



TIDINGS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH OF WATERTOWN, MINNESOTA



A Prayer for a New Year

For now we see only a reflection, as in a mirror, but then we will see face to face.

(1 Cor. 13:12)

In 1944, in the liminal season of Christmas, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote a poem meant to be a greeting to his family and his fiancé, Maria von Wedermeyer. He wrote it from a basement in a prison in Berlin. Amid bleak surroundings, his poem is at once a hymn and a prayer for a new year. We have the hymn in our red Evangelical Lutheran Worship (#626 *By Gracious Powers*). I invite you to find, read, pray, and sing it to yourself and maybe even sing it with others. It could also serve as another ray of light and newness for our congregation which reveals Christ's presence and goodness over the course of this new year. One of the things I love about this hymn is the way it gives voice to the realities we face in our lives and in our life together. That is: this hymn gives us language to borrow in our conversations with God when we can't seem to find the words on our own. What Bonhoeffer writes isn't flowery; it doesn't seek to numb you to the realities in which you find yourself. Instead, he looks directly at the things we face and writes to us from that context. This is one of the many gifts of music and poetry.

Think about your favorite song. How does it speak to you? What language in your favorite song helps you along the way? How does it help you? Where did you first become familiar with the song? What message does it give you?

In the final stanza of the hymn, Bonhoeffer writes:

*By gracious pow'rs so faithfully protected,
so quietly, so wonderfully near,
we live each day in hope, with you beside us,
and go with you through ev'ry coming year. (ELW 626, v. 4)*

Even when things look bleak, Jesus Christ meets us where we are at and attends to us. We can't always make sense of where and how God is with us. Yet, in the season of Epiphany, we rest in the melody of grace that plays in our lives, even when snow and cold surrounds us, and our hearts grow weary and lonely. Even in these spaces, the promise of God holds us close in the glow of love's gracious presence.

Grace & Peace,
Pastor Paul Lutter, Interim Pastor



JANUARY 2026

INSIDE:

Trinity Annual Meeting
Adult Education Study
OWLS Fellowship Event
Children's Ministry
Transition Team Update
Council Meeting Highlights

Worship
Sundays 9:00 am
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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Office Hours: Mon - Fri 9:00 am - Noon

What's Happening AT TRINITY LUTHERAN?



Annual Meeting Sunday, January 25, 2026 10:00 am in the Worship Center

Join us to reflect on the blessings of 2025 at Trinity Lutheran Church as well as discussion and approval of the 2026 Spending Plan and election of new leaders onto Trinity's Church Council, Committees and Boards. Your voice and participation are essential as we discern God's path for our congregation, set priorities, and prepare to make an even greater impact in the year ahead.



2026 Spending Plan Review

On **Sunday, January 18**, Trinity Church Council members will present the 2026 Spending Plan following worship at 10:00 am. There will be time for questions and discussion.

MONTHLY EVENTS

@TRINITY

Visit www.trin.org/events for more details on these and all upcoming events at Trinity.

Thursday, January 8 @ 9 am | Heavenly Housekeepers

Every Tuesday @ 9 am | Quilting

Every Wednesday @ 12:30 pm | Prayer Gathering

Wednesdays in January @ 1:30 pm | Adult Education

Mondays, January 12 & 26 @ 8:30 am | Apostles

Monday, January 12 @ 2 pm | Priscilla Circle Bible Study

Thursday, January 15 @ 9:30 am | OWLS



Book of Jonah Bible Study Wednesdays, January 7, 14, 21, 28 1:30–2:30 pm

Join Pastor Paul for a four-week Bible study on the Book of Jonah. Each week will focus on one chapter, exploring God's call, hope, growth, and grace—and how this ancient story speaks to everyday life and the life of our congregation. Some of the questions we'll discuss together will include: What is God calling me to do with my life? The death and resurrection of our dreams. What helps us move from surviving to thriving? Why does it seem that God's ways and our ways so different?

Sign up for the study at www.trin.org under **EVENTS** or just drop in on Wednesday afternoon. Study materials will be provided. Please note that the originally scheduled Thursday sessions of this study have been canceled. Just Wednesday sessions will be held.



Thursday, January 15 | 10:00 am

Trinity's OWLS (Older, Wiser Lutherans) Fellowship Group meets on the third Thursday of the month for a variety of activities and events to relax, socialize and enjoy Christian fellowship with one another. Join us in January to check out an exquisite butterfly and insect collection from John Ibeling. Hope to see you there!

Children's Ministry

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

A new year brings new energy—and lots of good things ahead for Trinity Sunday School! From familiar favorites to a few fresh surprises, we're excited to keep growing, learning, and laughing together as we explore God's love. Check out what is happening at Sunday School this month!

THIS MONTH AT A GLANCE

January 4: No Sunday School (Winter Break)

January 11: Sunday School Class - Craft Day!

January 18: Movie Morning

January 25: Sunday School Class



Sunday School Movie Morning Event Sunday, January 18

We'll have a special event in lieu of Sunday School on MLK Day Weekend – POPCORN and MOVIE! Bring your blankets and your stuffies, and we'll enjoy a movie in the Nylunda Chapel.

Interested in Helping with Sunday School?

Our Sunday School lessons are led by a rotation of wonderful volunteers. We can always use more help, so contact Chelsea Farniok at cfarniok@trin.org if you're interested in volunteering.

Ever Considered Leading a Children's Moment?

We're inviting teens and adults to give it a try! Leading a Children's Moment during worship is a joyful, short, and meaningful way to connect with our youngest worshippers—and you don't have to be an expert, just yourself! Reach out to Chelsea Farniok at cfarniok@trin.org if you'd like to learn more.



Summer Bible Camp Opportunities

Water's Edge Ministries (formally Green Lake Lutheran Ministries) offers summer ministry and camps for Youth, Families, and Adults at three sites located along the shores of beautiful Minnesota lakes. Trinity also offers "camperships" to Trinity youth attending a summer Bible Camp. Learn more about GLLM with the link above and sign up for summer camp today!

PASTORAL TRANSITION UPDATE

by team member Allison Neaton

Happy New Year! Trinity's Pastoral Transition Team was installed in mid-November. Since that time, the team has met nearly every week with Pastor Paul. The primary job of the transition team is to complete the Ministry Site Profile document using information gathered from all of you during the conversations led by Pastor in the fall. The site profile document includes detailed information about our current community and congregation, challenges faced recently, and priorities for the near future. We have made good progress in completing this document and will continue to meet and work on it in January. Once the document is completed, it will be reviewed by the church council before it is submitted to the synod office. A big thank you to everyone who has expressed thoughts and dreams about Trinity's future. The transition team is excited to be working on this important step in calling a new pastor at Trinity.

Team Members: Robyn Behrens, Anna Goetz, Sara Hallermann, Diane Johnson, Thomas McMahon, Allison Neaton, Eileen Nelson, Denice Widmer

Congregational NEWS

PASTORAL ACTS

WEDDING

Shelby (Mueller) & Alex Aalfs
United in Marriage on
December 19, 2025

FUNERAL

Geri Danielson
3/3/1935 ~ 12/16/2025
Memorial Service on
December 22, 2025

NEW MEMBER

Wayne Severson

MEMORIALS

In memory of

Geri Danielson
\$800 ~ General Fund
\$25 ~ Quilting Ministry

**2026 offering envelopes
are available in the
narthex at church.**

COUNCIL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

December 16, 2025

FINANCIAL REPORT

Operating Fund summary November 2025

Beginning balance 11/1/2025:
-\$ 32,672.22

Operating Fund inc: \$ 39,126.60
Operating Fund exps: \$ 38,071.02
Net balance (Nov): \$ 1,055.58

**Operating Fund balance as of
11/30/2025: -\$ 31,616.64**

**2025 operating fund EXPENSES
exceede INCOME by \$16,781.35.**

Capital Improvement Fund:
Removal of two trees: \$ 4,007.8

Cash Summary:
Old National: \$ 47,095.35
(includes \$2,433.28 for Nov federal withholding)

Citizen's Building Fund: \$ 83,733.20

Comments:

- 6% of operating fund income for benevolence to Minneapolis Area synod amounted to \$2,346.78
- November Xcel bill for fuel and electricity amounted to \$1,180 (up about \$329 from October)
- Income exceeded expenses for the first time since June
- Special gifts in the amount of \$194 were received for the food shelf

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

Motion to recommend the 2026 Spending Plan as presented including the addition of \$15,000 for use by the Transition Team and Call Committee.

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

PASTOR'S REPORT

Pastor discussed invigorating the Ministry Teams, Transition Team activities, and upcoming services and reflections.

OLD BUSINESS

- Removal of the Parsonage began December 9.

NEW BUSINESS

- Annual Meeting is planned for Sunday, January 25, 2026. Nancy Pickering will help with the Agenda and present at the meeting.
- Financial overview is planned for Sunday, January 18, 2026 following worship.
- Jim Sandquist will connect with Finance Committee and Stewardship Committee to set a date in January to get started on the February Stewardship Drive and request that it includes a Time & Talents portion this year.



Saint Lucia

TEA & OPEN HOUSE

Trinity's Saint Lucia event is a traditional Scandinavian celebration of hope and peace for the Christmas season. Each year a member of our congregation is chosen as the Saint Lucia, the honored guest of the event.

2025 SAINT LUCIA

Nancy Pickering

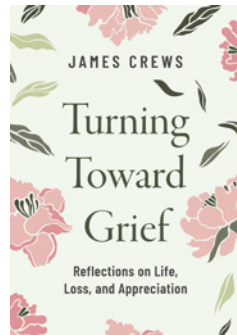
Nancy was born in Ohio and grew up in Kansas, Nebraska and finally landed in Minnesota. She earned a B.A. in Theatre from the University of Kansas and an M.F.A. in Theatre Design (costume specialty) from the University of Minnesota. Nancy taught college theater costuming history, design, construction, and makeup at the University of North Texas and the University of West Florida.

Her creative work includes designing and sewing her own wedding dress based on an 1890s ball gown and spending three summers touring backstage with Sesame Street Live. She later shifted careers, earning a programming certificate and working as a technical writer for software documentation. Nancy currently serves as newsletter editor and designer for a Norwegian Heritage organization and the Norwegian Lutheran Memorial Church in Minneapolis. She and her husband, John Millar, have lived in Watertown since 1993 and have two dogs and two cats.

Nancy joined Trinity in 2018 and quickly felt at home. She has been active in the choir, Church Council, and as Volunteer Coordinator, lector, and communion assistant. She values Trinity's sense of community and finds worship both comforting and renewing. With her Scandinavian heritage, the Santa Lucia celebration is especially meaningful, and she looks forward to sharing photos with her cousins in Norway.

A special thank you to all of the volunteers and bakers that made our Saint Lucia Tea a success!

PASTOR PAUL'S FAITH RESOURCE CORNER



Turning Toward Grief: Reflections on Life, Loss, and Appreciation by James Crews

Join me this January in reading James Crews' *Turning Toward Grief: Reflections on Life, Loss, and Appreciation* (Minneapolis: Broadleaf, 2025). A new year

can signal a look ahead while also an opportunity to heal and resolve what we continue to carry. The structure of this book includes poems he has written. A paired essay follows each poem. After "Wound," Crews writes, "The people in our lives who struggle to hold our grief with us will often push us to move on, perhaps long before we are ready." (pp. 15-16) Reflect on this! I'd like to form a writing group at Trinity Lutheran Church to process through the things we carry by writing together. No writing experience necessary! If you're interested or have questions, send me an email at plutter@trin.org. I look forward to hearing from you.

Grace & Peace, Pastor Paul Lutter



Brighten up the long winter nights—with a free night light!

You're invited to pick up a free LED night light, generously donated by Greenlite in partnership with Xcel Energy. These dusk-to-dawn

night lights turn on automatically when it gets dark, offering a little extra glow for hallways and bedrooms—while also saving energy and money. As we walk through these winter evenings, may this small light be a reminder of God's light shining in the darkness—steady, welcoming, and always present. Night lights will be available to pick up in Trinity's Narthex throughout this winter.

Last Month in Pictures

Last month at Trinity was full of Christmas cheer—from worship filled with festive music to the Saint Lucia Tea, the Children's Christmas service and family celebration, the OWLS Advent Lunch, and the many wonderful kitchen helpers who made every gathering warm, welcoming, and delicious.



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 NEW YEAR'S DAY <i>Church Office Closed</i> <i>Happy Birthday</i> Morgan Matson Joyce Nelson	2 <i>Church Office Closed</i> <i>Happy Birthday</i> McKenna Quinlan Rosie Schroers	3 <i>Happy Birthday</i> Jim Hunkins Diane Johnson
4 Worship 9 am Fellowship 10 am <i>No Sunday School</i> <i>Happy Birthday</i> Riley Delaney James Forcier Carrie Herman Albin Neaton	5 AA Meeting 8 pm <i>Happy Birthday</i> Evelyn Becker Tami Kuntz Bill Singsank	6 Quilters 9 am Transition Team Meeting 7 pm <i>Happy Birthday</i> Theodore Lohmann	7 Prayers 12:30 pm Adult Ed 1:30 pm Worship Choir 6:30 pm Worship Band 7:30 pm <i>Happy Birthday</i> John McCain Elvina Nelson	8 Housekeepers 9 am <i>Happy Birthday</i> Emmett Behrens	9	10
11 Worship 9 am Fellowship 10 am Sunday School 10 am Youth Ministry Team Meeting 10 am <i>Happy Birthday</i> Beth Gilles Gerald Gruette Emma Matter	12 Apostles 8:30 am Priscilla Circle 2 pm AA Meeting 8 pm <i>Happy Birthday</i> Ryan Otto	13 Quilters 9 am Finance Committee 6:30 pm <i>Happy Birthday</i> Jake Salzsiedler	14 Prayers 12:30 pm Adult Ed 1:30 pm Worship Choir 6:30 pm Worship Band 7:30 pm <i>Happy Birthday</i> Kaitlyn Hecksel Doug Hendricks Nina Kirkman Randy Ragner	15 OWLS 10 am <i>Happy Birthday</i> Kaitlyn Hecksel Doug Hendricks Nina Kirkman Randy Ragner	16	17 <i>Happy Birthday</i> Ella Hunkins Jordyn Salzsiedler Kennedy Tufte
18 Worship 9 am Finance Review 10 am Fellowship 10 am Sunday School 10 am	19 AA Meeting 8 pm	20 Quilters 9 am Council Mtg. 6:30 pm <i>Happy Birthday</i> Van Oak Joshua Stenson	21 FCA Breakfast 7 am Prayers 12:30 pm Adult Ed 1:30 pm Worship Choir 6:30 pm Worship Band 7:30 pm <i>Happy Birthday</i> Dori Akins	22	23 <i>Happy Birthday</i> Trisha Arndt Gail Cassidy Jody Zellmann	24 <i>Happy Birthday</i> Emma Hunkins Roxanne Lunderby
25 ANNUAL MEETING Worship 9 am Annual Mtg. 10 am Sunday School 10 am	26 Apostles 8:30 am AA Meeting 8 pm <i>Happy Birthday</i> Frank Fritzke Jeanine Johnson Kristina Skahaug Emma Thonn	27 Quilters 9 am <i>Happy Birthday</i> Jane Morrow Nora Delaney Amber Hausladen Jamie Isakson Natalie Johnson Hattie Neaton	28 Prayers 12:30 pm Adult Ed 1:30 pm Worship Choir 6:30 pm Worship Band 7:30 pm <i>Happy Birthday</i> Matt Gohman Travis Markgraf	29 Tidings 9:30 am <i>Happy Birthday</i> Autumn Guetzkow Alaina Thonn	30 <i>Happy Birthday</i> Kory Bender Jayce Blacketter Karla Brabec Ben Firth Jason Koets Michelle Sandquist Ken Tufte	31



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Trinity Lutheran Church Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 25, 2026
10:00 am in the Worship Center

CONNECT WITH US



Facebook/Trinity Lutheran Church (ELCA) Watertown MN



The Love God Desires

God's love is never meant to stop with us; it's meant to flow through us. When we love others, we reflect his very heart.

As 1 John 4:12 (NIV) reminds us, "If we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us." This is the true mark of a Christian — love that reaches beyond comfort zones, opinions and differences. Jesus said in John 13:35 (NIV), "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

The world is watching, not to see how loudly we profess our faith but how deeply we practice it. Every act of compassion, every gentle word and every moment of grace reveals something divine — God's love at work in us. The more we give that love away, the more it grows within us, mirroring the heart of Christ, who gave Himself for all. So ask yourself: Does the world recognize you as his disciple by the way you love?