

REPORT OF THE TRINITY LEGACY COMMITTEE

TO

THE REV. ANDREW R. THAYER

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Rev. Andrew Thayer asked Dr. David Houghton to be a member of this committee but the time of the meetings conflicted with his schedule.

II. Foreword

We present our conclusions to you humbly. If after considering our suggestions for a period of time, you find that they do not fit your philosophy, ask yourself where and how we diverge and how we can come together? We aspire to have discussions with open minds and hearts. All of us on the Legacy Committee have had our eyes opened as a result of our work.

Consequently, our thoughts have evolved. It is our prayer that our report and our recommendations fulfill the Mission of Trinity, respect our past and look forward to a bright future worthy of the children of God.

Trinity has, through the years, been known for its service to others. As Christians we strive to see and to serve Christ in all persons and to love our neighbors as ourselves, but we cannot claim that we have always done so regardless of race or color. Therefore, we must consistently consider whether we see Christ in each person we encounter who is different from us or do we simply dismiss them and avoid them as “other than us.” It is relatively easy to give money or service to a group of people, but what about making friends with individuals, going to church or coffee hour together or inviting others into our homes for a visit? What about a change in heart to bring us nearer to the Kingdom of Heaven?

We recognize that those who form our church family today are but part of an enduring multi-generational congregation. Our Trinity community is bound together, past and present, by common aspirations. Our understanding of our call as Christians to serve God evolves and changes throughout time.

Bishop Phoebe Roaf reminds us that we all have blind spots and have failed to respect all members of God’s family. She asks whether we can acknowledge those blind spots in ourselves, and in other people, and whether we can develop the discipline to spend more time listening to others instead of arguing our own points of view.

As a committee, our prayer for our Trinity community is,

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Book of Common Prayer, Prayers for the Social Order, 27. For Social Justice, p. 823)

III. The Legacy Committee's Charge

Trinity's Rector, the Rev. Andrew Thayer, called our committee together in November 2020. He named our committee "legacy" a word that connotes both the past and the future and asked us to consider Trinity's Legacy – the legacy we have received from generations past, and the legacy we will leave for future generations. Rev. Thayer asked us to prepare a report to the Rector and the Vestry regarding the names we have given to our public spaces in light of Trinity's history, mission, and aspirations as a faith community. Our committee has approached this work with prayerfulness and humility. It is our prayer that our work will honor the past and help guide the future of Trinity Church.

Through our work, our committee has come to better understand and sincerely appreciate the dedication, generosity and faithfulness of those who have come before us and built the wonderful legacy that defines Trinity as a faith community. We wish to express our gratitude to the Trinity family of the past for the gift of our buildings and campus complex but moreover, for our reputation for service to others, to our city and to the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Our committee articulated its charge as follows:

"The Trinity Legacy Committee is charged with:

- Examining Trinity's history in relation to race and racism, gaining a deeper understanding of our past through the perspective of the Church community we aspire to be today;
- Developing recommendations for how we may apply these insights to our parish life and ministry, including but not limited to guidelines for naming places and spaces; and,
- Sharing this history and these recommendations with our congregation in ways that invite us to live more fully into our mission to love our neighbors, do justice, and walk humbly with God."

Our Committee was asked to focus on Trinity's legacy in relation to race. Despite its Christian aspirations, Trinity has been part of a community that has supported slavery, racial injustice, segregation and discrimination. Trinity's leadership has repudiated the racism of the past and we wish to substantiate that resolve.

IV. The Church We Aspire to Be

In our reflections on the Church community we aspire to be, our committee looked first to the statements of our faith articulated in our Catechism, in our Baptismal Liturgy, and in the prayers in our Book of Common Prayer. We also considered the Mission Statement of our Church, the resolutions of our Vestry and the policies adopted by our School. As a Committee, we tried to discern how Trinity, as a church and school, and how we all, as individuals and members of its congregation may come into a right relationship with other human beings, especially in relationship with those who are different, with those whom we sometimes cause to feel “less than,” and with those who suffer from unequal treatment because of gender, race, sexual orientation, national origin, or religious beliefs.

The Catechism of our faith spells out the mission of the Episcopal Church:

“The mission of the Church is to restore unity with God and each other in Christ.”

Book of Common Prayer, page 855

Our Baptismal Covenant commits us to

“...strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being ... with God’s help.” Book of Common Prayer, p. 304.

We reaffirm this commitment as a community each time we participate in the Baptismal Rite.

We pray for the Human Family,

“O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.” Book of Common Prayer, Prayer 3, page 815.

We pray for the Social Order,

“Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart [and especially the hearts of the

people of this land], that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen". Book of Common Prayer, Prayer 27, page 823.

Trinity Church draws its Mission Statement, adopted in 2019 as the fruit of a lengthy and thoughtful strategic planning process, from these bedrock statements of our faith:

"Inspired by Christ, Trinity Episcopal Church strives to love our neighbors, do justice, and walk humbly with God."

Trinity's website proclaims and explains this Mission. <https://trinitynola.com/about/who-we-are/>

In 2015, building on decades of reflective learning,¹ Trinity's Vestry adopted certain Principles of Undoing Racism into its by-laws. By adopting these principles, Trinity committed itself to racial justice in its administrative policies, in its Christian formation and in its service to others.

The preamble to the Resolution adopting these Principles states:

"As faithful members of Trinity Episcopal Church, New Orleans, Louisiana, we each are called to the conscious acceptance of the sacred words and Holy Spirit of our Baptismal Covenant.

With God's help, we will honor this Covenant by:

- (1) continuing the Apostles' example of fellowship and teaching that all are one in Christ;*
- (2) persevering in resistance to the evil of racism and repenting and returning to the Lord when we fail to do so;*
- (3) proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel through our words and examples in seeking to undo racism;*
- (4) seeking and serving Christ in all persons and loving our neighbors as ourselves, regardless of race or color; and*
- (5) striving for justice and peace among all people and respecting the dignity of every human being."*

¹ Trinity representatives first participated in an Undoing Racism workshop in 1989 as part of the parish's engagement in the St. Thomas – Irish Channel Consortium. Slightly over a decade later, in 2000, the Vestry authorized the creation of an exploratory group to develop a new anti-racism ministry, which was launched with Vestry approval in 2001 as the Trinity Undoing Racism Network, or TURN.

Trinity School reflects our commitment to undoing racism in the Diversity and Inclusion Mission Statement it has adopted:

“As a ministry of Trinity Episcopal Church, Trinity School's ethos is to respect the dignity of every human being and to ensure that all people who serve and will be well-served by the programs of our School are welcome in our community regardless of race, religion, background, gender or sexual identity.

We believe that a learning environment that includes a wide diversity of viewpoints consistent with the School's mission is essential to a complete educational experience.

It is part of Trinity's mission to actively build and support an inclusive environment in which all feel they are valued members of our community. Like our School Mission Statement, this statement does not represent a departure from the values for which Trinity has stood for more than sixty years. Instead, it clarifies and indeed emphasizes the School's primary convictions since its founding.

Specifically,

- *We believe a commitment to inclusion is fundamental to our identity as a Christian school attempting to live out the Gospel that accords all humans the respect a child of God deserves.*
- *We believe we are a better school if ours is a diverse community.*
- *We believe it is not enough to open the doors to a wide variety of people; we must also do the hard work of ensuring that our community is one in which a wide variety of people can feel comfortable.”*

These are expressions of the expectations of our Faith, our Church, our Parish, our School, and our ministries. These are our aspirations as faithful members of Trinity Church.

Our aspirations as a Christian community within the Episcopal Church are high. As Christians baptized in the Episcopal Church, we pledge “to respect the dignity of every human being ... with God's help.” It is with candor and regret we acknowledge that we often fail to do so. It has been difficult for us to recognize and accept people who are different from us as being

created in the image of God and equally worthy of dignity and respect. Whether those differences are of race, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or any other characteristic which causes us to think that “those people” are less than we are, our Christian covenant remains the same – to respect the dignity of every human being.

The command that is bedrock to our faith is immutable.

“Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:34-35

The precepts of our faith remain unchanged, but our understanding of how we, as flawed human beings striving to bring about the Kingdom of Heaven, are to apply those precepts in our earthly realm, evolves and changes.

V. Trinity’s History

The history of Trinity Church, its challenges, its successes, and its ministries from its founding in 1847 to its centennial in 1947, is very admirably told by George Logan, writing for the Trinity Historical Committee in Trinity Church. Unpublished, 1948.²

Trinity was planted in an up and coming suburb of New Orleans, where white Protestants coming into the city from elsewhere in the United States settled to reap the benefits of a rapidly expanding economy based on the production of sugar and cotton, which depended on the enslavement and sale of human beings. These newcomers were exerting greater political control over its politics and economy at the expense of the Gallic community of white Creoles and Afro-Creoles, including free people of color during the years leading up to the Civil War.

Rev. Canon William Barnwell, a member of the Trinity Clergy for many years, was a keen observer of the racism of the South of his youth and an active leader in the effort to bring about a more just society. William has left us with his own reflections on the history of Trinity, Beloved Community, Building the Beloved Community at Trinity Church, 1847 to 2018, Reflections by the Rev. William H. Barnwell, Unpublished, 2019, as well as a series of oral histories collected from parishioners active in mission and ministry which our committee found insightful and informative as we considered the Church we have become. Trinity Stories on Race and Reconciliation and Much More, a Collection of Oral Histories, unpublished, 2018.

² Links to this work and other unpublished works referred to in this Report are found in the Bibliography which follows.

From these brilliant writers we learn of the sacrifices of our earliest Rectors who, with scant resources, led and sustained a handful of communicants and laid the foundations of the thriving, robust and committed Parish we are today. These writers tell the story of our first Rector, the Rev. R.H. Ramsey, and of the charismatic Rector, Rev. Alexander Dobbs during whose administration our church took shape in its present location, and who, “in the discharge of his duty toward the sick, the dying, the dead, the bereaved ... contracted the disease [Yellow Fever] which to him proved fatal.” (*The Daily Picayune*, August 18, 1853, quoted in Barnwell, *Beloved Community*, page 17.)

These writers remind us that the Rt. Rev. Leonidas Polk, D.D. (1806-1864), served as Rector of Trinity Church from 1855 to 1860, a critical period for the survival of the fledgling parish. He restored the parish to sound financial footing and greatly increased the number of members. Throughout his leadership at Trinity, he simultaneously maintained his role as the first Bishop of the Diocese of Louisiana, having been elected Bishop in 1839 when the Diocese consisted of only three churches. Through his efforts, that number was increased ten-fold. In 1861, Bishop Polk donned the uniform of a General in the Army of the Confederate States of America. Drawing heavily on the unpublished History of Trinity Church written by Tommy Tucker in 1997, and Rev. Herman Cope Duncan’s 1888 History of the Diocese of Louisiana, Rev. Barnwell provides a particularly nuanced and insightful appreciation of Bishop Polk and his accomplishments and contradictions. See, Barnwell, *Beloved Community*, pp. 19-24.

In the years that Bishop Polk brought financial stability to Trinity, the economy of New Orleans was closely intertwined with the economy of slavery. New Orleans was a center of the domestic slave trade, and as a main port for the cotton and sugar trade, which was supported in large part by the labor of enslaved human beings. Our committee discovered that Bishop Polk actively and successfully raised funds for the University of the South from slave traders and plantation owners at the same time as he was rector of Trinity. We did not have the necessary documents to determine precisely the source of the funds that Bishop Polk is credited to have raised for Trinity, but we deemed it safe to conclude that slavery contributed at least in part to Trinity’s financial success in the years of Bishop Polk’s ministry at Trinity.

While it would be wrong to conclude that Trinity’s early years were entirely supported by the fundraising efforts of Bishop Polk, his legacy continued to inspire after the end of the Civil War. We know from vestry records that the women of Trinity Church organized themselves under the name “The Bishop Polk Society” in order to raise funds from the community to fund the stained glass window in the chancel as well as the pulpit and other needed enhancements to worship. In 1877, the Bishop Polk Society was reorganized as the Trinity Guild, which served as the parent organization of Trinity’s “Chancel Chapter, the Church Chapter, the Church Grounds

Chapter, the Charitable Relief Chapter, the Rectory Chapter, and the Missionary Society.” Logan, Trinity Church, p.40.

The histories of Trinity that the Committee reviewed set forth the origins and history of our outreach ministries through which Trinity has consistently given life to Christ’s admonition that we love one another as He loves us. These ministries, sustained for the entirety of Trinity’s history, have made service to others a signal characteristic of Trinity Church.

In Trinity Church, George Logan reviewed the ministry of Rector Dr. Beverly Warner (Rector of Trinity 1893 – 1910) and saw it as a turning point: “Henceforth, Trinity would be concerned not with the affairs of her youth, such as buildings and finances, but with those of a mature institution interested in adding to the life of the community.” (Logan, Trinity Church, p. 27)

Dr. Warner founded a dispensary for the underprivileged in 1896, a foreshadowing of Trinity’s support for the St. Thomas Community Health Center in the 1980’s. Dr. Warner was instrumental in the founding of Kingsley House in 1895 and 1896. He and Trinity Parish led the work of Kingsley House until 1904, when it was transferred to a non-denominational board of directors. At its founding and into the 1950’s, Kingsley House focused its efforts on serving members of the newly arriving Irish, Italian, and German immigrants, with limited services to New Orleans’ African-American community. However, Kingsley House, supported by Trinity, took its place in the vanguard of the City’s desegregation efforts by initiating social services to the African American community in 1953. Kingsley House remains a vibrant source of community services to this day.

During the Great Depression, Trinity turned its efforts to feeding the hungry by creating and staffing a soup kitchen, providing food to all comers. By the late 1940s, the next rector, the Rev. Canon William Turner, was casting a vision for the church to launch a home for the elderly, a hospital and a mental health clinic, in addition to the hope of founding a Christian school (see his essay in Logan, pp. 43-46).

As the years have unfolded, this dream has materialized in many transformative ministries, Trinity School, in 1960, Trinity Educational Enrichment Program in 1966, St. Thomas Community Health Center in 1983, Trinity Counseling and Training Center in 1985, Lambeth House in 1998, and Trinity Loaves and Fishes in 2006, among many others.

St. Thomas Community Health Center was founded in collaboration with the St. Thomas Irish Channel Consortium, a community-based organization of residents and service agencies based on the recognition of the need to acknowledge and address institutional racism as key to reducing the health disparities experienced by the community it serves. In 2020, the pandemic

notwithstanding, St. Thomas Community Health Center provided high quality medical services to approximately 20,000 individual patients through almost 80,000 visits, all without regard to a patient's ability to pay. St. Thomas Community Health Center would not exist but for the early support of Trinity's parishioners. It has been central to Trinity's mission to serve the underserved for almost forty years.

If St. Thomas Community Health Center has been central to Trinity's mission, Trinity Educational Enrichment Program has been its beating heart for more than 55 years. In 1966, while school desegregation battles were still being contested, Trinity Church and School stepped up and opened its doors to assist mostly African American students. To this day, through TEEP, our congregation in partnership with Alvin Edinburg and his team, provide educational opportunities and enrichment to New Orleans Public School students. TEEP Sunday is one of the highlights of Trinity's liturgical year.

VI. Trinity School

The Founders envisioned the School as an integral part of Trinity's ministries, "a Parish Day School, as much a part of Trinity Church as its choir." Bell, Family Remembrances, p.248.

In his essay contained in Logan's 1948 Trinity Church, Rev. Canon William Turner expressed his vision for Trinity's future. That future included the development of a day school.

"We yearn for a parish family that will feel its bounden duty to follow Christ, to worship God every Sunday in His Church, and to work and pray and give for the spread of His Kingdom." A Vision of Trinity's Future, Logan, Trinity Church, p.43

Canon Turner goes on,

"Many of us have the vision of a day school for boys and girls to give our children locally what no other school can – a sound education based upon Christian character and faith as only the Church can do it." (A Vision of Trinity's Future, Logan, Trinity Church, p. 44.)

In 1958, Bryan Bell accepted the challenge to make this vision a reality. Mr. Bell chaired a committee, including Jack Weinmann, Brian Baird, Warren Waters and others, to investigate how Canon Turner's vision could be made a reality. At this time, former Senior Warden, Frank Strachan, proposed the idea of merging Edith Aiken's school for young girls into the Trinity fold.

Because of the extraordinary efforts of individuals like Bryan Bell who accepted the position of Assistant Headmaster to handle the financial aspects of incorporating a school into a church, the merger was successful and has developed into the School we are proud of today. (Bell, Family Remembrances, page 247.) Mr. Bell also served as Chairman of the School's Board of Directors for ten years.

The year of the School's founding, 1960, was a time of upheaval in New Orleans. In that year, Federal Judge Skelly Wright ordered that the Orleans Parish Public Schools be desegregated. Heading a small, new school in the midst of this controversy, was not a particularly attractive opportunity. Through Mr. Bell's tenacity and with the help of the School's nascent Parents Group, Rev. Tom Shaw accepted the challenge and eventually expanded the School from Kindergarten to 8th Grade. Rev. Shaw set the standard of dedicated, able and inspirational leadership that has been the defining characteristic of each of the Headmasters who followed him. Bell, Family Remembrances, page 250.

Our committee carefully considered the fact that the School was planned long before desegregation became the law of the land, and reviewed all available records concerning the founding of the School, and concluded that the School's driving goals were to teach Christian values and to provide excellence in education. Trinity's hosting of TEEP only six years after the start of court ordered desegregation exemplifies its commitment to equalizing educational opportunities. It was among the first private schools to enroll African American students. Its commitment to diversity remains strong and is explicitly set forth in its diversity statement quoted above.

VII. Trinity's Endowments

Over the years, some Parishioners have questioned whether the endowments, which support our ministries and secure our future, were funded by the profits gained from the labor, or the buying and selling, of enslaved human beings. Trinity's endowment funds are described below; all date from more recent times.

The Trinity Perpetual Memorial and Endowment Fund ("TPMEF"), was, and is, the creation of the congregation starting in the 1970's. At that time, Mr. Warren Waters and Mr. Shep Pleasants undertook the effort to combine several separate small funds, given in memory of loved ones, into a single fund, the Trinity Perpetual Memorial and Endowment Fund. On May 9, 1976, Mr. Waters, its Chairman, announced its formation to the Vestry. Through consistent contributions by the Congregation and careful management by the Vestry, the Fund has grown to \$6,888,483 as of April 30, 2021. The TPMEF provides stability and opportunity to create a more vibrant Church community.

The Vincent Memorial Legacy (VML), was created by Hugh Evelyn Vincent in memory of his parents. Upon the death of his wife, Mildred S. Vincent, in 1977, Trinity inherited the generous bequest. The Vestry determined that the best use for this fund would be to support outreach to the community and to partner with others who seek to improve the quality of life of our neighbors in our City. The VML has grown to \$7,242,706 as of April 30, 2021.

In 2019, Bruce Walker left an extraordinary bequest to support Trinity's wonderful feeding ministry, Trinity Loaves and Fishes. The value of this bequest is \$2,278,834 as of April 30, 2021.

A family who wishes to remain anonymous has made a generous gift to endow the maintenance and upkeep of our beautiful chapel. The value of this gift is \$148,545 as of April 30, 2021.

Trinity's music program and the Trinity Educational and Enrichment Program have each been enriched and supported by the generosity of our congregation, and by those who have benefited from these ministries.

VIII. The Church We Are

Our Committee's research confirmed that service to others is a key strand of Trinity's DNA, as integral to our Christian life as our liturgy. Although we strive to see and to serve Christ in all persons and to love our neighbors as ourselves, we cannot claim that we have always done so regardless of race or color. However, our review of our church's history leaves us with a profound sense of appreciation for our tradition of outreach and service to "the other." We thank the Vestry for its 2015 reaffirmation of the centrality of service to others as intrinsic to our life as Christians and for committing Trinity *"[to seek] and [to serve] Christ in all persons and loving our neighbors as ourselves, regardless of race or color."*

It is through this lens that we considered the people whom we honor through our choice to associate their names with important places in the Church.

IX. Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Existing Names at Trinity

Part of our committee's charge was to consider whether the names Trinity has given to places and spaces reflect the enduring values and aspirations of our faith and of our congregation. We challenged ourselves to look at our buildings as if we had never seen them before and to try to see them as others might view them.

As our committee considered the stained glass windows and memorial plaques throughout the church, whether given in memory of loved ones or to recognize individuals whose lives, contributions and service stand out as examples of the believers we strive to be, we concluded that we have neither the right nor the ability to question the motivations of those donors.

1. Our Stained Glass Windows

Our committee considered our stained glass windows.

We gave special consideration to the Chancel Window behind our Altar which is dedicated to "The Right Rev. Leonidas Polk, D.D., First Bishop of Louisiana" donated by "The Bishop Polk Society." Dr. James Theis' and Harriet Murrell's book, The Stained Glass of Trinity Episcopal Church, confirmed that the Bishop Polk Society was the first organization of the

women of Trinity Church. Dr. Theis and Ms. Murrell recount the story, “probably true” of the women “canvassing door to door for money to pay for the windows in the 1870’s.” Theis and Murrell, The Stained Glass of Trinity Episcopal Church, page 53.

The window was dedicated in 1874. The Vestry records from that year include the following commendation of the work of the Bishop Polk Society:

Whereas, whilst the Bishop Polk Society is efficiently engaged in the administration of charity and Christian consolation to the poor of the Parish, it has generously furnished to the church the pulpit, reading desk, stalls, altar redos and it has ordered a beautiful chancel window from England, has made a liberal subscription towards the completion of the exterior of the church and has completely and elegantly refurnished and refitted the Vestry room.

Therefore, be it resolved that in the Bishop Polk Society the Vestry recognizes an organization zealously devoted to all good works and eminently worthy of the confidence and support of all good Christians.
Logan, *Trinity Church*, p. 40

We concluded that this window honors Bishop Polk’s evangelical work as the First Bishop of Louisiana and not his defense of the institution of slavery, if indeed, those can truly be separated. Moreover, we concluded that the window honors the hard work and generosity of the first organization of the women of Trinity Church. Our recommendation is that this window be considered in the same manner as our other windows and its dedication be retained as a memorial.

2. The Howcott Chapel

The Howcott Chapel was originally part of the Howcott Parish House, built around 1909, to house various Parish activities. In 1931 a long-recognized need for a smaller, yet beautiful, worship space was addressed by converting the first floor of this Parish House into our Chapel. The Chapel, and a board room upstairs from the Chapel, still bear the Howcott name.

The Howcott Parish House was built with funds donated in 1909 by William Hill Howcott in memory of his son, William Hill Howcott, Jr., who died in 1907, at the young age of 21. William Hill Howcott, the father, joined a Confederate calvary unit at age 15 in 1864. However, his son was not born until 1886. The Howcott Chapel and Howcott Board room were built with money generously given to Trinity in memory of a beloved son. We concluded that this dedication was not tied to any views or motivations beyond familial love. We recommend that this memorial to a loved one retain its name.

3. Bishop Polk Hall

Bishop Polk Hall was built by the Church in the late 1950's, before the School was founded. The Legacy Committee could find no records of the decision making process regarding the space.

We thoroughly searched Church records, and found no indication that the Hall was named at the request of a donor, nor did we find any record of the Vestry's consideration of the name.

Bishop Leonidas Polk was the first Bishop of Louisiana and a Rector of Trinity Church. He was a Founder of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Confederate States of America and a Founder of the University of the South, Sewanee. Bishop Polk also owned plantations and enslaved as many as 300 men, women and children. He fought as a Confederate General and lost his life in the defense of a culture which was based on the enforced domination of one race over another and the belief that the enslaved race was inferior and incapable of surviving other than as property bound to the service of others. As one of the Founders of the University of the South, he envisioned a school where young men could receive an education suited to the preservation of the Southern plantation culture and economy, which was based on the enslavement of human beings. (See, The Roberson Project on Slavery, Race, and Reconciliation at the University of the South, [https:// new.sewanee.edu/Roberson-project/learn-more/research summary](https://new.sewanee.edu/Roberson-project/learn-more/research-summary).)

Bishop Polk's espousal of racial inequality and inferiority stand in opposition to the fundamental tenets of our Christian creed as we now understand them. His beliefs stand in opposition to the mission of the Church, "*...to restore unity with God and each other in Christ.*" His beliefs stand in opposition to Trinity's Mission Statement, our Vestry's resolutions and our School's policies.

We recommend that the name of Bishop Polk Hall be changed. However, we recognize that Bishop Polk is a seminal person in our Diocese and our Church. We do not recommend that his photograph be removed from its place among those of our other Rectors, nor do we recommend that his name and his role in the history of our church be hidden in our church and school.

We further recommend that the name of Bishop Polk Hall be changed to "Bishops' Hall" to acknowledge the unique role that Bishops have in our Episcopal Church and to honor all those who have demonstrated that unique combination of spiritual depth, religious zeal, theological learning, and wisdom, as well as the practical administrative skills to lead and serve the dioceses of our Church as Bishops.

In our Episcopal Church, our Bishops are the successors of the Apostles. An unbroken line of succession extends from the Apostles through our past Bishops to those who serve the Church today. Our Bishops are the chief pastors, priests, administrators, and decision makers of each Diocese and exercise authority over the parishes and congregations within their dioceses.

The role of the Bishop and the belief in apostolic succession distinguishes our Episcopal Church from other Protestant denominations. Over the years, our Bishops have displayed evangelic fervor, spiritual depth, administrative skill and diplomatic acuity among many other traits necessary to the propagation of the Gospel.

In Trinity's history, ten members of our Clergy (eight rectors, one associate, and one head of school) whose outstanding qualities were widely recognized, have been called and duly ordained in apostolic succession to serve as Bishops in our Episcopal Church.

These clergy members are (as of this writing):

The Rt. Rev. Leonidas Polk, Diocese of Louisiana 1841–1864
The Rt. Rev. Henry N. Pierce, Diocese of Arkansas 1870-1899
The Rt. Rev. John W. Beckwith, Diocese of Georgia 1868-1890
The Rt. Rev. John N. Galleher, Louisiana 1880-1891
The Rt. Rev. Samuel S. Harris, Diocese of Michigan, 1879–1888
The Rt. Rev. Hugh Miller Thompson, Diocese of Mississippi 1883-1902
The Rt. Rev. Thomas F. Gailor, Diocese of Tennessee 1898 to 1935
The Rt. Rev. Dabney T. Smith, Diocese of Southwest Florida, 2007-2022
The Rt. Rev. Duncan M. Gray, III, Diocese of Mississippi, 2003-2015
The Rt. Rev. Phoebe A. Roaf, Diocese of Western Tennessee, 2019-

These individuals have each demonstrated to their contemporaries their faithfulness, their compassion, and their extraordinary gifts to lead their dioceses in the direction of realization of the God's Kingdom. We recommend the name "Bishops' Hall" to honor these individuals and their connection to Trinity Church and to honor all who have been called to the Episcopacy of our church.

B. Guidelines for Future Naming

The names of the spaces where we gather, those for which the purpose is to promote worship, formation, or community are important symbols. These symbols should recall to us, and help us to live into, our Baptismal covenant, as well as advance the mission of the Church. We have observed that decisions to honor a person by naming a space after them often reflects

how the person's life and contributions reflect these values. The Legacy Committee recommends that this principle guide and inform future naming or re-naming decisions, whether initiated by the Vestry, School Board or at the behest of a donor seeking to honor and memorialize a loved one.

As a committee, we wish we knew more of the history and character of the persons whose names we see memorialized in our Church. We hope that when Trinity receives a request to name a space or an object, Trinity will attempt to record, preserve, and memorialize in our church records the qualities of the honoree that motivated the donor's gift, in addition to the donor's love and affection for the honoree. This will enhance the rich history of Trinity Church.

C. Other Recommendations

1. Education about Bishop Polk

Our inquiries and research revealed that neither the Church nor the School attempt to educate concerning Bishop Polk's life and contributions to the Diocese and to Trinity, nor do they discuss his attitudes towards his enslaved Christian brethren. Our congregation, students, and visitors are introduced to his name on the Hall but are not instructed about his biography and the profoundly contradictory nature of his beliefs as a Christian clergyman and as an owner of enslaved men, women and children. If they were to learn about his racial ideology, they would wonder why our church would honor a slave owner who sought to promulgate racial divisions and believed that the institution of slavery was a positive good to be preserved, defended and celebrated.

Bishop Phoebe Roaf guides us towards a better understanding of Bishop Polk in remarks she made for the University of the South Winter Convocation on January 17, 2020:

"...[W]e have focused on the founding Bishops such as Leonidas Polk, a former Confederate general, dealer in enslaved persons, and beloved child of God. Bishop Polk has a complex legacy.

And he is unconditionally loved by God just as all of us are.

God may not be pleased with our decisions but there's nothing that can separate us from the love of God, thanks be to God."

Because Bishop Polk had a foundational role in the establishment of the Diocese of Louisiana and the development of Trinity Church, his story should not be ignored and its difficult parts should not be excised.

Accordingly, our committee recommends that consideration be given to more fully integrating Bishop Polk's history into the education and formation offerings of the Trinity community. The incongruity of our current understanding of Christ's command to love one another as He loves us, and Bishop Polk's participation in and defense of a dehumanizing slavery based culture, leads us not to condemn his understanding of the dictates of his faith, but to examine our own faith, our own actions, and our own human flaws and frailties in the context of the Almighty's unconditional love for us. Bishop Polk, slave owner and priest, preacher of the gospel, evangelist, and defender of slavery to his death is unconditionally loved by God, just as all of us are. The consideration of his life is an invitation to grow in our faith, such that we live more holy, generous and Christ-centered lives.

For Bishop Roaf, reflection on Bishop Polk's life and legacy is not an exercise in condemnation and criticism but a reminder that "we all have blind spots and have failed to respect all members of God's family..." Her reflection causes her to ask,

*"Who have I assigned to the role of second class citizens?
How can I work to eradicate the discrimination which exists in society?
Can I acknowledge my own blind spots about other people and about myself?
Can I discipline myself to spend more time listening to others instead of rushing to argue my point of view?"*

(Roaf, "Remarks for the University of the South Winter Convocation" 2020)

These are questions we must ask ourselves if we are to live up to our Baptismal covenant. These are questions we must ask our leadership if Trinity is to live up to its commitment to undoing racism, now and into the future.

2. Add to the Recognition of our Leaders

As our committee surveyed the public spaces in our church, we were as much struck by the images and names which were missing as we were by those that are now in place. Therefore, the Legacy Committee recommends an approach of adding to, rather than cancelling or erasing the emblems of our history. We considered how best to tell Trinity's entire story, how to honor additional contributors to our legacy, and how to preserve an inclusive understanding of our legacy in the future.

Trinity is an historic church with leaders, contributors and clergy of whom we are very proud. We do not recommend that any of these individuals be ignored or their memorials be replaced. However, by adding additional memorials and photographs we can display more of the richness of our history.

For example, photographs of each of the Rectors of Trinity Church are displayed in the hallway beyond the Chapel. These photographs are of white men only. While this is historically accurate, it does not tell the complete story of our church.

As a congregation, we have been blessed by having extraordinary clergy, including women and persons of color. Yet we display nothing to honor the clergy who did not serve as Rectors, but whose commitment to faith and whose pastoral skills have guided us, educated us, deepened our faith and consoled us in times of grief and fear.

From Trinity's founding, lay women have played a leading role in its fund raising, its ministries and its vibrant community. Our Church has been led by a series of remarkable female Wardens and Vestry members. Their achievements are as deserving of memorialization as those of the men who served as Wardens and Vestry members in years gone by.

In addition, from the Bishop Polk Society to Women of Trinity Church, the work of the women who have organized themselves to support the church, and who have created ministries such as our rummage sale and Trinity Treasures, has become integral to our church's life. The extraordinary contributions of our women's organizations should be acknowledged and memorialized.

Our Trinity family has been enriched and our ministries have been supported by the contributions of many of our Staff members. Their steadfast contributions to our Parish life should be acknowledged and our appreciation should be made manifest in the common areas of our Church and School.

Our ministries have been blessed by the participation of people of color, particularly Alvin Edinburg, who, as Director of TEEP, Trinity Educational and Enrichment Program, has nurtured and guided the program for almost a half a century. As proud as we are of TEEP, we display no photograph, or other acknowledgement, of Mr. Edinburg's lifelong commitment to the children of our city and of our Church. We should acknowledge Mr. Edinburg and other faithful contributors to the vibrancy of our church.

As a committee we recommend that Trinity also consider opportunities to recognize and honor the ways in which the labor and contributions of African Americans, both slave and free, and other people of color, were crucial to the building up of the United States, to New Orleans, and directly and indirectly to Trinity Church.

The richness of our heritage and the diversity of the contributors to Trinity's legacy is a story that is not fully expressed in the people we have heretofore chosen to honor through our memorials and our naming of our places and spaces.

3. Continue to Study and to Serve

As a committee, one of our most striking discoveries was the enormity of our charge of “Examining Trinity’s history in relation to race and racism and gaining a deeper understanding of our past through the perspective of the Church community we aspire to be today.”

Trinity’s history is long and complex and its study is no small endeavor. We are fully part of a larger community and issues of race and racism are pervasive. To examine our church in relation to race and racism is an enormous task that is nearly impossible to circumscribe.

For example, a question about the effect of names of Confederate icons on students of color, led to research and discussion of the reasons schools were so named, especially in the 1950’s and 1960’s. The reasons offered include, among others, resistance to de-segregation, intentional intimidation of students of color and preservation of the “Lost Cause” mythology.

As the committee tried to isolate and understand Bishop Polk’s attitudes towards enslaved human beings, we found ourselves immersed in the extensive literature explicating the role of white churches in maintaining segregation and white supremacist beliefs over the decades. With an eye toward the future, we must study our past and continually examine whether our actions live up to our aspirations or merely serve to reinforce divisive beliefs and attitudes.

We recommend that Trinity continue to study its history in relation to race and racism and to other human attributes, including gender and sexual orientation, that may cause us to forget that all are made in the image of God and all are equally loved by God. This study may create greater awareness of the impediments to be overcome in our efforts to bring about God’s kingdom on earth, as it is in heaven.

4. Build Bridges

From the early days of Trinity Church, we have attempted to build bridges with congregations of color. We have mentioned our support of St. Timothy’s Church and St. Luke’s Church, and have acknowledged Rev. Canon William Barnwell’s lifelong effort to connect Trinity with neighboring African American congregations. Today, Trinity maintains a dialogue with Pastor Torin Sanders and his Sixth Street Baptist Church Congregation.

If Trinity is to live up to its commitment to undoing racism, we must continue these efforts until we no longer see diverse others as separate from us but as beloved brothers and sisters in Christ.

X. Afterword

When he called our committee together and presented our task, Rev Thayer asked us to be “thoughtful and not reactive” as we considered Trinity’s Legacy in relation to race and racism. Early in our process, we were advised to approach our work prayerfully and with humility.

We were mindful of these admonitions as we met to present our research and discuss our personal understanding of the demands of our Christian faith. We listened to each other carefully and respectfully and our differing beliefs coalesced into this report and its recommendations.

This report is offered for consideration by Rev. Thayer, the Vestry and the Trinity Community. We ask that those who read this do so with an open heart and an open mind and prayerfully seek to understand our responsibilities as Christians trying to live into our faith.

Bibliography and Additional Resources

Trinity Episcopal Church Legacy Committee's selected sources include the following, Where possible, these files have been added to the following Google Drive: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12-JyRtjT3XCyUUMoF3uD9eD3P8lyJ_CR?usp=sharing_eil&ts=6050fc92&sh=GtMXUb25x5GAitfT&ca=1

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Appendices

1. Trinity Church Demographics and Mission
2. Trinity's Mission and its outreach to African Americans in recent years
3. Trinity's Average Sunday Attendance, 2015 -2020
4. Trinity's employee census by race
5. Demographics of Trinity's immediate neighborhood, 2012-2015
6. Trinity School's Faculty and Student demographics by race