



Trinity Steeple Notes

February 2024

A Blessing from the Bard House: What is Lutheranism?



What is Lutheranism all about? I've heard many answers to this question throughout my ministry.

"Lutheranism means believing in salvation by grace through faith, not works."

Yes—but so does every other form of Protestantism. How are we different from Baptists, Moravians, or Presbyterians? There must be something deeper...

"Lutheranism is the religious expression of German culture."

Perhaps in some places—but there are more Lutherans in church on a Sunday in Indonesia, Tanzania, or Ethiopia than in Germany and the United States combined. Lutherans in Indonesia aren't emulating Germans or anyone else—they have their own unique expression of what it means to be Lutheran. So it can't be cultural...

"Lutheranism means following Martin Luther."

Yes—and no. Just as St. Paul reminded the Corinthians that Paul wasn't crucified for them, nor were they baptized in the name of Paul (1 Cor 1:13-15), Luther wanted people to follow Jesus rather than himself. So it isn't some cult of personality...

Is there no satisfactory answer? We should hope there is! Why would anyone want to join in the life of Christ in our congregation if we can't clearly explain what we're about?

We could hitch our wagon to a political or social movement, claiming that Lutheranism is really just a religious expression of something better-known. This has been done widely by churches of all stripes looking for their niche.

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While this provides clarity in a society in love with labels, the political and social movements du jour have drastically changed over the decades and centuries.

The author of Hebrews reminds us that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. In the same way that Jesus is intransient, we should aim to be stewards of a church whose reason for existing doesn't change with changing tastes. So what's our unchanging foundation as Lutherans?

Following theologians like Gustav Aulén, I like to put it this way: Lutheranism is unique because it is both Evangelical and Catholic.

Evangelical, because the Gospel message is our center: through Christ, each and every human being can be set free from the brokenness of this world and live a new life in response to God's call to love the Lord and serve the neighbor. We take this radical message seriously, even accepting those whom many in our world reject and calling for justice in our society. Our insistence that the gospel is radical makes us unique from many other Christians, who often find a way to make faith legalistic instead of a thankful response to God's completed work of salvation through Christ.

Catholic because we never sought a break from the Church's core traditions, but rather a removal of those human innovations that may not have been inherently bad, but drew our attention away from the essentials. And we affirm that there's nothing more essential than the sacraments: Holy Baptism, which binds us to Christ and makes us priests of Almighty God, and the Holy Eucharist, in which we receive the true body and blood of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. This insistence on tradition is unique among the churches of the Reformation.

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So what is Lutheranism all about? We're a church of radical welcome and acceptance, because Jesus has welcomed and accepted us. We are formed by the unchanging message of the Gospel and the overwhelming grace of the Sacraments.

--Pastor Hans

A Note from Our Vestry President

Vestry held its monthly meetings on December 11, 2023 and January 16, 2024.

The holiday season ushered in a new church year along with the New Year 2024. There are many projects and programs underway at Trinity but there is a lot of planning and work to be done in 2024.



Vestry received reports from the Property Committee. There was a turnout of 20-25 people on Sunday, January 14 for the Auditorium Meeting and for the workday projects. A sincere thank you for all who have dedicated time to volunteer for these renovation and beautification projects. The congregation should also be made aware that there continues to be issues with the sewer system. As many of you know we have had several sewage backups into the building that have been cleaned up by Bill Norton and Dave Troche. Although troubleshooting attempts have been made, the problem may result in substantial work to prevent future sewage backups. The Property Committee has also identified a couple of projects that will be focused on for 2024. These include repairs to the Bard House due to issues with the gutter and also repair to mortar and brick work on the church building.

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Vestry received the Treasurer's reports. Erica was able to share that our members have given generously during the close of 2023 and member giving, although below budget in earlier months, surpassed budgeted expectations for the year. Additionally, the investment accounts rebounded the end of 2023 with a report of healthy returns in the latter months of 2023. The report for pledges of giving from the 2024 Stewardship campaign is being finalized and should be available at the February meeting. Vestry also approved changing our regularly scheduled meetings to the third Monday of each month in order to accommodate accurate and complete financial reporting for the prior month.

Vestry addressed populating several committees and sub-committees/work groups. Travis Shick was appointed to the Personnel Committee. Vestry has appointed Jim Barrett and Franki Aitken to the Capital Campaign Committee with Steve Welz agreeing to serve a Vestry liaison for this committee. Russ Diesinger and I have been appointed to serve as voting member of Trinity for the annual Synod Assembly. We will also be attending the budget and annual organizational meeting for the WBMD as Trinity representatives. Beth Welz, Rob Speece, Ralph Unruh, Jessica Manning, Tom Hofmann, Hannah Long, Pastor Hans and Donna Osborne will be serving Trinity on the Minister of Music Search Committee. Vestry has also discussed the need for an active Audit Committee and we anticipate appointing members to this necessary committee at the February Vestry Meeting.

Please mark your calendar for February 10 at 1pm as we will be celebrating as a Congregation the installation of Pastor Hans as Trinity's Senior Pastor. Looking forward to a year of change and service,

--Amy Litvinov, Vestry President

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Worship at Trinity this Lent!

Midday worship

After a pandemic-induced pause, we're pleased to announce that Trinity's Lenten midday service will resume in 2024.



Join us at 12:05 PM in Trinity's chapel for a simple, 25-minute Eucharist on: Ash Wednesday (February 14), February 21, February 28, March 6, March 13, and March 20.

For the first time, we'll also hold our midday services on the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Holy Week (March 25, 26, and 27).

Bring a brown-bag lunch to eat with us after each of our midday services. Trinity will provide coffee and tea to lubricate conversation!

Ash Wednesday (February 14)

In addition to our brief midday service at 12:05 PM, we'll hold a festival liturgy on Ash Wednesday at 7:30 PM.

Weather permitting, Dcs. Deborah and Pr. Hans will also be available in Trinity's courtyard for a brief penitential rite and "Ashes to Go" from 8:30 AM until 9:30 AM as well as from 4:30 PM to 5:30 PM.

See page 6 for Trinity's Holy Week schedule...

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Holy Week (March 24-30)

We'll gather on Palm Sunday at 9 AM for a Palm Procession and Prayer Walk through our neighborhood. Our worship will begin at 10 AM and will include a splendid setting of the Passion led by Trinity's choir.

We'll hold brief midday services on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday at 12:05 PM in our chapel.

On Maundy Thursday, we'll gather at 7:30 PM for a Festival Eucharist as we celebrate Jesus' institution of the sacrament, his washing of the disciples' feet, and his command to love one another.

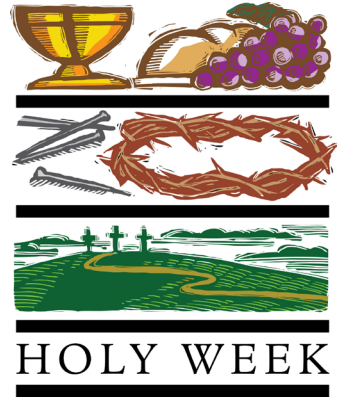
On Good Friday, we'll gather at 12:05 PM for worship—with scripture, preaching, and song all focused on the scandal and glory of the cross. In keeping with ancient tradition, the Eucharist is not celebrated on this day and Trinity's bells are silent.

Easter Sunday (March 31)

Join us for a very special Eucharist as we celebrate the Resurrection of Our Lord at 10 AM.

In Case of Inclement Weather

If winter weather causes us to cancel worship or other Trinity events, we will share those changes with Channel 69 and post the notice on Trinity's website and Facebook page.



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Sunday Forum

9:00 AM in the Hintz Room - Interesting. Informative. Inspiring.



February 4th: Idols Old and New *continued*

Luther instructs in the Small Catechism us to fear, love, and trust God above all things. St. Paul taught the church in Corinth how to deal with the ever-present idols of the Greco-Roman world. Join Pastor Hans as we continue exploring First Corinthians 8 to answer the question: how can we truly place God first in our lives, when so many idols bid us to bow down?

February 11th: Safe Berks and Its Work

Laura Preston and Mindy McIntosh from Safe Berks join us to discuss: what is domestic violence, what is the magnitude of the problem, what are the barriers to finding support, what services Safe Berks can offer, and how you can help or become involved.

February 18th-March 31st: Worship Under the Microscope

Why do we worship the way that we do? Whether you can define *anamnesis* and spell *Nunc dimittis* is or are totally new to liturgical worship, you'll learn something during this series as we explore our historic liturgy in detail.

Throughout Lent, we'll go through the service in order and reflect together on what we've heard and seen as participants in worship throughout our life. We'll also learn about what the words and actions of the liturgy mean, where they come from, and what they can teach us about our walk with our Lord.

Note that, due to the Palm Procession and Prayer Walk, there will be no Sunday Forum on Palm Sunday, March 24th.

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Souper Bowl of Caring – Sunday, February 11

Tackle Hunger with Us!

Imagine if every person who watched the big game gave just \$1.00 to local ministries. On Superbowl Sunday in 1990, 22 youth groups in South Carolina began the movement praying:

“Lord, as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game,
help us to be mindful of those without even
a bowl of soup to eat.”

On February 11, look for the youth of Trinity who will be holding big pots and ladles, collecting monetary donations to support unhoused women and children at the Light House. Be part of this movement that is sharing God’s love with those in great need. Check out <https://tacklehunger.org/> for more information.

Coldest Night Of The Year 2024

It’s cold out there! On 2/24 people from the West Berks Mission District (Lutheran Churches) are participating in a winterrific family-friendly walk at Penn State Berks Campus to raise money for New Journey Community Outreach so we can continue serving people experiencing hurt, hunger, and homelessness in the Reading Community. We will be walking with people from faith communities and civic organizations from all across Berks County to make a difference! Some give by walking. Some walk by giving. We are stronger together! Please, register as a walker for our WBMD team and/or give generously at walk.w-ith.us/WBMD

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Wolfe Series Concert

Mark your calendars NOW for the Sunday, March 10, 4:00 PM concert by the Albright College Chamber Ensemble under the direction of Dr. Derrick L. Thompson. The mixed a cappella ensemble is comprised of Bona Vox, an a cappella tenor/bass ensemble, and Bella Voce, an a cappella soprano/alto ensemble.

The A Cappella Ensembles are Albright's premiere choral groups. These ensembles are designed to provide select students with the highest level of musical experience and achievement. Repertoire includes all styles, eras, and genres, including repertoire written for traditional chamber choir, pop, Renaissance, Americana, folk, non-western traditions, and new works.

Derrick L. Thompson is the Assistant Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities at Albright. Additionally, he serves as the Student Activities Chair with the American Choral Directors Association of Pennsylvania and Interim Music Director at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. A highly accomplished musician, educator, and professional vocalist, he has an extensive academic background, driven by a passion for research and a commitment to advancing the field of choral and vocal music.

Trinity's Minister of Music is the collaborative pianist for the Ensemble.

Karen is thrilled that Trinity is hosting a concert of "her kids." Please join us for an afternoon of outstanding music.

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Update on the Welcome Center and the Multi-Purpose Room

There are many things moving now on our first-floor renovations. Let's start with completed projects:

The door opener has been working for months now.

The new handicap ramp is done and the new railing installed. The handicap access button is in its permanent place. The new second-floor KinderMusik room/nursery is finished. It is painted, shelves are up, toys are moved in and Tama McConnell and her KinderMusik supplies are moved in too. Thanks to Eric Rosenbaum and Peter Graf and all of the volunteers for making this happen!

The first-floor renovation committee met on January 14th and decided on a timeline for the rest of the projects. The demolition on the downstairs nursery has already begun. We will be removing the plaster from the wall with the Noah's Ark mural to see if there is brick beneath it. We will be removing the drop ceiling to see where support beams and wires go and we will be cutting holes in the drywall of the hallway wall to see where wires and supporting structures are. We are also removing all of the carpeting.

In addition, the back room that used to be a changing area for babies will now be made into a garden room at one end and a family bathroom at the other end. Plumbers will be coming in to move pipes for us to begin that work.

Since the removal of the flooring in the auditorium will be a major disruption to our Common Ground ministry, it was decided that we will start that leg of the project right after Easter and Holy Week. There will be too many things going on all over the church to be able to relocate our programs before Easter.

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That is where the project stands for now. There will be many moving parts to the next phase of the project. We will provide an update when we are getting close to starting that phase. To help fund this project, we did get an ARP grant from Berks County that will help with 25% of specific costs that we incur. Also, please support the capital campaign that will be starting to help fund this project. And finally, please feel free to pop into our dusty spaces to see our progress as we move forward with this exciting project.

--David Himes

2024 Lenten Offerings – Heart for Home

Our Lenten offering project will be supporting LightHouse Women and Children's Center. The need for safe housing and life support for women and their families is great. (Reminder: Trinity has pledged \$25,000 to give over 3 years. To date, we have raised \$5000.)



Offerings of all amounts are welcomed and encouraged. Together we make a difference. As an added incentive, Pastor Fred Opalinski and Bruce Ilgen have created Heart for Home ceramic mugs. When you donate, you are invited to choose a mug to bring home with you. The mugs can be a prayer touchstone for the work of LightHouse and the people they will serve.

To learn more about the ministry of LightHouse, check out: <https://www.hopeforreading.org/lighthouse>

February 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, on Facebook, or on our YouTube channel at 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

6:30 PM Music From Trinity

7:00 PM Trinity Worship Service

Wednesdays

4:00 PM Trinity Worship Service

5:00 PM Music From Trinity

5:30 PM World Views

Prepare for Worship

Feb. 4: Isaiah 40:21-3; Psalm 147:1-11, 20c; 1 Corinthians 9:16-23; Mark 1:29-39

Feb. 11: 2 Kings 2:1-12; Psalm 50:1-6; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9

Feb. 18: Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15

Feb. 25: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Psalm 22:23-31; Romans 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38



At Trinity, we welcome all LGBTQ+ people as full participants in our common life. We're proud to proclaim this publicly in our city and wider church as a Reconciling in Christ congregation.

Trinity Lutheran Church

527 Washington Street, Reading, PA 19601 (610) 374-4861

www.trinityreading.org