

Annual Report for Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, Melbourne Florida by The Co-Rectors,  
The Revs. Stephen and Pamela Easterday, January 21-22, 2017, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany,  
Matthew 4:12-23 and Psalm 103 “Bless the Lord, O my Soul!”

Come, Holy Spirit, come. Come as the fire of love and burn in our hearts. Come as the wind  
and cleanse our souls. Help us see our need of you. Help us turn to you. And make us holy.  
For our greater good and your greater glory, in Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Each year, we choose a Bible verse as our theme verse for the year. The verse for 2017 is short  
and easy to remember: Psalm 103:1, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within bless his  
holy name.” To help us internalize the verse we are going to sing it together:



The Hebrew word for “bless” that is used in Psalm 103 means “health-creating power.”  
Someone who is “blessed” is gifted with “health-creating power.” To bless someone is to  
bestow this power on them, or to declare that they have this power. When we “bless the Lord,”  
we declare that the Lord is the source of this power and we praise him for who he is. If you read  
all of Psalm 103, you find out that the call to “bless the Lord” begins on an individual, personal  
note and then expands to the community, later expanding again to include the heavenly host, and  
finally coming back to the personal praise of the Lord. It is our hope that as we live into this  
verse during 2017 we will each “bless the Lord” in our personal lives, that we will “bless the  
Lord” as a congregation, and that together as we celebrate the sacraments, we will join our  
voices with angels, archangels and all the company of heaven as we “bless the Lord” in worship.



Holy Trinity Episcopal Church experienced many blessings in 2016. Let me give you only a few  
examples of how this church received and gave “health-creating power” in the past year. The  
finances of the church are a blessing -- we exceeded the goals for both the Nourishing Body and  
Soul Campaign and the Walking the Gratitude Path Stewardship Campaign. The refinancing of  
notes from the sale of Trinity Towers will lead to over \$20 million in improvements to the three  
buildings. New ministries blessed many in 2016 including: expanded opportunities at Trinity  
Towers, a Blue Christmas service, a new Advent Bible study, and a new set of hand chimes for  
the music department. We continue to see growth in our children and youth programs and we  
are particularly blessed by the close cooperation of Phil and KC. Adult formation, the health  
ministry team, fellowship groups, music groups, the prayer shawl ministry, and the Thrift Shop  
(with manager Dean Wesenberg) continue to be strong conduits for “health-creating power” to  
flow through our church.



There is one more amazing example of “health-creating power” from 2016 and that is the  
Kitchen Committee. We have never seen a committee so dedicated and hard-working as this  
group. I think we can all agree that the new kitchen dramatically exceeds all expectations.




What's ahead in 2017? Many opportunities to "bless the Lord"! In today's Gospel reading, Jesus says, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." Jesus then travelled around proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing disease and sickness among the people. In other words, Jesus spread "health-creating power." The message of the good news of the kingdom carried with it the blessing of God. That is what we believe this church is called to do this year: to share the good news of the kingdom as we spread "health-creating power."



Here are some examples of what we are planning this year:

1. On the next two Thursdays we will offer a baptism class for children and their parents. So get ready to celebrate several baptisms in the coming weeks as we welcome new people into God's family of blessing.
2. For the next four weekends we will explore the whole concept of Kingdom Blessings with a sermon series based on Matthew 5.
3. On February 28 we will celebrate Shrove Tuesday (Mardi Gras) like never before. The annual pancake supper will be prepared in our new kitchen!
4. During Lent, we will enter into a holy time of exploring the last day of Jesus' life on earth, 24 Hours that Changed the World. We will do this in a five-week series with groups meeting in homes and at the church.
5. Soon we will see the revitalization of our lovely historic chapel enter a very active phase. The chapel has been a blessing for this community for 130 years and we look forward to many new opportunities to spread the good news of the kingdom and God's "health-creating power" in that prayer-filled space.
6. We will have our annual women's retreat in March, summer camps in June and July at Camp Wingmann for children and youth, and in November the men's retreat.
7. The fall will also bring the opportunity to go deeper in faith with a special series of classes for teens and adults who desire to be Confirmed, to be received into the Episcopal church, or to celebrate the Reaffirmation of Faith – all in preparation for a visitation from Bishop Brewer on November 19.

It's going to be a busy year of blessing the Lord together! 

Psalm 103:1 says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name." That is what Holy Trinity Episcopal Church is all about – coming together, here is this place, every week, to bless the Lord – to receive the "health-creating power" of God so that we can become conduits of that power to pass it on to the world around us. Last Thursday at the Treasure Kids Club, we were having a conversation about the wise men who followed the star to find Jesus. We talked about the gifts they brought and then we wondered together about the kinds of gifts we can bring to Jesus – the ways in which we can bless Jesus. One of the upper elementary students gave a great answer. He said, "the gifts I would bring to Jesus are people." Jesus said, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." More than anything else in all the world, God loves people. And God wants us to bring people to Jesus so that he can bless them – so that he can pour his "health-creating power" into them.

Will you stand with us now, and reach out and take the hand of the person nearest to you – and together let's sing it one more time as we commit to bless the Lord with all that is within us!



Amen.