first ones.

08:55

OATES: Yes, and the bishop approved that right away, and I think we had three or four on the Vestry, very strong woman, very strong woman.

[Skip to 10:31]

10:31

WEISLER: So we talked about the women and how they were in the founding. Do you still see strong women in the Vestry today and over time?

10:36

OATES: Yes. And now it's probably half men, half women.

10:43

WEISLER: Oh, wow.

10:44

OATES: And, you know, that has also changed down at St. John's. I think you have to get a start for something, and probably in the olden days, well, there weren't even women ministers. You had to have it stay.

10:58

WEISLER: Yeah, so when you guy started it, that was the real—?

11:01

OATES: We've had some lady assistance, let's say it like that, for our ministers.

11:10

WEISLER: So, what does that mean, like, to you personally, having the women so strong and you guys being one of the founding of having women in the Vestry and just it continuing on?

11:19

OATES: I don't think it bothered anybody.

11:21

WEISLER: No?

11:22

OATES: No, I do not. Because those women were pretty strong women.

11:27

WEISLER: You knew they were gonna take care of ya. [Both laugh]

11:30

OATES: Yes.

11:30

WEISLER: So, over time, how have you seen that Holy Trinity has changed? Has there been any main changes that you've seen?

11:39

OATES: Do you mean in the physical structure?

11:41

WEISLER: In the Church itself, in the members.

11:44

OATES: In the Church. Yes, because, that is determined by the Episcopal, Protestant Episcopal, Church. When the prayer book in 1972, I think, it changed, we had to make new changes in the way we said certain things in the creeds and in the prayers. Old timers can't take too big or fast a change.

12:07

WEISLER: Did that change any of the members that you guys had coming into the church?

12:14

OATES: Not really, because wherever they would go, it's eventually gon' come to the changes, the Protestant Episcopal Church.

12:26

WEISLER: So with the Church and with community issues, have you seen any community issues come into the church life?

12:32

OATES: No, no.

12:33

WEISLER: Not really?

12:33

OATES: No.

12:34

WEISLER: How does the church interact with the community? Are you guys—I've heard that you guys

are very helpful in the community. So, what are some of the kinds of things you guys help out with?

12:43

OATES: In the community?

12:44

WEISLER: Mm-hmm.

12:44

OATES: Well, we have, the first thing I'm thinking about, we have here in our church, for years, Alcoholic Anonymous. Is that the correct term?

12:57

WEISLER: Yeah, that's the correct [term].

12:57

OATES: Yes. We have, almost since the very beginning, maybe after the first five years, we have a preschool, full every year.

13:09

WEISLER: And it's still going on today?

13:10

OATES: Yes, it's still going on today. At times when the Church began to grow more, we had to have an assistant minister.

13:22

WEISLER: Oh, wow.

13:22

OATES: It was just too much for one minister to take on.

13:27

WEISLER: Yeah, 'cause you said there's all kinds of services going on, all the time.

13:31

OATES: Yes, yes, all kind of services, with eight o'clock, then Sunday school, then another main service at ten-thirty. And all kind of meetings going on, that I can't even remember. The building is loaned out to all kind of societies, where there's the Camellia Society, the Orchid Society, Ooh, I can't think of all of 'em.

13:58

WEISLER: There's so many, huh? Yeah, that's pretty awesome, though, that it's grown that much from something that some—most people thought was gonna fail. Is there anything about the church that you'd like share, kind of like so we can get an oral history of how the church has grown and anything you feel important or you remember significantly?

14:16

OATES: I think I kind of said it. I think I've kind of said it.

14:33

WEISLER: Let's talk a little bit more about you, then. What has your role been in the church?

14:37

OATES: What is my role?

14:38

WEISLER: Mm-hmm.

14:38

OATES: Well, right now I don't have much of a role. I'm going to be 81. But, we were in the Service League back there when it first started, like I say, with just a few. And we—I was thinking—well, we had wonderful bazaars that made lots of money for the Church, to help with the grounds and all the flowers and camellias that were planted and the gardens that were planted all around Holy Trinity. One of the things I have to say is, my father was so tied up in Holy Trinity, and he was elected by the diocese of East Carolina for three General Conventions and at that age, I went, my mother and I, we went with him, starting off in Boston for about 10 days, was the first big one. I was about fifteen or sixteen. Then we went to Honolulu with a whole shipload of Episcopalians.

15:58

WEISLER: Oh wow, that's awesome. I bet that was fun.

15:59

OATES: That was out of this world, and then the last one that my dad was elected to was in Miami. I think that was in about '56 or so—along in there.

16:16

WEISLER: And he was the minister here when—.

16:16

OATES: And it was quite an experience to go to the General Convention—

16:23

WEISLER: I bet, especially in all those amazing places, with all those people?

16:23

OATES: —thousands and thousands of people. Yes. Yes, it was something else.

16:28

WEISLER: So, was your father the minister here when the church began?

16:31

OATES: No, my father was not a minister, he just did all the wor—he was just a vestrymen for a long time in his life and the Junior Warden, Senior Warden, and I said, “dad, let somebody else do something, please.”

16:48

WEISLER: Time for someone else to come in.

16:54

OATES: I do remember one thing, when Charles Duvall came here as our minister, I’m not exactly sure what years it would have been, but I’m gonna say it was in the seventies, maybe the end of the sixties—seventies. He was the minister here, and at that time there was a great need for an assistant because our congregation was growing so. Actually, my dad got very ill and at that time and I—he, actually he’s going to not make it that weekend and he’s in—. When I went to the hospital to visit my dad the last time, his last little conversation with me is “Carol, how do you think Holy Trinity is going to approve Leland Smith as the new assistant minister?” And I said, “Dad, I think he’s gon’ be just what we need now.”

18:09

WEISLER: So even to the end he was thinking about how the church was gonna grow and take care of you guys.

18:15

OATES: Yes. And having left us, Charles Duvall became a bishop—

18:20

WEISLER: Oh, wow, so—

18:21

OATES: In the, maybe, in the way south.

18:26

WEISLER: Okay.

18:27

OATES: One of the southern states. Give me a break.

[After this we briefly paused the voice recorder to allow Miss Oates to take a break].

18:36

Weisler: So how have you seen the Church react to, kind of, gender, race and marriage issues?

18:43

OATES: As far as race, I think it's been one of the most open churches I've ever been in, and I've been in many of churches mainly in the South, because in the South they are more—they were not exactly like many in the early days of the Episcopal Church. You would find that "High Church," meaning many of the old Roman Catholic ways are observed, maybe in the North you could see. But as the world grew and as

our states and our cities grew, people brought these ways with them. So some of that was molded into the way that we do, not real “High Episcopal,” but just certain things began to slowly change. Because remember the national Protestant Episcopal Church is the rules of the route and you’ve got to keep, such as changing of the prayer book in nineteen seventy or two. That sent a lot of people who’d been going since the beginning of time, it’s a lot of people, a lot, including many of us to begin—. It took a while to accept these new changes in the way you said many of the prayers you’d always been saying, but we have had a wonderful relationship with Fort Bragg, with the foreigners, with the blacks and we have blacks on the Vestry now and they do a wonderful job and it’s working.

[End Transcription 20:44]