

Trinity Steeple Notes

June 2020 News and Notes



Trinity's Approach to Reopening

A letter from Pr. Alan and Vestry President Steve Hofmann, May 28, 2020

Dear Members and Friends of Trinity,

With an abundance of caution and concern for the health of our members and community, Trinity plans to move slowly toward reopening. We realize that we have many members who are vulnerable to the serious effects of this virus. We are also blessed by the ability to continue ministry through other means even when physical



contact is limited. Remember that we, God's people, are the church and that we are not closed as we continue to live in the Spirit of our risen Lord. We want to keep you informed of Trinity's plans and protocols for this time when we cannot gather in person and also for the time we are able to resume public worship and activities. We assure you that you are in your church's prayers and that Trinity stands ready to support you as we are able.

Current Situation

Trinity's campus will remain closed for now. Although we long for public worship to resume, it is difficult to predict a date for reopening due to the ever-changing nature of this crisis. We will continue to monitor recommendations of the medical community, government officials and the larger church as well as the response of hospitals, continuing care communities and society at large.

Continued on page 2...

Parish News

Continued from page 1...

Worship, music, fellowship, and devotions will continue to be offered through our various platforms to nurture the faith and love we share. New innovations and ways of connecting are always being explored, including some options for outdoor worship.

Staff will work from home when possible. Member visits to the church are discouraged; if you must visit, please call ahead for an appointment. Visitors are required to wear a mask when inside the church buildings. For staff safety, please keep any visits brief, adhere to their stated purpose, and avoid moving to other areas. Phone calls, messages, notes, and emails are encouraged and welcome.



Your financial support is important for the work we do together in Christ's name and is greatly appreciated. At the same time, we understand that those facing financial hardship may need to curtail their giving.

Resuming Worship at Trinity

Members will be notified two weeks prior to our return to public worship. If you are ill or feel that you are vulnerable to infection, please stay home until it is safe, and continue to worship remotely. Broadcasts will continue on Comcast 190; YouTube and Facebook worship will be posted by Sunday afternoon; bulletins will be available online and through the mail (by request).

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The facility has been deep cleaned and all common surfaces will be disinfected regularly when people are present. Hand sanitizer is in the pews and dispensers have been installed at doorways and entry points. For the safety of others, worshipers will be required to wear masks and are asked to bring their own. (If you are unable to wear a mask for medical reasons, please call Pastor Alan to discuss accommodations.) Distancing of at least 6 feet from those not in your household is essential. Staggered pews will be marked so that distancing is maintained during worship. Entrance and exit will be through the Narthex or center portico doors.



Initially, congregants will not share the peace; offering plates will be set at the entrance rather than being passed; hymnals will be removed from the pews with the entire service printed in the bulletin; children will remain in their pews for the children's sermon; Communion distribution will be revised; congregational singing will need to be delayed. There will be no coffee hour, Sunday School, Adult forum, nursery, or handshaking following the service. Please maintain a safe distance when exiting.

There will be special protocols for ushers, worship leaders and altar guild, developed in conversation with the Worship and Music Committee.

We are aware that these restrictions are cumbersome and will provide a more meager worship experience than we would like, but the welfare of God's precious people is vital. The opportunity to be together again, even with restrictions, will be a blessing for those who are able to join us, and we will look forward to a fuller return when it is healthy to do so.

Continued on page 4...

Continued from page 3...

Other Activities as We Open

Some limited small group activities and meetings may be allowed on site if social distancing can be observed, but virtual gatherings will be encouraged. More regular office hours will resume, but staff will still have the opportunity to work from home when appropriate. The pastor and deaconess may be available by appointment for counseling and conversation. Outreach ministries involving large numbers of people from the community (such as Courtyard Café and I Can) will remain suspended. Common Ground will be offered only outdoors, and proper precautions will be taken. Choir rehearsals, concerts, and recitals will be suspended until we enter the next phase.



Looking Forward

The time will come when most restrictions will be lifted, but Trinity will continue to take precautions to safeguard the health of members and the welfare of the community. We will return cautiously to a regular schedule of activities and interaction. The health and cleaning protocols established during the pandemic will continue to be observed. Ministries in the community will resume when possible. Singing and choirs will return when it is safe to do so. Fellowship and coffee time will be cautiously offered. Home and hospital visits should be able to resume. Vulnerable individuals are still urged to use caution; please speak with the pastor or deaconess about any special needs or concerns.

Continued on page 5...

Continued from page 4...

In the Meantime...

As we wait for restrictions to be lifted, remember that God is beside us and is blessing us, even now, in beautiful ways.

The love and support that have been shown in this time are nothing short of a miracle. In the midst of your own troubles and fears, you, the members of Trinity have been praying, caring, and supporting one another and our community. From sewing masks to delivering groceries to caring for the sick to teaching our children, the Holy Spirit has been active among us.

We are so grateful for our faithful staff and lay leaders, who have been thoughtful, creative, and wise. Trinity's media ministry and social networking presence have been a blessing, not only to Trinity members, but to hundreds of other people in our community and across the nation. We are discovering new ways of being the church, which will strengthen ministry well beyond our current crisis.



And we are blessed by our partners in ministry – faithful congregations and ministers, living and sharing their faith in remarkable ways; dedicated organizations, facilities, and individuals caring for those who are most vulnerable; our West Berks Mission District, NE Pennsylvania Synod and ELCA, drawing us together in mission and love as we face these times together by the help of God.

Keep praying. Be patient in hope. Be constant in love. And may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Yours in Christ's love,

Pastor Alan Wolkenhauer, Cell phone: 727-543-3531

Steve Hofmann, Vestry President

Parish News

Congregation Meeting June 21, 2020

The annual congregation meeting of Trinity has been scheduled for June 21, 2020. The purpose of this meeting is two-fold. First, we receive ministry reports from the previous year. Second, we elect Vestry members. Due to coronavirus restrictions, it is unlikely that we will be able to meet physically (if worship has not resumed, we will not hold a meeting). Printed reports will still be issued and available prior to June 21. Our constitutional attorney, Dan Huyett, advises that vacant Vestry positions can be filled by appointment of the current Vestry and be ratified when the congregation is able to meet. Please read your reports with care and pray for the ministries, leaders, and staff of our congregation in these challenging times.

Message from Bishop Zeiser

Excerpt from a recent post to the NE Pennsylvania Synod

Website: We cannot allow illusory hope or misguided enthusiasm to push us to unwise decisions about opening, assembling for worship, or gathering for meetings. The phased and deliberate process of relaxed restrictions in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and in states across the country, requires that we be patient for the sake of those most vulnerable to the corona virus. Some of the most vulnerable are likely among the members of our congregations, as well as among those who visit our churches or participate in the ministries carried out by our congregations. Love of neighbor, central to the understanding we hold of our discipleship role as followers of the Risen Jesus, draws to act in ways that are sacrificial of our own needs and desires....



Parish News

Vestry Notes (This is a summary of the meeting and not official meeting minutes.)

Trinity's Vestry met by Zoom on May 11, 2020. A discussion was held regarding congregational vitality and spiritual health during the pandemic. Vestry members were pleased with the ministry and opportunities being offered to Trinity and our community. The staff was commended for excellent work.

Conversation moved to reopening protocols and all were in favor of proceeding cautiously. It was determined that live streaming hardware is not needed at this time due to our many other methods of communication. Members were reminded that committee reports for the Congregation meeting need to be submitted by the first week in June for the annual report to the congregation. The Nominating Committee presented their nominees for vacant Vestry positions. The treasurer reported that income has been stable through April with expenses trending a bit lower than budget.

Thank You

It is with heartfelt gratitude that I extend my thanks to the entire congregation for the cards, notes, emails, meals, gifts, and phone calls of love and support given and sent to myself and my mother after my father's death. To be surrounded by such grace and kindness during this time has been overwhelming. The witness of the love of Christ through this sisterhood and brotherhood is a true testament of community and family. It has been an enormous comfort and brought much consolation during this difficult time. With humbleness, I say thank you.



—Donna Osborne

Music and the Arts

Fall Festival of the Arts 2020 Cancelled

Dear friends and patrons,

Since January, the Fall Festival of the Arts committee has been at work planning an extraordinary celebration of art, music, theater and dance for our 36th season. As the Covid19 pandemic spread, we were still hopeful that we would be able to host much-needed and uplifting arts experiences for people in the greater Reading area.

However, the ongoing uncertainty of health and community wellbeing has brought us to cancel this year's festival. We are saddened to make this announcement, but we know that many other arts organizations face the same reality.

We are grateful for the support you have given to the Fall Festival over the years, and we wish you and your loved-ones health and safety in these coming months. As we resume planning in 2021, we hope that you will look forward with us to next year's festival. In the meantime, through these challenges, may creativity and beauty sustain you.

Gratefully,

The Fall Festival of the Arts Committee



Stay in Touch with Trinity

Ways to Stay in Touch Remotely in Addition to Video Worship

- Sunday** 9:30 AM: Zoom Coffee Hour (contact Dcs. Deborah for invitation)
- Tuesday** Email prayer group (also sent later by US mail to those without email)
- Wednesday** Musical reflections with Karen Eddinger (Facebook)
- Thursday** Devotional with Pastor Alan (Facebook)

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- Occasional** Devotional with Dcs. Deborah (Facebook)
Interactive Activities (Facebook)
Other communications (email and mail)
Virtual Youth and Family Activities
- Monthly** Steeple Notes newsletter

Watch for other opportunities to share the life of Trinity in this time of isolation and, if you find that something touches you, share it with your friends and family.



Member Care



Join the Trinity K.I.T. Initiative

(K.I.T. = Keeping in Touch)

Your Member Care committee is concerned for you. Many of us are isolated, lonely, and unable to leave our homes. Others are missing out on celebrations and family gatherings. The physical distancing we all are experiencing can take its toll on our emotional and mental health.

We want to be in touch with our members and know how you are faring and if there is any extra support you may need/wish. Would you like a regular phone call? (weekly, semi-monthly, monthly?) Do you need help with errands?

And if you are feeling called to be part of the K.I.T. Initiative and would like to help and make regular phone calls, or run some simple errands, we welcome that.

We don't know how long we will be apart, and how our K.I.T. will look in the future, but for now it is a start.

We encourage you to reach out by contacting Deaconess Deborah (staff member who works with member care) dgraf@trinityreading.org or call the office 610-374-4861.

Ways you can SERVE

I'm At Home; Now What?

If you have asked yourself what are some things I can DO for others during the pandemic and time of physical distancing, here are some suggestions:

- Make desserts for Café Esperanza's Meal Distribution (Tuesdays and Thursdays.) Cookies and Bars that can be packed in small bags are the easiest. And we can pack them for you if you don't have the bags. (contact Deaconess Deborah for information.)
- Write a note of encouragement to a member that you haven't seen for a while. And pray for them as you write.
- Walk for Family Promise of Berks County on June 6. They are hosting a virtual promise walk anytime from 8 a.m. – 9 p.m. Online registration is only \$25.00 per household. Check out <https://www.familypromiseofberks.org/join-us-for-our-1st-virtual-promisewalk/> for more information. (or if you cannot walk and would like to support Team Trinity, contact Deaconess Deborah.)
- Join Trinity's pray-ers. Every Tuesday Pastor Alan sends out a message including prayers requests from and for our members.
- Check in with your neighbors to see how they are doing
- Sew some masks for our Common Ground Community or knit/crochet soft shawls for those who need some extra comfort.
- What else might you be led to do_____?

Broadcast Schedule June 2020

All of our programs listed below can be watched on Comcast Channel 190 (in the Reading Hospital, Channel 80) or online at any time at www.trinityreading.org or on our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/trinitylutheranchurch.

Sundays in June

6:00 PM: First Friday: TBD

6:30 PM: Music from Trinity: TBD

7:00 PM: Trinity Worship Service

Wednesdays in June

4:00 PM: Trinity Worship

5:00 PM: Music from Trinity: TBD

5:30 PM: First Friday: TBD



Affirmation of Welcome

Trinity Lutheran Church is recognized by Reconciling Works as a "Reconciling in Christ" Congregation which welcomes all LGBTQ+ persons into all facets of congregational life. Learn more at <https://www.reconcilingworks.org/ric/>.

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

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A congregation of the Reading Lutheran Parish and West Berks Mission District