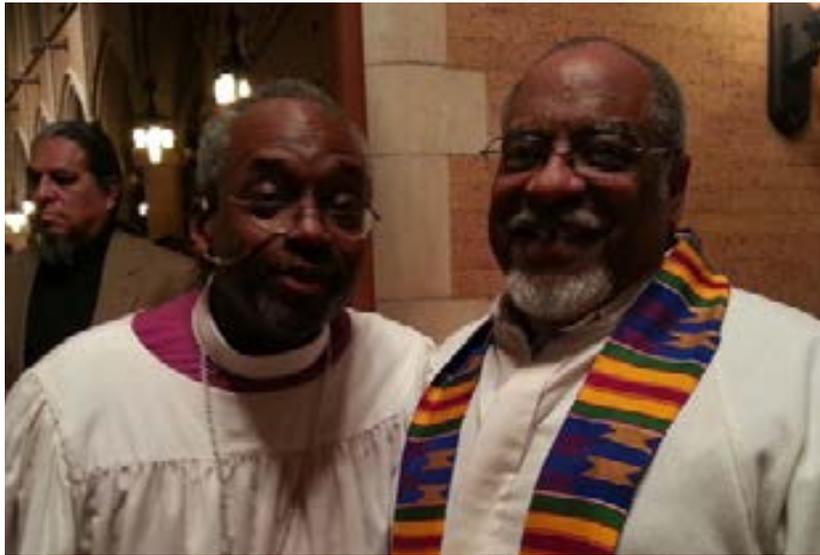




Holy Trinity Episcopal Church

Holy Trinity Episcopal Church is the merger of two historic Black congregations, St. Thomas Episcopal Church of



George Thompson, Sr. Warden, Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in St. Paul with Presiding Bishop Michael Curry

Minneapolis and St. Philip's Episcopal Church of St. Paul. Between 2008 and 2016 the combined congregations shared worship space with Epiphany Episcopal Church in St. Paul. In 2012, the merged congregations assumed the name of Holy Trinity and purchased Epiphany church in 2017. The Rev. Dr. James N. Wilson II serves as Priest-in-Charge of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church.

Historical Background

The presence of Black pioneers in Minnesota predates its territorial founding in 1840. By the time of its statehood in 1858, fledgling Black communities existed in both Minneapolis and St. Paul. During and following the Civil War, Minnesota experienced sizeable population growth. Many Black communities of faith trace their origins to the period between 1863 and 1890.

In St. Paul the first Black faith community of record was Pilgrim Baptist Church founded in 1863. The second was St. Mark's Episcopal Church, led by the Rev. T. H. N. Gerry in 1867. Upon his death in 1871 the congregation disbanded. In 1888 former members led by Mrs. Elizabeth Tibbs petitioned the Bishop for mission status. Initially denied, the petition was approved. In 1894, St. Philip's Mission was organized. The congregation worshiped in a converted factory building until it was razed, permitting the construction of a new house of worship in 1955.

In Minneapolis the earliest settlements of African Americans date back to 1857. Their first church was St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church (1863). St. Thomas Episcopal Church was organized in 1899 by Black parishioners at Gethsemane Episcopal Church who had felt unwelcome in their congregation. In 1901 Bishop Whipple granted their petition for a parish mission. It was consecrated in 1910. Lots were purchased, but a permanent structure was never built. The congregation languished, and in 1929 the site was sold. A building formerly owned by the Christian Union was purchased and remodeled. In 1960 a new church was built.

Leadership

Central to the early survival and spiritual/physical growth of both congregations were four extraordinary priests. The Rev. Alfred H. Lealtad, considered one of the leading Black clerics in the nation became rector of St. Philip's in 1905, celebrating Sunday Eucharist at St. Thomas as well. The Rev. Edward James, The Rev. Victor E. Holly and The Rev. Llewellyn Williams of St. Philip's continued spiritual leadership of both congregations through the Depression and World War II, after which the parishes were served by gifted priests, the Rev. Canon Louis W. Johnson at St. Thomas and The Rev. Denzil Angus Carty at St. Philip's. Both were respected community leaders, ardent civil rights activists, and scholar/teachers. Under each, new church buildings were constructed and congregations flourished. St. Philip's became nationally known for progressive positions in the national Anglican church and was among the first to accept women into the priesthood. It was also one of the earliest parishes in the nation to conduct "jazz masses" and sponsored the development of an urban low income housing project in St. Paul called St. Philip's Gardens. Recently, The Rev. Denzil Carty's name was entered into the Book of Holy Men and Holy Woman for his outstanding work in human rights, spiritual leadership in the community and affordable housing.



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For more than 100 years these two congregations have borne witness to their humble origins and fraternal ties. Connected by shared histories, partnerships, and family bonds, these parishes celebrate their individual and collective experiences. Lay leadership has been central to their success. Too numerous to mention, and for fear of inadvertent omission, they cannot all be recognized. However, it is understood that without their financial support and physical presence, these congregations could not have survived and thrived.

To Learn More about Holy Trinity Episcopal Church:

<http://www.startribune.com/minnesota-s-only-african-american-episcopal-church-celebrates-130-years/497282371/>

<https://www.stmatthewsmn.org/blog/history-holy-trinity-episcopal-church>



Holy Trinity receives community recognition for community conversations on racial and ethnic reconciliation.