

# The Journal

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## Back in time: Trinity Episcopal Church to celebrate 250 years of history with unique service

By Emily Keefer ekeefe@journal-news.net June 10, 2022



MARTINSBURG — Trinity Episcopal Church is looking forward to celebrating more than 250 years this Sunday with its 250-plus-1 event.

As part of the anniversary, Trinity will be celebrating in a unique way, highlighting its history in the Eastern Panhandle.

Beginning at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, those in attendance will be taken back in time through a church service designed as it would have been years ago. According to church personnel, all are welcome, and there will be a picnic after the service.

Bishop W. Michie Klusmeyer, from the West Virginia Diocese, will attend the service on Sunday, participants will be in period costumes, and parts of the service will be in 250-year-old English, setting the stage for reenactment of a 1772 church service.

Marty Keesecker, native of Martinsburg and president of the Adam Stephen Memorial Association, said he is looking forward to this service.

“The basis that this country was founded on was faith-based. It was a faith-based foundation that we grew from. I hope it stays that way,” Keesecker said. “This church has a long history in the community, as well as other churches. It is intertwined in the fabric and in the history of Berkeley County and Martinsburg.”

In 1771, Trinity Episcopal Church was built on the land that is now known as Norborne Cemetery.

“Adam Stephen was the major landowner. He owned all that we sit on today and beyond. He was instrumental in forming the new county of Berkeley from the old county of Frederick,” Keesecker said.

He explained that in addition to Stephen’s many donations, he also donated land for the Norborne Cemetery, which is part of Trinity Parish. Stephen was also a member of the Norborne Parish vestry.

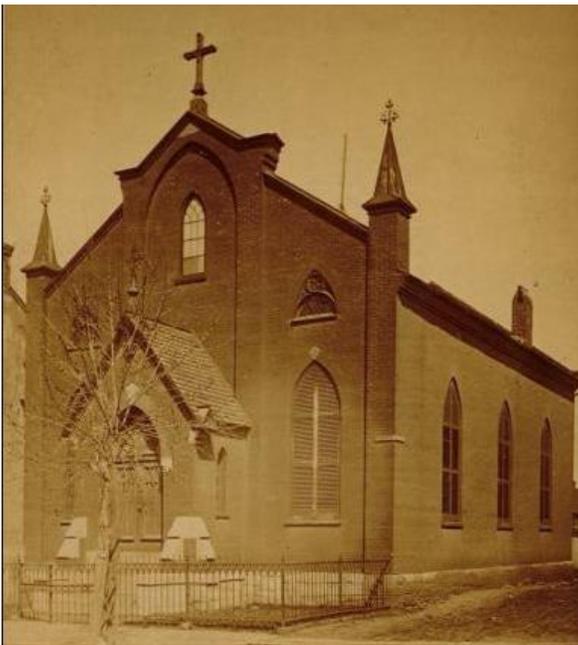
“It is exciting for me to feel the spirituality of it, as well as the historical nature of it. I think it will be shocking for people to hear a sermon from that period. We have different ways of communicating faith and religion these days,” Keesecker said. “Come and enjoy it. Take it in as a historical service.”

Norborne Parish was carved out of Frederick Parish, and it consisted of what is now Berkeley, Morgan and Jefferson counties in West Virginia.

Previously, there was one rector of Frederick Parish, responsible for churches located from the headwaters of the Rappahannock, now Shenandoah County, Virginia, all the way to the Potomac River, a large area to be served by one clergyman.

The new Norborne Parish would have its own rector to serve a smaller area. At the time, there were churches, or chapels, in Hedgesville, Bunker Hill, Mecklenburg (Shepherdstown) and St. George’s Chapel (near Charles Town).

Trinity Sr. Warden Phil Steptoe said that he is also looking forward to the historical aspect of the service.



“I am looking forward to the transport back 250 years, to see how it was done in the old days and to bring some of the old values forward to this time in the service,” Steptoe said.

The church, which was, at the time, part of the Church of England, does not have an exact establishment date, but it does have a significant history.

“We don’t know when the church was built or when the congregation first assembled,” Steptoe said. “This is all to coordinate with the Berkeley County anniversary. We knew we had church people here that were worshippers. With Adam Stephen’s donation of land for the church, things started to come together.”

After looking through history, Steptoe found that the bishop of Virginia at the time, in his travels, wrote the history of the churches of Virginia and what was Virginia.

“The best that he could determine was that it was built after the Revolution,” he said of the church.

The current church on King Street was established in 1837. When walking into Trinity Episcopal Church, there is stained glass in the chapel that is dated more than 125 years old.

“During the Civil War, it was used as a hospital, and it was wrecked,” Steptoe said. “They built another church later in the 19th century.”



Steptoe said that he hopes those in attendance take away the fact that the basics of the church remain.

Cathy Ruley, a vestry member at Trinity Episcopal, said that she hopes there are a lot of people who come out to this unique service.

“We want everyone to feel comfortable. We hope to show what we did way back then and that we are still open and modern,” Ruley said. “Sometimes, we look at all of the horrible things we’ve got going on, and we’ve forgotten how far we’ve gotten. God is still very much alive. You’ll see them talking in Old English and such but we

now use modern technology to communicate.”

For more information or to view the service the day of via livestream, visit

[trinitymartinsburg.org](http://trinitymartinsburg.org).