



ST. CLAIR SHORES CITY HISTORIC MARKER – TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Good morning. My name is Jerry Sielagowski and I am the chairman of the St. Clair Shores Historical Commission. On behalf of the Historical Commission, I would like to welcome everyone present at this dedication ceremony today.

Please allow me to take a brief moment to introduce the officers and members of the St. Clair Shores Historical Commission... John Cilluffo is our vice-chairman, Kathleen Campbell is our secretary/treasurer, and the members of the commission are Kathryn Gargalino, Janet Horan and Kay Van De Graaf. Our council liaison is Ms. Candice Rusie and our staff liaison is the city librarian, Mrs. Rosemary Orlando.

We're also happy to have with us today, Mayor Kip Walby and Councilpersons, John Caron and Dave Rubello.

The St. Clair Shores Historical Commission is very proud to be able to celebrate our local history through the City Historical Marker program. This program was created to promote recognition of historical sites throughout our city and raise public awareness of their significance and importance by noting their contributions to our local history.

This morning, we are dedicating the city historical marker at Trinity Episcopal Church. I would like to thank the City Historical Marker Subcommittee, and Mr. Dale Archibald and Ms. Connie Rempala from Trinity Episcopal for their research efforts and for sharing the history of Trinity Episcopal Church with us.

When Dr. and Mrs. Fred Thompson moved into the area known as L'Anse Creuse in Lake Township in June 1916, most of the residents of the area were descendants of the original French families that had settled there many years before. By this time, a few of the families which had previously resided in the area only during the summer months had decided to make their permanent homes here. And soon, they were joined by others who desired the fresh air and quiet solitude away from the city. The Thompsons, who lived at Jefferson at the corner of Raymond, were among the new people moving into the area who found that the only church for miles around was Roman Catholic. There were no Protestant churches in the area. Because of this, Dr. Thompson decided to conduct Episcopal church school services at his home.

On February 11, 1917, eighteen people met in the sunroom of the Thompson home where a church school service was conducted by Dr. Thompson. Others soon joined the original eighteen and a steady growth in attendance followed. On May 6, 1917, the name

"Trinity Mission" was chosen by a vote of the members of the Church School. Lay readers were provided from Detroit and the first regular church service was conducted on May 20, 1917. Dr. Thompson often drove to Detroit to get the lay reader, and after the service and dinner at his house, would drive him back to Detroit.

As the congregation was outgrowing the Thompson's sun porch, an alternate meeting place was needed. A building on the property which had housed chickens, geese, and peacocks was converted for use by the church school and for regular services.

On October 21, 1917, the first baptisms of the church were performed by Archdeacon Hastings from Detroit. Five children from two families were welcomed into the congregation.

Bishop Charles Williams of the Diocese of Michigan presided at the formal opening of the Trinity Mission on November 18, 1917. A year and a half later, Trinity had its first confirmation on March 13, 1919. Fifteen persons were confirmed by Bishop Williams.

Given that Trinity was the only Protestant Church in the community, it soon became apparent that a larger, more adequate church building would be needed. A lot was purchased on the corner of Jefferson Avenue and Lake Boulevard. An old French one-room schoolhouse (the Erin Schoolhouse), a white frame building located just south of Ingleside Grosse Pointe Park, was also purchased, moved to the Jefferson and Lake property and placed upon a basement foundation. Trinity purchased the building for \$175.

In October 1921, the Reverend William Kinder became vicar of Trinity Mission. During his two years at Trinity, a parish hall was added to the original school building. By 1922, the new building was completed at the foot of Lake Boulevard.

During the Depression, Trinity celebrated its 20th Anniversary. In 1937, membership was down due to the establishment of many other Protestant churches in the area; but the Trinity Congregation was not going to let the Depression do them in! The parish continued to grow, and its members continued to look forward to a time when they could claim the rights and privileges of a full-fledged, independent parish.

By the Fall of 1945, the Diocese recognized the need for Trinity to maintain itself as a true parish. On October 30th, 1945, Trinity Parish was incorporated under the laws of the State of Michigan. For the first time in its history, the members were allowed to elect a vestry and assume full responsibility for the parish.

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In 1949, the Reverend Eric J. Whiting became rector of Trinity. Rev. Whiting served at Trinity during the time when the most rapid growth of the church had occurred, the 1950s. A time when St. Clair Shores itself was also rapidly expanding.

As the number of families increased, the old buildings were no longer able to accommodate the growing congregation. A new church building committee, under the direction of Earle Richards, was formed. On Thanksgiving Day, 1954, construction began on the current church building. Groundbreaking services were held with Dean George Merrifield of the Eastside Convocation presiding. Almost a year later, on October 30th, 1955, a formal Dedication Service was held in the new building, with Bishop Emrich officiating. Highlighting the celebration was a parish dinner held on the evening before the dedication.

The new church had no parish hall or basement. So, in 1957, the parish acquired the Ackerly House, located next to the church on Jefferson. The house was used for classroom space for the Sunday School, with the original church still being used for some of the Sunday School.

The year 1959 was a milestone year for the parish. The Diocesan Canons permitted the election of women to the Vestry, which is the governing body of the parish. Because of the increased size of the parish, the membership of the Vestry was increased from nine to twelve.

In the Fall of 1964, the St. Clair Shores Fire Marshall condemned the old church building as a fire hazard and it was torn down. During the demolition, an original blackboard from the old schoolhouse was found on the wall with some French writing still on it.

In early 1965, a building committee for the new Parish Hall was appointed. One of its outstanding features are the stained-glass windows in the Nave, which were designed and installed by the Willet Stained Glass Studios of Philadelphia, PA. In the Spring of 1966, the old Ackerly House was sold and moved from the church property to Lake Boulevard. Groundbreaking services for the new Parish Hall took place in June 1966 and construction was completed in January 1967. Formal dedication services were held on May 18th, 1967.

Trinity Episcopal celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 1967. The Altar Guild held a lovely tea and couples renewed wedding vows. These were among the many events that took place to commemorate Trinity's Golden Anniversary.

October of 1979 saw the Consecration of the Church and Congregation when the mortgage was paid off.

On June 9th, 1985, in honor of his many years of service, the Eric J. Whiting Memorial Garden (a columbarium) was consecrated by Bishop Mayson.

Trinity celebrated its 75th Anniversary in 1992, which included a year-long program of activities. A dinner was held on November 14th for over 100 guests, in recognition of the special year.

On May 20, 2017, a Centennial Service was held at Trinity with Bishop Gibbs presiding and Rev. Buxo participating. A catered celebration dinner was held later that evening.

Over the years, many groups and individuals have contributed to the growth and mission of Trinity Episcopal Church.

And so, at this time, the St. Clair Shores Historical Commission would like to dedicate this city historical marker in celebration of Trinity Episcopal Church, a community of faith which continues to be a Christian influence by serving the Lord in our community. The Trinity Episcopal Church has occupied this site for over a century. It is and will continue to be an integral part of our legacy and local history here in St. Clair Shores! Thank you.