

# Trinity United Church of Christ, St. Louis, MO

## Celebrating 125 Years

In the past 125 years, God has been at work in many wonderful ways, as Trinity Church has sought in faithfulness, to minister unto others in His name and spirit. There have been both valleys and mountaintops in the life of this, His Church.

In the fall of 1893, Reverend Jacob Iron, pastor of St. Paul's Church and President of the Missouri District of The Evangelical Synod asked Rev. Herman R. Booch, a student at Eden Seminary, to canvas an area in South St. Louis then known as Mt. Pleasant to determine the possibility of establishing a church. Forty children expressed a desire to enroll in the Sunday school and the first class was held on the first Sunday in October 1893 in two rented rooms in a house owned by William Hoffmann located at 2905 Neosho Street. The German Evangelical Synod of North America desired to give this poor Mt. Pleasant neighborhood a church, which would establish one more link in the great chain of Christian Churches. Six weeks later, on November 16, 1893, the church was organized as The German Evangelical Trinity Church of St. Louis with 32 adults present and religious services were held the following Sunday with Rev. Herman Booch as our first Pastor.

The Mt. Pleasant Community was a poor one and a committee was formed and began working to solicit funds to purchase a lot at the corner of Neosho Street and Michigan Avenue. With the help of the Mission Board and a personal loan from Mr. Henry Weisbush, a simple frame building consisting of a sanctuary and a one-room school was constructed. The dedication service was held on Sunday, June 17, 1894.

The young congregation experienced many trials and declared itself self-sustaining in January, 1897, and therefore, received no more funds from the Mission Board. The neighborhood was not an affluent one and it became difficult to pay the Pastor's salary and a debt of \$2550.00. So, many members became discouraged and left the congregation.

Better times were seen on the horizon. In August of 1900, many old members returned, and new ones were added. In 1908, a basement was added under the old church, an addition built to replace the schoolroom, and the building was veneered with brick. New pews and art glass windows were purchased with gifts from various members and organizations. A two-manual Kilgen organ was installed and a parsonage adjoining the church was built and later enlarged by adding a second story.



1918 was Trinity's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, which was a happy occasion because 55 new members were added. The Sunday school enrollment was around 450 children and the growing congregation realized the need for more room. The church became debt free in July of 1921 and in July of 1922, the lot at the corner of Grand Avenue and Itaska Street was purchased. In 1927, it was decided to build a parsonage on the lot and to use the parsonage on Neosho Street as a Sunday school, meeting rooms, and a dwelling for the caretaker. A large financial campaign was begun to raise money for a new church

building. The groundbreaking services were held in August of 1930 and the cornerstone was laid on October 12, 1930, by Pastor Bahnsen.

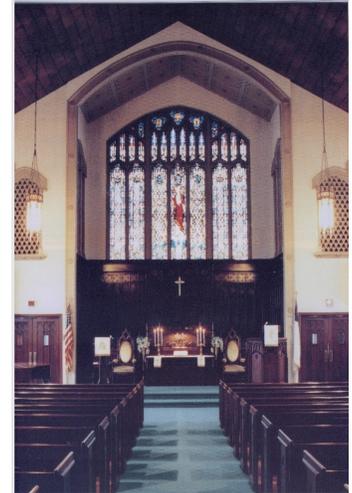
Because of the Great Depression, financial struggles hit many members with more and more members out of work and unable to provide their daily needs and unable to meet their pledges. The

financial trouble of the time not only affected the members of Trinity but Trinity itself, as it was impossible to meet even the interest payments of the financing of the new church building. Despondency settled on the congregations and church membership dwindled to less than 300. However, the faithful carried on realizing that through faith, work, prayer, and courage, Trinity would again go forward.

As the suffering of the stormy days of the depression was beginning to subside, the church made great progress and the stakes of the church strengthened by winning back the former members and inspiring the whole congregations with new hope and uniting them in one Christian family. Church membership grew reaching a peak of 1700 in 1947. The average Sunday attendance in 1948 was 900.

The year 1957 marked a new chapter in Trinity's and denomination's history when the Congregational Christian Church and Evangelical and Reformed Church united, forming the United Church of Christ.

The work of Christian education continued to grow and created a need for another expansion. In 1954, a new educational building was erected and dedicated. It included two pastors' studies, the church office, a library, and fifteen class/meeting rooms. Extensive repairs were made to the organ, air-conditioning was installed, and the art glass windows were repaired. Trinity became very active in the community making the facilities available to groups from Cleveland High School, elementary schools, Girl Scouts, and Boy Scouts for various banquets and awards programs.



After much planning and preparation, Trinity's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was held in 1968 at the Scottish Rite Cathedral with dinner and a special program. The church basement was remodeled by adding paneling to the walls and new tile on the floor and ceiling. The kitchen was updated, and cabinets were installed in the dining area.

Trinity continued to serve the community by allowing the Red Cross to hold blood donations, entertaining the Emmaus Home residents with barbecues and parties, and allowing the St. Louis Association of Retarded Children to use our classrooms for twenty-five years.

During the latter part of the 1970's, parents were very concerned about the education their children were receiving in the St. Louis Public Schools. The South Side Church Group consisting of Seven U.C.C. churches combined efforts in 1980 to start the United Community in Christ School which was an elementary school using Trinity's classrooms.



In 1987, The Archives Room was created to display Trinity's history, the Wayside Chapel was refurbished, extensive repairs were made to the 3-Manual Kilgren organ including the installation of a new rank, and new seat cushions were installed in the sanctuary.

In 2007, due to declining membership and skyrocketing maintenance costs, a tough decision was made to sell the three buildings Trinity owned and move to a more manageable facility. A small church was purchased, and Trinity moved to its current location in Affton, Missouri in the Summer of 2008. Since moving, Trinity has personalized the sanctuary with some of the stained-glass windows and the altar from the old building. In 2009, a projector was installed for video presentation of the worship services utilizing

computer-based software. The projector is also used for community movie nights, weddings, funerals, and Boy Scout meetings. Improvements continue to this day including the replacing of the pews with chairs to make the sanctuary more versatile to adapt to the various uses. To date, there have been three Boy Scout Eagle Projects that have taken place at Trinity, as Trinity and its members are strong supporters of Scouting. Future improvements include remodeling of the lower level with an improved kitchen, upgraded lighting, and code compliant remodeling.

In November of 2018, Trinity will celebrate its 125 years of serving the community. Trinity is the first church to officially become Open and Affirming in 2018. We also have a registered Free Library/Food Pantry. With our many talented and loyal members, we look forward to the yet uncharted future with confidence and expectation knowing that we meet each new challenge with God's help.

