

Welcoming Congregations of Kansas City

by Bradley Osborn *October 2006*



Our *Welcoming Congregations* series continues with a midtown church. Located a few blocks east of Main Street on Armour Boulevard is an eighty-seven-year-old stone edifice sheathed on its south-facing front by trees; this is the Trinity United Methodist Church building. This article is about the people who meet, and worship there.

Trinity United Methodist Church

Many of us have seen the United Methodist television commercial that says, "When you truly embrace diversity, you embrace God," and "Our hearts, our minds, and our doors are always open." This media spot illustrates the denomination's acceptance and inclusiveness. The current incarnation of the United Methodist Church is a result of several mergers of like-minded congregations, culminating in a 1968 union that embodies the present church.

The Trinity United Methodist Church building at Kenwood and Armour was dedicated, and first occupied in 1919; it is a three-story Gothic structure with a bell tower. The words "Gothic" and "bell tower" evoke a dark, medieval fane. The congregants at Trinity are anything but—they are filled with a progressive brightness. In 1992, members of Trinity voted to identify as "reconciling," and joined the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) of United Methodists.

We believe all persons, regardless of their age, race, sexual orientation, gender, socio-economic position, challenging conditions, or lifestyle, are valued equally in the life of Trinity Church.

In 2004, *The Pitch* awarded Trinity its "Best Expression of Solidarity" for enacting a moratorium on all marriages until the larger denomination allows the holy union of two adults within the church without regard to gender or sexual orientation.

Rev. M. Diane Nunnelee, senior pastor at Trinity Methodist, says, "It is so important that LGBT people know they are fully included in God's love, in the minds and hearts of many, in the walk of faith." She notes that a welcoming Bible study called "Claiming the Promise" was recently concluded at Trinity. "Claiming the Promise" addresses those scriptures that are often used to place LGBT persons outside the parameters of the church.

Membership at Trinity is diverse: seniors, singles, and couples—families of all sorts. Young ones are ministered to with a Sunday children's sermon; for the youngest, there is a nursery. Vocal musicians may join the choir, or simply enjoy congregational singing accompanied by the antiphonal organ. There are also intergenerational events meant to bring elders and youth together.

Liturgical practices generally follow Wesleyan tradition, but members give input, as well. Themes of reconciliation, service, and social justice pervade the church's ministries. These ministries extend beyond the stone structure, as the congregation hosts community chili suppers and a neighborhood festival, and it serves weekly lunches to seniors and the hungry.

Outreach is an important part of Trinity's mission, including international and hurricane relief and *Operation Santa Claus* for homeless children. Trinity's Reconciling Ministries Committee has hosted proms for Passages, Kansas City's LGBTQ youth organization. And the church has participated in *AIDS Walk*, *Out in Westport*, and *Gay Pride*.

If you choose to worship at Trinity United Methodist, you will be warmly greeted by a member of the Welcoming Committee, and receive a visitors brochure describing "a joyful people daring to live God's inclusive vision of justice, love, and reconciliation."

Trinity United Methodist Church Sunday schedule

Healing & Eucharist Service	9:00 AM
Church School	9:30 AM
Worship Celebration	10:45 AM
Coffee & Fellowship	12 Noon
620 East Armour Boulevard	Kansas City, Missouri 64109-2247
816-931-1100	<i>trinitykc.org</i>

