



3003 Howell Mill Road, NW  
Atlanta, Georgia 30327

TEL 404-237-6491  
FAX 404-264-0470  
[www.trinityatlanta.org](http://www.trinityatlanta.org)

Dear Trinity Members,

At a Called Session meeting on May 24<sup>th</sup>, the Session voted to adopt the final 2021 operating budget. Decreased commitment campaign pledges as well as macro giving trends necessitated a meaningful reduction in our budget compared to 2020. It has been a decade or more since Trinity engaged in a comprehensive process to review and restructure its operations. The pandemic has also triggered an important, but overdue conversation around staffing, structure, and pressing capital investment needs.

The interim period gives us space to address these issues. In addition to operating with a balanced budget, we must set Trinity on a sound fiscal path so that we welcome a new Senior Pastor with much of this hard work accomplished. Churches of all denominations are engaged in similar reviews and restructurings in response to a rapidly changing world.

### **Reassessing Spending and Priorities**

Last fall, after a careful analysis of the past 13 years of Commitment goals and actual pledging statistics, there was a clear need to evaluate our expenses across all facets of the church. In November, the Session appointed an 18-member task force, the Church and Budget Workgroup (CBW), to undertake this task. The CBW worked collaboratively from December-March to formulate recommendations for reducing the operating budget while also redirecting spending to new and emerging congregational priorities.

The CBW examined four major areas: use of buildings, programs, mission and technology, and personnel. In addition, the CBW benchmarked 10-12 vibrant congregations, comparing staffing and budget trends across churches similar to or larger than Trinity. In early April, the CBW shared a comprehensive list of recommendations with the affected Session Committees. The Session Committees then further studied and refined the recommendations through mid-May.

With input from the Session Committees, final budget recommendations were presented to the Session, with the Board of Trustees also in attendance, on May 24<sup>th</sup>. After considerable discussion, the Session approved the unified budget. Changes represent approximately \$550,000 in annualized expense reductions that aim to create a more sustainable operating budget going forward. The Board of Trustees also endorsed this Session action.

While further details of this unified plan will be shared in subsequent communications, this letter is to inform you of the major areas of reduction to be implemented between now and December 31, 2021.

- **Use of buildings:** A plan to decrease hours of operations and standardize other operational activities, thereby reducing hospitality staff overtime and utility costs.
- **Programs:** Budget reductions in various programmatic areas of between 13%-20%.
- **Mission and Technology:** A decrease in dollars given to other mission organizations while simultaneously increasing the hands-on engagement of our members in service opportunities. In addition, the plan includes reducing our per-capita and governing body support to the Presbytery. The changes will also include additional spending to support new and ongoing technology needs.
- **Personnel/Staffing:** This area represents the largest expenditure in the operating budget and thus was the most deeply affected. The plan includes several changes to staffing.



3003 Howell Mill Road, NW  
Atlanta, Georgia 30327

TEL 404-237-6491  
FAX 404-264-0470  
[www.trinityatlanta.org](http://www.trinityatlanta.org)

Trinity has been blessed with a large staff and we value their work. However, as part of the required budget reductions, the staff will be reduced through a combination of position elimination, retirement, and internal restructuring. Any reduction in personnel is difficult because our employees are valued and appreciated by the congregation. In the coming days, we will be sharing more details on these transitions, including opportunities to convey our gratitude for their service among us.

### **Investing for the Future**

Rightsizing our operating budget for 2021 to match giving still leaves Trinity needing to address critical deferred items related to property, security, streaming capabilities, and signage. These investments are required to maintain a healthy campus, effective operating systems, and necessary infrastructure. Priorities in this category include tackling long-deferred issues with our aging HVAC systems and new investments in our website and digital communications.

A plan for these capital and maintenance items was also presented to Session in the May 24<sup>th</sup> meeting. The Finance Committee, Property Committee, and Trustees worked through a detailed process to identify funding sources for these needs. The sources include a combination of previously established, but unused designated giving funds as well as gifts made above annual pledges. This plan was also adopted by the Session on May 24<sup>th</sup>.

### **Preparing for a Vibrant Future Together**

Trinity Presbyterian Church is a healthy congregation, strengthened by our large and dedicated membership, an amazing campus, a vibrant community and city, and a large budget even at this reduced amount. As we await the arrival of our new Senior Pastor in the coming months, we have the confidence and commitment to make these changes for Trinity's next era of faithful service and worship. Proactively addressing these items now creates a strong foundation for our future.

A special thanks to the many members who invested hundreds of hours in study, discernment, and collaboration in these matters over the past seven months. We know you may have more questions related to these decisions and we encourage you to reach out to the pastoral staff, Session, or Trustees.

In gratitude and hope,

**Rev. Dr. Kimberly Clayton**  
Interim Senior Pastor

**Brian Williams**  
Clerk of Session