

Parish of
Trinity Church
in the City
of New York



Thursday March 14, 2002

St. Paul's Sets City-Mandated Clean-up And Resumption of Public Ministry

The Parish of Trinity Church in the City of New York today announced that it will resume its public ministry at the 235-year-old St. Paul's Chapel here following a City-mandated cleanup of hazardous residues left by the September 11 terrorist attack.

In mid-September, the historic chapel was closed to the public and converted to a 24 hours-a-day, seven days-a-week refuge providing food and rest for the thousands of firefighters, police and emergency workers at Ground Zero. Trinity said St. Paul's will continue its relief work until Easter Sunday, whereupon it will close to allow the clean up of the hazardous residues from the World Trade Center's destruction. The cleanup project is mandated by the Environmental Control Board of the City of New York.

"After Easter and the required cleaning, St. Paul's public ministry will be reborn to address the urgent, unique spiritual needs of a community that is recovering but still grieving from the terrible tragedy," said the Rev. Samuel Johnson Howard, the Vicar of Trinity Parish. "There could be no more fitting time to address this tremendous challenge than the season when we celebrate the resurrection of Christ.

"There is a desperate need for a place of spiritual pilgrimage near the World Trade Center site," he added, "not only for the thousands who live and work in lower Manhattan but also for visitors from around America and the world who come here every day."

Father Howard said the emergency ministry at St. Paul's would continue for the next two weeks.

"For six months, volunteers from churches, synagogues, corporations, law firms and other kinds of organizations from throughout the United States have come to New York to serve the heroic people at the World Trade Center site," he added. "We thank everyone at St. Paul's who have given so much, and we thank hundreds of other compassionate people and their companies whose generosity has underwritten much of the financial cost.



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"Besides serving Ground Zero workers more than 300,000 meals, the Rev. Lyndon Harris, his emergency staff and scores of volunteers also provided them with rest, physical therapy and, most of all, the solace of open ears and open hearts."

The Rev. Lyndon Harris, the associate responsible for ministry at St. Paul's, said: "Those whom the volunteers have helped at St. Paul's have responded with stirring expressions of gratitude. We are committed to continuing ministries to rescue workers as well as to the wider public."

After Easter, St. Paul's volunteers will be encouraged to work at other nearby emergency centers or Church-sponsored programs in the area, he said. St. Paul's itself will donate any remaining food and supplies to other continuing programs, he added.

Trinity said that during the anticipated closure of St. Paul's for the environmental clean-up, its staff and Vestry will closely review the spiritual and community needs in order to resume a public ministry that will be best structured to meet them.

Father Howard said: "We have yet to work out precise details of our post-September 11 ministry to the public, but it will include worship, civic and religious programs, counseling, prayer and meditation."

The Episcopal Bishop of New York, the Right Rev. Mark Sisk, said:

"We are proud of the role St. Paul's has played in the life of the city and nation since September 11, and are deeply grateful to the volunteers from every walk of life who ministered to rescue workers. We look forward to its future ministry to this city, the nation, and all those who come here for solace and inspiration."

St. Paul's Chapel, located at Broadway and Fulton Street, was built in 1766 and attended by hundreds of Colonial and Revolutionary figures, including George Washington. It is one of two historic churches in lower Manhattan owned, operated and staffed by the Parish of Trinity Church in New York City, Manhattan's oldest Episcopal Church. Its mother church, Trinity, established in 1697, is located further south on lower Broadway at the head of Wall Street.

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