

Trinity Episcopal Church, Morgan City: A Family

2021 Church Profile created by members of Trinity Episcopal Church



This June we ate together for the first time as a parish since the pandemic began last March; celebrating life, health, happiness, good food, and even better company. While we have worshipped at Eucharist in some shape or form for almost a year, our monthly potluck lunches after Eucharist were stopped until this June because of COVID19 precautions. Our Sunday potlucks serve as a means for everyone to sit and visit over a plate of homemade casseroles and desserts. Our monthly potlucks help nurture the heart which makes Trinity Episcopal Church in Morgan City, LA, so special, our family. We are a church family first and foremost, doing the work of Christ among us in our small community in St. Mary Parish, LA. Let us tell you about what makes us so unique and loved by those who join with us each week. Let us tell you about our Trinity family.

What We Do

Worship



The Eucharist is a central part of life at Trinity. Holy Eucharist or Morning Prayer is offered at 9:30 AM each Sunday, depending on the availability of a supply priest. Further, a service is offered on Holy Days such as Christmas Eve, Easter Sunday Morning, Ash Wednesday, and other feast days. In the past we have offered a non-singing Eucharist at 8:00 AM on Sunday Morning and a Eucharist with choir at 9:30 AM.

Traditional music is central to worship with a small full choir, organist, and instrumentalist playing and singing. Songs are primarily classical pieces or from *The Hymnal 1982*. The choir has also sung music from popular Christian artists.

Additionally, a priest serves the needs of the parish and community by celebrating funeral Eucharist, weddings, baptisms, and anointing of the sick. Confirmations and receptions into the church are traditionally offered in November when the bishop comes to celebrate these momentous occasions. The priest provides weekly blessings at Sunday Eucharist for birthdays and wedding anniversaries and offers home visits to offer comfort, support, and Eucharist where needed. Further, lay ministers take Eucharist to homebound parishioners.

Formation for adults, children, and teens has also been part of our parish. Adult Bible Study has been held on Sundays before Eucharist or on a weeknight with the priest or a theologically trained parishioner providing education and insight. At one point a Sunday School was also offered so parents could attend Eucharist while their children received age-appropriate instruction about the weekly readings and message. In past years, Summer Vacation Bible School has been provided and well attended by children from Trinity and other churches in the Morgan City area. Trinity has offered teen activities and sponsored students at Camp Hardtner (some have gone on to become camp counselors). Finally, several parishioners have made their Cursillo and subsequently become active in the Cursillo movement and served on staff for retreats.



Mission and Community

Trinity has always been a parish of mission, serving our greater family in St. Mary Parish, Louisiana, and the world at large. We accomplish this in a multitude of ways.

Trinity Outreach

One of the highlights of the Episcopal Church and specifically Trinity, is our ability to provide needed outreach in our community. Over the last few years, we have impacted our fellow citizens through various activities.

Shrimp and Petroleum Festival



Every year our “Little Green Church” is smack dab in the middle of the Morgan City Shrimp and Petroleum Festival (Yes, it is a thing!). While the festival is a blast, it is also a very hot time of year. After a day of carnival rides, music, dancing, eating, and artisan crafts shopping it is easy to get overheated. Trinity sets up two large tents with chairs, industrial fans, and free water to help cool the body and calm the spirit. We strive for a quiet and restful atmosphere during our city’s busiest festival. We hear year after year how appreciated our service is.

Bayou BBQ Bash



Pre-Coronavirus, Trinity participated in the Annual BBQ Bash by hosting the judging portion of the competition in our parish hall (Yum!). Due to the contest being an officially sanctioned function, all the submitted brisket, chicken, and ribs must be discarded. As compensation for the use of the hall, they donate all the submissions to us for charitable distribution to those in need in our community. Our church members process, vacuum pack and freshly freeze around 100 lbs. of BBQ each event. This food is provided to those in need upon request.



Additionally, we use the occasion to sell soft drinks from a Coke trailer. Although it is a lot of work, the fellowship of working together is a real reward, and on average, we make between \$700 and \$900 in profit that we use solely for community outreach. Traditionally this has gone towards helping transient people looking for work stay in hotel rooms, utility payments, and or donations to our local St. Mary Outreach organization in Morgan City.

Food Donations During the Pandemic Lockdown

Goodbye 2020... you will not be missed. Our world suddenly changed in 2020. Though we all knew the events that transpired were possible, it caught most of us flat footed and unprepared to address persistent problem issues. Many of the residents of our community depend on the school lunch programs in our parish and across Louisiana to help keep their children fed. As the initial weeks rolled into months without businesses, government offices, and schools, some in our community suffered. Everyone wanted to do something, and we struggled to find a platform for us to use to help ease the need. Some of our parishioners reached out to some of the local schools and arranged for a donation day during the height of the pandemic uncertainty before the government or anyone else had a chance to respond. The outpouring of donations and stewardship from Trinity was very inspiring and greatly appreciated by those in need of a helping hand.



Ecumenical Spirit

For several years we have participated with Cornerstone Ministries and Pharr Methodist Chapel to offer a Good Friday fish fry in Lawrence Park. The entirely free menu consists of fried catfish, coleslaw, white beans and rice, with French bread and dessert (usually a tasty sheet cake). In years past, we have had live Christian music in the park's pavilion and the "Stations of the Cross" are walked around the circumference of the park at noon. We usually distribute between 600 and 900 meals within the span of three hours during this event. It has become a local tradition for many of the residents of our community.



Care for Local Law Enforcement, First Responders

Each week we pray for the first responders, law enforcement officers, and military from our community. We also have over the years provided Christmas Eve treats to those working that evening. Parishioners bake cookies and make candy to take to those serving others at the local hospital, police stations, firehouses.

Additionally, Trinity has provided meals to thank our local law enforcement officers and first responders for the work they do for us. Before COVID, a lunch was held at the parish hall, served by some of our parishioners to thank our Law Enforcement Officers and Fire Fighter for all they do for us.



Care for Others in our Community

We also give to our elderly community members through Christmas gifts and other donations and service at the St. Mary Parish Council on Aging, give beans and rice and other needed items to St. Mary Outreach for those in need, and have during the pandemic created a food pantry of items available outside our church hall for those who come to us requesting help. We also collect coats, backpacks, and school supplies for local school children.

Our Episcopal Church Women hold both Christmas greens and bake sales, using this money to help those without in our community. ECW members present gift cards to St. Mary Outreach at Christmas for teens and elderly in need, showering them with the ability to purchase gifts for themselves. Our women oversee the Church Periodical Club which helps seminarians purchase textbooks. The money is also used to purchase spiritual reading material in countries suffering from poverty. We also have Spring and Fall Ingathering for United Thank Offering. We provide hospitality after Sunday Eucharist and funerals. We serve wherever we are needed, when called, at the parish, diocesan, and national level.

Trinity has also always been concerned about those in our world at large, not just those in our local area. We pray each week for our prayer partners in Uganda, Japan, and Honduras. In the past we have sent missionary groups to work in Honduras helping local villagers to work on various building projects and teaching local children about Christ's message through stories and crafts. We have collected shoes, clothes, toys, and personal hygiene items for them. We have also collected funds to help them help themselves in their various needs.



Finally, we have recently started donating to The Heifer Fund International each month through a collection at Eucharist. This worthy charity takes donated money and purchases chickens, heifers, or goats for those in undeveloped parts of the world. The respective eggs, cheese, or milk produced provide food and additional income for the families who care for these animals.

Who We Are

Our Parish Demographics

Trinity is a small but busy parish in rural Southeast Louisiana. We do our part to share Christ's message of love through our time, talents, and treasure, not just in our parish life but in our personal ones as well. Our members are from all backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses. Our members are doctors, teachers, law enforcement officers, first responders, business owners, and oil and maritime industry workers. We work in service industries and are stay at home moms. In 2020, we had 62 active members in our parish (56 adults and 6 youth). Those 62 members did much to help impact our area in big and small ways. While we may seem little, we are indeed a powerful force in our community. We believe that with growth, there is so much more we can do.

Our Parish Life

While service and worship are large parts of who we are as a church family, Trinity in a normal year is also a vibrant, small community. We welcome all with Sunday coffee and snacks after Eucharist and Sunday potluck lunch once a month. Members enjoy ECW socials at Christmas and the annual St. John's tea. Members represent Trinity Morgan City at both the ECW Annual Gathering and Diocesan Annual Convention. Last, our parish gathers for weekly Wednesday Lenten Evening Prayer and soup dinners hosted by parish families and Trinity Sunday Eucharist and celebrations.



Trinity Enjoying St. John's Tea

We are family there for each other in the joys of life: births, marriage, new jobs, good medical reports, successes at work and among children and grandchildren, and the celebration of Sunday Eucharist in person. We are also there for each other in the sadness of life: deaths, illness, job loss, and moves of parishioners to other communities. We laugh, support one another, celebrate one another, and would love to have more people become part of our parish community.

Trinity and the Diocese

Trinity is one of five churches in the Southwest Deanery of the Diocese of Louisiana. The Rt. Rev. Morris K. Thompson, Jr. serves as bishop with the assistance of Canon Shannon Duckworth. Each year Trinity sends three delegates to the diocesan convention. Members have served at the diocesan level and members of the executive board, the Commission on Ministry, and the Episcopal Church Women's executive board. Many parishioners have taken part in retreats held at the Solomon Episcopal Conference Center. They have also attended work shops and Cursillo weekends. Several have served as staff at Cursillo weekends.

Life in the Deep South

Morgan City has one of the nicest campgrounds in Louisiana located on Lake Palourde just north of Morgan City. The park has six cabins, over 200 campsites, a beach, and boat rentals. The area is known for great fishing and hunting and has often been called "the sportsman's paradise."

There are also walking trails for those who like to be close to nature.

The city is protected by a levee system which protects homes from the threat of flooding during hurricane season. The city has not flooded since 1917.

New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Lafayette are just over an hour away, so it is easy to go to the city for shopping, dining or flying away then return home where driving to church takes five minutes.

Our Community



Morgan City was originally named Brashear City for Dr. Walter Brashear, a prominent physician who settled in the area from Maryland. He owned three large sugar plantations, Tiger Island Plantation, Golden Farm Sugar Plantation in Berwick and Bayou Boeuf Sugar Plantation, eight miles south of Morgan City.

Brashear City was embroiled in the Civil War from the very beginning. Preparing for the war, three forts were built: Fort Berwick, across the bay, Fort Chene, eight miles to the south, and Fort Bisland, located near Patterson where the H.P. Williams Airport is today. With the fall of New Orleans on April 25, 1862, the forts were abandoned. The Union erected two sizable forts: Fort Brashear became known as Fort Star and Fort Buchanan, a mile north of Morgan City. Union forces brought in swelled to 16,000 men in Brashear City by 1863. Many families left and went to Mexico only to find their homes and businesses destroyed when they returned home.

In May, 1876, a committee of the council, along with Mrs. F. Brashear, widow of Henry Lawrence, changed the name of Brashear City to Morgan City and donated land downtown for a park named Lawrence Park. Charles Morgan was a great benefactor who made the Atchafalaya River town a booming port for years. He is credited with owning the first steamboat to navigate the Gulf of Mexico and in his lifetime owned over one hundred vessels--more than any other single man in American History. He extended the Gulf-Western Texas and Pacific Railroad from Indianola to San Antonio and when he was more than 70 years old, he dredged a deeper channel through the Atchafalaya Bay to accommodate his fleet of steamboats.

Anyone who has ever been to Morgan City, or heard of it, knows its connection to shrimp and petroleum. There is even a festival each Labor Day weekend to celebrate--The Shrimp and Petroleum Festival. Morgan City once celebrated the proud title of Shrimp Capital of the World and when oil was discovered in the Gulf of Mexico, the city became a boom town. Shrimp is still harvested in the Gulf and shrimp can be bought fresh off the dock in Morgan City, but much of the oil industry has moved on to other areas.

Trinity Episcopal Church History

Morgan City's Trinity Episcopal Church, founded in 1874, is one of the oldest congregations of worship in eastern St. Mary Parish. Dedicated members and generous benefactors sustained Trinity in the early years and enabled the growing congregation to weather the hardships of the Reconstruction Era, the terrors of yellow fever, and now the Covid 19 pandemic. In 1878, the local school had closed for lack of funds, so a schoolhouse, which could be used for divine services on Sunday, was constructed by Trinity and sixty students were enrolled.

In 1911 the church was remodeled with the project funded by Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, Methodists, and Jews as well as Episcopalians. The rapid development of the offshore oil industry in Morgan City in the years following the Second World War enabled the church to expand and flourish. The church remained a mission until 1956 when Trinity called its first resident priest, the Reverend James Douglass, who helped the mission church move to parish status the following year.

The church is lovingly referred to as "the Little Green Church on the Corner" by people in the community. As oil companies moved from Morgan City to Lafayette and Houston, membership dwindled and now attendance is about 30-35 parishioners each Sunday. While members have always enjoyed the beautiful small tranquil church, the pandemic has made it difficult for members to attend. However, with the ease of some restrictions, members are beginning to return. The parish is hopeful that things will return to normal quickly so that we can grow our parish again and get back to all the ministries and activities we value.

Our Hopes for the Future

Survey Results from Trinity for new rector

February-March 2021

Areas of expertise most important for new rector were

1. Church Growth-We want a priest who can help guide and lead us to increase our parish size with new members in our congregation each week. We would love to see an influx of young families and single people who are actively involved in parish life and bring new ideas to the parish community.
2. Counseling-We would like a priest who can provide spiritual, personal, and marriage and family counseling as our parishioners need it. A priest who has experience working with older parishioners and their needs would be wonderful.
3. Crisis Ministry-Our priest should be able to handle crises as they come up for individual parishioners, the church parish, and/or the community at large. Having a pastoral presence during a major event is comforting and very much needed.
4. Pastoral Care-We need a priest who can visit our church members at home when life events occur, both good and bad. Our priest needs to be part of our families, celebrating joyous events like Baptisms and graduations and being with us in hard times like job loss, illness, and death. We need a priest who has time to dedicate to our parish each day, not just a few times a week or at Sunday Eucharist. We have missed this kind of care.
5. Theological Background-Our priest should be able to lead and teach about matters of theology and biblical interpretation at Eucharist and during other times of religious formation. He or she should be able to work with and reach young children, teens, young adults, and older adults.
6. Worship-Our priest should have the ability to plan and conduct worship as a central event. The Eucharist is very important to the spiritual life of Trinity. Our priest should have worship as a central part of his or her life as well.

While all areas are of importance, the least important is capital development. We have traditionally been able, through generous benefactors, to maintain financial stability.

Other areas of importance not listed in the survey were

1. Inclusive of all people-Our priest should be willing to work with all people from all walks of life who enter our church and reside within our diverse community of St. Mary Parish.

2. Keeps politics out of church-Our priest should be able to be politically neutral. Many of our parishioners are conservative. Others are more liberal. We are a parish that respects all who come to our church family. We hope our priest will be able to work with all of us.

3. Integrity in all aspects of life and work-Finally, we need a priest who lives out Christ's message in his or her daily life, representing our parish and the Episcopal Church in all that they do.

A sentence that describes Trinity:

Trinity is a spiritual, loving, giving church where much of the congregation is conservative. The historical church's members have a big heart and deeply care for each other.

Our Social Media

We can be found on Facebook as Trinity Episcopal Church (www.facebook.com/trinitymcla)

Our Contact Info:

Trinity Episcopal Church
302 Greenwood Street
P.O. Box 1776
Morgan City, LA 70381
(985) 384-7629
TrinityEpiscopalMCLA@gmail.com

Our Vestry

Charles Parsiola, Senior Warden
Ed White, Junior Warden
Tim Cheramie
Peggy Coats
Drew Mauro
Judy Weber
Robbie Wiggins

Our Priest Search Committee

Tammy Cheramie
Sam Jones
Ben Mauro
Claire Parsiola
Judy Weber
Ed White

Our Staff

Peggy Coats, Secretary
Fr. Travers Koerner, Supply Priest