



# Trinity Steeple Notes

## December 2023

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### **A Blessing from the Bard House: All-new!**

There aren't many times in my ministry when I've felt like a car salesman—even if I do relish a good negotiation.

But as I've been sitting in my all-new office or driving my all-new commute and reflecting on my all-new ministry that's beginning in an all-new church year, I've been struck by the energy that comes from newness.

To all of you, I am your new pastor, and to me, you are my new congregation. All-new, even! I am excited about doing some new things in worship, education, administration, and discernment alongside you—and about looking to the all-new future that God is beginning to write for Trinity in this era of newness.

Even this article is something new, a new monthly column in which Deaconess Deborah Graf, Karen Eddinger, and I will share our thoughts about ministry and life (with me providing an article every other month, and the two of them taking turns on the opposite months).

Yes, something new excites us! It gets our blood flowing and our imaginations racing. We wonder—how could this new thing be better than what we are used to? How could it change our lives—make us more comfortable, more productive, or more successful?



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This is why marketers tell us that a car, smartphone, or food is all-new: even though it will transport us, communicate for us, and nourish us similarly, the excitement is in the novel things.

No matter how excited we get about this new beginning—and trust me, I’m pumped—we should remember that this newness we celebrate is just a small bit of the newness that we are promised through our Lord Jesus.

In Revelation 21, Jesus—the Lamb both slain and conquering, the One both God and Human, the Beginning and the End—proclaims: “See, I am making all things new.”

Indeed, it is in and through Jesus that our world, so longing for newness and yet so ensnared by its age-old brokenness, will find true transformation—something that actually lives up to the advertisement. At Trinity, we meet our master renewer in things that are at once both old and new: in sins forgiven, in Law and Gospel preached and heard, in God’s glory and beauty proclaimed in music, in neighbors heard, loved and served, and most of all, in the body and blood of Christ.

As we look to our all-new ministry together, we can trust that, whatever newness and life comes, it will have its source in these things.

And so we ask, in this Advent season: Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus! Come to us, in ways both old and new, and renew your church, your hurting world, and our hearts.

**Pastor Hans**

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## Christmas Eve at Trinity

**Join us for worship on Christmas Eve at either 5 PM or 10:30 PM!**

Both festival services will include Holy Communion, special music from Trinity's gifted ensembles, and a candle-lighting ceremony. Pastor Hans' Christmas sermon will be the same at both services.

The 5 PM service will include special elements designed for people of all ages to fully participate in the liturgy. Children will also be invited forward for a special Teaching Time. This is a wonderful opportunity to invite a young person and their family to experience worship at Trinity—either again or for the first time.

The 10:30 PM service will begin with special music at 10:00 and will include the fullness of our Lutheran liturgy. Invite night owls, music lovers, and spiritual seekers to join us for this splendid nighttime celebration of Jesus' birth.

The 10:30 service be live streamed on our Social Media channels and also live broadcast on Comcast starting at 10 PM. The service will also be rebroadcast during the following week on Sunday and Wednesday.

Grace and peace,  
Pastor Hans

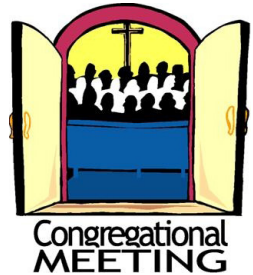


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## Congregational Meeting Announcement for Sunday, December 10

All voting members of our Trinity Lutheran Church Congregation are asked to attend the Congregational Meeting to be held on Sunday, December 10th immediately following worship service. The purpose of this meeting is to approve the annual budget.



## A Note from Our Vestry President

Vestry held its monthly meeting on November 13, 2023. Deaconess Deborah led with a devotional time sharing a blessing for beginnings and endings.

This provided Vestry with a moment of meditation to reflect upon the transitions that have occurred over the last several months and years but also focus on the transition forward. Vestry wholeheartedly thanks Pastor Drew for serving our Trinity Congregation as Interim Pastor during this transition. His call to Trinity came as an answer to prayer. In contrast to our October Vestry meeting which held many actions points, this November meeting was about preparation and looking forward to projects underway and new endeavors approaching.

Vestry received updates from the Property Committee concerning the completion of phase one of the HVAC project along with discussion about phase two, which involves the auditorium.

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Currently, Vestry and the Property Committee are in the planning of phase two, which involves the air handling unit for the auditorium area. We are gathering information for the best way to implement the repairs and renovations that are needed for our building and a timeline for moving forward that will work in conjunction with the auditorium project.



This conversation will also include the Finance Committee to determine the most effective means of providing the needed funds for the work to be done.

Vestry and Finance Committee held a joint meeting on November 20 at which time the annual budget was finalized to be presented to the Congregation at the congregational meeting on December 10. The 2024 Stewardship campaign is currently underway. Vestry is also in the process of organizing a committee tasked with implementing the auditorium project and shower trailer capital campaign that was approved by the congregation last month. Vestry has appointed Brooke Rosenbaum and Allison McCanney as new members of the Personnel Committee. A resolution was passed waiving a reversionary right in property that is presently owned by the congregation of Renewed Spirit and is anticipated to be conveyed to Rock of Salvation Church for continued use as a place of worship to strengthen our City of Reading. Worship and Music reported to Vestry that some integral parts of worship that had been changed or eliminated during COVID will be reintroduced into our worship service with some elements arriving as soon as the Advent season.

With Thankful Tidings,  
Amy Litvinov, Vestry President

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## Church Property Cleanup Day

**Saturday, December 9, 9:00 AM - midday**

The property committee invites you to help with church clean-up on Saturday December 9th. We will be cleaning up the church garden as well as doing some light interior cleaning work. We hope to finish by lunch (pizza lunch will be provided).



## Advent Adventures

During Advent we are waiting and preparing for the birth of our Lord and Savior. This year, in the days leading up to Advent, we are also waiting and preparing for the arrival of Pastor Hans. How exciting on both counts!

In Advent, we look forward to the presence of the Advent wreath and candle lighting. This year, members of ChAOS and their families will lead this portion of worship. We will use chanted setting 9 from the ELW and listen for the shruti box.

We will also return to several pre-Covid worship practices. While financial offerings will continue to be received before worship in the plate located in the narthex, we will return to presenting a flagon of wine, the paten with bread, and the offering. At the distribution time, everyone will receive the bread from Pastor Hans. You will then be guided to open spots at the chancel rail where you will receive the wine from pouring chalices. Complete directions will be announced and also be in the bulletin. We ask for your patience as we return to this procedure and refine the flow as necessary.

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## Music Musings

The Advent and Christmas seasons are filled with wonderful music. Preludes for Advent include a solo from Bach's *Magnificat* by choral scholar, Maria Yost; a duet from *Magnificat* by Hannah Long and choral scholar, Ben Hoover; Jacinda Motley singing a setting of "O Come, O Come" with Lisa Speece on flute; and two Advent hymns with several different ringing techniques by the Trinity Ringers. The shruti box will make a return appearance, accompanying both the choral Advent wreath lighting hymn and the psalm. The anthems will feature Hal Hopson's haunting setting of the text "Thou Shalt Know Him When He Comes"; the familiar John Ness Beck's "Every Valley"; the Mixed Ensemble, accompanied by piano and recorder singing Anne Krentz Organ's setting of "There's a Voice in the Wilderness"; and the Trinity Choir, with flute and clarinet, in her setting of "Canticle of the Turning."



Early Christmas Eve will feature the Trinity Orchestra, under the direction of David Himes, in his arrangement of "The Holly and the Ivy." Piano, flute, and handbells will accompany the Mixed Ensemble in Joel Raney's setting of "Royal David's City."

Music for the late service will include three selections by the Trinity Ringers, "Joy to the World," "In the Bleak Midwinter," and a setting of "We Three Kings" that you do not want to miss! Maria Yost will sing the familiar "Gesu Bambino" and Ben Hoover will begin the worship service with Scott Weidler's beautiful "This Holy Night." Choral pieces include "Ding Dong! Merrily on High," "There Is No Rose of Such Virtue" by Stephen Caracciolo featuring

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Hannah Long, Michael Praetorius' "En natus est Emanuel," Donald Busarow's "The Best of Rooms," Michael Burkhardt's "Gaudete," and the stunning setting of "Where Shepherds Lately Knelt" by Kyle Haugen. Both services will include "Silent Night" led by Peter Graf on guitar as well as many other favorite carols. On December 31 we will continue our Christmas celebration and January 7 will feature a service of Epiphany Lessons and Carols. Come, hear our wonderful choirs as they lead us in worship during our preparation for and celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

## Swinging into Christmas

Don't forget the Let's Dance big band's "Swinging into Christmas" concert, here at Trinity on Friday, December 1 at 7:30 p.m. Trinity member

Charlie Randazzo is the musical director of the band and David Himes plays saxophone with the group. You might even spy a guest appearance by Trinity's Minister of Music. The concert is free. An offering to support the Salvation Army Reading Citadel will be received. Invite friends to join you for this toe tapping evening of fun standards.



## Sing G.F. Handel's *Messiah*

**Sunday, December 3, 5:00 PM** at Scottish Rite Cathedral, free of charge  
Join Reading Choral Society singers, orchestra and soloists conducted by RCS Music Director, Dr. Graham Bier. Bring your own music or borrow it at the event. You will see some Trinity faces among the singers, including Rachel Gambone, Matt Hayes, Darryl Jeffries, Pat McMahon, and Fred Opalinski.



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## Sunday Forums

### **December 3: Prepare! A Simple Advent Event for all ages**

Slow down for a moment and come for a time of easy crafts, music, food, and conversation. This will be our first Sunday with Pastor Hans Becklin.



### **December 10 and 17: Pitfalls and Promise of our Secular Age**

Where is the church of Christ headed? As American Lutherans, we face a bleak picture: the ELCA's own demographers predict that, if current trends continue, our denomination of around three million will have only 66,000 members in 2050, about two-thirds of the 2021 membership of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod alone. Clearly we need to change our methods—or at least find the long-sought plateau.

And the ELCA is not alone in facing this reality. All denominations, save a few exceptions, are experiencing rapid, structural decline—whether progressive or conservative, liturgical or contemporary, hierarchical or independent. The primary driver? Secularization—a mass of social and cultural changes currently hitting the Western world. Instead of a culture that fosters religious belief and practice, we have a culture that disrupts it.

With these changes and disruptions come new opportunities for outreach and evangelism—something that Lutherans, used to growth by natural means for the first 300 years in North America, are not very practiced in. However, many studies indicate that young and diverse populations are interested in spirituality—including Christian spirituality—and are looking for experiences of community, connection, and transcendence. Furthermore, many people raised in

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the church are looking for a way to be authentically Christian—connecting to the wells of Christian tradition or leaving behind a particular closed-minded moralism. Join Pastor Hans in Sunday Forum for a guided exploration of this through data, theology, and philosophy.

**December 24 and 31:** No Sunday Forum. Join us for worship at 10:00 AM



## **Sharing Christmas Joy - Angel Tree 2023: Dayspring Harry House and LightHouse Center**

This Christmas, Trinity will once again be adopting a Dayspring Home: the Harry House. You are invited to take a tag from the tree in the Narthex and purchase a special present for Albert, Chris, Jenn, or Donald or something for the entire household.

Dayspring Homes is a faith-based nonprofit providing services to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. <https://dayspringhomes.org/wp/>  
We also are adopting several guests at the LightHouse Center for Women and Children. <https://www.hopeforreading.org/lighthouse>

When you take a tag, please sign your name on the form next to the tree. **Please bring your wrapped/bagged presents WITH a gift tag affixed to the gift by Sunday, December 17.** Speak to Deaconess Deborah if you have any questions.

You also are encouraged to give an extra gift to the LightHouse this Advent/Christmas Season. There are several “Heart for Home” mugs available in the Narthex. For a donation of \$50.00 or more, you are welcome to choose a mug to take home or give to someone else. Envelopes are on the table in the narthex next to the mug display.

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## Resounding Joy!

**Sunday, December 10, 3:00 PM**

**Atonement Lutheran Church**

Wheatland Chorale and Artistic Director

David J. Fitzpatrick invites you to attend its

Christmas concert. "Resounding Joy" reflects on the meaning of joy through various pieces such as carols and seasonal works both sacred and secular.

Trinity member Beth Welz is a member of the chorale. General admission

tickets are \$25; students with ID cost \$10. Tickets can be purchased in advance at <https://www.wheatlandchorale.org/season> and at the door with cash, check or credit card.



## Lessons & Carols with Brass

**Sunday, December 17, 4:00 PM at Immanuel UCC Church, 99 S. Waverly St., Shillington**

Celebrate the Christmas season with Reading

Choral Society, Dr. Graham Bier, Music Director, and

Vox Philia, Dr. David McConnell, Director. Enjoy music from Praetorius to

Pinkham and readings that fill your heart. You will see many Trinity faces

among the singers. Tickets are \$15 in advance at [https://reading-choral-society.](https://reading-choral-society.ticketleap.com/lessons--carols-with-brass/)

[ticketleap.com/lessons--carols-with-brass/](https://reading-choral-society.ticketleap.com/lessons--carols-with-brass/) or at the door for \$20; student tickets (with ID cost \$10).

## December Broadcast Schedule

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](http://www.trinityreading.org), on Facebook, or on our YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/trinitylutheranchurch](http://www.youtube.com/trinitylutheranchurch). Worship is available both on demand and streamed live at 10:00 AM on Sundays.



### Sundays

6:00 PM World Views:

The Quran and its Place in the Muslim Community

6:30 PM Music From Trinity:

Christmas Music Highlights

7:00 PM Trinity Worship Service

### Wednesdays

4:00 PM Trinity Worship Service

5:00 PM Music From Trinity:

Christmas Music Highlights

5:30 PM World Views:

The Quran and its Place in the Muslim Community

### Prepare for Worship

Dec. 3: Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37

Dec. 10: Isaiah 40:1-1; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

Dec. 17: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

Dec. 24: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:46b-55; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

Dec. 31: Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 148; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40



*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.*

**Trinity Lutheran Church**

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[www.trinityreading.org](http://www.trinityreading.org)