

Historical Timeline

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1696

Governor Benjamin Fletcher grants his approval for the Anglican community in Manhattan to purchase land for a new church.

May 6, 1697

Trinity receives its charter and a land grant from King William III of England. An annual rent of "one peppercorne" to the English crown is set.

1698

The first building to house Trinity's worshipers was a modest rectangular structure with a gambrel roof and small porch. According to historical records, Captain Kidd lent his runner and tackle for hoisting the stones.

1705

Queen Anne of England grants Trinity valuable acreage, increasing Trinity's holdings to 215 acres. In the centuries that follow, Trinity divests most of this land to establish and endow other churches and institutions, including what is now Columbia University.

1709

Trinity founds the Charity School (now the Trinity School and the oldest educational institution in continuous operation in New York City). By 1715, over 650 impoverished children are taught to read and write.

1750

A mysterious fire damages the steeple and destroys the Charity School and all records of parish baptisms, marriages and burials to that point. The school was rebuilt and the steeple replaced in 1762 after being destroyed by a lightning-induced fire.

1756

Cornerstone is laid for King's College (now Columbia University) on land granted by Trinity Church.

1767-1808

Trinity directs its efforts toward the needy, helping to found numerous charitable organizations such as the Society for the Relief of Widows and Orphans of Clergymen (1767); the Protestant Episcopal Society for Promoting Religion and Learning in the State of New York (1802); and the African Episcopal Catechetical Institution (1808).

1774-1776

Several Trinity laymen are members of the first and second Continental Congresses as relationships between England and the United States deteriorate. Trinity itself feels the conflict as parishioners are divided in their political loyalties. The clergy take the side of the crown.

September 1776

The original church structure and Charity School are destroyed by a fire that sweeps through New York City. Nearly 500 houses are burned down; thousands of New Yorkers are left homeless.

1784

The Rev. Dr. Samuel Provoost, a patriot, is appointed Rector of Trinity (1784-1800) in 1784. The New York State Legislature ratifies the charter of Trinity Church, deleting the provision that asserted its loyalty to the King of England. Whig patriots are appointed as vestrymen.



1787

Dr. Provoost is consecrated as the first Bishop of the newly formed Diocese of New York.

1789

Following his inauguration at Federal Hall, George Washington attends thanksgiving service, presided over by Bishop Provoost, at St. Paul's Chapel, a chapel of the Parish of Trinity Church. He continues to attend services there until the second Trinity Church was finished in 1790. St. Paul's Chapel is the oldest public building in continuous use in New York City.

1790

The second Trinity Church structure, begun in 1788, is consecrated.

1809

Former Trinity Parishioner Elizabeth Bayley Seton (who became a Roman Catholic in 1805 and was canonized by the Vatican in 1975) founds the Sisters of Charity in North America.

1839

Weakened by heavy snows in the winter of 1838/39, the second church structure is torn down.

1842

Trinity Church Cemetery is established on 23 acres in the area of 155th Street and Riverside Drive. This land was part of the estate of naturalist John James Audubon. In 1843, the first burial in the cemetery is recorded.

May 21, 1846

On Ascension Day, the third, and current, church building is consecrated. Designed by American Institute of Architects co-founder Richard Upjohn, it is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This church building is one of the first and finest examples of Neo-Gothic architecture in the United States.

1857

In response to the panic of 1857, Trinity establishes an outreach center on the Bowery to provide food and counseling to needy families as the number of unemployed in New York reaches almost 40,000.

1864

A pioneer of ecumenism, Dr. Morgan Dix preaches to a congregation of 2,000 at Broadway Baptist Tabernacle. His emphasis on Christian unity is well received.

1866

St. Chrysostom's Chapel is founded. It is the first free chapel established by the parish, authorized by New York State in 1867.

1879

Trinity establishes a Mission House to oversee its growing list of social programs, including: a girls' vocational school, a home for aging women, cooking and nutrition classes for immigrant women, a workingman's club, and a relief bureau to counsel the sick and the jobless. A new Mission House is built in 1888 and enlarged in 1896.

1910

Trinity Rector William T. Manning (1908-1921) joins with other Episcopal leaders in calling for an international, ecumenical conference. As an outgrowth of these efforts, the World Conference on Faith and Order is held in 1927. This conference leads eventually to the formation of the World Council of Churches.

1919

Trinity abolishes the practice of charging for pews.

1922

Trinity pioneers church radio broadcasting with a Christmas Eve radio transmission, heard as far away as Cuba.

— The Depression Years

Trinity uses its buildings as hostels for the homeless and sets up soup kitchens to feed the hungry.

Trinity's Real Estate Department takes over the operation of commercial buildings located on its own land. Back taxes and mortgages, on which the original owners had defaulted, are paid by Trinity; Trinity gains sole control of the leasing and management of these buildings. As of September 2000, Trinity owns 26 commercial buildings in lower Manhattan, with space totaling approximately 6 million square feet of office, retail and manufacturing space.

— The World War II Years

Trinity Mission House coordinates an effort to make bandages and surgical dressings. Eighty men and four women from the Mission House serve in the armed forces.

Beginning on January 1, 1942 (designated by President Roosevelt as a national day of prayer), special New Year's Day services are held at Trinity and its chapels during the course of the war. The first of these services attracted over 1,000 people. Many special intercessions are added at other services and offerings taken for war chaplains. On V-E day and the day following, Trinity conducts hourly thanksgiving services.

— 1946

Trinity purchases 470 acres of land with buildings on the Housatonic River in West Cornwall, Connecticut. Originally established as a multi-purpose camp and meeting facility, the Center now hosts conferences, retreats and summer programs.

— 1950s

Trinity establishes an outreach program for young people living on the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

Trinity News publishes its first issue. Currently, the quarterly magazine is sent to 15,000 clergy and laity throughout the national Episcopal Church and published online at www.trinitywallstreet.org/resources.

— 1967

Trinity Institute, a national, continuing-education program dedicated to theological renewal for clergy and laity in the Episcopal Church, is founded.

— 1969

The first performance of Trinity Church's Noonday Concerts takes place. This series provides the Wall Street community with the finest professional vocal and instrumental performances.

— 1971

Trinity's philanthropy is formalized as the Grants Board is approved as a standing committee of the Vestry of Trinity Church. Through the Grants Program, significant financial support is given to a wide variety of programs domestically and throughout the world.

— July 9, 1976

Queen Elizabeth II presented with symbolic "back rent" of 279 peppercorns on her historic visit to Trinity Church.

— 1982

Trinity establishes St. Paul's Shelter in the balcony of historic St. Paul's Chapel (Broadway and Fulton Streets). The Shelter offers transitional housing and life-skills training for up to fourteen male residents.

St. Margaret's House, a 250-unit residence for low-income, elderly and disabled men and women, is dedicated. Support services include a social worker, 24-hour security, various programs, and a congregate dining room that serves lunch and dinner. Ground-breaking for the facility, located at 49 Fulton Street, takes place on November 18, 1979.

Trinity Preschool is opened at 68 Trinity Place. Currently, the Preschool and Nursery serve 75 students, providing year-round professional childcare to children between the ages of six months and five years.

1983

The Trinity Bookstore, 74 Trinity Place, is organized. It is currently the only full-service Christian bookstore in Manhattan's financial district and stocks a wide variety of religious books.

1985

Trinity establishes a state-of-the-art video studio and editing room to extend its communications outreach. Many programs produced by Trinity Television have won prestigious awards, including several New York Emmys, several Gabriel Awards, Religious Public Relations Council honors, and the CINE Golden Eagle for "Faithful Defiance: A Portrait of Desmond Tutu."

1987

Trinity's sixteenth Rector, The Reverend Daniel Paul Matthews, D.D., is installed.

1988

John Heuss House is founded. This outreach ministry of Trinity Church, located at 42 Beaver Street, is a 24-hour center for the homeless who suffer from chronic mental illness. Meals, showers, clothing, and other support services are provided on a daily basis.

1992

The first satellite broadcast of the Episcopal Cathedral Teleconferencing Network (ECTN) takes place. Trinity Church, with the North American Conference of Cathedral Deans and the Episcopal Church Center Office of Telecommunications, supports this nationwide network that brings interactive, live programming on religious themes to viewers at hundreds of downlink sites across North America.

1996-97

On Ascension Day (May 16) 1996, the Parish of Trinity Church launches a year-long celebration of its 300th Anniversary. Throughout its tercentennial, Trinity focuses on, and rededicates itself to, its rich tradition of worship, leadership, and community service.

2000

In keeping with its 300-year old tradition of worship and congregational life, Trinity offers a full schedule of Sunday, Weekday, and Saturday services, including Morning and Evening Prayer, the Eucharist, and Healing Services. Daycare is offered on Sundays for nursery and kindergarten-age children from 8:30 am to 1:00 pm.

2004

Trinity's seventeenth rector, the Rev. Dr. James H. Cooper, is installed.