

Trinity Buckingham Church Annual Report for January 2020 through June 2021







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RECTOR'S REPORT FOR ANNUAL MEETING 2021

June 6, 2021

Dear Members of the Trinity Family,

Well, I think it is safe to say that when we last met for the annual business meeting of Trinity Buckingham, none of us could have imagined that a pandemic was right around the corner.

One day we were gathered here for worship, singing, hugging, sipping from a common cup, and lingering over coffee, and the next we were in quarantine. At first, we thought we'd be closed for a couple of weeks while the virus ran its course and disappeared. I must admit that first week, I reveled in the gift of extra time. I deep cleaned the rectory kitchen, organized closets, caught up on mending, and read a novel.

By the middle of the second week, it was dawning on all of us that this was not a simple two-week break, but a major public health crisis. Fear for our lives and livelihoods and those of our loved ones set in. We began to wonder how on earth we would maintain relationships and continue to be church—the body of Christ—when we were isolated at home and away from one another.

I remember the moment I realized that I was going to have to figure out how to provide for our worship and fellowship and spiritual needs virtually. Technology has never been my strong suit, but overnight I became a televangelist. Reed Chapel became a production studio and I practically lived there, looking at the little red light on my cell phone and imagining you all saying the responses at home, or reading stories to children in my pajamas in front of the fire place, or inviting unseen participants to silence at Morning Meditation.

It was a great joy to be able to include some lay leaders and have Martha's beautiful voice and skill at the keyboard enrich our worship with music, even though we were each in our own homes.

As the summer wore on, it became clear that livestreaming is simply going to be part of our lives as a worshipping community from now on. Paul Harar spearheaded the technology project that extended the wireless internet to the sanctuary, added a camera and a computer with software that lets us broadcast on our website and on Facebook. When this Boxcast system went live in September, our virtual attendance tripled, and I heard from many of you about how wonderful it was to see our beloved chancel once again.

An added bonus was that we added a new speaker in the rear of the sanctuary which has improved the audio for those who attend worship in person as well as on line.

We were fortunate to receive a technology grant from the diocese for about half the cost of the project. We are also blessed to have the technological wizardry of 14-year-old Ewan Swidorski, who comes faithfully every Sunday to make sure things are operating smoothly and manages the camera.

Like most of you, I'd never heard of Zoom before the pandemic. Now I host Bible Study and Morning Prayer and Compline and book study and coffee hour and vestry meetings. I'm on Zoom with members of this church community six days a week. I am always so glad to see your faces pop up on my screen! One of the blessings of this odd way of being together is that our weekly bible study has tripled in size and often includes members of the Trinity family who have moved from the area.

Your vestry and I made lots of phone calls those first few months, checking in to see how you were doing and how we could support one another through the quarantine. Martha and I curated seasonal resources to support our spiritual lives in diaspora, and Joanne Welker and Natalie Welker-Marx lovingly mailed them to our 150 households throughout the year.

I have been so encouraged by the way you have reached out to one another—phone calls, cards, emails, texts, surprise gifts and food deliveries. Even apart, we have been together.

The quarantine made providing pastoral care so difficult for all of us. I heard from and prayed for parishioners who had contracted COVID, or coped with other health crises, but the virus kept me from being able to make pastoral visits. I wept with those who lost family members and friends and were unable to be with them at their hospital or deathbeds, or to hold funerals or memorial services. We still have much grieving to do together.

But as hard as it has been, it has not been all bad news. Marty and Lauren Gillen began to produce a bi-weekly Trinity Buckingham *Good* News newsletter, and month by month we have celebrated birthdays, graduations, the births of grandchildren, eager for the smiling pictures and proof that life continues in pandemic. Members of the community gifted one another with music and stories and poetry and candles during the twelve days of Christmas. Cynthia's seemingly endless supply of cartoons to accompany the eblast has brightened our days with holy humor.

We've celebrated some real milestones this year. Two 100th birthdays: Cornelia Humphreys in August, with a distanced, drive-by balloon and banner celebration, and Jane Eastwood's birthday celebration here at Trinity just a few weeks ago on April 25. Maddie Bannon, Emily McCreary and Max Harar have graduated from High School this year.

And we've said some hard goodbyes. Doris Whelan, Donna Wisnom, Richard Newman, Lue Hansen, Nick Trunzo, Elaine Good and Dennis Zak left us this year to dwell in the kindly shelter of the Trinity.

Despite the quarantine, Trinity has been anything but dormant. Take a look at the facelift Faith Hall received from the woodworking skills of Jake Swidorski and the paint brushes of Sara Swidorski, Joanne Welker, Natalie Welker Marx and Jim Sanders. Spring daffodils covered the lawn in front of Historic Trinity, a gift planted this year in memory of former parishioner Joanne Phillips.

In a year that saw many preschools close—some permanently—the Trinity Buckingham Academy has remained open. Under the direction of Alison Rose and six dedicated teachers, we have had a thriving program for three year olds and four year olds all year long. Department of Education grants allowed the purchase of a fogging machine and two portable air filtrations systems and masks and disinfectants. Ali reports that not only did they have no COVID cases, they had no colds, or flu or stomach bugs this year either! She also reports a waiting list for fall for the first time in quite a few years. Our support of children and families has been strong during the pandemic.

Others of our outreach ministries did not fare as well. For the first time since its inception, the Code Blue shelter wasn't hosted by Trinity in January, although many parishioners did continue to volunteer for both meals and shelter shifts at the new January host site: Our Lady of Guadalupe. Sadly, the shelter will not be returning to Trinity. Guadalupe has a much larger volunteer base and a space better able to accommodate overnight guests, and so will become the January shelter site for Code Blue. We will continue to have a vital ministry to our unhoused neighbors, just not on site.

Community PeaceMeal has also been on hiatus, during the pandemic, but we look forward to its return to Trinity as a collaboration of St. Philips, Trinity Buckingham and Trinity Solebury, perhaps by fall. Our outreach ministry continued in many smaller and quiet ways: masked people dropped off bags of groceries during Christmas in July, and bicycles in the fall, shopped on-line for our Christmas gift-tag projects and have kept the office in gift cards and the rector's discretionary fund flush for the weekly phone calls we receive from people in need of aid.

Never let it be said that Trinity is not a generous parish. This has been especially true in how you have kept up and even exceeded your financial support of the parish in the last year. Our operating budget has been impacted by the loss of income from rentals and from in-person offerings at Christmas Eve and now two Easter Services, but thanks to all of you, Trinity is still financially afloat. We'll talk more about finances in just a moment, but I do want to thank you for your timely, ongoing and unfailing financial support of this parish.

And here we are. Nearly 15 months after Coronavirus shut our doors, the campaign of public vaccinations is allowing to open them again, and we are gradually resuming some familiar ways of worship, song, fellowship, community and ministry.

But as I said in my sermon last week, I think the church—not just Trinity, but the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church—is at a crossroads. Like Nicodemus, we are being asked to be born anew. These next weeks and months will be ones of discernment and hard choices.

We have been changed by these last 15 months, and we will never be the same. Despite a strong desire on the part of many of us to get back to normal as quickly as possible, going *back* may be neither possible nor truly desirable.

You, your vestry and I will be asking and seeking God's help to answer some tough questions as we go on from here:

Who are we as a result of this last year?

What have we learned about God, about ourselves, about community in these months? What God is calling us to do for the life of the world, and one another *now*? What, from our pre-pandemic life, will we choose to pick up again?

What might we choose to lay down, in order that we might pick up something else? Are there things to celebrate, bless, give thanks for and entrust to Trinity's hallowed past, instead of carrying their bones with us into the future? And what are the resources for ministry that we will need to act on whatever answers we discern—space, time, volunteers, staff, money.

These next months—this next year—can be an exciting time for Trinity. As St. John wrote in his first letter: "Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed."

John goes on to say that God delights in revealing Godself to those who take the time to look, listen and trust.

Ahead of this annual meeting I sent you a brief survey. As much as anything, the questions were to prime the pump, to tickle the imagination of your hearts and prayers as we move forward together into God's future. This is your chance...it's not your only chance, but it is an important chance to make your own dreams known.

As it becomes safer and we become more at ease with being together again face to face and sharing food fellowship, there will be opportunities to engage around questions of worship, education, outreach, pastoral care, fellowship, property, program and resources in smaller groups. In the meantime, I encourage you to speak with me and with members of your newly configured vestry about your vision for our common worship and ministry.

For now, let me leave you with the words of St. Paul:

Glory to God whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen.

LOVING GOD

WORSHIP

When the pandemic closed our red doors for in-person worship in March, Trinity didn't skip a beat in our communal worship of God. By the second Sunday, Pastor Nancy and Deacon Matthew were streaming worship on Facebook live from Reed Chapel. We continued to share Morning Prayer together in this manner until late September, happily adding lay readers when we were able in early summer and blissfully glad of Martha's keyboard and vocal music to help us sing our praises at home.

In late September we were able to resume limited in-person worship and celebrate Holy Eucharist (bread only), though we lamented our continued inability to sing together. A dedicated team of lay volunteers helped keep us safe and sanitized.

The addition internet and audio-visual equipment in the main sanctuary allowed us to begin to livestream worship on our website as well as Facebook at about the same time as our reopening. The virtual attendance tripled, indicating that parishioners were glad to see their familiar holy spaces once more. Kudos to Paul Harar and Dani Badiali for their assistance in getting the Boxcast system installed and running and to Ewan Swidorski for manning the camera on Sundays and fixing the occasional technical glitch.

By Advent, increasing incidents of COVID in the community returned our worship to virtual only, but creative music by Martha Dudich and our lay worship leaders helped make the on-line experience a rich one.

We re-opened in a limited way again before Easter as more and more of our community was able to be vaccinated, and at the time of this writing are looking forward eagerly to lifted restrictions on attendance, although we will continue to be masked indoors. Best of all, we will once again be able to sing together as a congregation.

The Children of All Ages service elected to meet outside in the fall and spring and Pastor Nancy supplemented the opportunities for worship with a weekly Pajama Vespers YouTube video.

We experimented with worship on Zoom as well, with Pastor Nancy as host and Martha Dudich as liturgist and members of the congregation offering reflections at Sunday evening Vespers in Advent and Lent.

The Tuesday and Thursday Morning Meditation moved from Historic Trinity to Facebook live.

In the months prior to the pandemic, Pastor Nancy had begun celebrating Eucharist on First Wednesdays at Ann's Choice. This is a ministry we hope to resume again ere long.

Altar Guild

Trinity Altar Guild is composed of volunteers who prepare the eucharist and care for the altar for each service. Our tasks include polishing silver and brass, laundering and ironing the linens, ordering flowers, seasonal decorating and hanging the banners and altar frontals.

This year had been an unusual one, needless to say. Although we have had our services mostly via zoom this year, the need to present the seasonal changes of the church continued. It helped us feel that somethings in our lives have not changed. So, a grateful Thank You to all who served in this important work.

Altar guild volunteers include: Joanne Welker, Pat/Cook/Jane Eastwood (flowers), Mary Jo May, Joan Noveske, Marjorie Guidry, Sue Snyder, Jill Unger, Janet De Caprio, Natalie Welker-Marx, Judy and Pete Krauss, and Jerry and Meryl LaSala. As Trinity Church returns to being fully in person participation, we look forward to and <u>invite</u> more people to participate in this service of the Altar Guild Ministry. *(Meg Perry)*

SPIRITUAL FORMATION/EDUCATION

In an odd sort of way, our spiritual formation ministry benefited from its move from inperson gatherings in Reed Capel to virtual gatherings on Zoom. The Fizz Bible study has continued to meet every Tuesday and often includes former members of Trinity who have moved to other churches and states. The attendance has doubled, and the community has deepened.

With time to read in quarantine, a book study group formed and met on Zoom every Wednesday morning. Over the course of the pandemic we read three wonderful books together (Brian McLaren's *A Generous Orthodoxy*, Barbara Brown Taylor's *Holy Envy*, and Diana Bulter Bass' *Grounded*)

A Sacred Ground study group co-led by Pastor Nancy and the Rev. Cathy Kerr and made up of members of 5 Bucks County Episcopal parishes explored the topic of racism in America.

And Education for Ministry (EfM), also made up of members of several Bucks parishes, moved to Zoom in the pandemic and has just re-convened in-person.

LOVING our NEIGHBORS as OURSELVES

Fellowship

What we have missed as much as worshipping together is sharing a cup of coffee together in Faith Hall on Sundays. Although we tried for a year to offer Coffee Hour on Sundays and Hump Day Huddles on Wednesdays on Zoom, this format just didn't resonate with many in the Trinity Community and was discontinued at Easter. (Rector's note—those of us who did log on for coffee hour enjoyed getting to know one another better and swapping stories).

Pastoral Care

One of the more difficult things in a year of difficult things was our inability to visit one another in times of need or moments of joy. Hospital and nursing home and home visits abruptly stopped, and only now are restrictions being lifted.

Trinity bade goodbye to Doris Whelan, Donna Wisnom, Richard Newman, Lue Hansen, Nick Trunzo, Elaine Good and Dennis Zak this year.

And we celebrated the 100th birthdays of Cornelia Humphreys in August of 2020 and Jane Eastwood in April of 2021.

We congratulate Maddie Bannon, Max Harar and Emily McCreary on their high school graduations.

Outreach

Four major face-to-face ministries of outreach had to be suspended this year:

Jazz n Joe	Community PeaceMeal
The ECW sales	Code Blue shelter

While the ECW sales and Community PeaceMeal may resume in the future, the Code Blue shelter has found a new January home at Our Lady of Guadalupe. We expect our involvement with the Coalition to Shelter and Support the Homeless with continue, just not in Faith Hall. We are already at work planning Jazz 'n Joe performances for the summer and fall.

Christmas in July Food Drive – In July we held our annual food drive. Bins were placed on the Faith Hall Porch so parish members could drive by and drop off their donations. Approximately nine hundred pounds of food was delivered to local food pantries. *(Bonnie McCabe)*

Christmas Giving Trees – Because church was held virtually and mitigation measures were in place, we carried out this holiday outreach in a different way. Members were able to pick gifts from an Amazon list or send money to the office. The gifts went to Tabor Services and the Doylestown Family Shelter. *(Bonnie McCabe)*

Doylestown Family Shelter – In partnership, Trinity and Doylestown Presbyterian supplied a welcome basket to a new family of eight shortly before Christmas. We also delivered Thanksgiving and Christmas meals. Christmas gifts and gift cards came from the money sent to the Giving Tree Outreach. *(Bonnie McCabe)*

Trinity Buckingham Academy (TBA)

TBA was happy to welcome back students in person September 2020. We did some reshuffling to make sure all of the students and staff felt safe. The four-year-old and three-year-old classes came on different days to help keep up with the health and safety protocols set forth by the department of education and department of human services. As a licensed facility, TBA was able to receive several grants throughout the year from the PA Act 24/CARES act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act) to help pay for staffing and COVID expenses. TBA also applied for the Emergency Assistance to Non-Public Schools (EANS) grant through the PA Department of Education. We were able to add an additional three-year-old class in November 2020, bringing our total enrollment to 30 students. The staff has done an amazing job keeping our students happy and thriving throughout the school year. We are grateful to our wonderful families that have entrusted Trinity during this unprecedented time. We are thankful for the support from the TBA board of directors and church staff has given us to help make this year possible and successful. Our last day of school will be June 4th!

TBA is looking forward to resuming our normal programing for the 2021-2022 school year. We have many returning and alumni families to welcome back this fall! We will be offering lunch bunch, kids club and kindergarten enrichment in the afternoons to supplement our morning programs. *(Educational Director Alison Rose)*

Reports from our Resources for Ministry

PERSONNEL

Staff

Trinity continued to be blessed in 2020 with a talented, creative and generous staff.

The Rev. Dr. Nancy Burton Dilliplane, full-time Rector Ms. Cynthia Goode, half-time administrator Dr. Regina Gordon, part time minister of music Ms. Martha Dudich, organist Ms. Danielle Badiali, rentals coordinator Ms. Caroline Oakes, media communications assistant Ms. Alison Rose, ³/₄ time preschool director

Trinity received a CARES act grant that allowed us to keep staffing at pre-pandemic levels for all of 2020. For the first half of 2021, we have had to furlough Gina and Dani.

Alison Rose and the six teachers and aides for the Trinity Buckingham Academy, while employees of the church, are funded by the operating budget of the Academy.

The Rev. Matthew Simpson was reassigned by the bishop to St. Paul's, Doylestown at the end of 2020, and is relocating to Maine in June of 2021.

Vestry

Trinity is grateful to Marty Gillen for serving this year as Rector's Warden, and to Don O'Hara who has served as Accounting Warden. We are especially grateful to Bob Kinney, Bonnie McCabe, Don O'Hara and Joe McLean for extending their vestry terms by six months to accommodate the rescheduled annual meeting. Thanks as well to Paul Harar (2nd term), Mary-jo May (resigned in 2020), Peter Oliver, Jerry LaSala, RoseMarie Proctor, Joanne Welker and Kevin Wielehowski who have adapted to the challenges of leading a parish in the midst of quarantine.

Volunteers

We could not operate without Trinity's volunteers. While some found their ministries suspended in the pandemic, others donned masks and turned up regularly to help with the ongoing operations of the parish. Kudos to Dave Romero, treasurer, Jim Sanders property volunteer extraordinaire, Joanne Welker and Natalie Welker-Marx who help out in the office and with mailings, and with paintbrushes and gardening gloves. Ewan Swidorski who makes sure our services are broadcast on Sundays (and mom Sara who drives him here). Jake and Sara Swidorski along with Ewan, Rachel and Ellie also donated countless hours last summer to giving Faith Hall a facelift. Joanne Welker and Meg Perry who oversee the altar guild.

Property Committee Report for 2020

Even with the closure due to the COVID pandemic, our Property Committee had a busy year. We had a Zoom meeting and developed a list of the projects that required attention on our grounds and buildings.

Below is a list of the projects that were completed in 2020:

A new AV system was installed in the church so that our Sunday services could be viewed from home. Also, Faith Hall has new AV equipment that will enhance our meetings and rental opportunities. Thank you, Paul Harar and Dani Badiali for heading these efforts.

Faith Hall was completely repainted and has new baseboards. It looks wonderful and a great big thank you to Sara and Jake Swidorski and family, and Jim Sanders for their hard work.

All four-foot lamps throughout the building were replaced by LED lamps except the dimmable lamps in Faith Hall. This includes lamps in the office, classrooms, Reed Chapel, and kitchen. Thank you, Jim Sanders and Marc Olivastri for your work on this project, which will help to lower Trinity's utility expenses.

Drywall repair and new baseboards were installed in the side entrance foyer leading into the church (the area near the organ). The walls and trim were also repainted. Thank you, Jim Sanders and Natalie Welker-Marx.

The iron ramp and step railings leading to the church office area were sanded and painted. Thank you, Jerry LaSala for taking the lead on this.

The old deteriorated shed in the rectory's backyard was removed. Thank you, Bob Kinney for arranging this.

At the bequest of the Phillips Family, and in memory of long-time parishioner Joanne Phillips, Bucks Beautiful and Gale Nurseries planted 5,000 daffodils bulbs around Historic Trinity. *(Joanne Welker)*

Future Projects Using Vision 2020 Funds:

- Reseal the parking lot and repaint the lines
- Have a new roof put on our building, repair the steeple and install gutter covers.
- Replace the aging HVAC units

Media Communications Assistant report on 2020

What a difference a year makes. As every person on the planet was required to adjust to restrictions placed on us this past year by the Covid19 virus, churches needed to turn on a dime and suddenly become technologically super-fluent in order to create, maintain, and sustain communications with the *real* church — the people of the Church, the body of Christ.

(As one favorite pastor of mine said, "Who knew I was going to become a televangelist"?!)

Effective communications suddenly required topnotch online presence, and Trinity met the challenge. BoxCast live streaming from Trinity's sanctuary, twice-weekly parish emails, and a website homepage full of current events posts and links kept the body of Christ informed and included. Parishioners and the many others who participate in Trinity's online community are now able to actually **live-stream Sunday** morning services, view **Sunday morning sermons** through the website on YouTube, and share prayer and song and **story time with Pastor Nancy** through her YouTube **Pajama Vespers** Sunday videos.

Trinity's **Zoom** offerings are another new bonus, with The Fizz Bible Study, Education for Ministry, Trinity Book Groups, Wednesday Happy Hours, and Sunday Coffee Hours available to anyone who "zooms in."

And Marty and Lauren Gillen send out the **Trinity Good News email**, sharing delightful and heart-warming photos and news of fun and important events happening in the lives of Trinity parishioners. Thank you, Marty and Lauren!

We've often spoken of how a church's website homepage is its online "red front door," acting as both a welcome to those who are new to the church, and as a resource to the people of the church. But this was more true than it has ever been as we made every effort possible to stay in close touch during this year's Covid pandemic.

Stewardship Booklet

This year Trinity published a 12-page **Annual Giving booklet** with the theme "Love God and Love Our Neighbor" that outlines Trinity's vision and focus for the years ahead and to showcase the many ways Trinity parishioners are continuing to meet their call to "Love God and Love Our Neighbor" in this time of the pandemic. An online version of the Annual Giving booklet is available on Trinity's website under the "GIVE" tab.

Parish eNews Emails - Trinity's now bi-weekly eNews is THE primary and most effective way to stay updated with current Trinity news. Created by Parish Administrator Cynthia Goode using Constant Contact, it highlights all current events at Trinity and provides links to Trinity's homepage for upcoming events, sermons, and special worship times. Currently it has 211 subscribers with a 42% average open rate versus the industry average of 12%. <u>Fun facts:</u> 59% of you view from your desktop, 10% from your tablet and 31% from your mobile phone.

Social Media

Trinity's online spiritual community continues to grow at a steady pace. The number of followers of Trinity's Facebook page has grown 700% in seven years!! If you are on Facebook but are not yet a "follower" of Trinity there, please visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/trinitybuckinghamchurch and click the LIKE button.

Also, it really helps Trinity get the word out about events and general news and wisdom if you click the SHARE button on posts you find interesting so the post will be sent to your Facebook friends, and those friends will learn more about Trinity. Thank you!

In circling back to the theme of this year's Annual Giving booklet, even in the midst of the real hardship and anguish that the Covid19 virus has brought to many of us, it has been an honor to be a part of communicating all the ways Trinity loves God and loves our neighbor. Let us pray for a more restful and healthy year for all. *(Caroline Oakes)*

Facilities and Rental Coordinator report 2021

To say that we have had a challenging year for rentals, is truly an understatement! Who knew that my last Wedding Event was to take place in Historic Trinity back in March 2020!

A big thank you to our Vestry for securing a grant back at in 2020 that allowed me to stay on board until the beginning of this year. It meant so much to me and my family as the events and rentals industry was especially hard hit by the pandemic.

Bright spots during the pandemic include:

- Continued rental income from AnnaP Catering In an effort to stay in business herself, Anna's team used Fay's Kitchen to prepare "Family Meals" for the public.
- Our weekly AA support group was also generous with financial support for their use of Faith Hall throughout 2020/2021.
- During the many months of downtime, Faith Hall received a much needed face lift with minor repairs and a new coat of paint by some very generous parishioners. Thank you **Swidorski family**, and **Jim Sanders** for leading the project. The Hall has never looked so good!

Going forward in 2021:

- Gilbert & Sullivan performing group will begin rehearsals this month in preparation for their first show back in July at Del Val University.
- The Handweaver's Guild is also securing dates to resume their monthly meetings.
- If you are planning any type of event in the fall, please reach out to me ASAP so that I can secure your date on our wide-open calendar!

In closing, I pray that 2021 blesses all of us with continued health and I pray for a robust rental season for the end of this year and 2022. I am looking forward to coming back to Trinity and resuming my regularly scheduled program real soon! *Dani Badiali*



Sharing Gods love and serving God's people With Christ in our hearts and God's work through our hands.



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