

# Trinity Parish Church, Seattle

## Parish Profile

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### Introduction

Trinity Parish Church's search for a new Rector is being conducted under a new model for the Diocese of Olympia. Rather than going through a long period of interim leadership, we hope to have a new Rector in place soon after the current Rector departs. We were given permission by the Bishop to begin our search as our current Rector prepares to retire in June of 2012.

In the fall of 2011, the members of Trinity Parish Church gathered for two all-day [Appreciative Inquiry](#) sessions. These "Days of Discovery" drew a large majority of the active membership, with 70 percent attending at least one session and many attending both. These congregational conversations were, in part, preparation for the work of calling a new Rector.



We invested our time and energy in a thoughtful and lively discussion of what brings us to Trinity, what makes us strong, and how we'd like to build on our strengths under the leadership of our new Rector. It was remarkable to experience the vitality of the parishioners as they coalesced around fundamental understandings about our identity, our hopes for the future, and steps we can take now to make those dreams a reality.

With this introduction, we offer our Parish Profile for consideration by clergy who may be drawn to lead and love a spiritually mature, intellectually curious, and socially responsible congregation.

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## Snapshot of the Congregation

[Trinity](#) is the “Mother Church” of the Episcopal mission in the Puget Sound area; the parish was founded in 1865 and the current building dates from 1902. The parish has survived two fires and a major earthquake. Each time the church was rebuilt or restored, thanks to the generosity of the congregation and with support from the greater community.

We are a downtown parish and reflect the diversity of our urban neighborhood and of our city. On any Sunday morning the congregation might include:

- parishioners who have been members of Trinity for 50 or more years and newcomers who have only recently joined the parish,
- couples and individuals drawn by our firmly established Open and Affirming identity,
- residents from Seattle’s largest public housing project, a block south of us,
- retirees from the neighborhood’s upscale retirement communities,
- tourists and convention attendees staying in downtown hotels,
- homeless folk (often troubled by serious mental illness) who camp out beneath the freeway just west of our campus,
- visitors who have loved ones staying in the major medical centers that give our “Pill Hill” neighborhood its name,
- music lovers who attended an Early Music concert and thought they’d peek in on Sunday, and
- passersby who noticed our red doors and know that the Episcopal Church welcomes *them*.



Although in the past Trinity had a Sunday school and a preschool, today there are few children in the parish. Demographics tell the story: census data for 2010 reveal that just 20 percent of all households in Seattle include children under age 18. In the two neighborhoods closest to Trinity Parish—First Hill and Capitol Hill—family households account for only 16 percent and 12 percent respectively.

Trinity has 380 members; the average Sunday attendance of the combined 8:00 and 10:30 services is about 125. The congregation welcomes all who come to worship, creating an emotionally inviting place for those at different stages of their spiritual journeys.

Trinity Parish is especially fortunate to enjoy the services of a cadre of Associate Priests who add several dimensions of diversity to the spiritual practices of the church. Three are retired clergy who have chosen Trinity as their church home. Recently a retired Deacon joined the congregation and joins in celebration of the Eucharist from time to time.

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## Administrative and Financial Matters

In 1942 the Vestry established an endowment with a \$500 contribution to match a \$500 gift from a parishioner. Since then, thanks to many bequests, and to proceeds from a property sale, the endowment has grown to several million dollars. As is common with other endowed churches, we find the endowment a mixed blessing. It has allowed us to meet financial responsibilities and to preserve the historic building and grounds, but it has allowed us to be casual in the matter of stewardship. The 2012 budget is \$892,000; 26 percent comes from pledges and offerings, 43 percent from the endowment, and the rest from other revenues such as parking and use of the facility.

In addition to a full-time Rector, paid staff includes a music director and a part-time assistant director, a parish administrator, a part-time bookkeeper, a sexton, and some intermittent, part-time custodial help.



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## Ministries

### ***Northwest Harvest and Cherry Street Food Bank***

During the week, Trinity bustles with activity related to the ministries of the parish. Chief among them is Northwest Harvest, the only nonprofit, statewide, food bank distributor in Washington. Its network of more than 325 food banks and meal programs provides more than 1.6 million meals every month. Northwest Harvest operates the Cherry Street Food Bank (founded by the parish); it is the busiest food bank in the state, serving well over 2,000 people on full-service days. Trinity donates to Northwest Harvest space worth nearly \$100,000 annually for administrative offices and the actual food bank. Parishioners engage in a range of volunteer services to support these activities.

### ***Thrift Shop***

Trinity parishioners donate hundreds of hours each year at the onsite Thrift Shop. Established during the Depression, it has been a joint ministry with the nearby Seattle First Baptist Church since the 1980s. The Thrift Shop offers a wide array of clothing, household effects, and other items. The church provides anyone who asks for help with vouchers they can redeem for merchandise (last year providing more than \$30,000 worth of vouchers). Proceeds from sales are donated to local nonprofit agencies that serve Seattle's homeless people and others who need assistance.

### ***Hospital Ministry***

Some of the most highly regarded hospitals in the country are located within a half mile of Trinity, drawing people from throughout the Northwest, including Alaska. Sixteen years ago, Trinity's now-retired Deacon recognized the need for pastoral services for patients and their families who were away from home for medical treatment. The Diocesan hospital ministry was established to meet this need. Today, each Episcopal Church in the area is assigned to a particular hospital and sends clergy to visit patients and families when invited.

### ***Evans House***

Parishioners have established an outreach ministry to Evans House, a supportive living housing program designed for chronically homeless single adults with severe and persistent mental illness.

### ***More Ministries***

A number of other ministries and groups are hosted at Trinity. Two spiritual life groups offer support for those seeking deeper meaning in Christian life. The Centering Prayer Group employs the practice and nurturing of centering prayer as a way to be open to the contemplative dimension of the Gospel. The Benedictine Spirituality Group meets to study the Rule of St. Benedictine and its lessons for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. All this activity keeps our campus (and our custodial staff!) busy.

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## **The Arts at Trinity**

The arts are an important part of Trinity's reputation and identity. The congregation is outspoken in valuing its traditional music program, designed to complement the liturgy and enhance the experience of God's presence. Trinity's stained-glass windows are a key feature of the church, and with the music and liturgy, reflect a sacred space that is deeply beloved by the congregation.



*Fr. Kevin Smith*

Trinity is proud of its [partnerships with arts organizations](#) and of its long history of musical excellence. It is home to several artists-in-residence and also provides rehearsal and performance space for music and theater groups. Another program, Art for Everyone, is an active church committee that gives local artists an opportunity to display their work in regularly scheduled shows in the parish's Dorothy Liberty Gallery.

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## Discerning Our Core Values

Our Appreciative Inquiry sessions were an extraordinary experience that invited people to listen to each other. What emerged was very strong harmony around our core values and delight in our distinctive identity.

### ***Core Value: The Liturgy and Music of Our Worship***

Trinity draws parishioners who appreciate the timeless beauty and majesty inherent in the traditional liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer. We offer a Rite II Eucharist on Sunday mornings (8:00 and 10:30) and Wednesday evenings, and a Rite I service on Thursday evenings. Morning Prayer, offered Monday through Friday, is chanted on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. [Worship](#) is at the heart of who we are and what we do, and the atmosphere created by the aesthetic qualities of our worship services is important to us. During any month, our musicians may offer a plainsong chant from the earliest centuries of the Church, a Renaissance motet by Palestrina or Byrd, and anthems from the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic eras as well as modern works by composers such as Richard Proulx. The purpose of Trinity's [music staff, choir, and handbell choir](#) is to offer, at the highest standard possible, praises to God through leadership in music and liturgy.



### ***Core Value: The Openness, Acceptance, and Diversity of the Congregation***

Several years ago the congregation undertook a conversation about what it would mean to commit to being an Open and Affirming Congregation. The result of that work was a decision to support and welcome the full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons in the parish's life and ministry. Today we are proud to advertise our commitment on our website and stationery as a signal that all are welcome in this parish.

Commitment to diversity means that Trinity shares God's unconditional love and acceptance of all, regardless of age, gender, race, marital or family status, sexual orientation, disability, or economic means, and including those who feel excluded from the Christian community. Inclusivity isn't about being trendy; it's about living the Gospel. Our inclusiveness helps us fulfill our commitment to seek Christ in all people. Each year, we reaffirm these values and become more knowledgeable about the current state of affairs with both a Martin Luther King Jr. sermon and a [Matthew Shepard sermon](#).

***Core Value: Outreach Ministries***

The congregation firmly supports efforts to share Christ’s love by reaching out to our neighbors who are in need. While there are several longstanding ministries that engage parishioners, the Days of Discovery revealed that there is clearly a deep desire for additional opportunities to serve.



***Core Value: The Parish as a Safe Source of Emotional Support***

Parishioners are grateful for the comfort they have received over the years as they have faced the challenges and pain of daily life. They refer to “my Trinity family” as a source of comfort and steadfastness in times of trouble. There is a strong desire to offer this same comfort to others, and an appreciation for our clergy who are available for spiritual guidance.

Because Trinity is located near homeless shelters, transitional housing units, and Harborview Medical Center (which treats most of the city’s low-income people with serious mental illness and substance abuse issues), it is common to have visitors associated with these organizations find their way to our church for Sunday services. Some are actively mentally ill and others too withdrawn to interact. They often don’t know the routines of church practices, but they join in the Eucharist. Then they disappear back to the streets and we hope they feel welcome to return. The parishioners are dedicated to preserving this refuge of safe emotional support and to welcoming each person as Christ at our door.

***Other important values that came to light during our Days of Discovery***

People value Trinity’s warm and welcoming atmosphere. They love the beautiful and historically significant building and grounds and want to invest in keeping them in good condition. They share an appreciation for Trinity’s long [history](#) and for its commitment to environmental stewardship.

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## Our Goals for the Future

During the second session of Days of Discovery the focus was on the future. We are seeking a Rector who will help us achieve the following goals.

1. **Continue to maintain and enhance the quality of the liturgy and music.** We have been blessed with a beloved staff of associate clergy and musicians whose liturgical knowledge and aesthetic sensibilities are well-suited to the spiritual needs of the parish. Many parishioners were initially drawn to Trinity because of its traditional Anglican feeling and classical music, with the use of the Book of Common Prayer and the Hymnal, and its fine organ, choir, and handbells.
2. **Remain financially stable and grow in our stewardship commitment.** Trinity is unusual for a West Coast Episcopal Church in having a substantial endowment. This has been invested carefully over the years and has grown. Still, we want to become less reliant on the endowment to support operating expenses of the church. We confronted the issue of our hesitant approach to stewardship and vowed to ramp it up. Trinity's buildings are old and expensive to maintain (see #3, below) and the endowment fund is more appropriately spent on such work.
3. **Maintain the buildings and grounds.** Our [beautiful English Gothic Revival style building](#), more than 100 years old, is on the Washington State and United States National Registers of Historical Places. It has endured fires and earthquakes—as well as less dramatic but equally expensive day-to-day upkeep issues involving plumbing, litter, leaks, pigeons, etc. Trinity is a beloved sacred space and we want to keep it beautiful for future generations just as those who went before us preserved it for us.
4. **Encourage more diversity, while continuing to value the presence of *whoever* comes to us.** Trinity is an urban church and there are few young families with children in the vicinity. Although we may not have the diversity of age and ethnicity that we would like on Sunday morning, our ministries serve a diverse population. We hope to explore ways to make our presence known to community members who may be longing for what Trinity has to offer.
5. **Select the right Rector.** The congregation is determined to find a Rector who shares its values and its vision for Trinity. We have enjoyed stability of spiritual leadership over the years. Our current Rector is retiring after 13 years of service. The two previous Rectors served a total of 39 years. We are ready to settle in under new leadership and are looking for someone who will want to stay for many years.
6. **Continue to have a vibrant cadre of assisting clergy.** Trinity's liturgical richness is enhanced by the presence of several Associate Priests who actively participate in the Eucharist, Morning Prayer, and pastoral duties of the parish. Each brings unique skills and personalities to the church and plays a vital role in expanding Trinity's reach and exposure. This is a development we need, and want, to continue.

7. **Build a greater sense of community in the parish.** An unexpected message emerged from the congregation during our Days of Discovery—the longing for more time together, perhaps regular communal meals. This was a common theme accompanied by a commitment to make it happen. There are challenges in achieving this: Working parishioners find it difficult to participate in events during the day and others find it difficult to attend in the evenings. Parking is often an issue, especially during the workweek. We are working around those difficulties to create more opportunities for our parishioners to further develop a sense of community.



8. **Expand opportunities for Christian Formation.** Our Christian Formation classes are generally held on Sunday after the second service, and are well attended and appreciated. In the past year we've had programs on the life of St. Francis, the Celtic roots of St. Patrick, the Palestinian issue, our relations with the Jewish and Islamic faiths, and the histories of various religious orders: monastic, mendicant, and congregation. Again, there are challenges to expanding the opportunities beyond Sundays, including working out ways to include the 8:00 congregation, but we are searching for ways around these barriers.

9. **Build commitment to evangelism and membership growth.** Evangelism has many different meanings; the term makes many Episcopalians anxious. The Days of Discovery provided a setting to explore the

meaning in the context of Trinity's congregation. What emerged was a strong desire to increase the membership through exposing people to Trinity's many opportunities for spiritual growth and reaching a deeper understanding of God. This was coupled with a desire to find more ways to serve the community and let people see who we are, inspiring them to join us.

10. **Continue and expand our commitment to environmental stewardship.** Trinity believes that stewardship is both about finances and about caring for God's earth and resources. In the past few years, the parish has replaced water heaters, changed to more energy-efficient lighting, and switched to ceramic plates and cups. We are undertaking some major maintenance jobs in the coming year that are being done with energy efficiency and conservation in mind. We have made progress in reducing Trinity's carbon footprint and are determined to stay on this path.

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## We Have Already Started on Trinity's Goals

The Days of Discovery generated great energy among the parishioners as well as a desire to get onto the path *now* toward achieving our goals. Several committees are working to achieve this:

- **Stewardship:** Recreate and promote the Legacy Society; start a capital campaign for repairing and restoring our splendid stained-glass windows; and develop a program of year-round stewardship.
- **Liturgy and Music:** Develop a quarterly parish hymn sing where we will learn new hymns and sing old favorites (including those from different church traditions), possibly combined with an opportunity to take a meal together.
- **Diversity:** Form a parish group to research, study, and visit urban churches that have excelled in encouraging diversity and see what lessons might work for Trinity.
- **Outreach:** Create and publicize a list of volunteer outreach opportunities as well as a list of community services available to those seeking assistance; collect and distribute bus tickets to those in need.
- **Spiritual Life and Christian Formation:** Provide more opportunities for spiritual direction and counseling, including the use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and increasing access to Christian Formation.
- **Hospitality:** Organize and train a team of greeters to welcome newcomers and take them to coffee hour.



Trinity Parish Church  
609 8th Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98104

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## Living and Working in Seattle

### Trinity Parish Church

<http://www.trinityseattle.org/>

### Diocese of Olympia

<http://www.ecww.org/>

### Living in Seattle

<http://www.seattle.gov/living>

<http://downtownseattle.com>

<http://www.kingcounty.gov>

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health.aspx>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Hill,\\_Seattle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Hill,_Seattle)

<http://www.king5.com/weather>

<http://www.greatschools.org/washington/seattle/>

### Trinity's Neighbors

#### Social and Housing Services

*Northwest Harvest*

<http://www.northwestharvest.org>

*Jefferson Terrace*

<http://www.seattlehousing.org/housing/public/locations/jefferson-terrace/>

*Bishop Lewis House*

<http://www.doc.wa.gov/facilities/workrelease/bishoplewiswr/default.asp>

#### Hospitals

*Harborview Medical Center*

<http://uwmedicine.washington.edu/Patient-Care/Locations/HMC/Pages/default.aspx>

*Swedish Medical Center*

<http://www.swedish.org>

*Virginia Mason Medical Center*

<https://www.virginiamason.org>

#### Retirement Communities

*Skyline at First Hill*

<http://www.skylineatfirsthill.org>

*Exeter House*

<http://www.prcn.net/exeter-house>

*Horizon House*

<http://www.horizonhouse.org>

#### Churches

*Seattle First Baptist Church*

<http://www.seattlefirstbaptist.org>

*St. James Cathedral*

<http://stjames-cathedral.org>

*Mt. Zion Baptist Church*

<http://www.mountzion.net>

*Seattle First Presbyterian*

<http://www.firstpres.org>

*Plymouth Church (UCC)*

<http://plymouthchurchseattle.org>

#### Colleges and Universities

*Seattle University*

<http://www.seattleu.edu/default.aspx>

*Seattle Central Community College*

<http://seattlecentral.edu/>