

Trinity Church Parish Profile

A Brief History of Trinity Church

Trinity Church began in 1790 when a small group of people met in Washington, Pennsylvania and used the Anglican prayer book to guide their worship.

Trinity Church was officially organized in 1844, and from 1863 to 2000, the parish worshipped in a small church on the campus of Washington and Jefferson College.

The collapse of the U.S. steel industry in the late 1970s and early 1980s had a devastating effect on both the community and Trinity's membership. Remaining members recognized that without dramatic change, Trinity wouldn't be able to continue. In 1995, Cn. Bob Duncan led the vestry on its first annual retreat under the leadership of its newly called rector, Jonathan Millard. The retreat resulted in a renewed focus and mission statement.

“Unashamed of the gospel: praying, giving, and bringing friends.”

Within a year, prayer was part of every gathering, members were giving, and visitors were returning.

Guided by this vision, the community grew significantly, but carrying out this energized and growing ministry in what amounted to prayer chapel built in 1860 proved to be an increasingly tedious challenge.

Washington and Jefferson College (W&J) had been going through its own growth around that time and when they offered to purchase Trinity's building they accepted.

With proceeds from the sale combined with the generosity of the parish and diocesan funds, Trinity entered into an ambitious and challenging building project on a property overlooking the city of Washington. The story of God's provision at each step in the building project confirmed his leading in this endeavor and gave witness to his never-ending faithfulness. A new church building on 550 South Main Street was dedicated on September 16, 2000. That same year, The Rev. Karen Stevenson, then serving as Associate Rector at Church of the Ascension in Pittsburgh, accepted the call to become the new rector at Trinity after Jonathan Millard felt called to return to England where he was from.

With new leadership in a new location, Trinity launched several new ministries and avenues of outreach, building housing with Habitat for Humanity for local residents and partnering with local churches to open Crossing the Jordan, a family health care center. Trinity partnered with the Washington City Mission and with W&J to minister to the surrounding community.

2007 began a challenging period for Trinity Church when the convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh voted to amend its constitution and withdraw from the Episcopal Church. While Trinity experienced few losses in membership, uncertainty about whether Trinity church would be able to maintain ownership of the property which so many had invested so much to build, complicated our life and ministry. In 2018, the vestry signed a property agreement with the Episcopal Church, ensuring the continued use of our current space for ministry and mission.

Under Karen Stevenson's leadership, Trinity became a launching place for new ministries and ministers. Jamie Donne, who serves the CCO as Associate Director of the Fellowship Program, began her now 10-year ministry to W&J students at Trinity, and Trinity continues to support her ministry through a

partnership Trinity developed with Washington churches. Seminarians Matthew Frey, Ethan Magness, Amanda Goin Burgess, Bryan Jarrell, Claire Megles, Gail Long, Gary Mead, Elliot Winks, Kristi Cobb, and Ben Hughes completed their mentored ministries and first ministry experiences at Trinity, where they were ordained to the priesthood and now serve as leaders in other churches.

The face of Trinity has changed substantially over the past two decades. Most members who were retirees in 2000 have passed on. New families have joined Trinity, drawn by a caring leadership and a welcoming community. Young adults have stepped into leadership roles, while seasoned leaders continue to provide stability. Among our young families, patterns of attendance and ministry now reflect the patterns of a surrounding culture that has changed significantly.

We are now discerning how God is calling us to minister to a new generation of God's people and equip them for ministry and mission.

Recent ministry projects include a community garden to complement our existing Food Pantry ministry by providing fresh fruit and vegetables and hosting an end-of-summer Party on the Hill that provides backpacks and school supplies to many local families in need.

Core values of Trinity Church

The vestry and congregation together have determined the following to be our core values. These values are practical, rather than aspirational, reflecting not what we wish we valued, or what we think we should value, but rather what we exhibit to each other, to visitors, and to the community:

Living Life Together

We value our life together as a community and church family. We want Trinity to be a welcoming place for members and visitors alike.

Providing a Sanctuary

We work to make Trinity a safe place for children, young people, and adults. We work hard to foster an environment that is accepting and non-judgmental, a safe place to heal and recover. We work to encourage each other and try to make Trinity a place that is free of gossip and cliques.

Diversity of Thought

We are a heterogeneous group with differing socioeconomic, spiritual, political, and racial backgrounds. We value what we have in common, our faith in Jesus Christ while allowing our differences to serve as a catalyst for growth and better understanding--in essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.

Discipleship

We value Christ-centered, biblically-oriented teaching that strengthens our understanding and ability to increasingly live out the gospel in our daily lives.

Diverse Worship

We value music in a variety of styles. Our community is intergenerational and comes from varying styles of worship and cultural norms, and we enjoy exploring all of those in our worship.

Liturgy

We value the use of liturgy to be a vehicle for worship and teaching. While individual opinions and preferences within our community vary on how we might prefer to practice, we are united in the use of the vehicle.

Authenticity and Transparency

We encourage people to ask questions and to be open and honest about what they are thinking and feeling. We value sincerity and authenticity in our conversations with others.

Prayer

We value the power of prayer and its transformative effect on a community of believers.

Community Mission

We strive to be outwardly focused in our community, our nation, and our world.

Family Ministries

Ministries at Trinity are relationally focused. Programs are shaped to respond flexibly to ministerial needs.

Infants and Toddlers

Nursery is provided during the 10:45 service. It is located on the lower level. Our nursery is currently staffed 2-3 Sundays a month with qualified members. Our library is also available as a cry room, with a changing pad, a TV/DVD player, children's books, and toys. We host a Playgroup for families with babies and preschool aged children on Wednesdays from 10:30 am to Noon.

Children

Each 10:45 service, children are invited to come up to the altar for a children's talk immediately after the Epistle reading. After this 3-5 minute talk, children are invited to go downstairs with members of our children's ministry to attend Children's Church.

Student Ministry

Youth Group aims to be a safe place for students to encounter the gospel and experience authentic community. Students from our parish and beyond meet on Sunday evenings during the school year for games, worship, and Bible study. We also hold outreach events and service days throughout the year.

Adult Formation

On Sundays at 9:45 am, this group meets to discuss various topics or portions of the Bible.

Small Groups

These groups are formed around the practices we see in the early Christians' community of faith: study of the Bible, community, sharing meals, praying, and reaching out.

Saturday Men's Group

This group meets the first and third Saturday of the month for breakfast, study, and prayer.

Women's Dinner and Devotions

This group meets about every other month at 6:30 pm for dinner, study, and prayer.

Events

We host a number of special events throughout the year to reach out to our community. We host an Easter egg hunt in the spring, Vacation Bible School and parish picnic in the summer, a Harvest Party in the fall, and various events throughout the holiday season.

Worship Patterns

The 8:30 am Sunday morning service of worship offers the Rite I Holy Eucharist with traditional hymns. The 10:45 am service offers the ACNA Holy Eucharist with a blend of contemporary worship music and traditional hymns.

Prayer Teams

Each 10:45 service, a team of two people stands at the back of the church during community to pray with people who come with any need.

Worship Ministries

Adults, youth, and children serve in many ways in our worship services. Acolytes assist clergy and ministers throughout the service. Adult, students, and children age nine and older are invited to serve. Readers come forward to read the Old Testament and Epistle readings.

Choirs sing occasionally at special services throughout the year. Musicians lead worship music with vocals and a variety of instruments to support congregational singing. Technologically savvy volunteers run the soundboard and projection screens and record sermons for Sunday worship. Dramatically inclined parishioners occasionally provide drama and dramatic readings for worship services.

Our community

Washington, PA is a county seat, a town with a small college, and a commercial center that is 30 miles south of Pittsburgh and 30 miles east of Wheeling, WV. Washington was the hub of the coal mining and steel industries before the industrial collapse in the 1970s and 80s. In 1983, unemployment in Washington County rose above 16%. While few vestiges of steel making and mining remain, unemployment has fallen to 5.2%, with 7.9% of residents unemployed.

Washington residents have an average commute to work of 17 minutes.

Washington and Jefferson College (W&J) is a small college with about 1,200 students who tend to stay on campus, rather than spending time in the town.

The most common industries in Washington are retail, manufacturing, health care and social assistance, accommodation and food services, educational services, transportation and warehousing, and construction. There has been a considerable amount of new commercial development and residential construction in the region.

The total population of the city of Washington is 13,551, and the median age is 38 years. The median household income is \$36,806. The median home value is \$101,760, and the median rent is \$628. The renting percentage of Washington is higher than that of Pennsylvania, so it is a landlord's market.

The majority of the population is white, with 2,145 African-American residents, 249 Hispanic residents, and 96 Asian residents. The 2,145 African-American residents are concentrated in the heart of the city of Washington, close to Trinity. For residents age 25 and over, 86.9% are high school graduates, 18% have a bachelor's degree, and 5% have a graduate or professional degree.

Those numbers are a bit misleading since Western Pennsylvania is broken into smaller incorporated areas rather than larger metropolitan cities. For a more accurate picture, it is important to look at county-wide statistics since many of these associate themselves with the city of Washington even if they don't share a zip code.

County wide, half the population, 104,301 residents, identify as religiously unaffiliated. About a quarter of the population, 53,777 residents, identify as Catholic. Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Washington is a thriving parish. The remaining quarter of the population identifies as Protestant, with 28,797 residents identifying as Mainline Protestant, 16,871 residents identifying as Evangelical Protestant, 1,340 residents identifying as Black Protestant, and 1,275 residents identifying as Orthodox. Church of the Covenant on the campus of Washington and Jefferson College is a large and active Presbyterian church. The Bible Chapel, which has several campuses in the Pittsburgh region, has a campus in Washington. As an overall trend, mainline, evangelical, and historically African-American churches in Washington are aging.

While a number of Trinity parishioners have attended for 10 years or more, the face of Trinity has changed dramatically in the past 10 years. Almost all parishioners who were seniors in 2000 have either died or moved away to reside near family. Currently, a number of our attendees were relatively unchurched prior to joining Trinity, and their attendance patterns reflect today's more transient and overcommitted culture of juggling Sunday soccer games and other commitments alongside church attendance. While seniors attended every Sunday, newer members attend less consistently.

Attendance Trends				
	2015	2016	2017	2018
Transfiguration	94	108	102	90
Lent	92	99	-----	72
Palm Sunday	128	122	101	101
Good Friday	-----	62	52	40
Easter	198	179	144	127
Christ the King	99	119	87	-----
Christmas Eve	180	209	166	-----

Hopes for the future

We wish to re-engage in prayer, investment, and outreach—“praying, giving, and bringing friends”—at a new and deeper level:

Prayer

We need to reinvigorate our corporate prayer life while encouraging and discipling the individual prayer lives of our community.

Investment

Giving has always been about more than monetary resources, and our leadership has always stressed investment in the church community, rather than a consumer mentality. We need to learn how to better live this in a culture where there are many options vying for our time and resources.

Outreach

Trinity has a sense of the importance of outreach—to our friends, the community, and the world. Our community garden and Party on the Hill are examples of recent efforts to reach out to the community. However, we need discernment as to how to focus our resources, so that we can reach out to friends on the one hand, and the community on the other.

We have completed negotiations on our church building with the Episcopal Diocese, and we have survived the period of uncertainty brought about by realignment. Our leadership is now discerning how we can thrive moving forward in ministry and mission.