



March 5, 2020

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Dear friends,

In 1878, a small group of Anglicans sowed the seeds of hope that blossomed into Trinity Episcopal Church, a congregation and its building. This Eastertide, Trinity will give its final Eucharist, and after 142 years, give its final blessing to North Corktown. Trinity Episcopal Church is closing.

Our story has a diverse path and includes two other congregations. In 2006, Faith Memorial Lutheran Church and Trinity Episcopal Church joined together and called themselves Spirit of Hope. In 2018, Spirit of Hope closed, and Trinity's latest chapter began as a Mission of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan.

I arrived in February 2019, responding to a call from the The Rt. Rev. Wendell N. Gibbs, Jr., Tenth Bishop of Michigan. I began to get to know the community and its rhythms as a profound ministry of outreach in the neighborhood. I came to revitalize a worshipping community as a new mission in an existing building. Ultimately, the needs of our physical structure outweighed our available resources, making our growth an almost impossible task. In light of the considerable expense and the lack of sustainable resources, our leadership prayerfully and carefully discerned closure of the church and redeployment of our ministries in different contexts.

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Bonnie A. Perry, Eleventh Bishop of Michigan, has called me to Christ Episcopal Church Detroit, to serve as an Associate with its Rector, The Very Rev. Emily Williams Guffey. For over 40 years, Trinity and Christ Church have had a relationship of mutual support. Some of the amazing things Trinity did in the community was because of the generosity of Christ Church Detroit. Christ Church even shared clergy with Trinity. It is my privilege to serve with them in my new capacity as Associate. I anticipate my continued development as a new priest with great hope and promise working alongside Pastor Emily.

I had the distinct privilege to watch the congregation of Trinity grow spiritually. When I arrived, there had not been a worship service held in almost a year. It was fulfilling to begin worship with them, first as Liturgies of the Word. Since my June 2019 ordination to the Priesthood, we have celebrated The Holy Eucharist. Small children volunteered to read and acted in skits. The adults had amazing and insightful conversations during the weekly Bible Study. I have watched these individuals confront issues in their lives with fortitude and gratitude. I salute them for what we were able to accomplish, regular worship services, and a consistent and engaging study of the Scriptures.

Trinity's story was of continuous ministry in and alongside the wider community. Several days throughout the week, volunteers from churches and other third parties from all over the metro area have hosted meals and meetings at Trinity. It has been wonderful to get to know their stories about why they serve and see their joy in service. Basketball and Badminton teams regularly worked out in the gymnasium. There was a Head Start Program here. Street Medics operated a clinic in the nave about once a month. My first winter here, the church was open as a warming center during the Polar Vortex. The community garden, which has a longtime association with Trinity, was one of the pioneers of urban farming in our city. Various addiction recovery groups and local neighborhood and special interest groups came to call Trinity home. Trinity was one of the most excellent examples I have seen of Christ in the community and the community engaging with a church.

Every single person around here worked hard to keep this place going. Untold scores of volunteers worked to assist the hungry and needy week after week. We should not have any regrets. I've watched people, myself included, work long hours, responding to calls, praying, eating, and laughing together. We proved God's love in our faithfulness, and this is what ultimately matters to us as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Starting today, I, along with members of the Diocesan staff, are working to make sure everyone who calls Trinity home will be able to do so in new places. We desire that members and ministry partners sheltered and operated here find other locales. They still can represent Christ and his Church; bear witness to him, and use their various gifts to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation. The religious and non-religious entities associated with Trinity all have at their core, a deep desire for reconciliation of broken lives at the intersection of wealth and poverty, race, and social identity. This Gospel work is needed in Detroit. We want to make provisions for the work to continue.

In the coming days, our partners will be contacted by me, Jo Ann Hardy, Canon Administrator, and Jim Gettel, Canon for Congregational Life, to discuss operations and the disposition of Trinity Church property.

I anticipate many will have questions and concerns. Many will be grieving the loss of the church. You are not alone in this. I am experiencing similar emotions. Let us mourn this loss together. My door is open for any conversations you may wish to have. May your hands and your feet find new places where your heart can sing of God's love through your actions and faithfulness.

There is a print on display in Trinity's vestibule, just outside of St. James' Chapel. It is an excerpt from an address to the 1923 Anglo-Catholic Congress given by Frank Weston, Bishop of Zanzibar. It beautifully renders all I can convey in words of blessing and exhortation to you all. In part, it reads:

“Now go out into the highway and hedges, and look for Jesus in the ragged and naked, in the oppressed and sweated, in those who are struggling to make good. Look for Jesus in them; and when you find Him, gird yourselves with His towel of fellowship, and wash His feet in the person of his brethren.”

Your fellow-servant,

