



Trinity Episcopal Church
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Trinity 2024: Connected and Alive in Christ

October 26, 2023

Dear members of the Trinity community,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As we begin to look beyond the current fall and calendar year to financial needs for 2024, it is good to pause and take stock of where we are as a community. There is much cause for thanksgiving. Following the pandemic, this year of 2023 has been the first we could begin planning months ahead with any certainty. In the summer, we supported the first high school youth pilgrimage since 2019. We've restarted the Sunday Adult Forum. Elementary and Middle School classes, having shown sustainability of attendance and volunteer support last year, were resumed with more confidence. With a generous gift of \$500,000 toward renovating the 307 N. Chester property (aka "Trinity House"), we engaged an architect to begin working from vision to decisions. There are new Outreach ministries involving more people in the parish and beyond. And we're adding new parish activities in 2024, to include a spring festival and a parish camping trip. These are good signs.

We've also been through a great deal of transition in leadership, guided by our rector and vestry. With Jared Agee as Director of Music, Amy Caruso as Coordinator of Children's Ministries, Stephanie McDonough as Office Manager, Lakeita Buckner as Bookkeeper, and Naim Jenifer as Sexton, we have a mostly new staff. This has been both a significant effort of your leadership this year and a sign of successful transitioning.

In the meantime, vestry has been following through on initiatives to Invite, Welcome and Connect; to engage Stewardship (time, talent, and treasure) as a fundamental practice of Christian living; and first to survey then begin needed Campus Improvements. Additionally, Trinity has revived its voice on issues of public concern, with such actions as sponsoring and painting a downtown Swarthmore Pride Crosswalk and, next spring, anchoring a march through Swarthmore for Gun Violence Prevention and Awareness. The Spirit is alive in us and calling us forward.

Regarding financial matters the pandemic saw a contraction in both the number of Trinity pledgers and the total amount pledged. The 2020 Pledge Campaign, undertaken prior to the start of the Covid pandemic, saw 93 participants pledging a total of \$298,000. In the 2022 Campaign, we had 81 participants and our budgeted pledge total was \$245,000. In short, the pandemic, coupled with high inflation, took a significant toll.

So, to avoid a deficit still over \$100,000 in 2023, the rector and vestry undertook cost-reduction measures. The plan to fill the vacant, half-time associate rector's position had already been put aside. By cutting additional personnel costs, including eliminating our full-time office position, and with other reductions such as our giving to the Diocese of Pennsylvania, we were able to cut the deficit in about half. But the work to support our mission and ministries with a balanced budget must continue.

“Trinity 2024: Connected and Alive in Christ” ... With our expenses addressed, we now look forward to expanding as a community, Connected and Alive in Christ. Despite reduced human resources, our rector has remained committed to sustaining three services on Sundays. The three Vestry initiatives named above are also part of this direction. We are now asking all current and potential pledgers to consider not only what Trinity means to you, but how you are called to give through Trinity Church for God's purposes in the world.

To fund the church's ministries and mission, we are asking all current pledgers to consider increasing their last year's pledge by 8%, and we ask new members to join in pledging support for the Church. The rector and every member of the vestry who possibly can have already committed to increasing their pledges. If you realize you have not been giving at a level that reflects your faithfulness, consider increasing by even more. The average pledge for 2023 was \$3,250. We also ask you to consider what you might give of your *time* to Trinity. The saying goes that time is money; what Trinity can do with volunteer effort is at least as important as what we can pay to have done. Time is also life; when we give time for ministry and mission, we are giving from the life God has given us.

To help us connect with one another and reflect on matters named in this letter, *we are organizing a number of smaller, intimate **Cottage Meetings** in host parishioners' homes.* These Cottage Meetings will allow us all to share our thanksgivings, our ideas for Trinity's future, and how we can support the community we love. We ask that you plan to attend a convenient meeting. Sign-up will be available three ways: (1) in person on Sunday, October 29; (2) through [Sign-Up Genius, linked here](#) and on the [Trinity Church website](#); (3) or by calling the church office for help.

Our church's stated mission is “to be a vital Christian community affirming the gifts of all God's people.” We give thanks for the ways God is at work through the Trinity community, and we give thanks for the ways you already support Trinity in mission and ministries. May God bless each of us and all of us as we prayerfully consider how to give from what God has given us.

Respectfully,

The Trinity 2024 Stewardship Committee

Mike Donoghue, Vestry member Jeff Orlando, Vestry member
Bill Scarborough, People's Warden