



TIDINGS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH OF WATERTOWN, MINNESOTA



Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him... (Lk. 24:31)

This verse from Luke's gospel shapes our midweek Lenten worship services this year. The story in which this verse is found is known as the Road to Emmaus. Having watched Jesus' crucifixion, two disciples wander away, distraught and full of grief, uncertain about what the future will hold for them. They are met on the road by a stranger, who walks beside them and asks all sorts of questions about where they came from, what they've gone through, and where they were headed. One of the most heartbreaking verses in the Bible, at least to me, comes when, as they tell their stories, they declare, "But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel." (v. 22) They didn't know this Jesus whose death they grieve was raised. They didn't know the person with whom they walked and talked right in front of them was Jesus, raised from the dead. And really, how could they? Their grief was fresh. Their hearts were broken. They likely thought they were being realistic: Jesus was dead. End of story.

It wasn't the end. The disciples were slack-jawed at this realization, and how this good news came to them. In his hands, Jesus broke open the bread. And in the breaking of his body and the bread he held, the story they told and lives they lived changed. They were opened. They were made new. They couldn't imagine it. Everything they knew – about themselves, the world around them, and Jesus changed.

The contemporary writer Anne Lamott writes about grace – that it meets us where we are but does not leave us where we are. Through their stories during the midweek Lenten worship services, five members of the congregation will tell stories about how or where God's grace has met and opened them in some way or another. As you hear their stories, I invite you to consider how and where God's grace has met and opened you in ways you couldn't otherwise have imagined at some point in your life...and maybe even now. Come and see!

Grace & Peace,
Pastor Paul Lutter, Interim Pastor



FEBRUARY 2026

INSIDE:

Season of Lent at Trinity
Children's Ministry
Underwear Drive
Call Committee Formation
Social Justice Conversation
Stewardship Campaign

Worship
Sundays • 9 am
Lent Wednesdays • 7 pm
Onsite & Online

STAFF:

Interim Pastor	Paul Lutter
Children's Ministry	Chelsea Farniok
Music Ministry	Hannah Rosholt
Office Manager	Robyn Behrens
Financial Secretary	Gail Cassidy
Financial Administrator	Mary Jech

Trinity Lutheran Church

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What's Happening AT TRINITY LUTHERAN?



Trinity's Lenten Theme *Unbound: Longing for Wholeness*

During Lent, Trinity will be using a series from Church Anew, a ministry of St. Andrews Lutheran Church in Eden Prairie. The series theme is *Unbound: Longing for Wholeness*. Together we'll explore the idea of the opposite of being bound is being whole. Our world is filled with things that hold us captive. These things that bind us prevent us from living the whole, abundant life that God has promised us. Through the stories of regular people encountering Jesus, and being drawn to the wholeness that Jesus provides, we can learn about our own longings and be drawn into wholeness.

Ash Wednesday

Wednesday, February 18

Service at 7:00 pm ~ Onsite & Online



The Season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. On that evening we will gather to receive the gift of communion, receive the gift of ashes, and receive the gift of the presence of Christ in our lives again.

Lent Midweek Services

Wednesdays, February 25, March 4, 11, 18, 25

Light Supper from 5:30 - 6:30 pm

Services at 7:00 pm ~ Onsite & Online

Our midweek services continue the "Unbound" theme through the story of Jesus walking on the Road to Emmaus, where we discover that wholeness is found in Jesus' presence. Members of the congregation will share personal testimonies of how God's grace has met and opened them. We invite you to consider where grace is meeting you during this season of Lent as well. Join us for a light supper and worship each Wednesday evening in Lent.



Contemplative Practices for Lent

Written by Rev. Susan Engholm

Through the Church Anew theme, *Unbound: Longing for Wholeness*, you are invited to explore a contemplative practice for Lent. Written by former Trinity member Rev. Susan Engholm, this unique resource guide offers weekly reflections and prayer practices. Try out this meaningful opportunity to slow down, create space, and discover where God is leading you. Booklets will be available in the narthex and the Welcome Center during Lent.

Welcoming New Trinity Members

Sunday, February 15

Trinity will receive new members into our congregation on February 15. At worship we will welcome them into our midst with our presence and our prayers, and afterward we will introduce them during the Fellowship Hour. Join us for this wonderful morning of faith and new friendships!



Thursday, February 19 | 10:00 am

Trinity's OWLS (Older, Wiser Lutherans) Fellowship Group welcomes Watertown Mayor Mike Walters this month to share information about opportunities for senior citizens in our community. Invite a friend and bring your questions.

Children's Ministry

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS



We're excited to spread the love of Jesus this month! Our Sunday School theme is "How To..." where children will learn how to do many different things—most importantly, how to live the way Jesus teaches us. On February 15, we'll enjoy a Movie and Popcorn Day as we finish the last half of our VeggieTales movie. It's sure to be a fun and faith-filled month!

THIS MONTH AT A GLANCE

February 1: Sunday School Class

February 8: Sunday School Class

February 15: Movie & Popcorn Morning

February 22: Sunday School Class



REGISTER ONLINE
@GLLM.ORG
\$65 Discount
through Feb 19



WATER'S EDGE MINISTRIES
SUMMER
CAMP 2026

It's not too early to start making your summer plans! Water's Edge Ministries offers summer ministry and camps for youth in Grades K-12.
Learn more at www.gllm.org.

It's Time for Trinity's Annual UNDERWEAR DRIVE



In a time when so many are struggling with growing and complex challenges, the need for the basics—like underwear—remains constant. Trinity will continue our annual tradition of collecting new packs of underwear (kids and adult sizes) for the Central Lutheran Church "Free Store" in Minneapolis this month. Please drop your donations in the "Undie Bin" at the Donation Station near the main parking lot entrance. We consistently collect over 100 pairs each year—let's come together to do it again!



PASTORAL TRANSITION PROCESS

Forming a Call Committee

The church council has begun the process of forming a call committee to search for a new permanent pastor to serve at Trinity. Being on the call committee is an important role, as its members are directly influencing the future staffing of Trinity. The ideal call committee would reflect the makeup of the congregation in mission and ministry. Being on the call committee will require a significant time commitment and it is important that you are available for most, if not all, of the meetings – potentially at least once per week during the peak time. The church council will recommend six congregation members for the call committee and those members will then be approved by a congregational vote.

If you are interested in being considered for the call committee, please email or notify the church office by February 15. Any and all applications are encouraged.

Congregational NEWS



COUNCIL MEMBERS

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Nancy Stello
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MEMORIALS

In memory of

Geri Danielson
\$50 ~ Operating Fund

COUNCIL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

January 20, 2026

FINANCIAL REPORT

Operating Fund summary December 2025

Beginning balance 12/1/2025:
-\$31,616.64

Operating Fund inc:	\$ 77,649.35
Operating Fund exps:	\$ 40,886.25
Net balance (Dec.):	\$ 36,763.10

**Operating Fund balance as of
12/31/2025:** \$ 5,146.46

**2025 operating fund INCOME
exceeded EXPENSES by \$19,981.00.**

Capital Improvement Fund:
No expenses in Decmeber

Cash Summary:
Old National: \$ 84,450.93
(includes \$3,258.24 for Dec. federal withholding)

Citizen's Building Fund: \$ 86,988.86

Comments:

The faithful response to the end of year appeal by many resulted in not only covering the negative balance of \$14,835 brought forth from 2024, but allowed Trinity's operating fund to end the year \$5,146 in the black. Thanks be to God!

M/S/C Nick Neaton / Nancy Stello / carried

PASTOR'S REPORT

Included a Transition Team update, and discussion about recruiting Call Committee members. He shared information regarding the upcoming midweek Lenten worship, New Members Sunday, baptisms, the Jonah Adult Faith Formation study, Pastor's essays, and scheduling items.

OLD BUSINESS

- Stewardship Committee Update: Jim Sandquist will meet with the Stewardship Committee in January to make plans for our Stewardship Drive in February/March.
- Discussion will continue regarding passing the offering plate at major holiday services.
- Discussion will continue regarding updating the congregation on the finances quarterly (during worship), in addition to posting them in the monthly newsletter.
- The Financial Forum was held Sunday, January 18 where the 2026 Spending Plan was presented.
- Motion made to approve the Annual Meeting Agenda.

M/S/C Nick Neaton, Steve Boylan, carried

NEW BUSINESS

- A Church Council special meeting following the Annual Meeting will be held to elect Council Officers. NOTE: President and Treasurer will be signers on Trinity's Old National Bank account.
- Motion was made to approve the Audit Committee's request to appoint two new members (Scott Cassidy and Adam Rowan) to serve on the 2025 audit, replacing current members who are unable to participate in this year's audit process.

M/S/C Nick Neaton, Steve Boylan, carried

- In an effort to reinvigorate committees and ministry teams, Church Council liaisons have been assigned to select ministry teams.



Minneapolis Area Synod of the ELCA

As Christians, the call to love God is tied closely to the call to love our neighbor – the hungry, the thirsty, and the stranger. In this time, when many of our immigrant neighbors, members, and churches feel especially vulnerable, we want you to know that we are with you. And we want to provide support as we all work together to love God and love our neighbor.

In January, the White House began rolling out executive orders targeting immigrants in our communities and expanding the reach of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, delivering on campaign promises to target immigrant communities and launch mass deportation efforts across the country. The Administration also rescinded a policy that protected certain spaces from immigration enforcement, including schools, hospitals, and churches – a move inconsistent with the rights of all people to freedom of religion and undermining the ministry of communities called to love the neighbor, the stranger, and the immigrant. These moves are raising many questions and causing much anxiety for those most at risk, including some of our communities.

The ELCA's Social Message on Immigration reminds us that "...hospitality for the uprooted is a way to live out the biblical call to love the neighbor in response to God's love in Jesus Christ." Trusting that God is near us as we stand together, we draw on the words of scripture: "The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love

the stranger as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God," (*Leviticus 19:34*) and "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (*Matthew 25: 35*).

While there is a lot that we cannot control and right now, the world feels particularly out of our control, the invitation is to remember those things we can we control.

- **We can slow down enough to breathe**, focusing our attention, resting and eating, weeping and laughing. We can take care to pace ourselves for this marathon, avoiding frenetic reactivity and leaning into the steadfast and radical love we know in Christ Jesus.
- **We can respond as our contexts necessitate**: listening deeply, hearing our neighbors' joy and pain, proclaiming the gospel, raising a voice, writing a letter, gathering community, resisting the numbing of apathy, amplifying joy, and stepping out in the name of love even when it calls us to do something beyond our comfort.
- **We can show up** - this can be a really isolating time for our immigrant leaders and congregations, so be sure to connect with your neighbors about how you can show up alongside them in meaningful and helpful ways.

In his letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul reminds us that "...the body does not consist of one member but of many...If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it" (*1 Corinthians 14, 26*). We are church together, and as the Minneapolis Area Synod we will strive to support and accompany each other in love.



Trinity in Action: Social Justice Conversation

Sunday, February 8 | 10:00 am

If you would like to talk more about how we as Trinity members can show up for our community in times of need, please contact the church office, reach out to Adam Rowan (rowdelt@gmail.com) or come to a meeting of Trinity's Social Justice Committee following worship on Sunday, February 8 in the Pioneer Room.

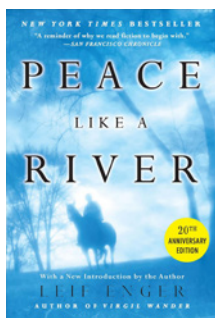
Last Month in Pictures



Sunday Schoolers Shining Jesus' Light



The OWLS Admiring Bugs and Butterflies



Peace Like a River

by Leif Enger

Some years ago, I was gifted the book, *Peace Like a River*, by Minnesota author Leif Enger. I invite you to read this novel in the season Lent. It's a work of fiction, one I think may stir you and invite you to be open

to the ways God is present and at work in your life, even if God isn't necessarily even mentioned in this novel. I return to this book often for the beauty of the writing, for the characters, and for the way the story unfolds. Among the characters, one of my favorites in this book is Swede. If you do read it, come tell me what you think about her and what she has to say.

Grace & Peace, Pastor Paul Lutter



What Have We to Offer?

AN INVITATION TO STEWARDSHIP

At Trinity Lutheran Church, stewardship is understood not merely as financial support, but as a reflection of the relationship the congregation wants to have with God, one another, and the wider world. While financial generosity is vital for the church's mission—and Trinity is deeply grateful for this continued support—true stewardship encompasses our whole lives. It asks: *What gifts has God given us, and how are we called to use them?*

As part of Trinity's upcoming Annual Stewardship Drive, the Stewardship Team invites all members to look for a mailing from Trinity arriving soon, which will include a pledge card for you to indicate your financial gifts for the coming year and a Time and Talent form. This form is designed as a tool for discernment, encouraging members to consider how they might serve both within the congregation and in the broader community. The team specifically encourages creative thinking—there will be room to suggest new ways to serve that may not even yet exist!

As the congregation reflects on being "blessed to be a blessing," please keep an eye out for these materials. We invite everyone to participate in this exciting season of discerning how Trinity is equipped and sent to serve.

February 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Worship 9 am Fellowship 10 am Sunday School 10 am Happy Birthday Henry Blakstad Mary Gallus Bill Keller Kendra Kottke Jacob Rowan	2 AA Meeting 8 pm Happy Birthday Kenzi Gohman Troy Hecksel	3 Quilters 9 am Happy Birthday Terrance Johnson	4 Prayer 12:30 pm Handbells 5:30 pm 6-8 Confirm. 6:30 pm Worship Choir 6:30 pm Worship Band 7:30 pm	5 Housekeepers 9 am Happy Birthday Eric Prigge	6 Happy Birthday Eleanor Rundell	7 Happy Birthday Nathan Ragner
8 Worship 9 am Fellowship 10 am Sunday School 10 am Social Justice Conversation 10 am Happy Birthday Courtney Matson	9 Apostles 8:30 am Priscilla Circle 2 pm AA Meeting 8 pm Happy Birthday Leah Gillett Joyce Harding Mark Huber	10 Quilters 9 am Finance Committee 6:30 pm Happy Birthday Shelly Becker John Diesman Jackson Drahos	11 Prayer 12:30 pm Handbells 5:30 pm 6-8 Confirm. 6:30 pm Worship Choir 6:30 pm Worship Band 7:30 pm Happy Birthday Eric Scanlo	12 Happy Birthday Hope Berscheit Ava Danielson	13 Happy Birthday Hope Berscheit Ava Danielson	14 Happy Birthday Jax Kuffenkam Adrienne Quinlan Tucker Ritter
15 NEW MEMBER SUNDAY Worship 9 am Fellowship 10 am Sunday School 10 am Happy Birthday Heather Berscheit Scott Cassidy	16 AA Meeting 8 pm	17 Quilters 9 am Church Council Meeting 6:30 pm Happy Birthday Fred Thomson	18 ASH WEDNESDAY Prayer 12:30 pm Handbells 5:30 pm Worship Choir 6 pm Worship 7 pm Worship Band 7:45 pm Happy Birthday Nathan Kirkman Paul Lutter	19 OWLS 10 am	20 Happy Birthday Kevin McCain Audrey Ress Theo Rosholt	21 Happy Birthday David Filek Alice Gersema Ben Ragner Elena Salonek
22 Worship 9 am Fellowship 10 am- Sunday School 10 am Happy Birthday Lois Hendricks Nels Tuvey	23 Apostles 8:30 am AA Meeting 8 pm Happy Birthday Kaden Blacketter Brielle Hirsch Amanda Lohmann EllaMae Neaton	24 Quilters 9 am Happy Birthday Randy Berhow Debra Dummer	25 FCA Breakfast 7 am Prayer 12:30 pm Lent Supper 5:30 pm Handbells 5:30 p Worship Choir 6 pm Worship 7 pm Worship Band 7:45 pm Happy Birthday Mitchell Erickson	26 Tidings 9:30 am Happy Birthday Mitchell Erickson	27 Happy Birthday Dave Durkin	28 Happy Birthday Annika Lutter Cecilia Sieling Kameron Tufte (February 29) Happy Birthday Ethan Thonn Samuel Tronnes



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Spring Cleaning for the Soul

Ash Wednesday is February 18, and it marks the beginning of the 40 days of Lent. Lent hints of spring, a time when the earth begins to awaken from a winter's nap, and new growth bursts forth all about us.

More personally, it is an opportunity to enter into a springtime for our spirit. For centuries Christians have used the 40 days of Lent to seek spiritual growth. Sincere repentance, a changing of heart, casting off old sinful practices and seeking to commune with our creator help us go in the right direction. Spending serious time in silence and prayer focuses our attention. Reading spiritual literature, becoming more knowledgeable about the New Testament, meeting in small groups with other Christians to share personal stories of faith can all be immensely stimulating. Joining with others to serve the helpless and hopeless can strengthen our spiritual life.

Lent is a time to let God do "spring cleaning" within us. It's our opportunity to allow God to help us toss out the "stuff" that hinders us and then freshen up the "new creature" we are meant to be as followers of Christ.