

trinity TODAY

BECAUSE GOD FIRST LOVED US, WE LIVE AS JESUS IN THE WORLD.

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interim lead pastor *jen hackbarth*

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:10-11

A typical tenure of a Lead Interim Pastor can vary, but if the process goes smoothly, it often lasts between 12-18 months. I've discovered there are "seasons" to an interim position: I begin by settling in and learning about the congregation, move into self-study with the transition team, then the final step is getting the call committee in place and started on their tasks.

When the call committee begins their work, I feel a shift in the congregation and in my role. My work is separate from the call committee, so my focus moves from transition team work to ending well. I prioritize what I can accomplish before the settled pastor arrives. This is often an energetic and optimistic time; the congregation and I enjoy the fruits of our transition work and the connection we've formed over the past months. We look forward with excitement to what is next. I grieve a bit that I won't be present as they begin a new path, but I also celebrate what we've accomplished.

As Trinity looks forward to a new program year, now is the time to celebrate and enjoy the energy of moving forward into a new future! As a congregation, you've identified your strengths and areas that need more focus. You've talked together and prayed for Trinity's future. Your leadership is dedicated and faithful and your foundation is solid. God will continue guiding Trinity forward in mission in ways beyond your imagining.

Here are a few projects we've been working on during this last phase of the interim time:

- To support Trinity's core value of Radical Hospitality, we brought church building consultant Anne Gerriets to Trinity for a building walk-through in August. She identified the building positives and gave us suggestions about ways to help our space be more welcoming and inclusive. You will see some updated signage and rearranged spaces this fall as we explore how best to use this wonderful asset. This is in addition to facility updates including a new dishwasher and needed maintenance.
- In Pastor Kristine's article in this issue, you'll read about the robust plans for education for all ages at Trinity this autumn, including the addition of Sunday morning education offerings for children and youth. Be sure to check out our monthly all-in events featuring engaging speakers on Wednesday evenings (including someone who lives in my house).
- We're working on hiring two new staff members, including a Contemporary Worship Leader (who will lead our worship band) and a Visitation Pastor. The Visitation Pastor hours have increased from 5 to 10 per week to better serve our Trinity community.
- 1 Peter 4:10-11 (see above) will be our Stewardship theme for this fall. These verses were chosen by the Puerto Rico travelers as their guiding Scripture for their mission trip in July. We will build on their example of generosity in all areas of life—gifts of time, talent and treasures.
- I am excited to lead two sessions of the Sunday Faith Forum on 9/20 and 9/27 about the book "Discovering Your Spiritual Type." Have you ever wondered why certain worship styles leave you cold while others fill your soul? Come learn how we can grow closer to God and better support one another as a spiritually diverse congregation.

These are just a few of the projects we are looking forward to at Trinity this fall. Please check out this issue for additional updates on all our ministry areas!

In God's Glory,

Pastor Jen

Pastor Jen Hackbarth



interim pastor of lifelong faith formation

kristine stedje

At the beginning of the autumn season, as we return from summer activities to begin a new year of learning, our faith formation programming starts at the very beginning. In Genesis 1:1, the very first verse of the whole Bible, the author makes a grand statement: In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth. When God created, God made promises. Those promises include us!

The book of Genesis portrays the beginnings of the world, including creation, a great flood, Abraham and his many children, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and more. The stories of Abraham's family are full of promises. Promises God keeps. God is also full of surprises in the stories told in Genesis. God creates the world, including a talking snake who tempts people to doubt that God's promises can be trusted. Noah builds a really, really big boat, and fills it with all sorts of God's creation, including his family. After many days and nights of rain, God promises through a bow in the clouds that God will never flood the earth in this way again. God keeps God's promises.

God promises two people, Abraham and Sarah, who are almost 100 years old that they will have a baby. The first of many, as many as the stars. Isaac is born, his name means laughter (as though his parents were surprised by it all!). Isaac has two sons, twins,

Esau and Jacob, who don't always get along, but they learn about forgiveness. God promises forgiveness to those who ask.

Jacob works for Laban. Laban has two daughters, Leah and Rachel. Through them Jacob has twelve sons and one daughter. Jacob's favored son, Joseph, is sold into slavery by his brothers for 20 pieces of silver. Joseph is rescued out of a deep, dark pit, sent to Egypt, to work for the Pharaoh (kinda of like a king) by interpreting the Pharaoh's dreams. As a result, the Pharaoh makes a big decision based on a dream about skinny cows! Now that is surprising.

Years later Jacob's eleven sons go to Egypt searching for food. They and their families are

starving. The government official who helps them is none other than their long-lost brother. God has one more surprise in store for this family of surprises, Joseph's brothers want to hurt him, but God uses their plan to save their lives.

And that is just the first book of the whole Bible! So come and learn about the God of surprises. Dip your toe in the waters of baptism and come and be surprised about the God who loves you. Young and old will find new ways of seeing God. Through it all, God promises to save the world, including each one of us.

Pastor Kristine

Pastor Kristine Stedje



God promises to bless Abraham.

IN WITH THE NEW. This past fiscal year marked a significant milestone in Trinity's life. With the blessing of being freed from mortgage debt, we enter the 2026-2027 budget year with renewed purpose and possibility. More than ever, we believe our budget can reflect and support the values, vision, and mission God has entrusted to us.

As we celebrate this accomplishment, we also recognize the importance of strengthening and sustaining our financial support for the future. Much of our giving has come from a dedicated group of faithful supporters, and we are deeply grateful for their generosity and commitment. At the same time, we have an opportunity to broaden participation so that together we can continue supporting the ministry and mission of Trinity for generations to come.

With this in mind, we are taking a thoughtful and prudent approach to stewarding our resources and managing expenses. While our mortgage has been paid in full, ongoing financial support remains essential as we carry out Trinity's ministries, respond to new opportunities for service, and invest in our future mission. Our faith reminds us that we serve a generous God who calls us to live generously. As we step into this new season together, may we do so with gratitude, confidence, and anticipation for all that God will accomplish through Trinity.

JULY 2026 FYTD INCOME VS EXPENSE.

- FYTD Contributions were \$1,199,651 (98.4% of Budget). 2024/25 YTD Giving was \$1,194,336.
- Total Income - minus Missions and Anonymous Gift - was \$1,448,805 (96.4% of Budget). 2024/25 Income was \$1,603,239 (\$98,636/ERC).
- Total Expenses – minus Missions – were \$1,443,925 (96% of budget). 2024/25 Expenses were \$1,448,512.

FACILITIES.

The approximately \$58K in mortgage savings in the 2025/2026 budget has funded the following recent facility improvements:

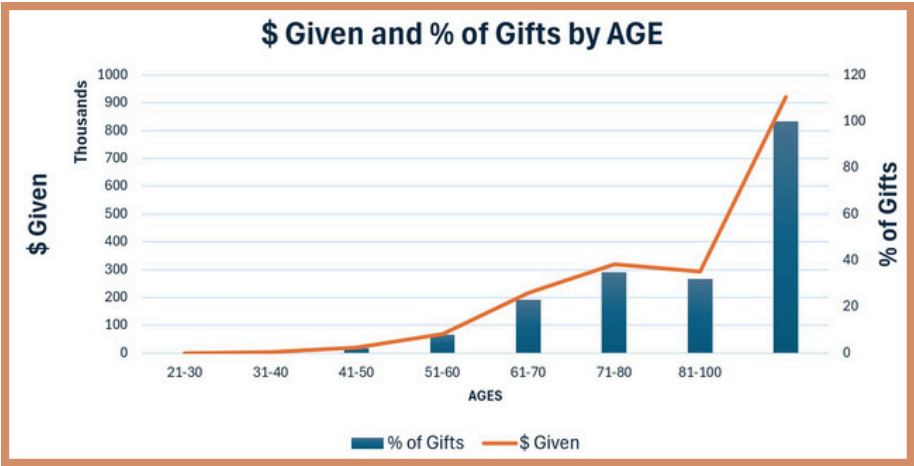
- Installation of a new HVAC unit for the Narthex: **\$10,529.**
- Installation of a new elevator door detector: **\$4,701.** A new emergency elevator cellular phone to be installed – approximately **\$1500.**
- Installation of hardwired combination smoke/co detectors in lower-level daycare area: **\$7,275/LADC split is half.**
- Installation of a new dishwasher: **\$12K/LADC split is half** – plus the new on-demand water heater and softener is another **\$6000.** (all Trinity). Training will be scheduled for this fall.
- New AEDs: **\$7,050.** Training will be scheduled for this fall.

THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF THE VISION.

Thank you for being part of what God is doing through Trinity in 2026 and beyond. Together, we are moving toward a more sustainable future, one that aligns our financial life with the mission we believe God is calling us to live out in this place and time.

Sarah Kinsman

**Sarah Kinsman,
Parish Administrator**



This analysis of church giving from 2019 through 2026 highlights both the total amount given and the age distribution of donors. The data demonstrates the faithful generosity of our current giving base while also pointing to an important opportunity: increasing participation among younger adults. Cultivating a new generation of committed givers will help ensure the continued growth, stability, and impact of our church for years to come.

**FROM THE RED SEA TO WHAT COMES NEXT:
A MESSAGE FROM MICHAEL KARLSRUD,
TREASURER, TRINITY FINANCE COMMITTEE**

A few months ago, we told you Trinity had crossed a major milestone. After years of faithful giving, sacrifice, and trust, this congregation retired \$3 million in debt. That was the fruit of decades of generosity, and it deserves to be celebrated again, in full. Thank you.

There may be a sense that now that the debt is gone, Trinity must have an abundance of resources and that it's time for giving to ease up. It's a natural assumption, and it comes from real trust in this church's stewardship. Here's the fuller picture.

What Debt-Free Actually Means Right Now

Picture a family that just made its final mortgage payment after thirty years. That's real freedom. It's also rarely a windfall; it's the roof that's needed attention for years, the water heater past its expected life, furnaces and air conditioners that have limped along, carpet long worn out, and the recognition that the people doing more with less deserve fair pay. The debt is gone. The list of what was deferred while we paid it is not.

That's where Trinity stands. Our Finance Committee has completed its work on the 2027 budget: between bringing staff wages up to fair market value and addressing years of delayed building maintenance, next year's budget doesn't leave us with abundance to spare. It gets us to solid ground, moving us from a posture of "hope," of simply keeping the doors open and the roof from leaking, to one where we can finally begin the work the church exists to do.

For decades, so much of what this congregation gave went toward carrying debt and holding things together. The 2027 budget is the first in a long time that lets us stop treading water.

Why Your Giving Matters More Now, Not Less

When we looked at eight years of giving data across our congregation, one pattern stood out clearly: roughly two out of every three dollars given to Trinity each year has come from members in their seventies, eighties, and nineties. That's been quietly true for a long time, and it reflects remarkable, faithful generosity from the generation that has carried this church for decades. We're deeply grateful for it and always will be.

The same data shows something else: giving from younger households, while slowly growing in number, hasn't yet grown enough for Trinity to thrive a decade from now. That's simply where we are, and exactly the kind of thing our congregation

needs to look at together now, rather than discover too late.

If you're one of the generous members who has sustained our church for years, this is not the moment to step back. It's the moment your continued faithfulness matters most, because we're building the bridge to what comes next, not just paying down what came before.

Where We're Headed

Here's the hopeful part. As Trinity calls both a new Lead Pastor and a new Family & Faith Formation Pastor this year, our Council has been clear about where we're asking our new leadership to focus: reaching, welcoming, and forming young families in this congregation. Not as a side project, but as the central work of the next decade.

This is where the two halves of this story meet. We are debt-free because generations of faithful members gave sacrificially for decades. We will still be a vibrant, thriving congregation in another fifty years only if we now welcome the families who will carry Trinity forward the way our current members have. Those two things aren't in tension. They're the same story, told across time.

Our congregation has always risen to clear, honest asks; that's exactly how the debt got paid off. We're not asking you to give more because we're in trouble. We're asking you to keep giving, and to help us grow our reach to new households, because Trinity is on the move toward something worth building, not settling into what we've already achieved.

What We're Asking This Stewardship Season

Three things. First, keep giving as you have. Your faithfulness is the foundation everything else stands on. Second, help us welcome younger families into this church: an invitation to a neighbor, a mentorship with a young parent, making newcomers feel as at home here as you do. Third, join us for the conversation ahead. Your Council, Finance, and Stewardship Committees will share more in the coming months, and this will be a conversation the whole congregation is part of. The path ahead isn't a rest stop. It's the next leg of the journey, and this congregation is more than ready for it.

With gratitude and hope,



**Michael Karlsrud,
Treasurer, Trinity Finance Committee**



Join us for Dinner Church, a community meal and worship service for everyone—families, singles, couples, and friends. Connect with the Body of Christ every Wednesday evening in the River Room. The night is a full schedule of faith and fellowship for all ages. Questions? Contact Pastor Kristine Stedje at kstedje@trinitylc.org

4:30-5:15 p.m. Youth Choir Rehearsal (Kindergarten –Middle School) – Choir Room

5:20-6 p.m. Children's Faith Lab (Faith Formation for Ages 4-Grade 5) – Location TBD

5:30 p.m. Community Meal Service Begins – River Room (Families with children in Faith Lab and staying for Dinner Church should grab food for the whole family during this time.)

6:15-6:45 p.m. Dinner Church (eat together, worship together) – River Room

6:45-7:45 p.m. Break into Small Groups:

- Middle School Confirmation (Grades 6-8)
- Adult Faith LabFAFA – Faith And Fellowship

SPECIAL DINNER CHURCH OFFERINGS:

Parent and Children Monthly Faith Formation: Wednesday nights this Autumn.

Sept 16: Pastor/Teacher Tim Hackbarth

The Intersection of Learning, Growing and Faith

October 21: Merri Guggisberg, Parent Coach

In this Together: Building Emotional Connection That Lasts

November 18: Trinity Lutheran Stewardship Team

Stewardship at Trinity: Your gifts matter

December 16: Trinity "No Fuss" Christmas Program. *Where everyone gets a part in the Christmas story!*

TRINITY YOUTH CHOIR.

The Trinity Youth Choir welcomes all interested singers in Kindergarten through Middle School. We rehearse Wednesdays (starting Sept. 16th) from 4:30 - 5:15 in the Choir Room and Sing in Church one Sunday a month. We also have an opportunity to sing in a Christmas Concert in December with the Adult Choir and Orchestra. Contact Sonia Esch, Director: wisokiwi@msn.com

ONE SERVICE SUNDAYS.

A few times a year we offer only one worship service on Sunday mornings at 10 a.m. to come together as one body of Christ.

- Sep 13- TrinityFEST
- Nov 22 – ALL-IN Fall Worship
- Dec 13 – Children's Advent Program
- Dec 27 – Lessons + Carols
- Feb 7, 2027 – Drive-Indoors
- March 21, 2027 – Palm Sunday
- May 2, 2027 – Youth Musical

WORSHIP TEXTS.

- Sep 7 - Matthew 18:15-20
- Sep 13 - Matthew 18:21-35
- Sep 20 - Matthew 20:1-16
- Sep 27 - Matthew 21:23-32

Sunday Service

9 AM

Traditional Worship

10 AM

Learning Hour

11 AM

Contemporary Worship

SUNDAY WORSHIP.

9 AM Worship: Gathering in the Worship Center and led by choirs, organ and instrumentalists. Here you will participate with robed clergy and worship leaders. You will sing hymns, songs, liturgy and psalms from a worship book and hear a message relevant to our lives today.

11 AM Worship: Gathering in the Worship Center and led by a band incorporating a wide variety of contemporary worship music. The congregation engages in a time of praise and worship following the historic pattern of Lutheran worship (Gathering, Word, Message, Meal, and Sending.)

ONLINE OPTIONS FOR WORSHIP.

Both services will be available online and livestreamed from our Worship Center at Trinity. Find worship online on our website at: <https://www.trinitylc.org/online-worship> and livestream on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/trinitylcstillwater>



SUNDAY FAITH FORUM.
Sacred Practices, Service,
and Stories: Connecting
with God and One
Another.

Because God first loved us, we live as Jesus in the world, loving God and loving our neighbor. This is Trinity's mission statement. But what does that look like in practice?

As a member of the Transition Team, I was blessed to hear from many members of the Trinity community about what is most important to them and how they live out Trinity's mission. One thing became very clear: everyone does it differently. Yet at the heart of it all are relationships with God and with one another.

For some, meaningful connection happens through a traditional worship service, Dinner Church, yoga or a walk in the woods. For others, it may be serving on a justice team, singing in the choir, helping build a tiny home, or sharing and listening to one another's stories of experiencing God's presence in their lives.

Jesus nurtured relationships with God and others through sacred practices such as prayer and shared meals, through acts of service and healing, and through stories that taught us what it means to love God and one another.

This year let's explore the many ways people find meaningful connection with God and with others.

Join us as we discover new practices, learn from one another, and perhaps uncover something new about ourselves. Along the way, we can grow in our appreciation for the many different ways people experience and connect with God.

Together, let us learn to tell the greatest story of all: You are a beloved child of God, just as you are.

Blessings,

Penny Catlin

Penny Catlin

Questions, comments, concerns? Please contact Penny Catlin, Sunday Forum Coordinator, pccatlin@trinitylc.org or Pastor Kristine Stedje, Interim Pastor of Lifelong Faith Formation

Sept 20: Stump the Council.

Got a question for the council? Join us for Stump the Council, a fun, fast-paced game show where questions about Trinity take center stage, answers are unscripted ... and anything can happen! Come cheer, laugh, and learn what's really on the mind of our congregation, from the pastoral transition to the budget and beyond!

Sept 27 & Oct 4: Discovering your Spiritual Type with Pastor Jen.

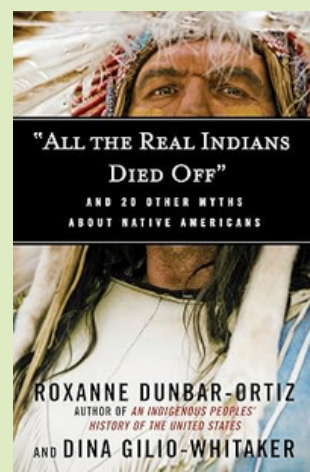
Have you ever wondered why certain worship styles fill your soul while others leave you cold? Just like the Myers-Briggs system helps us understand our everyday personalities, Corinne Ware's *Discover Your Spiritual Type* helps us map our spiritual personalities! Pastor Jen will lead us in taking the "Spirituality Wheel" test and discovering our unique styles. Come learn how we can grow closer to God and better support one another as a spiritually diverse congregation.



ABIDE READERS.

"All The Real Indians Died Off" And 20 Other Myths About Native Americans by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and Dina Gilio-Whitaker

Join us for a thoughtful and important conversation about the myths we have inherited through textbooks, media, and everyday language. What changes when we see Native peoples and cultures as they are today: living, diverse, vibrant, and enduring? Whether you've read the whole book or just want to learn, you are welcome as we talk, listen, and learn together. To join the Zoom discussion on Monday, **September 28**, 6:30-8:00, email Ann at wolff701@msn.com for the link.



FORMING FAITH FOR ALL AGES.

It is an honor and a privilege to preside over a baptism. Parents and sponsors gather with the faithful community to make promises of support and guidance. Ordinary water and sweet smelling oil have been used for centuries to baptize and anoint God's beloved children. The community gathered for worship on any given Sunday join in welcoming the new ones into the family of God. Lifelong faith formation is a Lutheran understanding of learning to love and trust God throughout our lives.

This autumn our Faith Formation offerings will include a variety of ways to be involved in forming our faith based on the promises made at our baptism. Young and old, teenagers and infants, will discover new insights as they learn and grow in faith.

SUNDAY SCHOOL.

For our youngest members Sunday School will be held between worship services beginning **September 20**, we will begin our class at 10:15 am and conclude at 10:45 am. Join Pastor Kristine in the LADC classroom in the lower level, simply follow the footprints you'll encounter on the floor and the signs guiding you on the wall! Parents and their children are welcome, especially pre-school and grade school children. We will hear stories of Jesus as he heals, restores and forgives God's people. We will create a picture or a memory to remind us of God's love throughout the week.

MONTHLY PARENT GATHERINGS.

We will begin our Wednesday evenings for Confirmation students and their parents, and anyone who wants to learn together, on **September 16**. Gathering in the River Room, everyone is welcome to come for a meal beginning at 5:30 pm. As a group we will gather for devotions, and communion following our meal. At 6:15 pm we will welcome Pastor, Teacher Tim Hackbarth.

Tim will talk with us about the Intersection between Learning, Growing and Faith. Tim is currently serving as a first grade teacher in the Stillwater school system. He knows a lot about faith and kids, and he will share his insights with us. You won't want to miss this opportunity!

FAITH LAB.

Faith Lab (for children ages 4 – grade 5) will gather on Wednesdays beginning **September 23**. Following youth choir, Pastor Kristine will lead lessons on stories of Jesus and his love for us. Parents don't forget to sign up your kids, see the link below!



YOUTH.

After a successful, fun, service and faith-filled trip to Puerto Rico, our youth will gather on Sunday evenings beginning **September 13**. Dana Kruse will provide intriguing glimpses into what it means to be a child of God in today's world. You can plan on exploring an interesting topic twice a month, including the poetry of Joe Davis.

ADULTS.

Adults of the congregation, you have multiple opportunities for lifelong learning this autumn season. The Adult Faith Lab on Wednesday evening will begin on **September 23**. You will be exploring the Holy Spirit, Biblical Translations and a Video Documentary, 1946, with Pastor Jen. Bible studies for men and women will continue or begin during this season, check with your particular group leader to learn when to show up!

And on Sunday mornings, between worship services, join the conversation as the Adult Forum offers a variety of interesting topics this year under the theme: Sacred Practices, Service, and Stories: Connecting with God and One Another. See the article on page 6 for more detailed information on each week's offerings.

As we begin another program year in this time of transition, we never stop our lifelong journey of faith. We look forward to welcoming you into a time of learning and exploring God's incredible continuing story.

**Pastor Kristine,
Interim Pastor for Lifelong Faith Formation**

REGISTER BELOW.

Confirmation:



Faith Lab:



Dear Trinity,

One of my favorite parts of worship is walking in and seeing the sanctuary prepared for a baptism. This has been true since I was young. When my parents would take me to church as a child I'd beg my parents to lift me up so I could see everything better on mornings with baptisms. I remember standing on my tip toes and looking through the arms and bodies of the people in front of me because I wanted to be close to all of it. Even as a small child I knew it was important and I peppered my parents and pastors with so many questions about baptism. Now that I'm an adult I don't jump up and down to see the baptisms any more but the excitement hasn't changed.

Over the past few weeks, Pastor Kristine and I have had the honor of journeying with two high school youth who are preparing for their baptisms and it is so amazing to be right there as these youth are exploring the baptismal promises, God's grace, and what it means to live as a member of a church community. Last Sunday she and I were discussing Martin Luther and baptism. I shared how Luther was plagued by self-doubt and how he never thought he was worthy of God's love or grace. I described the lengths he went to in order to feel like he earned God's love and how he always came up short.

As we were talking we all agreed that we have felt these kinds of feelings before too. Luther wasn't unique in that feeling. Now our reactions to these feelings are a little different. The look of shock on their faces when I described Luther hurling an ink pot across the room and yelling out, "I AM BAPTIZED!" was truly second to none. Silliness aside, we came back to the fact that God's love isn't dependent on any one thing and reminding ourselves that we are baptized is always a good way to remember that we are chosen children of God. Even before our baptisms God chose us and knitted us together before we were even born. As the storms of life rage, remember always that nothing separates us from God's love and grace. In the coming weeks keep your eyes open for these two youth as we celebrate their baptisms as a community.

God's Peace to you all,

Dana N. Kruse
Youth Faith Formation Coordinator



MIDDLE SCHOOL MINISTRY

Get ready to kick off an incredible year of Middle School Ministry!

Confirmation for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders officially begins on **Wednesday, Sept. 16**, and we're starting with a special event for the whole family. Parents, please plan to attend alongside your youth for an evening of food, fellowship, and faith.

Schedule for the Evening:

- 5:30 PM – Dinner for all families
- 6:15 PM – Worship
- 6:45 PM – All In 678 Confirmation Session

This year, we are diving deep into the Old Testament to explore big stories, bold promises, and how God's epic journey with His people connects to our lives today. Bring your appetite, your family, and your curiosity—we can't wait to see you there!

678 Confirmation Registration is open! Scan here to register.



HIGH SCHOOL MINISTRY

Calling all 9th graders and families! The countdown is on for a huge milestone in your faith journey:

Affirmation of Baptism (Confirmation) is coming up on **Sunday, October 25**, at the 11:00 AM service. Detailed information and next steps have already been sent out to households. If you haven't received yours, please email Dana at dkruse@trinitylc.org so we can get you everything you need. Ready to celebrate? We can't wait to surround our 9th graders with love, prayer, and blessing as they take this exciting next step! **Reserve your spot by scanning the QR code to register your student!**



High School Ministry is back! Join us as we kick off a full season of faith, fun, and community.

Info Meetings for Youth and Families:

- August 30 @ 1:00 PM (River Room)
- September 2 @ 7:00 PM (Online)
- (Video sent later if you miss both)

Upcoming Events:

- Sept 13 (7:00–8:30 PM): Kickoff Bonfire & S'mores! Bring a chair/blanket and a friend
- Sept 27: Board Game Night (bring your favorites!)
- Oct 11: Pumpkin Painting & Costume Contest

Starting October 4: High School Bible Study on Sunday mornings between services in the Youth Room, complete with snacks and an iced coffee bar!

How You Can Help! Can you lend us a portable fire pit or serve as an adult leader? Let us know! Questions? Email Dana at dkruse@trinitylc.org

CALL COMMITTEE UPDATE.

The Call Committee continues to make progress in our search for our next lead pastor.

First-round interviews are underway. The Committee is meeting with candidates virtually as part of the initial interview process and will be moving forward with second-round, in-person interviews as the search progresses.

The Call Committee is using a comprehensive approach as we connect with candidates. In addition to the interviews, the Committee is taking time to thoughtfully assess each candidate's talents, gifts, experience, leadership style, and ministry strengths to determine how they may best serve our congregation as lead pastor.

The Committee remains in consistent contact with Deacon Krista Lind, who continues to provide guidance and support throughout the candidate review and interview process.

We are grateful for the congregation's continued prayers and support as we discern the candidate who is the best fit to serve Trinity and lead us into the future.

VISITATION PASTOR OPENING.

As part of our core value of Authentic Community, Trinity is increasing our Visitation Pastor position from 5 hours per week to 10 hours per week. The position is currently open. If you are interested in the position or know of someone who is, please contact Pastor Jen. Here is a link to the job description on Trinity's website at <https://www.trinitylc.org> and look for Employment Opportunities under the ABOUT tab.



UPDATE: 2026 Stillwater Pride Ice Cream Social.

Thanks to the generosity of the Stillwater community, EACH of the three event community partners - Family Means, Hudson Pride Co, and Transforming Families-received a check for the amount of \$1,521.66!

This was made possible by generous donations from event sponsors, including Trinity, other area churches, businesses, and individuals. Thank you to all who shared their time as an event volunteer, provided sponsorship support, or celebrated the LGBTQIA+ community while eating ice cream treats!

With gratitude and thanks,
Stillwater Pride Alliance
And the Trinity Pride Justice Team

Mark your calendar for the 2nd annual Stillwater Pride Ice Cream Social, June 15, 2027!



LET'S GO is a ministry of Trinity Lutheran Church that celebrates ALL people by offering a wide variety of activities.

These outings offer a community where people can be who they are, knowing that we are ALL God's beloved.

Our goal is to choose events that will appeal to anyone. Activities have included visiting a synagogue, a Buddhist temple, caroling at nursing homes, attending live theater, progressive dinners, and recently we toured St. John's Abbey and University, visited Munsinger and Clemens Gardens in St. Cloud and took a tour of Franconia Sculpture Park in Scandia.

We generally have at least one event each month. Events will be listed in the monthly Trinity Today, the weekly bulletins and Friday emails, and on the church's website. We look forward to seeing you. Check us out!

Upcoming Events

- **Sunday, September 13:** Trinity Fest; stop by and say HI!
- **Sunday, October 11:** Rivertown Inn Social, 3-6 pm.
- **Sunday, November 29:** Nutcracker by St. Croix Ballet.
- **Thursday, December 10:** Caroling.



It's Back to School: Let's Learn Together



As we shift from summer to fall, many of us return to more formal learning – attending school or college, confirmation or other Wednesday night classes, adult forum on Sundays.

Lifelong learning is a core value in Lutheranism, rooted in Martin Luther's emphasis on studying scripture, questioning, and continuous spiritual growth. Not surprisingly, many Lutheran churches, including Trinity, have pastors of Lifelong Learning.

The ELCA's Social Statement on Our Calling in Education affirms that education is part of our baptismal vocation — a calling from God that applies to all life, not just formal schooling. The Church's two-fold calling in education is:

1. To ensure all have access to high-quality education that develops personal gifts and serves the common good (a focus of the RJMT's August article); and
2. To educate people in the Christian faith for their vocation — shaping individuals to live out their calling in home, work, and community throughout our lifetime.

As we age and face new experiences and circumstances, our relationship with scripture, vocation, and God evolves, requiring ongoing learning, critical thinking, and reflection. Not surprisingly, the ELCA expects all rostered ministers to complete 50 contact hours (or 10 days) of continuing education annually. The ELCA's lifelong learning approach blends faith formation, community engagement, and educational excellence, offering both spiritual and practical opportunities for personal growth at every stage of life.

Growing up, Midwestern baby boomers like me, learned mainly about western/white history and culture in school and lived in settings with little exposure to people that didn't look like us. That has changed in recent years, as schools offer a richer, more complete account of our history and culture; and as our communities welcome more people of color and diverse ethnicities. What an opportunity for lifelong learning these changes present! How fascinating it is to explore and discover:

- The Dakota are Minnesota's (Mni Sota) first people, with documented indigenous presence in the region dating back thousands of years – about 1000 CE or earlier.
- The earliest known African American presence in Minnesota (still a territory) dates to 1790s with Pierre Bongo – a free Black fur trader who married an Ojibwe woman, and fathered George Bonga in Duluth in 1802.
- Minnesota is home to the largest number of Somali and Karen Americans in the U.S., with about 87,000 and 20,000 respectively. Ethnic Somalis first emigrated here in the 1990s, fleeing the Somalia civil war. Similarly, the Karen began emigrating in the mid-2000s as a result of violence in their homeland in Myanmar (Burma).

And SO MUCH MORE....

Which is why in most articles, the RJMT recommends learning opportunities including books, classes at Trinity, local museums, art exhibits, cultural events, restaurants, and more. Following are our latest recommendations. Come learn with us.

Claudia Swendseid,

Racial Justice Ministry Team

FALL EVENTS: FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT GAIL AT [GAILWIRES@HOTMAIL.COM](mailto:gailwires@hotmail.com)

September 12, 11 AM to 10 PM: Mdewakanton Pow Wow, St. Peter Catholic Church, 1405 Sibley Memorial Highway, Mendota Heights.

September 30, 12:30 PM to 8 PM: National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding School Survivors, Powderhorn Park, Minneapolis.

October 11: Worship Services and Faith Forum reflecting on Indigenous Peoples' Day (October 12).

Oct 17, 10 AM to 2 PM: Sacred Sites Tour with Jim Bear Jacobs. \$40/adult, teens free. For more information contact Ann at wolff701@msn.com Register soon! Space is limited.

Learning Together 101: The Story Behind the LGBTQIA+ Acronym

In the 1970's and 80's, the early years of the LGBTQIA+ movement, the term Gay was an umbrella term used for many identities in the community, and the acronym **GLBT** was the most common acronym used. (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender)

The change in the order of letters to LGBTQIA+, occurred because of the 1980's AIDS crisis. Gay and bisexual men were disproportionately impacted by this devastating epidemic. The CDC reported 89,581 AIDS related deaths between 1981-1989. People living with AIDS were abandoned by family and friends, did not receive proper healthcare, and often had little support.

Lesbian activists in the United States and across the world stepped in and offered support in extraordinary ways. They volunteered at hospitals and clinics, organized fundraisers and community support groups, advocated for health care and research, and cared for gay men who were rejected by institutions and/or families. Their compassion, activism, and leadership saved lives, and gave care and dignity to God's beloved children.

As a way to recognize the contributions of the lesbian community, organizations and community leaders switched the order of the letters, intentionally placing the **L** first to recognize the lesbian activism and compassion during the AIDS crisis, to express gratitude for the lesbian community's care and solidarity, and to act as a reminder that this community work is done collectively.

Just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body -- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free --- and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13)

Reconciling Scripture for Lutherans, a Reconciling Works resource, expands on these verses: "Paul reminds us we are set free in Christ -- free to care for one another. In baptism, we become part of one body, the living Body of Christ in this world. Just as each part of a human body is interlinked, each human member of Christ's body is linked to each other. In the face of a world that tries to tell us we are separate and don't need anyone else, Paul's metaphor speaks a word of good news -- especially for LGBTQ+ Christians. Just as no part of the human body can be dismissed, LGBTQ+ Christians can't be dismissed or shut out from the church. The church cannot say, "I have no need of you." We are all part of Christ... "If one member suffers, all members suffer with it." 1 Corinthians 12:26.



Images of the 1,920 panels of the AIDS Memorial Quilt displayed at the National Mall in Washington DC in 1987.

<https://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/stories/fabric-of-life>

We don't carry our pain alone. The whole Body of Christ is hurting with us, even if it's the church who has done the hurting. We don't have to feel alone -- and we also can call the church to reconciliation and healing, since it benefits not just individuals but the whole Body of Christ.

Knowing the stories of our LGBTQIA2S+ siblings in Christ is one way to be the Living Body of Christ in this world. Learning the story of why "**L**" is first letter in the acronym-a story of compassion, activism, and tending our sick siblings when others turned away, is a story we hear frequently of how Jesus lived in the world. *Leaning* into Paul's words, the whole Body of Christ-the whole church-hurts when one suffers. What can we learn, as individuals and the church, from the L story?

Alphabet Soup continues-not a hodge podge of letters. It's God's Beloved Children!

- LGBTQIA2S+
- L: lesbian
- G: gay
- B: bisexual
- T: transgender
- Q: queer/questioning

I: Intersex: An adjective used to describe a person with one or more innate sex characteristics, including genitals, internal reproductive organs, and chromosomes, that fall outside of traditional conceptions of male or female bodies.

A: Asexual: An adjective used to describe a person who does not experience sexual attraction (e.g., asexual person). Sometimes shortened to "ace." Asexual is an umbrella term that can also include people who are demisexual, meaning a person who does experience some sexual attraction, but only in certain situations, for example, after they have formed a strong emotional or romantic connection with a partner.

2S: Two-Spirit: An adjective used by some Indigenous and First Nations people as an umbrella term to describe people who are not straight and/or cisgender. Many Indigenous communities have specific words in their language to describe these experiences, but some do not. This term should not be used to describe people who are not Indigenous. Only use it for an Indigenous person if they use it to describe themselves.

+: A plus sign at the end of the acronym means anyone not listed in the acronym, but who still identifies as part of the community. These can include non-binary, pansexual, demisexual, aromatic, genderfluid, and agender.

Karen Gieseke

Karen Gieseke

PrideJustice



500 ITEM COLLECTION CHALLENGE! For Emergency Housing Services Building and Lutheran World Relief. Help is needed to reach our goal of collecting 500 items on or before Sunday, September 13, for distribution to both local and global neighbors. The collection bin will be stationed inside the 4th Street entrance near the elevator at Trinity during the week and will be attended by a Missions Team member at all worship services from August 23-September 13.

EMERGENCY HOUSING SERVICES BUILDING ITEMS OF HIGHEST NEED (full-size)

- Shaving cream
- Shampoo and conditioner
- Body Wash and bars of soap
- Deodorant

ALSO NEEDED (full-size)

- Vaseline and Aquaphor
- Face wash
- Body and hand lotion
-

LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

- Bath towels (between 20" x 40" and 52" x 70"), light weight, dark colors preferred
- Soap bars (8 to 9 oz), in original packaging
- Toothbrushes, adult size in original packaging
- Combs (sturdy)
- Nail clippers (metal)

Volunteers will be welcomed in assembling personal care kits for Lutheran World Relief at Trinity Fest's Missions table on **September 13**.



LOCAL EVENT SUPPORTS NEIGHBORS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS.

Twice yearly at Point-in-Time events, a count is made of people experiencing homelessness in our area, with 467 people attending in July. Over 30 local churches and organizations collaborate on these PIT events—hosted by First Presbyterian Church—to provide needed supplies, services, and resources to those in attendance. Trinity helped to provide food and fuel gift cards, as well as funding for haircuts. In addition, Trinity volunteers helped set-up and distribute donated items. If interested in helping with the next PIT event in January, please email Beth Payne: beth.a.payne@comcast.net



TANZANIA 2027

Reverend Gary Langness & Carol Langness spoke to a curious audience on August 12 about their more than twenty trips to Tanzania. Most who came to listen to the Langness' stories had previously traveled to Tanzania or are planning to go in September 2027. When asked for advice on how best for a **mzungu** (white person) from Minnesota to connect with Tanzanian people while there, Gary Langness replied, "You listen."

If you have interest or questions about the 2027 Tanzania trip, please email Beth Payne: beth.a.payne@comcast.net or Marie Liberda at mbvgro@gmail.com

The Trinity Missions Team





**A BUSY SUMMER
AT TRINITY!**

Thank you for making
this an amazing summer
of community, faith
and fun!



CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL

Our congregational governance calls for an elected council and includes the Interim Lead Pastor, Jen Hackbarth and Pastor of Lifelong Faith Formation, Kristine Stedje. Parish Administrator, Sarah Kinsman, is also on council as a non-voting, ex officio member.



John Hodler
Council President



Kirsten Parker
Vice President



Shane Brockshus
Secretary



Mike Karlsrud
Treasurer



Brian Barts
Council Member



Bill Bjorum
Council Member

CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY

Sympathy to the family & friends of

Leighton Johnson

Carol Huber

BAPTISMS

Nellie Anne Larson, child of

Lauren & Ted Larson

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

The church office is open the following hours or by appointment: Monday - Thursday | 9 AM – 5 PM

Summer Hours (Memorial Day thru Labor Day): 9AM - 4PM.

WORSHIP ON TV

Trinity's traditional Sunday worship service is rebroadcast on channel 14 through Valley Access Channels (VAC) on the following days and times:

- Sundays at 11 a.m. & 7 p.m.
- Mondays at 7 a.m. & 1 p.m.

CHURCH ATTENDANCE

AUGUST ATTENDANCE	Early	Drive-In People	Drive-In Cars	Online engagement
2026-08-02	69	103	170	423
2026-08-09	70	89	160	332
2026-08-16	106	101	183	253

At Trinity, you are truly welcome. Whether you're exploring faith for the first time or have been on the journey for years, we invite you to bring your whole self - your questions, your hopes, your story. Rooted in God's unconditional love, we are a community where all are embraced, valued, and encouraged to grow.

Trinity's Core Values

Engaging Worship
Radical Hospitality
Authentic Community
Lifelong Faith Formation
Compassionate Action

Inclusion Statement

Read our Inclusion Statement at:
www.trinitylc.org

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The poster for the 11th Annual Trinity Fest is a vibrant collage of colorful squares and icons. The central text reads "11TH ANNUAL TRINITY FEST" in large, bold, blue letters. To the right, a green square contains the date "SEPT 13 2026" in blue. Various icons are scattered around the text, including a heart, flowers, a tent, a guitar, a church steeple, and a bison. A photograph of a woman standing next to a large bison is positioned on the left side. A blue speech bubble with white text says "STOP BY AND HAVE YOUR PICTURE TAKEN WITH TATANKA THE BISON!". At the bottom, a blue banner with white text reads "10 AM WORSHIP INDOORS • 11 AM MINISTRY FAIR+LUNCH".

11TH ANNUAL
TRINITY
FEST

SEPT 13
2026

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