

**“The foundation remains”...The Challenge Continues**  
**A History of Holy Trinity, 1991-2017**

**By Jessica Taylor**



Holy Trinity Episcopal Church  
Gainesville, Florida  
Celebrating 150 Years, 1868-2018

## "The foundation remains"...The Challenge Continues



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### The Cover:

The pelican carving on the reredos above the altar in both the 1907 and the 1995 sanctuaries represents Christ's sacrifice for mankind, as the mother pelican will pierce her own breast to provide nourishment for her young.

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**Author's note:**

This brief account of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church discusses only the most recent events in a long history inextricably tied to the story of Gainesville. Even though this chapter in the church's history begins in 1991, an astonishing amount of organizing, giving, preaching, singing, building, and rebuilding was accomplished by teachers, lawyers, dancers, schoolchildren, college professors, and homemakers. Their actions make downtown Gainesville a more welcoming and just community. The following work is for the parishioners and staff who, in records we keep, often remain "invisible" but who keep the services and buildings working week after week: pastoral care volunteers, the Altar Guild, the sextons, calicifers, vergers, secretaries, childcare specialists, and many other talented and passionate people. Sincere gratitude goes to Jim Salter and Professors Ginny Maurer and David Colburn, and this work certainly would not have been possible without the work of the Archives Committee.

## **"The foundation remains"...The Challenge Continues**

*...all of the particular and specific incarnations of God's Word—all the special people and times and places that have shaped us and made us who we are—are passing, transitory. ...But the Gospel remains—and will remain. It remains alive in the people of God—in us, and in our children, and in their children. When all else has passed away—when the roof has collapsed, and the walls have crumbled, and the windows and doors are empty—only the foundation remains.*

**-The Rev. David Pittman, Rector, 1991**

### **Conquering Challenges**

Parishioners at Holy Trinity at the start of 1991 were no doubt stunned at the accelerating rate of change surrounding their historic church: downtown problems endemic to every urbanizing area concerned community members: rising numbers of homeless individuals and families outnumbered beds in shelters, and a significant percentage of Alachua County residents fell below the poverty line. Holy Trinity's leadership faced a potential identity crisis: how should church leadership respond to multiplying needs in the downtown area? How would the building accommodate a growing congregation and multiple ministries?

The crisis culminated on January 21, 1991 when an arsonist set fire to and destroyed the church building. Holy Trinity's fire was one of three in Gainesville set by the same arsonist that day, and one of over a thousand set nationwide during a spike in the 1990s. Nell Page, watching over napping toddlers in the Child Caring Center, smelled smoke and evacuated the children, while part-time assistant rector the Rev. James (Jim) Wright called the fire department. With both urgency and helplessness "all of us that could get in touch with each other drove as fast as we could to the church," vestryman Jim Stringfellow remembered. Many parishioners stood on the corner and watched the fire spread and eventually consume the roof. Virginia Maurer recounts the hundreds of people watching in the streets. "I looked at it and I thought, oh, there are firetrucks. Someone must've had a heart attack. I said, no, the roof's gone. There's a fire. And,

I just started bawling. And I turned to a policeman and said, that's my church!" Parishioner David Colburn remembers that "at first, many of us thought the church could be saved. But when the roof collapsed, everyone realized there was no saving even part of it." Long-time parishioners with priceless memories of the church were devastated at the loss of their historic structure. Minnie Crevasse was a member since childhood and recalled, "You could sit inside the [church], with its beautiful windows, the music, the altar, birds singing outside, the sounds of children playing in the playground, and feel like the hymn says, 'Nearer, my God, to Thee.'"

Most parishioners, whatever their memories in the church, faced the future with new determination; member Gary Kirkland wrote in an essay about the fire, "For a father the reality of the ashes couldn't take away his recollection of seeing a bride come down the aisle or remembering what it was like to cradle her in his arms as a tiny baby with drops of water from her baptism glistening in her hair." Rector David Pittman assured the congregation and the Gainesville community that, "We have a sense of pulling together, just like a family pulls together when there's a death in the family...we have a renewed sense of mission."

"I'm sitting there thinking, well, we really needed it bigger so here's the opportunity to do that." Holy Trinity Episcopal Foundation President James Salter's thoughts were prophetic, and the fire started new conversations about how the church might grow and change for the better. The clergy, vestry, the Foundation, and congregants found creative solutions to the enormous tasks of rebuilding, fundraising, and reconvening services. In so doing, they demonstrated the value of the church's downtown location and its ties to both congregants and Gainesville's faith community. From the start, the vestry and new rebuilding committee ensured that plans for the project remained transparent and participatory for parishioners. Fr. David Pittman's equanimity and desire for consensus encouraged creative solutions to issues surrounding logistics and

funding. Enthusiastic parishioners took up the call to give and participate in the cleaning and rebuilding process.

Services and salvage of the building's remains resumed immediately with the help of neighbors. Firefighters rescued the processional cross, ceremonial brass and silver pieces, and books from the church that had escaped the blaze. The night after the fire, Holy Trinity's clergy held a special service in nearby First United Methodist Church, marking the first of coming weekly services held there. In 1991 alone, services were held at nearby Williams-Thomas Funeral Home, University United Methodist Church, St. Michael's, St. Joseph's, Chapel of the Incarnation, and in Holy Trinity's Children's Chapel. Parishioners gathered in the University of Florida auditorium on Easter and University United Methodist Church on Christmas to accommodate the larger groups. Friends of the Library across Main Street helped move the parish library to a safe location. In the ensuing months, local businesses from bookstores to banks donated alongside church members towards the building fund.

In his sermon less than a week after the fire, Fr. Jim Wright preached a message of hope: "We will rebuild our sacred place, for this momentary loss cannot keep us down. It is the essence of our faith that resurrection follows death." Fred Cantrell, Sr., chaired the building committee—comprised of a number of long-time church leaders to guide the lengthy process—that set to work dozens of parishioners divided into subcommittees. Meanwhile, Holy Trinity's prominent organizations and parishioners found niches in the rebuilding effort. St. Mary's Altar Guild shouldered the responsibility of restoring rescued silver and preparing it for every service, regardless of location. Individual parishioners helped salvage when they saw the need: Buddy Thomas cleaned and cared for the enormous church bell in his home, and Susan Wehlberg rescued the brass chandelier from the dumpster. Most of the collected artifacts were stored in

parishioners' homes. Junior Warden Pete Vickers painstakingly collected historic stained glass fragments and catalogued them by window. Members of St. Elizabeth's Circle started planning a fundraiser for the building fund through the sale of burnt "relics." The process of collecting, caring for, and distributing salvaged materials from the fire scattered the physical church across Gainesville, signifying the larger community's stake in Holy Trinity's future.

On top of business as usual, the vestry used the rebuilding process to open communication between leadership and parishioners so that they could reevaluate together the role of the church in the downtown community. Virginia Maurer led the process committee, which held focus groups of parishioners in people's homes and at Holy Trinity's campus, "a bonding experience for a congregation in grief." Members of focus groups were asked what kind of building they wanted but more importantly, where they wanted it—downtown or in the suburbs? Parishioners and the building committee ultimately decided on a traditional church very much like the old and in its original location, reaffirming their place as a downtown church. Longtime vestry member Jim Stringfellow remembered, "When the church burned, we had a choice to buy some land in the northwest where most of our congregation lives. It would have been a natural thing to build a church in the northwest. So this was a purposeful move to stay here and serve this area. That's needed." Although nearby churches had made the move to a more suburban environment, the vestry recommitted to "understanding our role as a downtown parish and developing a ministry appropriate for a downtown parish."

Once the location was set, the vestry contracted with architect Ann Beha, who specializes in historic public spaces. Beha met often with the congregation—including a Sunday School class—in order to design a traditional church that met Holy Trinity's changing needs. The new church's façade strongly resembled the old, incorporating the original church's silhouette and the

intact bell tower. The church and new parish hall, however, would both accommodate larger numbers of people. A new, custom pipe organ would be complemented by improved acoustics and a new sound system. New stained-glass windows, created in France and dedicated to loved ones, would accentuate the traditional style of the church. The construction committee chose small local builder Joyner Construction and contract manager John Carlson to complete the church and work closely with Fr. Pittman and the rebuilding committee. Once plans were solidified, parishioners remained interested in the construction process, volunteering to paint, assisting Sunday School students in a mosaic installation, and taking time to tour the construction zone and provide input. St. Elizabeth's Circle, in Virginia Maurer's words, "came alive after the fire," raising substantial funds for the new buildings. Their work included the reinstallation of the Ascension stained glass window—saved from the fire since it had been removed for repair—and the furnishings in the Rev. William Lillycrop Reception Room. The interior design committee worked with the architect to pick colors, fabrics, carpets, and pews that made the church comfortable and welcoming. The new spaces promised to serve as the heart of the parish and as a permanent, downtown center of music and culture. The vestry reaffirmed the importance of the building itself for members and Gainesville residents, where even in its most passive state the church would "once again provide members of our community a place to which they can go for quiet reflection." As Jim Stringfellow concluded, "Holy Trinity is the old backbone of the community-type church. Our mission is very clear, and I'm sure we're gonna stay with this mission forever."

On September 8, Fr. Pittman held a service in the ruins of the historic church to deconsecrate the space and rededicate the congregation for the tasks ahead. Older children from the youth group helped set up for the event, and St. Elizabeth's Circle distributed stained glass

fragments to parishioners as keepsakes. The service reinforced that life moved on in the months after the fire. The Holy Trinity Episcopal Foundation played a pivotal role in funding the new church, and parishioners noted that strong layman leadership, particularly from fundraising chair James Salter and Wayne Castello of the campaign committee, kept finances organized and schedules on time. Al Alsobrook, Special Gifts Chair, and Capital Funds Coordinator Elaine Stiefel James ran a successful fundraising campaign across the Gainesville community. Gainesville residents, in David Colburn's words, "exhibited support and Christian love throughout the rebuilding process." Services were continuously held at First United Methodist Church a short walk away, Sunday School took place in another building on Main Street, clergy maintained weekend classes, and the Holy Trinity Child Caring Center continued operations at the 16th Avenue (Center II) location. To keep up with the logistics and work of rebuilding the church, Fr. Wright was promoted to full-time assistant priest on July 1 to fulfill needs for preaching, services, and pastoral care. Holy Trinity's many choirs began taking new members. The robust outreach program continued through food, blankets, and clothing distribution to the downtown homeless. Leadership also remained able to quickly respond to community needs, answering the call to help keep guard at First United Methodist during the rash of church arsons.

With parishioners enthused at the prospect of renewal, membership and involvement remained strong at Holy Trinity and at the other Gainesville churches damaged by arson the year before. Camden Pierce, then a newlywed and recent Gainesville transplant, remembered, "We just got caught up, I think, in this story of Holy Trinity burning down and coming back. So we started attending Holy Trinity when they were meeting in the parish hall." At the start of 1992, donations and pledges to the building fund eclipsed a million dollars, and yearly canvass pledges remained strong through the construction of the new church. The vestry and clergy did not skip

a beat after a second arson fire in June of 1992 destroyed the parish hall. Workers broke ground for the new church on January 31, 1993, and when construction estimates proved too burdensome, the building committee found creative solutions that cut the cost by over \$1.4 million. Events large and small—tea parties, T-shirt sales, "Music in the Ruins" featuring pianist Evans Haile—supported the building fund and attested to the creativity and commitment of active parishioners. In 1994 one such church member, Martha Williams, even donated her Rolls Royce for a raffle. After the groundbreaking, the vestry issued final instructions to the builders that, "Above all, the church building, with its focus on the altar, should be a house of prayer, a welcomer of everyone's dreams, and a place to celebrate our common life."

The clergy and staff also integrated new ideas into successful programs even without a completed building. Following Director of Program Cynthia Baskin's enrollment in seminary, a personnel committee reconsidered the behind-the-scenes workings of the staff, rewriting position descriptions to create new Director of Education and Director of Music positions. Choirmaster and organist David Benson immediately filled the role of Director of Music, and in 1993 longtime teacher and parishioner Debra Stinson became the Director of Education. Stinson led the Church School through a renewal of its own, with new curriculums for school-aged children and children's participation in preexisting outreach programs like Save a Tree and the yearly blanket drive. On 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the vestry began offering scholarships for low-income families toward tuition at the Child Caring Center; by 1999, out of thirty-four children, ten received partial scholarship. The Ecumenical Vacation Bible School, founded in part by Holy Trinity in the 1970s, continued with the support of over twenty participating churches. Without a parish hall for large gatherings, the adult education classes met in small groups and throughout the week. Parishioners took the initiative to offer new programs, like "Solo Flight" for singles

alongside established clergy favorites like Fr. Jeremy Hole's book class. Bill Weaver and George Bentley organized and staffed the church's new library, and by 1995 eagerly anticipated its opening with over fifteen hundred volumes available for checkout. Through nine separate pastoral ministries, Ann Shands, Mary Saxon, Dot Sterling, and many others provided leadership coordinating services beyond the church through prayer with home-bound parishioners, hospital patients, and young families. Their quiet work, providing consistent pastoral care outside church walls, was emblematic of the female leadership that helped the parish function during this period of transition.

By late 1994, the parish hall was already functioning and versatile, allowing on-site concerts, community group meetings, youth group plays, and Christmas Dinner to accommodate enthusiastic crowds. Foreshadowing the demand for the completed campus, people flooded into the new Earle Page Parish Hall even before it was dedicated in January of 1995, when services finally shifted back to Holy Trinity's campus from First Methodist. At the dedication celebration, Fr. Wright preached that the community space, named after beloved Rector Earle Page (1960-1985), would be like Page, "a sign and a symbol of God's presence...an empty channel through which the Holy Spirit could travel and touch other people." In the following weeks, Pete Vickers organized luncheons and lectures for the "sixty-five or better" crowd. She called it Adults Pleasantly Pursuing Leisure Enthusiastically (APPLE): "We didn't want to be called a golden, a silver, or a senior anything. Being good Episcopalians, we wanted it to be something that was different, that was more age-confirming." Sixty to eighty parishioners filled the hall per event, and used the meetings to coordinate out-of-town trips to destinations from the Florida Aquarium to Savannah. Sexton Mitchell Craig kept the hall clean and safe even as construction finished around these events.

The church was consecrated on the eve of the Pentecost, June 3, 1995, and clergy and leadership wasted no time in putting the building's improved capacity to good use. On May 24, 1995, Cynthia Baskin was ordained as a deacon at the church and delivered her first sermon. St. Elizabeth's Circle dedicated partial proceeds from their annual Christmas Bazaar to landscaping the campus courtyard so that it could hold a hundred people comfortably. In 1996, the church hosted twenty weddings, twenty-nine baptisms, and twenty-two funerals, and every week hosted five meals, five choir rehearsals, six worship services, and about seventeen meetings for educational groups and fifteen non-affiliated community groups.

Holy Trinity's arts groups also made extensive use of the new church. In 1996, Ruth Johns and other adult parishioners in Holy Trinity's theater group, the Pelican Repertory Company, briefly through two junior musicals, brought dramatic performance back to the church. Although the folk choir and chancel choir continued to travel across the state for concerts, under David Benson's direction the music program contributed to the interfaith Festival of Choirs at Holy Trinity and held collaborative concerts with choirs from nearby houses of worship. Benson also diversified the program by reinstating the "Angel" Choir for young children and founding the Handbell Choir with a complete set of handbells donated in 1994. The facilities also attracted musicians from beyond Gainesville, including the Saint Thomas Choir in 1998, and the Stetson Concert Choir and the Children's Choral Festival in 1999. The new church gave the arts room to grow and parishioners room to celebrate life's major milestones.

With the campus complete and in use, Holy Trinity's parishioners dedicated themselves to the downtown mission just as Gainesville's downtown shifted dramatically. New meeting space allowed clergy and active parishioners to deepen their commitments to earlier programs and ministries—youth education, HIV/AIDS ministry, environmental justice—while the new

church building and weekly services remained at the core of parish life. Clergy and vestry remained sensitive to developing needs in Gainesville and strengthened interfaith ties to address these. Before and after the fire and reconstruction, Holy Trinity's vestry ensured the church's commitment to longtime partners like Habitat for Humanity, Hospice, and St. Francis House. The number of community or parish outreach groups and volunteers proliferated in response to Gainesville's endemic problems related to poverty, homelessness, and healthcare. Even though its downtown location is only one facet of Holy Trinity's identity, Fr. Pittman wrote in 1998, "I am sometimes surprised when I stumble upon some group doing some ministry that I had forgotten about."

The most growth to an established outreach program, however, came from the HIV/AIDS ministry under the guidance of Eleanor and E.T. Henry and Fr. Wright. When the ministry was founded in 1990, HIV/AIDS diagnoses in Florida were on a steady rise, particularly among very young children born with the virus. By 1991, five thousand Floridian adults and over a hundred infants and toddlers were diagnosed yearly. By 1992, twenty people associated with Holy Trinity had died of AIDS. With support from the vestry, parishioners ramped up key programs increasing support for people living with HIV or AIDS, including a support group attended by dozens and a yearly healing conference held at the diocesan retreat, Camp Weed. Volunteers also contributed to the campaign for awareness, openness and especially education for young people, praying with twelve other congregations across town during the annual World AIDS Day service and contributing the names of Holy Trinity members lost to AIDS to the national AIDS Memorial Quilt. As the demographics of the disease changed, clergy created a support group specifically for women in 1995 and met with the African American AIDS Task Force in 1996. The ministry took a philosophical approach consistent with Holy Trinity's place as a downtown

church: to confront and embrace pain and difficulty, rather than to create distance from it.

Eleanor Henry wrote about her perspective, "We need the sense of control that comes with offering advice or solutions. It can be difficult to voluntarily place ourselves with those who are in confusion and despair...But standing beside those in anguish, facing the mystery of children's suffering, is a powerful sign of caring, a way to share one another's burdens."

Henry's thoughts undergirding the AIDS ministry also influenced Holy Trinity's response to two interrelated, growing problems in downtown Gainesville: homelessness and hunger. During the 1990s, the number of people sleeping on the streets in cities across the country spiked, while in Gainesville the percentage of people living below the poverty line climbed steadily. Between 1996 and 1999, the use of Gainesville's food pantries rose by 300%. At the time the new church was consecrated, Florida ranked fifth in the nation in homelessness, with nearly 58,000 people experiencing a short-term or chronic lack of shelter. In 1994, Fr. Pittman convened an "Evangelism with the Poor" workshop to plan effective ministry in downtown Gainesville, and many leading women in the church responded to the call. Suzanne Brown initially coordinated an informal Streetside Breakfast to address the lack of morning meals offered to the downtown homeless population. In 1996, before Sunday service her newly-formed committee served coffee and bagels from a stand to a small crowd at the entrance to the parish hall on 2nd Avenue. When Leonardo's Pizza began contributing deep-dish pizza in 1996, the number of guests—"Veterans, the elderly, women and children, people who walk over from the Salvation Army and St. Francis"—increased steadily until between fifty and eighty people were served every Sunday in the parish hall. Once a month the weekend sexton, Frankie Sumpter, cooked a hot breakfast of eggs and grits.

Tapping into interfaith networks once again, Holy Trinity worked with other houses of worship to address a myriad of community needs. In 1995, parishioners became involved in the SHARE food co-op. By 2000, the program provided a hundred packages of discounted food a month to families in need. Holy Trinity also helped Gainesville Community Ministries (GCM) offer dozens of services each year to several thousand residents. Holy Trinity also supported one of GCM's most central ministries, Project 5000, which delivers emergency supplies of food to families. Other volunteers worked toward helping people in crisis. One parishioner told the congregation, "Last week a social worker brought in a woman whose husband had threatened to kill her. She needed to get herself and her three small children away. GCM provided bus fare to New York and toys and snacks to the children as she had to leave hastily. Without GCM one can only guess what would have happened to that family." Every year during the 1990s, requests for GCM's assistance rose.

After Fr. Pittman's workshop, Junior Warden Pete Vickers searched for her own solutions to what appeared an overwhelming problem. "I don't know what to do. What do you do when you're just a middle-aged white person who works and has a family? How do you help people like that?" For years after the workshop, she pushed fellow vestrymen and church members to consider implementing the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN). Implemented in the northeastern US, IHN is a temporary housing solution for families in need. Organizers needed a dozen churches to offer week-long housing and meals to a temporarily homeless family. Vickers was bolstered by Pittman's support and long-term involvement in addressing downtown issues with the Alachua County Coalition for the Homeless and Hungry, later renamed the North Central Florida Alliance for the Homeless and Hungry. In the mid-1990s, 32% of the homeless were family units who needed a place to sleep and access to social services in order to find

employment and permanent housing. Once the vestry approved Holy Trinity's participation and funding in 1995, Pete Vickers led the uphill charge, recruiting houses of worship from tiny one-room chapels to enormous congregations for IHN. In April 1998, eighty of Holy Trinity's volunteers cooked, set up beds, laundered sheets, and provided supplies and companionship for IHN's first family, a young couple expecting twins. The program, later renamed "Family Promise", is entering its twentieth year offering hospitality in 2018.

Holy Trinity also expanded its presence in Latin America in the 1990s through a variety of parishioner-run programs. Holy Trinity's congregants sent a thousand books to American University of the Caribbean in Haiti, and medical supplies and other forms of relief to Central America after the 1996 earthquake in Nicaragua. The church, at a critical time, also deepened its relationship with companion church Iglesia Episcopal de San Juan Bautista in Florencia, Cuba. Food, tires, medical supplies, and money for building repairs were hard for Cubans to come by after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, and church members in the "Cuba Club" sent a steady supply of these previous commodities throughout the decade. Nancy Galloway recalled, "The very first day I was in Florencia, a man came to visit and asked if I had brought vitamins for pregnant women. His daughter was pregnant and did not have any. Fortunately, I was able to help." Yearly trips to Cuba during the embargo—and even a visit from San Juan's priest—closed the distance between different congregations of the same faith and supported the Diocese of Florida's growing Companionship Ministry in Cuba.

Although the church was on secure financial footing and enthusiasm for outreach remained high, concern persisted about how to deepen intergenerational connections and attract more young people and young families to Holy Trinity. Parishioner Rita Henderson wrote, "We need to give them reasons to make the journey downtown and provide opportunities for them to

become a vital force in the church. They are our future." "That's when we lose them or keep them," church historian George Bentley added, "and for many of them that's when they keep or lose their spiritual well-being." In 1993, informal get-togethers or "foyer groups" were re-established to bring parishioners of multiple backgrounds together in fellowship. In 1995, the Guild of the Christ Child began offering support to parents of infants. The Evangelism/Welcoming Committee established a sponsor program for newcomers, and Fr. Pittman renewed old traditions of providing fresh-baked bread to visitors and hosting coffee hour after services. The diocese allocated resources throughout the 1990s to improving Camp Weed, the site of three youth retreats from Holy Trinity yearly. Youth Director Julie Johns Thompson orchestrated "Family Night Dinners," catered by local restaurants like Grandy's and Sonny's, to reinforce the youth ministry's emphasis on the importance of family. After she resigned in 1999, the vestry dedicated a half-time position solely to middle school and high school students. When Sunday School teacher Beth Sheppard filled Thompson's shoes, she was tasked with programming for youth in the critical ages of 11 to 18. After Debra Stinson filled the new role of Director of Children and Family Ministry and Adult Education, she reported in 2000 that 18 volunteers and 4 paid staff led 156 children in the children's program.

Julie Johns Thompson also consciously incorporated service into the Episcopal Youth Encounter curriculum for teenagers, and young people, which made an enormous impact on the "in-reach" offered by the church. Members of the church youth hosted Mother's Day Teas for their mothers and grandmothers, Valentine's Day parties for elementary school-aged church youth, and Halloween parties with First United Methodist Church. They led the congregation during Youth Sunday services, set up for Spring Family Picnics, and delivered homemade pumpkin bread or gift baskets quarterly to Holy Trinity's homebound parishioners. They also

joined established outreach groups for intergenerational work, including the annual Earth Day Great Florida Clean-Up, and a visit to hospitalized Florida manatees during the large 1996 die-off. Holy Trinity's youth were supplied with a multifaceted understanding of parish needs and real-time responses to problems beyond church walls, both critical for future leadership in the church.

### **Time for Change**

Holy Trinity's parishioners faced the new millennium with mixed feelings about the future. In 2000, Fr. Pittman reported strong numbers: clergy held 390 worship services per year, congregants volunteered with a dozen outreach ministries in Gainesville and contributed to almost as many national and international programs. However, clergy also noticed shortcomings in the Evangelism and Welcoming Committees, writing in 2001 that "we desperately lack leadership" on the part of parishioners. Concerns remained about involving married and unmarried young people, while attendance at the Sunday evening service popular with young people declined drastically, from 121 to 56 worshippers in an average week.

Fr. Pittman felt that after fifteen years, Holy Trinity would evolve and grow with the help of "different gifts, new ideas, new energy." He accepted a position as rector of St. Peter's, a downtown church in Charlotte, North Carolina, in March 2001. For the vestry, charged with forming a committee and preparing a parish profile for prospective rector applicants, the search was a chance to "get to know ourselves without David." Pittman's move was expected by some, but his resignation came at a moment of transition among lay leadership and clergy at Holy Trinity and beyond. Over the next couple of years, parishioners also got to know a new

maintenance team, organist, HTCCC director, and lay leadership. Longtime music director David Benson resigned in 2001, and his enormous duties were undertaken by new organist Lee Cobb, volunteer Lorraine Amick, and St. Michael's Director of the Folk Choir Brent Swanson. Larry Van Cleave became the facilities manager in 2001, and HTCCC hired Rebekah Reneke as new director in 2002. Will and Elizabeth Spencer, "heads of many commissions, groups, and projects," transferred to a church in St. Augustine and left a leadership void; in Bruce Hoffman's words, "I don't know who's going to step in to fill their shoes." Simultaneously, neighboring churches St. Michael's and the Chapel of the Incarnation underwent almost concurrent searches for new rectors. To steer through the turnover, the vestry remained "intact" or frozen through the search for a new rector. They provided continuity of leadership and underscored determination that the parish, and not the diocese or Bishop Stephen Jecko, make the choice of rector. Jim Salter chaired the search committee, Betty Alsobrook served as vice chair, and theology professor Fr. Taylor Scott joined the clergy in August 2001 as an interim assistant priest. That the search for a new rector finished precisely on time—June 2002--speaks to the organizing muscle of the vestry and search committee.

Fr. Jim Wright, priest-in-charge, and Fr. Jeremy Hole, assisting priest, reflected the vestry's consistency during the search process and laid the groundwork for social justice-oriented work and conversations continued after the interim. Their response to the September 11 attacks reflected the legacy of interfaith cooperation and careful study that had long characterized Holy Trinity. On the Sunday following 9/11, Fr. Wright encouraged the congregation "to have a moment of silent prayer on Sunday for the hijackers, in addition to the prayers for the victims of the attacks," invoking "[Jesus] hanging on the cross, [who] prayed for his executioners." Fr. Hole encouraged resistance to Islamophobia, using historical perspective on the relationship between

Christianity and Islam in a sermon that met resistance from parishioners. Virginia Maurer remembered, "There's no time for anger, no time for fighting, for whatever anxious, angry, fearful emotions people were having. We were brought up short by the fact that we're Christian. They were really good with that." Fr. Scott worked diligently to continue the conversation about Islam, enlisting UF professors Zoharah Simmons and Richard Foltz to lead lectures on women in Islam and a long history of the faith. Scott saw this work in terms of "the struggle against fundamentalist authority," while Wright considered understanding Islam a crucial part of pursuing peace and "self-examination into our own motivations and actions to determine if we have contributed to the conflict." Issued during a period of uncertainty in the church, the clergy's challenge to parishioners to resist larger national trends and confront their own biases demonstrates their confidence that they and their parishioners shared the same mission of peace and dedication to inquiry. Although this conversation was largely a reaction to national events, the clergy succeeded in laying the groundwork for interfaith events in the years to come.

The search committee ultimately recommended to the vestry charismatic and energetic priest the Rev. Dr. Gordon Tremaine. He began his tenure as rector on Rally Sunday in 2002 and matched parishioners' interest in downtown ministries and social justice. Tremaine addressed many of the laymen's burgeoning concerns by building on the precedent set by Holy Trinity's clergy: he got to know downtown Gainesville's homeless personally like Fr. Wright, he attracted young families to the church like Fr. Hole, and he quietly supported parishioners' outreach efforts and encouraged interfaith cooperation like Fr. Pittman. He also took risks, transforming the downtown ministry and decisively navigating the schism between the Diocese of Florida and the national Episcopal Church on behalf of the parish. Although his large personality seemed at

the center of new ideas during his four-year rectorate, new lay leadership in ministry and outreach was just as effective at expanding the church's programming.

The most noticeable physical change under Tremaine was the expansion of the Holy Trinity Child Caring Center I, located on the parish campus downtown and underwritten by the Foundation. In 2002, HTCCC Center II on 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue, originally a gift to the Foundation, supported only eleven students and was in dire need of repair. Behind the scenes, a bequest from Ruth Sinclair of over three million dollars supported Holy Trinity Episcopal Foundation's outreach work, and the Foundation took over the financial responsibility of maintaining the physical plant in 2003. It was no small task to handle the sound system, HVAC, and routine maintenance as well as recent property acquisitions like a flower shop on Main Street as well as Center II. Parishioners worked on evenings and weekends around school hours to refurbish the school on 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue. To meet the needs of families working downtown, the church location for HTCCC I re-opened on February 1, 2004 under the leadership of Junior Warden Deirdre Folger after a hiatus following the fire. Staff at the new site cared for infants and toddlers from forty families by 2004, when St. Elizabeth's Circle fundraised to refurbish the interior. In 2005, with Fogler's guidance, HTCCC became the first facility in Gainesville certified as a Universal Pre-K provider. By the next year, the school had a wait-list several months long. Additionally, a quarter of the students received scholarships from Holy Trinity by 2006, indicating a growing demand for affordable and educational childcare and representing a future opportunity for Holy Trinity.

Under Fr. Tremaine, increasing numbers of young people filled leadership positions and parishioners donated time to already successful in-reach. In 2005, Holy Trinity welcomed 120 new members and many of them were members of young families. Two groups, the longtime favorite Stiefel Men's Group and the reactivated Brotherhood of St. Andrew, brought men

together for fellowship and service opportunities. In particular, the Brotherhood of St. Andrew worked in concert with St. Elizabeth's Circle to host a fall festival, raising over ten thousand dollars for church programming. The all-female St. Elizabeth's Circle remained a powerhouse on its own, raising tens of thousands of dollars yearly through their annual Christmas Bazaar. Holy Trinity's clergy also sought creative solutions to accommodate the unique needs of younger parishioners. In the parish hall, Fr. Wright began a successful family service which included young children, and the church hosted "Mom's Night Out" once a month with sixty attendees on average. By 2003, over a hundred children and fifty seventh to twelfth graders attended Sunday School and took part in growing numbers of service opportunities. Debra Stinson left her position as Director of Children and Family Ministry and Adult Education alongside longtime teacher Beth Sheppard in 2004; Stinson was replaced by Erica Fuller. Michael Goldsmith joined the team as the new youth minister, but stayed only a year before Gram Alsobrook filled the position in 2005. New traditions catered to the middle and high school crowds, including an annual 30-hour "famine" to raise money for hungry children and the "Common Grounds" Coffeehouse open mic night in the Main Street flower shop acquired in 2001.

New leadership also remained responsive to both emergent needs and longstanding outreach commitments. Fr. Tremaine and Nancy Galloway visited longtime sister parish St. John the Baptist in Cuba, carrying medical supplies in their suitcases. In 2006, major fundraising for a new rectory in Florencia began. Work days for Alachua Habitat for Humanity and fundraisers for Hospice continued as they had in decades before. But when Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast, Holy Trinity parishioners sent almost forty thousand dollars to the Episcopal Dioceses of Louisiana and Mississippi. Attention to chronic, systemic social issues and events that exacerbate those issues pulled Holy Trinity's parishioners into current events as participants.

The new direction of the Earth Stewardship Mission encapsulates the best of this sustainable, intergenerational in-reach and outreach. In 2001, Korean War veteran Harold Nugent hosted ten teenagers on a service trip to the Florida Keys, where he taught the students about the ecology of south Florida through their work digging watering holes for key deer and alligators. The Nugent family continued to coordinate youth work days every few months in Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park, removing trash and learning from park rangers about human impact on Florida's water resources. Work days were well-attended, and in 2003 young volunteers picked up over a ton of garbage in a single trip. Nugent emphasized to the students that humans were a part of an environmental community, responsible for the "source of water on the Prairie for all of our neighbors - folk, fauna, and flora." Harold Nugent, Florida State Parks Volunteer of the Year in 2004, provided younger people an entrée into environmental education, scientific inquiry, and community service.

The community partnership with Duval Elementary School represents another successful model of outreach during the Tremaine rectorate. In the late 1990s, parishioner Ann Pierson identified Duval as a struggling school, with ninety percent of students on free lunch, a forty-seven percent mobility rate, and an F rating from the state. Leaders like Elizabeth Spencer and Eleanor Henry worked with teachers to identify the needs of both students and educators, and invited Holy Trinity members to meet school officials at the church. Together, teachers and coordinators created opportunities for parishioners to give in whatever way fit their skills, time, and resources. Holy Trinity volunteers bought uniforms, planned events, and were trained to tutor, mentor, and read with students. When teachers needed daycare for their own children, Holy Trinity volunteers helped furnish one inside the school. Henry and school officials coordinated with funding sources to help transform Duval into a fine arts school, with students

engaged in arts of their choice from violin to African dance. Through long-term partnership, Duval Elementary evolved from an F into an A rated school. Henry, Florida's Volunteer of the Year 2006, and her fellow coordinators used Holy Trinity's resources to maximum effect.

With Tremaine's assistance, established community outreach efforts remained responsive to community changes and gained permanency that made consistent services possible. When Gainesville Area AIDS Project (GAAP) lost its lease in 2006, for example, Holy Trinity's members helped it find another space, three times as large. Gainesville Community Ministries also moved into a larger facility with a donation of \$10,000 from Holy Trinity, helping them serve approximately five hundred families a month by 2003 and 750 families a month by 2005. After the North Central Florida AIDS Network folded, Holy Trinity responded by supporting TREE (the replenishment of everyday essentials) to meet the needs of struggling people not covered by food stamps. Interfaith Hospitality Network reached over a hundred volunteers from Holy Trinity alone by 2003, and Holy Trinity also joined the Alachua County Coalition for the Homeless and Hungry that combined manpower from these ministries with the work of the city, other houses of faith, and nonprofits across the county. In Fr. Wright's words, "It shouldn't take tragic events like September 11 to awaken the spirit of community within our own church and neighborhood. Many people are living [in] quiet desperation, searching for ways to connect with others." With a growing percentage of Gainesville's population living without secure housing, Holy Trinity's leadership anticipated the need for more efficient collaboration.

By facilitating new partnerships, Fr. Tremaine left a long-lasting contribution to the Outreach Commission. Gainesville's difficult relationship with homelessness physically reached Holy Trinity in 2001, when as many as a dozen homeless people regularly used the courtyard overnight to sleep. In their discussion about posting a "No Loitering" sign, the vestry encouraged

that the organizations separately administering aid to the homeless—the city and county governments, St. Francis House, the Alachua County Housing Authority and a half-dozen churches including Holy Trinity—meet to coordinate their efforts. Fr. Wright formed the Homelessness Task Force as a permanent branch of the Outreach Commission, and within months of his installation as rector Tremaine proposed opening the church to house people on winter nights. Tremaine announced to parishioners on January 20, 2003 that Holy Trinity would offer shelter to the homeless on nights below forty-five degrees, if shelter was unavailable elsewhere due to city ordinances. He stated simply, "It is the right thing to do." Vestry treasurer Terry Fleming engineered a plan to provide enclosed, warm space and breakfast for twenty to forty people. Although the church was little used that winter, the precedent was set for more direct involvement with the homeless. Jim Braswell, a new deacon from California, provided a pastoral presence to the growing crowd at Streetside Breakfast on Sunday mornings, and Tremaine led a bible study with the homeless once a week. Tremaine publicly and insistently supported administering aid to traditionally vulnerable and disenfranchised residents, arguing for compassion in the *Gainesville Sun* and at city council meetings. Meanwhile, the problem worsened: by 2004, almost nine hundred people in Gainesville were homeless, and over a thousand in 2005. In 2006, during an especially harsh winter, Tremaine announced that with the blessing of the vestry, Holy Trinity would provide the homeless a place to sleep from January through March regardless of fluctuations in temperature. Holy Trinity also opened the enclosed courtyard for dogs belonging to residents, while parishioners took on the task of providing medical care and supplies to the animals. His willingness to work directly in government and nonprofit spheres, and to bring the most often ignored and stigmatized Gainesville residents into a sacred space, set an example for future organizing on behalf of the city's unhoused people.

Concern for the most vulnerable also drove Tremaine's response to another growing problem: the split in the Episcopal Church of the United States over the ordination of gay bishop Gene Robinson in 2003. During an emergency national meeting, dissenting Episcopal leaders warned of irreparable, even global, divisions within the church over the issue. *The New York Times* even ran the apocalyptic line, "Is the Episcopal Church tottering on the brink of schism or even self-destruction"? While Florida was not one of the six dioceses to ultimately leave the ECUSA, Florida's Bishop Stephen Jecko was a founding member of the opposing, "traditional" American Anglican Council. He claimed that "Ninety-nine percent" of people in the diocese supported his dissent, which was based on "the teaching of the Apostle's [sic], the Church's traditional teaching on sexual morality and marriage, and... canon law." Jecko made the unusual move to withhold funds from the national church for an indeterminate amount of time, and requested that Florida parishes provide "sustained pastoral care for those disturbed by the ordaining of homosexuals and blessing of same-sex unions." Jecko's actions on behalf of the diocese did not reflect the views of Holy Trinity's entire membership, and many parishioners felt compelled to take a side.

Holy Trinity's congregation had confronted the controversial topics of homosexual church leaders before, when Bishop Jecko and nine other bishops brought a presentment against Bishop Walter Righter of Iowa for ordaining a gay deacon in 1996. At the time, Fr. Jeremy argued openly for inclusion over concern about church order and canon law, in sermons and to Jecko himself. Simultaneously, Holy Trinity clergy ministered to gay and lesbian parishioners and worked with vulnerable LGBTQ people as part of everyday outreach, encouraging discussion about sexual orientation rather than silence. Seven years later, congregants openly discussed the implications of ECUSA divisions—more than one heated argument arose in the

Stiefel Men's Group, for example—and remained uncertain about whether Holy Trinity should become involved in the fray. Some advocated withdrawing Holy Trinity's support from the diocese until Bishop Jecko restored Florida's relationship with the national church. Concerned that the funding issue might affect programming that benefits vulnerable people, Tremaine wrote to parishioners that he hoped that the bishop would reverse the decision to withhold funds from the national church. But in a familiar refrain Tremaine stated, "Honoring our diocesan pledge is the right thing to do." Splitting the difference, he asked that the vestry send ten percent of the diocesan pledge directly to the national church for as long as the diocese refused to do the same. Terry Fleming, parishioner and then head of Gainesville's PRIDE Center, saw the successful election of a gay bishop as the outcome that proved "lesbians and gays are not second-class congregants in any church." Other members of Holy Trinity were uncertain that Tremaine's compromise was the correct choice. Bishop John Howard replaced Jecko in 2004, and Tremaine continued to urge the conflicted congregation to hear differing opinions and avoid polarization, "a culture of winners and losers." Steering towards the middle, Tremaine had ultimately avoided a serious conflict inside of Holy Trinity, while adhering to his own mission to provide consistent aid to the most vulnerable.

Another controversy hit closer to home on the Sunday after Easter in 2006. Bishop Howard came to Holy Trinity, suspended normal Sunday services, and to the convened congregation at 10:30 announced that Fr. Tremaine had been relieved of his position as rector because of an immoral act committed at his previous church. The confusion and painful process that followed lasted over a year. The vestry and Senior Warden Bunnie James maintained transparency with the congregation, and followed the advice of the Pastoral Response Team. James acknowledged the church's gains under their rector: "If there has been grace, growth in

Christ, inspiration in our individual lives because of the efforts of Gordon Tremaine, we need not question its authenticity because of his brokenness." Although there was initial hope that Tremaine would resume his position after the bishop's discipline, the clergy ultimately agreed that it was best Tremaine not return to Holy Trinity, to avoid in Fr. Wright's words "the challenges of a continuing Rector-Parish relationship" as the congregation healed. Tremaine resigned on April 27, 2006, and the vestry accepted Tremaine's letter of resignation on May 31. The vestry ensured that the severance package and health insurance took care of the Tremaine family during their break from Holy Trinity. While waiting for the bishop's decision on his punishment, Tremaine continued his leadership position at the Alachua County Coalition for the Hungry and Homeless and by the end of 2006 had been hired as Executive Director of the Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County. At the end of the year, Bishop Howard still had not ruled on Tremaine's case.

Bishop Howard's office guided the initial healing process. Bishop Howard visited the congregation in May and formed focus groups for parishioners to discuss their feelings. To keep the parish together, Bunnie James encouraged people to avoid the ensuing speculation and gossip, to respect each other's grief, and to reach out to worshippers missing on Sundays. Mother Gay Silver advised the vestry and spoke directly with the congregation. Howard requested that the vestry hire a temporary clergy leader for a period of two years, and the vestry-appointed interim rector Fr. Kerry Robb who reported at first glance that "Holy Trinity seems quite healthy to me." Building on their experience hiring Tremaine in 2002, a search committee formed in anticipation of a new rector with Betty Alsobrook, the vice-chair during the Tremaine search, at its head.

The church suffered instantaneously from the Tremaine scandal. Attendance on Sundays dipped fifteen percent between 2005 and 2006, pledges were lower than expected, and limits in revenue pushed control of spending. Although his rectorate ended on a sorrowful note, the expansion of outreach, childcare, and family-centered services formed under Tremaine outlasted him and opened opportunities for the next rector, proving his efficacy as a leader.

### **Healing and Helping Others Heal**

Tremaine left behind a congregation in need of both recovery and stable leadership. In the year following Tremaine's resignation, Fr. Robb saw a great deal of turnover. Fr. Wright felt called to leave Holy Trinity to start a new executive position with the Alachua County Coalition for the Homeless and Hungry on June 1, 2007, after almost two decades at the church. Later in the summer, Coordinator of Lay Ministries Anne Seraphine left for divinity school and musician Dr. John Lowe, Jr. began his new role as Music Director and Organist. Fr. Hole, once again, provided a comforting and consistent presence while the search for a new rector continued.

The Rev. Louanne Loch's call to Holy Trinity in November 2007 reflected parishioners' hopes for healing, and new energy for youth ministries and outreach. Over almost a decade, guided by Loch, by engaged ministry directors, and by a well-run vestry, Holy Trinity got so much more: financial restructuring, robust music and youth programs, and the Holy Trinity Episcopal School. As the first female rector, leading a church that had never called a female priest before, Loch's response to the myriad challenges facing Holy Trinity—and the deepening social and economic ruptures in Gainesville—carried extra weight. Solving potentially divisive

problems alongside an adept vestry, she assured the parish an inclusive, relevant, and stable future.

The Rev. Loch's commitments to pastoral care and evangelism complemented one another throughout her rectorate. Alongside the day-to-day visitations and spiritual counseling incumbent upon a rector, Loch held weekly "get to know you" sessions in parishioners' homes to build relationships with church members beyond the lay leadership, and she started a small daily service at the child caring center and later the school. Loch also ramped up the number of parish life events both at the church and elsewhere, including formal affairs like a blessing of government officials and police officers in 2010 and casual get-togethers like yoga classes and young adult meet-ups. Chaired by Marilyn Peterson, the Good Shepherds group welcomed visitors for the first time in spring 2010, providing information about the parish and hosting friendly Newcomer Dinners at parishioners' homes. The ministry was immediately successful, welcoming over sixty people into the church by the end of the year. Additionally, the Worship Commission—comprised of volunteers from greeters to ushers to the Altar Guild—reconvened to implement changes that made services more comfortable for visitors. Finally, the well-rounded music program under Lowe brought both accomplished and learning musicians to perform and became a focal point for Loch's services. Loch and other energetic leaders like Lowe harnessed already efficient and organized ministries and reoriented them outwards, defining the public face of Holy Trinity for Gainesville residents. Over the course of Loch's rectorate, people of all ages became confirmands.

Holy Trinity's public face proved valuable to Gainesville's developing interfaith community, countering an increasingly dark political climate. In 2010, the Rev. Loch took a leadership role in the response to the Dove World Outreach Center's threat to burn copies of the

Quran through an interfaith service held at Holy Trinity. Although people from over a dozen houses of worship attended, the service was especially energizing and valuable for Holy Trinity's congregation. One parishioner wrote, "What does "Interfaith" mean to you? To the Holy Trinity parishioner standing in the back of the church showing visitors the way to the water fountain, it meant joy—joy in the knowledge that our church home made a difference in the life of this community." From the conversations around this interfaith service, an Interfaith Habitat House Working Group organized and—with volunteers from the Brotherhood of St. Andrew—built a Habitat for Humanity home in a matter of months. Holy Trinity's music program, which had cooperated with choirs from other churches for decades, joined the interfaith effort on the tenth anniversary of 9/11. Teaming up with the Gainesville Festival Choir and Orchestra, Holy Trinity's John Lowe was conductor for a Concert of Remembrance at First Presbyterian Church, which attracted six hundred people. Parishioners also enriched the conversation: Dr. Alfred Ring had endowed an educational fund for a lecture series, bringing luminaries from the theological world to Holy Trinity and Gainesville. Loch and parishioners also represented one of five churches at Gainesville's Pride Festival, and the rector remained active on a committee of clergy called the Alachua County Interfaith Prayer Service. As a voice for the congregation, Loch publicly supported nonviolence and inclusion throughout her time with Holy Trinity, demonstrating that Holy Trinity is a welcoming, relevant, and active voice for the vulnerable.

The Rev. Loch's and lay leadership's biggest challenges revolved around strengthening the youth ministry. Introducing herself to the parish, Loch wrote that "one of my first goals will be to strengthen the children and youth programs. Spiritual care of children and youth has always been a priority in my ministry." In 2007, the number of baptisms and young children in Sunday School was on the rise. Loch and youth ministry leaders highlighted the achievements of middle

and high school parishioners, encouraged them to coordinate parish events, carved out space on the campus for their use, and planned mission trips to locations ranging from Vermont to Costa Rica. But in early 2008 Minister of Christian Education Erica Briggs resigned and popular youth minister Gram Alsobrook left soon after. Loch hired Gina Cox as Director of Children's Ministries and young priest the Rev. John Satula in 2009, who proved effective at engaging teenagers and college-aged young adults in regular programming. Loch's need for an assistant rector actively engaged in services and the everyday goings-on of the parish, however, placed Loch and Satula at odds. When Satula's contract was not renewed in 2010, Satula and Cox both resigned abruptly, and Kristin Bryant, the new Director of Children and Youth Ministries, was forced to reboot programming. Rebuilding attendance by continuing mission trips and hosting youth services and fundraisers, as well as coordinating with youth programs from nearby FUMC, Bryant and Loch built a growing ministry that honors young people as current as well as future church members.

The tenure of the Rev. Ron Owen as associate priest from 2011 to 2014 ultimately impacted the youth ministry. A strong preacher, Owen had been effective with adult programming such as the Disciples of Christ in Community program. After three years, he and the Rev. Loch differed about leadership and the vision for the future of the church. In the 2014 letter announcing that she had not renewed Owen's contract, Loch said, "During this past year it became clear, through the vestry retreat and subsequent meetings of vestry members that we are moving as a church in the direction of increased attention to children, youth, and family ministries consistent with our commitment to the new Holy Trinity Episcopal School." Fr. Owen was followed by interim the Rev. J. Perry Smith and finally "Father George" Holston in

2015, a beloved favorite of Holy Trinity's toddlers and young students, who also leads adult members in Bible Study, Sunday morning education, and pastoral care.

As Holy Trinity cycled through leadership, several other ministries were poised to expand. Bishop Howard held a long-range planning meeting with Holy Trinity's parishioners in 2008, and a few months later the Outreach Commission led by parishioner Kathy Navajas also set forth a vision for investigating new outreach programs and cooperating with other churches to increase their impact. Continuing outreach to Duval Elementary School, Interfaith Hospitality Network, and other programs coincided with new interest in helping endeavors like the Kairos prison ministry and Peaceful Paths women's shelter. During the Rev. Loch's rectorate, she visited Cuba and coordinated visits by Fr. Andres Espinosa and the Bishop of Cuba, the Rt. Rev. Griselda Delgado Del Carpio to Florida, which strengthened the Cuba ministry and served as a model for the diocese. However, in 2008 the global recession hit Florida and created both urgent needs for other community groups and budget cuts for the church. The Gainesville Area AIDS Project ran into emergency shortages of supplies and donations in summer 2010, the long-running SHARE Food Program dissolved in January 2011, and even Streetside Breakfast required extra funds to stay operational during this period. The vestry, clergy, and lay leaders searched for sustainable solutions to the economic strain impacting church and community projects.

The recession particularly affected the homeless and downtown outreach. By 2009, over sixteen hundred people lived unhoused in Alachua County, a 71% increase since 2007; the number of homeless schoolchildren also doubled. The large networks of tent encampments on the outskirts of the city were forced to disperse, displacing hundreds. Laity and clergy worked together to engineer solutions for the individuals who sought the clergy for spiritual and financial

help every day. Encouraged by the Rev. Loch, in June 2008 nine volunteers working with Dr. Melody Marshall and Betty Jennings formed the Homeless Care Team, which distributed care packages of donated food and toiletries as well as financial assistance. This new face of the Downtown Ministry moved from reacting to the immediate needs of visitors towards understanding and anticipating those needs. Learning about the processes of obtaining birth certificates and IDs, seeking out partners like the Junior League to provide clothing, and tracking the patterns of requests for assistance allowed the ministry to budget appropriately and to provide services to a maximum number of people. After one full year, volunteers saw 812 people, most needing identification, medication, or birth certificates. The program expanded yearly with the help of parishioners' endowments, the Holy Trinity Episcopal Foundation, and yearly pledges. With parishioner Tallulah Brown overseeing the Downtown Ministry's daily operations in 2011, the pastoral care team served over sixteen hundred people, half of whom received city bus passes. Holy Trinity's emphasis on interfaith and community cooperation also assisted in the 2014 opening of GRACE Marketplace, Gainesville's center for homeless assistance. In support of GRACE's mission, parishioners make one hundred sandwiches a week for GRACE residents. Keeping a watchful eye on both changing downtown needs and citywide resources assures Holy Trinity has played a central role in connecting people of means to the challenges facing downtown Gainesville.

With new challenges and an eye towards the future, Holy Trinity's leadership undertook some financial restructuring. To meet the needs of the parish stewardship program and the day-to-day responsibilities of the Foundation, the Board of Trustees hired Harvey Ward as executive director in 2009. In a pattern initiated during Gordon Tremaine's rectorate, the Holy Trinity Episcopal Foundation supplied about a quarter of the parish budget yearly. Although pledges

consistently increased, the amount drawn each year from Foundation coffers was unsustainable, and the vestry further anticipated large future expenses like modifications to aging parish buildings. In 2010, Senior Warden David Colburn appointed an ad hoc Committee on Parish and Foundation chaired by Virginia Maurer to adjust the financial relationship between the Foundation and the church. Their new plan, which would incrementally decrease the parish's reliance on the Foundation over a period of years, resulted in difficult decisions and budget cuts. The adjustment impacted outreach, Holy Trinity's beloved music program, education and family programs, and operating capital. The committee also recommended that the parish undertake a capital campaign to anticipate the long-term needs of the parish.

In 2012, Ward and the Rev. Douglas Ray, who had been hired to advise the church leadership on the possibilities of a major capital campaign, led the parish through a "discernment process." Together, parishioners and Ray discussed the direction of Holy Trinity's stewardship and the possibilities of a capital campaign, including new property acquisitions and a daytime outreach center for the homeless. Ray remembered one parishioner who reflected the frustration and pessimism surrounding budget cuts and parish needs: "We talk about what we can't do. We talk about how this church did so much in the 70's and 80's, but how times have changed. People are saying we can't be what we once were...But other congregations in Gainesville are finding the resources to do amazing things. Why can't we?" The "Listening to the Spirit" capital campaign, chaired by Bobbie Hall, was authorized in March and launched in November 2012, and after over two years approached five million dollars in pledges. The campaign moneys financed a new HVAC and sound system for services, acquisition of the rest of the block of property on which the church campus sits, renovations to the parish kitchen and the Phillips

Building, and The Shop at Holy Trinity, and one of the church's largest projects ever: the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church School of Gainesville.

Before the capital campaign began, the Holy Trinity Child Caring Centers were in a promising position to expand. Attendance had grown from eleven students in 2002 to ninety-nine students in 2009, housed in two separate facilities managed by Executive Director Rebekah Reneke. Each of HTCCC's thirty-five employees was highly qualified and had completed special training in childcare. Childcare was and remains a critical part of Holy Trinity's outreach to youth; one quarter of HTCCC students came from the Early Learning Coalition and received scholarship or financial assistance from the church or their parents' employers. By 2011, however, a vestry-appointed committee led by Marion Radson found that the two facilities were inadequate for the center and urged the HTCCC to become financially self-sustaining during a period of budget cuts.

The rector, Foundation, capital campaign committee, and the re-formed school's board of directors rapidly transformed the HTCCC with a new name, mission, location, and vision. The new school would bring together the two daycare centers at one location, a newly-designed facility reconfigured in the Foundation-owned former catering facility on Main Street. This central location, primed for clergy outreach and involvement and downtown families, would hold 130 pupils. On December 31, 2012, the HTCCC became the Holy Trinity Episcopal School of Gainesville, Inc., and on September 5, 2013 the Rev. Loch and school board members broke ground on the construction project. After months of renovation and workdays led by parishioners, the Rt. Rev. Dorsey Henderson, Diocesan Assisting Bishop, blessed the newly-opened school in May 2014. Since then, the school and its head, Jason Hill, have realized many of the original HTCCC's long-held hopes. Reaching a hundred students by 2015, HTESG

approached self-sufficiency while maintaining many scholarship students. Furthering outreach, the clergy presence in the school's chapel and well-attended Parents' Night Out events cultivated new stakeholders invested in Holy Trinity's downtown presence.

In September 2016, Rev. Loch accepted a call to St. Paul's-by-the-Sea in Jacksonville Beach. She left behind measurable achievements, including new members, a rejuvenated Youth group, renovations, a self-sufficient school, and a completed capital campaign. In November 2016, the vestry called the Rev. Dr. Reed Freeman to guide the congregation during its search for a new rector. From 2016 to 2017 the congregation has focused on its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2018, its identity in the wider community, the empowerment of new and existing lay leadership, linkages with the diocese, and laying the groundwork for calling a new rector. The pursuit of these focus areas has been in the forefront of the work of the Foundation board, James Salter, president; the school's board, Ann Mullally, chair; and the vestry, Robert Stripling, senior warden. In Fr. Freeman's words, this intentional interim time together is "an opportunity to celebrate the ministry of those who have come before and to prepare for those yet to come."

***"Christianity is not a Lone Ranger faith. It is a partnership between God and humanity. And it is a partnership of people of faith working together...God works in partnership with God's children. It's a spiritual principle that is as solid as God's compassion. If we try to go it alone, we will never see miracles happen. Placing something in God's hands that God can use to his glory and humanity's service is the key to abundant living. It's the key to lasting happiness....And when people participate in God's work in the world, they discover meaning and purpose and joy. As the hymn says, "I come with joy to meet my Lord forgiven, loved, and free. In awe and wonder to recall his life for me . . . as Christ breaks bread and bids us share, each proud division ends. That love that made us makes us one, and strangers now are friends."***

**The Rev. Louanne Loch, Rector, 2011**

## **View the Taylor Timelines**

### **First 25 years**

[https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1izYTZQUIMkJ-8DPzgiEFvkILel0f8o3Z9-OeNrDLuzc&font=Default&lang=en&initial\\_zoom=2&height=650](https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1izYTZQUIMkJ-8DPzgiEFvkILel0f8o3Z9-OeNrDLuzc&font=Default&lang=en&initial_zoom=2&height=650)

### **Preparing for the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

[https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1pIhc1jdM80xILTIIqG81SK4wVl624mTCp5qLRySIIA&font=Default&lang=en&initial\\_zoom=2&height=650](https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1pIhc1jdM80xILTIIqG81SK4wVl624mTCp5qLRySIIA&font=Default&lang=en&initial_zoom=2&height=650)

### **Growing With Gainesville**

[https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1XZwWTveeo8D-TkRiJvjBArnoTc0W1oThncPb4o5ow\\_4&font=Default&lang=en&initial\\_zoom=2&height=650](https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1XZwWTveeo8D-TkRiJvjBArnoTc0W1oThncPb4o5ow_4&font=Default&lang=en&initial_zoom=2&height=650)

### **Growing Pains**

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### **The Page Years**

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### **The David Pittman Years**

[https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1f8-4pTOTy-oxAeeB2M6qRih6v9Z9kiAbtluRhHbYk&font=Default&lang=en&initial\\_zoom=2&height=650](https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1f8-4pTOTy-oxAeeB2M6qRih6v9Z9kiAbtluRhHbYk&font=Default&lang=en&initial_zoom=2&height=650)

### **The Twenty-first Century**

[https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1-JHHpeRZYq2efZ8DB\\_hFpYPhCHBkIBSc8WX4a\\_qewQk&font=Default&lang=en&initial\\_zoom=2&height=650](https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1-JHHpeRZYq2efZ8DB_hFpYPhCHBkIBSc8WX4a_qewQk&font=Default&lang=en&initial_zoom=2&height=650)