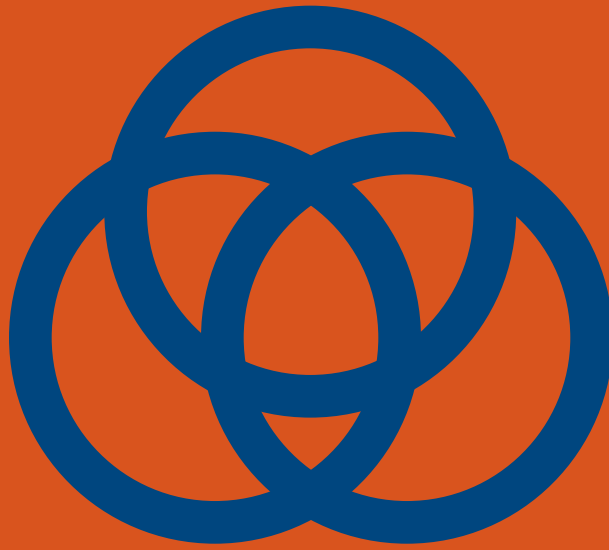


# TRINITY: NEXT

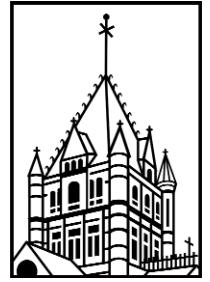
A Plan for Trinity Church in the City of Boston



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TRINITY SUNDAY  
MAY 18, 2008

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TRINITY CHURCH  
IN THE CITY OF BOSTON

May 18, 2008

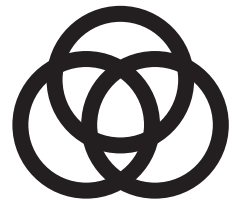
What is Trinity Church called to be, now in our 275th year and in the decade to come?

With the arrival of the 19th rector of Trinity Church and the completion of a major capital campaign that blessed us with renewed, expanded ministry space, it has been only natural to wonder: What's next? With eyes fresh to our congregation, our new rector has seen and named areas in which the energy of the Holy Spirit could flow more freely here at Trinity. In the spirit of Isaiah, she charged Trinity:Next to imagine how we might prepare a new and clearer pathway here for God.

In late April 2007, our rector formed a committee of 31 parishioners and clergy advisors to answer these questions and discern a vision for the next one to ten years. The group, dubbed Trinity:Next, met over the course of 12 months to pray, plan, and listen for God's call for this church. Ideas, opinions, dreams and concerns were sought from all parish members through "Holy Conversations," with more than 500 of the faithful ultimately participating. Together, we all have imagined a Trinity Church in the City of Boston where the Holy Spirit is living in, with, and through us in new powerful ways.

Through this work, Trinity:Next has come to hear God calling us to live in a renewed and renewing cycle of faith.

In the 19th century, one of Trinity Church's great rectors, Phillips Brooks, chose this image of three-interlocking circles for the church that is our parish home. Trinity:Next has come to understand that this image, a centuries-old symbol of the Holy Trinity, also represents the ongoing cycle of our lives and faith here at Trinity Church:



**We encounter God here in worship and in our lives together.**

**As we are formed as Christians, we are transformed as people.**

**We give witness to Christ by serving the world in God's name.**

Throughout our lives, as we encounter the Holy, are transformed, and serve others, God renews, sustains, and inspires us. The life of faith, like these intertwined circles, is not linear but cyclical as we grow and change in our relationship with God and one another.

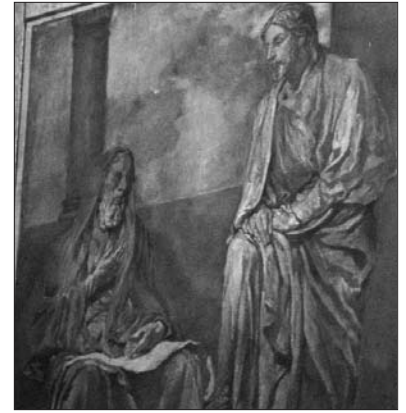
Trinity:Next has come to appreciate how interdependent these faith experiences are. Formation enriches our spiritual maturity to prepare us to serve God's people. Both formation and service provide us with opportunities to encounter the Holy, which inspires us to learn more and act upon our faith.

Each of these experiences strengthens and inspires us to give witness to Christ in our lives. By sharing our faith, through our lives and words, we invite others to join us, and in so doing, we ensure our church community's future.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ... and remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28) In his Great Commission, Jesus calls us — indeed, he commands us — to share

this wonderful gift we know as Trinity Church, to grow the community of believers building God's Kingdom. We are blessed with Church facilities that can welcome, inspire and serve many. In making Trinity a vibrant, expanding parish of disciples, surely we give delight to God.

Welcoming all is not a new idea to this parish. The creators of our parish family home also called Trinity to be a welcoming place for all God's children to encounter the holy, be formed and transformed in Christ, and be inspired to serve God's world. The builders chose to greet everyone who enters from the Copley narthex with two murals. To the right is the mural of Nicodemus, the Pharisee ruler, meeting with Jesus in stealth to learn how we all must be "born from above" to see the Kingdom of God. (John 3)



The mural to the left shows the shunned Samaritan woman at the well, assured by Jesus that he gives her "living water, a spring within welling up for eternal life." (John 4) These two images profoundly underscore how all are welcomed here — whether male or female; influential or outcast; prominent or precarious in society; whether we are seeking God in the anonymity of night, or the light of day.



This commitment to welcome holds particular meaning in the context of our time, one unique in our nation's spiritual history. A Pew Foundation study published this year reports that we are living in an age when one-quarter of American adults have changed from the religious affiliation of their childhood. One-sixth say they believe in God but have no church affiliation. This means that, as Trinity Church welcomes the parish's next generation, many of us will be new not just to the Episcopal Church, but quite possibly to organized religion itself. This epic cultural shift implies much for how we will welcome, worship, learn, serve, and live together.

After listening to our present, looking at our past, and gaining understanding of the greater community of which we are a part, we ask:

How is God calling the people of Trinity Church in the City of Boston? Where does God want us to lead, serve, and grow next? As we have prayed for the Spirit's inspiration and guidance, we repeatedly have heard and seen God calling us to be and become:

**wider in welcome,**

**deeper in formation,**

**bolder in service.**

We envision that living into this call over the next decade would create a church that is:

- Known for its invitation and welcome to all to encounter God here;
- Embracing new ways of experiencing God's presence in worship, while being faithful to our traditions;
- Devoted to lifelong Christian formation and learning;
- Infused with an expansive, inspiring vision of stewardship of all God's gifts; and
- Dedicated to collaboration in serving Christ, especially in addressing the impacts of poverty and racism.

In the next sections, we say more about these elements of our vision of Trinity's future, and we offer the Vestry recommendations to realize this vision. In its size and style, the Trinity:Next report takes inspiration from the prophet Habakkuk: "Write the vision on tablets. Make it plain so a runner can read it."

**The Vision:** We are known for our invitation and welcome for all to encounter God here.

Our encounter with the Holy begins at our front steps, as we come through the door and continue into the heart of the church. While we may initially come to encounter God in worship, we also grow to experience one another as windows to the Holy. To experience the faithfulness of others has been, for so many of us, critical to our spiritual growth.

We believe God wants Trinity to be a church where, from the first minute through the first year here, newcomers experience a warm and intentional welcome. We believe we are called to make hospitality an intentional practice, a kind of personal spiritual discipline for the whole parish, to ask in all we plan and do: What is it like to be new here? What gift does God offer us through this newcomer? What gift does God give me to share with this newcomer?

“It’s a lot smaller church than it looks.”

One manifestation of this commitment, partially inspired by the Trinity:Next conversations, has been the new four-week clergy-led Compass Class for newcomers exploring membership at Trinity. But we believe God is asking all of us at Trinity to go much farther, to make welcome and hospitality the work of every one of us, not just the clergy, ushers, or a guild of greeters. We imagine a Trinity where every single member could tell a visitor at coffee hour wondering how to get more deeply involved in our life: “Here’s how, and here’s whom to contact.” We imagine a Trinity where each of us would believe: “Welcome here begins with me.”

Hospitality begins with a warm greeting and continues through the process of incorporation, guiding individuals to connect in our community and inviting them to become members of Trinity Church (defined as all who have made known their baptism, worship regularly, and annually pledge financial resources to support Trinity). Incorporation at Trinity, we have come to understand, also means to meet and accept each other where we are whether one becomes an active participant in our life, or prefers to stay, literally or metaphorically, in the back pews.

We also affirm that hospitality and incorporation are not just for newcomers. We all have seasons of longing for new, closer connections in our community. In Trinity:Next, we have learned how important it is that people, no matter how long they have been here, are welcomed and invited to join ever more deeply in our community. In conversations for this report, we often heard from members that at its very best, Trinity is a small big church, a bustling, vibrant community that still has a place for me. Small groups create an intimacy of being known, a sense of place, and a home inside the house of God. We must nurture an engaging abundance of diverse and faithful small groups, lay-led and clergy-nurtured. We know we are called both to deepen our roots and extend our branches.

“It’s not what we do, it’s how we do it. Becoming this kind of true and deep Christian community is what enables us to do anything.”

Our hospitality is grounded in the sacramental experience of the Holy Eucharist, Christ’s hospitality to us. We don’t originate hospitality, we channel it. As the religious author

Diana Butler Bass has written, “True Christian hospitality is not a recruitment strategy designed to manipulate strangers into church membership. Rather, it is a central practice of the Christian faith — something Christians are called to do for the sake of [welcome] itself.” We see a Trinity Church whose members pledge their hospitality as surely as they pledge financial resources and time.

# EVERYONE

In our deepened commitment to welcome and hospitality, we return to our heritage. More than a century ago, the Rev. Phillips Brooks, the great Trinity rector and builder of our Copley Square home, declared: “Trinity should be the most hospitable church in Boston.” Mr. Brooks’ vision is ours today.

Recommended actions and goals:

- Install banners on the Copley porch to welcome all to our church and make information abundantly available in our narthex about who we are, what we believe, and how to join us.
- Include a welcome statement and a schedule of worship opportunities in every public invitation to any event at Trinity Church.
- Develop a new welcome ministry, led by laypeople and supported by professional staff, that both welcomes visitors and helps everyone, on their first Sunday or their fifth decade at Trinity, to find a place in our parish life. Build this ministry to involve participation by hundreds of Trinity parishioners.
- Refine the Compass Class to become part of the Trinity “culture” — with a goal of the majority of our future new members completing the course.
- Institute annual measures of our welcome, such as what percentage of our visitors become members and what percentage of members invite someone to Trinity each year.
- Resume offering some form of parish directory, printed or online, to help parishioners know and connect with each other.
- Install improved and ecologically sustainable exterior lighting to make our building appear inviting; also use lighting to share the glory of our stained glass windows with passersby.
- Welcome visitors by regularly deploying greeters and choirs on the church steps before services.
- Form a vestry task force to build upon extensive Trinity:Next subcommittee work to advise the rector and staff on the wisest, most effective uses of 21st century communications and Internet technologies for the sake of welcome and community-building at Trinity.

# COLORFUL

**The Vision:** While being faithful to our traditions, we embrace new ways of experiencing God's presence in worship.

Our worship together is the primary place where we encounter God, are transformed by Christ, and are inspired to serve the world. It is the center of our life together. We give thanks to God for all who give such beauty to our worship, and we reaffirm the centrality of preaching and music at Trinity.

“I love hearing other people praying when I'm praying.”

Cherishing all the ways generations have worshipped together here, we believe God is calling our parish to both build on the legacy of our traditions and expand our experience of God in worship. Continued faithfulness in crafting transformative liturgy, music, and preaching is the most profound welcome we can offer visitors. Likewise, new, faithful ways to embody and express God's welcome and to encounter the Holy at Trinity will bring future generations to Christian formation and service in God's name.

We imagine worship alternatives that honor how people experience God in different ways in different seasons of life. We imagine worship that invites and welcomes newcomers into the best of Episcopal liturgy and music. We imagine approaches to worship taking advantage of all seven days of the week. We look to respond to parishioner's requests for other ways to enter into the presence and mystery of God, in practices of prayer and meditation. In all these we seek not to take away, but to offer more, and to make welcoming worship an avenue of growth for Trinity Church.

Recommended actions and goals:

- Explore new styles of community worship, thinking particularly of those who come to us from different religious backgrounds and those who have no previous religious affiliation. These opportunities can be offered at a variety of times throughout the week.
- Support our music leaders continuing to teach church singing to worshippers at all levels of musical expertise.
- Ask our clergy to design quiet days, retreats or similar opportunities for prayer and meditation shared by lay leadership.
- Equip and encourage our lay leaders to incorporate elements of prayer, singing, reflection, or liturgy into all small group gatherings.
- Build on our strong relationship with the New England Conservatory and explore new resources such as the Berklee College of Music and others who would benefit from sharing our space, introduce us to new communities and bring strong artistic gifts.

# TRANSFORMATIONAL

**The Vision:** We are devoted to lifelong Christian formation and learning.

Trinity currently has a strong and well-attended Christian Formation program, with parishioners of all ages participating in a wide variety of classes and learning experiences. As we look to build on this solid foundation, we believe God is calling Trinity Church to develop a culture of integrated Christian formation that begins from our initial entry and extends through our final days in the church. This lifelong formation reflects our Anglican identity as Christians, as we believe God blesses us with reason, tradition, and the holy word of Scripture. It takes place through study, prayer and practice as disciples of Jesus Christ. We believe this to be an ongoing process that calls for different opportunities for different stages of life.

“I pray that Sunday school can be a little holy, a little special, a little fun.”

We also see the need for training our parishioners in spiritual discernment. This traditional Christian practice names the presence of God in our lives and asks: “What is God’s invitation?” Discernment guides us to look beyond a new set of programs or classes, to a way of intentionally living into God’s call for us. It helps us to learn how to pray. Practicing spiritual discernment also can help the many of us who long for support in connecting our faith with our lives at home, at work, and in community service and leadership.

Recommended actions and goals:

- Offer regular opportunities for those learning the basic elements of the Christian faith, the Bible, and our Anglican heritage, to be taught by our clergy and lay leaders. Weave these opportunities into our existing adult classes as part of an intentional lifelong formation framework.
- Support the Children’s Ministries Committee and Youth Mentors in a similar effort to define what we believe all young people graduating from Trinity’s church school should know about their faith.
- Develop formation opportunities for those unable to attend evening classes or those with other limited access to church. Bring small group experiences to a wider group of parishioners through differing offerings.
- Offer annual classes on prayer and discernment for those entering Trinity, as well as for those who wish to reflect upon God’s call at any point in life, with particular emphasis on discernment opportunities for those seeking new ministries or concluding leadership roles in the church.
- Provide opportunities for parishioners to reflect upon the connections between their faith and work, drawing on the Baptismal Covenant as a spiritual resource for daily life.
- Look for ways to encourage growth in God that engages all aspects of our life as a body and connects young and old.

“There’s an old Jewish saying:  
‘Where is God to be found?  
Wherever people let God in.’”

# INTIMATE

**The Vision:** We are infused with an expansive, inspiring vision of our stewardship of all God's gifts.

At its core, Christian stewardship is the grateful recognition that all we have and all we are come from a generous Giver, and that to give back in joy, to live with a grateful heart, is to open the door to transformation in Christ.

Financial generosity is important in our life together, but it is only one manifestation of stewardship. We will be faithful stewards of Christ's hospitality in the welcome we offer to newcomers and our commitment to deepening community here. We will be faithful stewards of the gift of our human relationships here by promoting a rich and deep culture of small faith groups at Trinity. New models and practices, as one parishioner put it, "to release the gifts of lay leaders," to clarify pathways to volunteering here, and to express appreciation and gratitude will all be celebrated as stewardship of human talent. We will be faithful stewards of our church buildings as we maximize them as welcoming Christian instruments and engines of ministry. With support through Trinity Boston Preservation Trust, we will also faithfully preserve and enhance our church buildings physically for future generations as our forebears did for us. In doing so we honor the spirit of God's gift of "wells you did not dig and vineyards you did not plant." (Deuteronomy 6:11)

"God wastes nothing in our lives and wants to make use of all of it."

In our faithful stewardship, we will also recognize and commit to meeting the cost and responsibility of keeping Trinity financially vibrant for future generations and of carrying out the vision embodied in this document.

Recommended actions and goals:

- Reclaim the word "stewardship" from being understood only as a synonym for "financial support" by recognizing and naming all the ways in which we are called to be good and faithful stewards in our lives.
- Create a culture of thanksgiving for shared abundance, so that all gifts and givers of time, service, and money are promptly and warmly recognized and celebrated.
- Increase both the overall number of pledgers and those returning a percentage of their income to the church as an intentional move towards the standard of the Biblical tithe, returning the first 10 percent of what we have to God, to God's glory.
- Increase our endowment through the development of a sustained planned giving program and special gifts.
- Develop environmental and energy-use policies and practices for making Trinity Church a responsible steward of our God-given resources and Earth.
- Share the stories of the stewardship of our newly improved buildings, reporting annually on their use for myriad internal, external, and direct-service purposes, such as Trinity Boston Counseling Center, Trinity Education for Excellence Program, Alcoholics Anonymous.

# SUSTAINABLE

**The Vision:** We are dedicated to collaboration with other community groups in serving Christ, especially in addressing the impact of poverty and racism

As we are transformed and led closer to the heart of Christ, we are compelled to serve the world as he commanded, loving our neighbor as ourselves. We know that true Christian service is sustained only by our ongoing encounter with God and through spiritual formation. Trinity:Next understands that outreach is integral rather than adjunct to living faithfully. We recognize that there are many needs as well as many gifts. Service can be offered in a variety of ways, through prayer, listening, and action.

We believe God is calling Trinity Church to use our position in the city — geographic and social — to collaborate in service beyond our walls. This work has begun through the extraordinary partnerships with public and private agencies forged by Trinity Boston Foundation, Inc. Recognizing that every need is not necessarily a ministry, we must consider together how best to use our resources. Discernment requires us to ask: “What is God’s invitation to Trinity Church to serve in our city and the world?”

In Trinity:Next we have come to understand that the outreach ministries of Trinity Church all address the impact of poverty and racism. We are addressing immediate needs and human suffering, seeking justice through systemic change, and offering short- and long-term missions such as service in Honduras, New Orleans, and at Yearwood House. Trinity:Next lifts up and thanks the outstanding work reflected in the Trinity Education for Excellence Program strategic plan, the Homelessness Task Force, and the Crossroads Anti-Racism Project, and we encourage the parish to support their ongoing work as being central to our outreach ministry.

The greatest ministry of Trinity Church is in the lives its members live in the world. We pray for and seek a deeper collective appreciation for the outreach parishioners do, not only as part of this parish, but also in their daily work and in serving with organizations beyond Trinity through volunteering, providing leadership on nonprofit boards, and being activists and advocates on behalf of others. We note with gratitude our bishop’s appreciation for “the professionalism and can-do spirit of Trinity people” in the work we do in and beyond the diocese.

Recommended actions and goals:

- Offer all parishioners discernment opportunities to articulate and realize their call to Christian service in their work, their homes, their communities, and this parish.
- Affirm parishioners in the gifts they can offer, whatever limitations may arise in their phases of life. For example, remind those physically unable to participate in parish outreach of the importance of their active prayer.
- Provide an “outreach exchange” for members in volunteer ministries to share stories, support one another and pray for those being served.
- Continue and extend the work of our Crossroads ministry through which we commit to understand more fully the damage that systemic racism has done to our country, church, culture, and souls, and to do all in our power to address and overcome this sin. Engage increasing numbers of our parishioners and neighbors in this important and culturally and personally transformational work.
- Develop further our shared ministry with Roxbury Presbyterian Church through participation in the Dream Again program and other programs.

- Include a professional outreach position on Trinity's staff in conjunction with developing a mechanism for discerning outreach initiatives congruent with our stated areas of focus: impact of poverty and racism, immediate need, systemic change, and short and long term missions.
- Continue to strengthen our outreach collaboration with other faith communities and nonprofit organizations, recognizing the blessing of an expanded worldview and common work.
- In times of discernment and crisis in Boston, ensure that this community will continue to serve as a convener, and offer our house of prayer as a place of welcome, solace and hope for all God's people.

## CONCLUSION

THE HEART OF THE WORK that has produced this report and our vision for the future of Trinity Church in the City of Boston was a grand, year-long dialogue. "We must hear one another," our rector said to us, "and we must listen for the voice of God in our conversations." Through a series of "Holy Conversations," many people shared their time and their thoughts. We thank every one of you who listened and spoke in such deep faithfulness.

We pray we have been true to your voices, and to God's, as we have heard the call to make Trinity Church a place where we encounter the holy, are transformed by Christ, and are inspired to give witness through service to God's world. We pray that this report may spur our collective dreams into transformational action, especially in how we welcome and incorporate newcomers and members, how we worship, how we are formed as lifelong disciples of Christ, how we are faithful stewards of all God has given us, and how we collaborate in outreach and service.

We remember the words of a parishioner in one of these conversations. "What keeps me coming back to Trinity Church," she said, "is seeing so many people here giving God their very best."

May we all make it ever so, to the glory of God.

**Amen.**

The quotes scattered throughout this text were gathered from the series of "Holy Conversations" held with parishioners during the past year.

A Reflection by Archbishop Oscar A. Romero (1917-1980)

It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view.  
The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.  
We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of  
the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying  
that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.  
No statement says all that should be said.  
No prayer fully expresses our faith.  
No confession brings perfection.  
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.  
No program accomplishes the church's mission.  
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.  
We plant seeds that will one day grow.  
We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.  
We lay foundations that will need further development.  
We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capability.  
We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation  
that enables us to do something, and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way,  
an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.  
We may never see the end results, but that is the difference  
between the master builder and the worker.  
We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.  
We are prophets of a future not our own.

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