



TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
1314 E Lexington Blvd • Eau Claire, WI 54701

FEBRUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER

BLACK HISTORY MONTH RECOGNITION

2026 marks a century of national commemorations of Black history. Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, George Cleveland Hall, William D. Hartgrove, Jesse E. Moorland, Alexander L. Jackson, and James E. Stamps institutionalized the teaching, study, dissemination, and commemoration of Black history when they founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) on September 9, 1915.

On February 10, 1976, during the United States Bicentennial, President Gerald R. Ford became the first president to issue a message recognizing Black History Month. Then in 1986, Congress passed Public Law 99-244 designating February as Black History Month. These efforts have made February the month when Black history finds its way not simply into the schools of our nation, but also into cultural heritage sites (museums, archives, libraries, parks, etc.), public squares, workplaces, houses of worship, and homes across the land and across the oceans.

Check out Trinity's library for several excellent books on black history.

FEBRUARY IS AMERICAN HEART HEALTH MONTH

This is a national campaign dedicated to raising awareness about heart disease—the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States. Why Does Heart Health Matter?

- **Preventability:** Research suggests that nearly 80% of cardiovascular events can be prevented through lifestyle changes and managing risk factors.
- **Leading Cause of Death:** Approximately 1 in every 5 deaths in the U.S. is due to heart disease

READ MORE ON PAGE 3

WITH GRATITUDE

Offering Update as of December 31, 2025.

- Amount Budgeted to Date: \$631,698
- Amount Received to date: \$617,641
- Expenses to Date: \$544,186
- Deficit/Surplus: \$73,455

Trinity offers three giving options: Use the QR Code, text "GIVE" to 715.468.6800, or click GIVE on www.trinity-ec.org



RENTAL HOUSE UPDATE

Rental House Ready!

Trinity's 4-bedroom, 2-bath rental home at 1402 E Lexington Blvd is newly remodeled and available for \$1900/month with a one-year lease.

Interested or know someone who might be? Contact **Bruce Weegman** at (715) 577-7767 for details!



Trinity Food Pantry Hours: Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, 1:30–3:00 p.m.

MEMORIALS & GIFTS

Noah's Ark

- In memory of Kjersti Pressler from Katie & Bill Clouse

Food Pantry

- In memory of Michelle Messer from Bob & Mary Schoenknecht
- In memory of Sam Yanakopulos from Judy Foss
- In memory of Ron Gullicksrud from Judy Foss
- In memory of Jane Hartman from Skip Hartman and Family
- In memory of David Mahoney from DJ McFarlane
- In memory of David Mahoney from Jack & Shelia Running
- In memory of Chuck Wallen from Phyllis Grohn
- In memory of Chuck Wallen from Nancee & John Burbank
- In honor of Lori Juneau from Vicki Dueringer

General Fund

- In honor of Linda Ballerstein from Denise Noll

Friends of Flynn

- Randy & Peggy Casper from Daniel & Jacqueline Helgeson

Luther Park Bible Camp

- Pam Burrows from Margie Larson

HOLY WEEK 2026

Holy Week invites us to walk with Jesus through the final days of his earthly ministry and to remember once again that we are a people marked by the cross. From shouts of Hosanna to the silence of the tomb, this week tells the story of a love that does not turn away from suffering, but enters fully into it for the sake of the world.

We invite you to join us for worship throughout Holy Week: Palm Sunday: 8:15 a.m. and 9:45 a.m. Maundy Thursday: 6:00 p.m. Good Friday: 12:15 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

As we gather in worship, we remember that the cross is not the end of the story—but it is the place where God's love is made unmistakably clear. Wherever you are on your faith journey, you are welcome to come, to listen, and to be marked once again by grace.

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK:

Later this month, Lent kicks off with Ash Wednesday. And with it comes many beloved hymns that speak to our collective (sometimes nostalgic) soul. One of those popular songs is "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me."

This song's roots originate within the rich history of slave spirituals that were sung throughout the day as a way in which to keep strength and faith amidst the evils of slavery. While this song has only become popular in hymnals for the last 50 years or so, it is a hymn that speaks to the long and rough roads that we all face throughout life with the truth that no matter what, Jesus walks with us.

I want Jesus to walk with me;
I want Jesus to walk with me;
all along my pilgrim journey,
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

These words do not ask for certainty, strength, or answers. It asks only for presence. These words name what Lent dares us to admit—that life can be heavy, faith can be fragile, and the road ahead is not always clear. Lent is a season when we stop pretending otherwise.

And yet, Lent is not about fixing ourselves or proving our faithfulness. It is about trusting that Jesus already walks with us—especially in moments of sorrow, temptation, and fear. The cross reminds us that God does not stand at a distance from human suffering but enters into it fully in Christ. That is the promise of this season. Jesus walks with us through the wilderness, toward the cross, and ultimately toward resurrection.

Pastor Patrick and Pastor Tom

LENT 2026- MARKED BY THE CROSS

As we enter the season of Lent, we are reminded that we are people marked by the cross. On Ash Wednesday, ashes are placed on our foreheads in the shape of the cross—an honest sign of our mortality and sin, and at the same time, a powerful sign of belonging. We are marked not because we have earned God's love, but because God has already claimed us in Christ.

This Lenten season, our worship will center on what it means to live as people marked by the cross in a broken and uncertain world. The cross names the reality of suffering and loss, but it also reveals God's deep solidarity with us. In the cross of Christ, we see a love that enters our pain, redeems it, and promises new life beyond it. Lent is not a season of easy answers, but a time to return—again and again—to the grace that meets us where we truly are.

You are invited to join us for worship throughout Lent:
Sundays: 8:15 a.m. (traditional) and 9:45 a.m. (band-led, contemporary)
Wednesdays: 12:15 p.m. (traditional) and 6:00 p.m. (Holden Evening Prayer)

A simple soup meal will be served after the 12:15 p.m. service and before the 6:00 p.m. service. Wherever you find yourself this Lent—hopeful, weary, curious, or unsure—you are welcome. Come and be reminded that you are marked by the cross and held in grace.

CARE & CONCERN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

THE MOST IMPACTFUL LIFESTYLE CHANGES TO REDUCE THE RISK OF HEART DISEASE INCLUDE:

- **Quit Smoking and Vaping:** Quitting is considered the single most effective step for heart health. Within one year of quitting, your risk of heart disease drops by approximately 50%. Within 20 minutes of quitting smoking your heart rate and blood pressure improve.
- **Adopt a Heart-Healthy Diet:** Focus on whole foods, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins while limiting sodium, added sugars, and saturated fats. Both the Mediterranean diet and the DASH diet are scientifically proven to reduce inflammation and blood pressure.
- **Increase Physical Activity:** Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (like brisk walking) or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week. Adding muscle-strengthening exercises at least twice a week provides additional benefits. Start slowly, moving 5-10 minutes at a time; 2-3 times a day is a good starting point. Then gradually increase the time.
- **Manage Body Weight:** Even modest weight loss of 5% to 10% can significantly improve blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels.
- **Quality Sleep:** Adults should target 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night. Chronic sleep deprivation is linked to higher blood pressure and increased cardiovascular risk.
- **Control Key Health Factors:** Regularly monitoring and managing blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar—is essential. Ideal blood pressure for most adults in 2026 is cited as less than 120/80 mmHg.
- **Manage Stress:** Chronic stress can lead to inflammation and unhealthy coping behaviors like overeating. Techniques such as mindfulness, meditation, and deep breathing are recommended for long-term heart protection.
- **Limit Alcohol Consumption:** In 2026, guidelines increasingly recommend avoiding alcohol entirely for optimal heart health. If consumed, intake should be limited to one drink per day for women and two for men.

FRIENDS OF FLYNN

Each school year, Trinity's Friends of Flynn Program is able to give each student a book to take home and keep. Through your generous donations, we are able to do this at the Christmas break and at the end of the school year—we are hoping to distribute a third time at spring break. Thank you. The children love their forever books.

We also supply needs that are requested by the Flynn staff, including snacks and providing for the Flynn Food Pantry. We have received a gift card from Thrivent to help us provide food for the pantry.

We saw a need at the pantry and will now start to volunteer at the school to pack up the take home meals for the families in need. If you wish to assist us in this project please contact us. We will be going on Tuesday mornings to pack the food for the families.

We will be distributing Bomba socks to the students soon. They love to get the socks!

You can donate to Friends of Flynn to assist us in our endeavors any time you wish too. We appreciate any donations we receive.

BLOOD DRIVE

Trinity's first blood drive of 2026 will be held on Thursday, February 19, from 12:00–6:00 p.m. You may register online at redcrossblood.org, or contact Vicki Dueringer at parishnurse@trinity-ec.org to be registered.

In 2025, Trinity collected 151 units of blood, making a meaningful impact in the lives of others. While this was slightly lower than the 176 units collected in 2024, our goal for 2026 is to increase participation and donations.

Please consider inviting neighbors, family, and friends to join you in donating. And, as always, there will be delicious baked goodies to enjoy.



TRINITY BOOK CLUB

Our February meeting is on Monday, February 16th.

This month's book is *The Genius of Judy, How Judy Blume Rewrote Childhood for All of Us* by Rachele Bergstein.

In *The Genius of Judy*, her remarkable story is revealed beginning with her as a mother of two searching for purpose outside of her home in 1960s suburban New Jersey. The books she wrote starred regular children with genuine thoughts and problems. Judy created a cohesive, culture-altering vision of modern adolescence. Blume's bravery provoked backlash, making her the country's most-banned author in the mid-1980s. This is the story of how a housewife became a groundbreaking artist.

SUMMER SNEAK PEAK

Mark your calendars! Dates have been set for many of the summer opportunities for children and youth! More information will be coming soon.

- **Camp Come & Play** (for 2-3 year olds) – June (Dates TBA!)
- **Trinity Week at Luther Park Bible Camp** – June 21-26
- **Summer Stretch** (for middle-high school students) – June 29-July 2
- **High School Trip to Estes Park, CO** – July 12-17
- **Vacation Bible School** (for preschool-elementary ages) – July 27-30

THANK YOU

A special thank you to everyone who helped with the lefse-making process in November. Together, we raised \$771 for the food pantry, which was greatly appreciated. This would not have been possible without the many hands involved in preparing the lefse, as well as those who supported the effort by purchasing it.

CHILDREN, YOUTH, & FAMILY

NO FIRST SUNDAYS- CANCELED

Due to Katie being at the ELCA Youth Ministry Extravaganza, we will NOT have First Sunday family faith formation in February. Please note that we also will not have our normal Sunday School that day either.

LUTHER PARK BIBLE CAMP

Trinity children and youth are invited to join us for a week of fun at summer camp! Trinity encourages students to attend Luther Park Bible Camp in Chetek during Week 3, June 21-26, 2026.

Campers stay in cabins and experience the wide variety of fun and activities available at Luther Park. Kids will engage in creative Bible studies, worship, campfires, and meaningful small group discussions, along with swimming, games, and developing community with new and old friends.

Check out Luther Park's website at www.lutherpark.org to learn more about Luther Park summer camps and to register. Scholarships are available to Trinity kids – just enter the code TLEC when registering for a 25% discount off one week of camp.

If you'd like help deciding if your kiddo is ready for camp, please reach out to Katie Conner at katie@trinity-ec.org or 715.832.6601 ext. 218. She is more than happy to talk to you about what various camp programs might look like!

LENTEN SOUP LUNCH & DINNER

Lenten soup lunches are returning, and we're adding in soup dinners as well! Join us after the 12:15 p.m. worship services during Lent for a soup lunch or from 4:30-6:00 p.m. for a soup dinner before the 6:00 p.m. worship services. The 17 youth going on the Estes Park, CO Adventure Trip in July 2026 will be preparing and serving the soup and all profit will help offset the cost for this trip. Keep an eye out for more information on the kind of soup that will be made! NOTE: We will have a gluten-free option available each week.

CHRISTMAS TREE FUNDRAISER UPDATE

Thank you to everyone who signed up to have our youth pick up their Christmas trees and take them to the Eau Claire brush site! We raised \$600 which will help to offset the cost of youth going to Estes Park, CO in July 2026.

LIBRARY TIDINGS

New Books:

Boy from the North Country by Sam Sussman. This debut novel is an autofiction work inspired by the author's own life. It centers on a young man named Evan who returns home to care for his dying mother and uncovers secrets about her past, including a possible connection to Bob Dylan, who he is often told he resembles. (FIC SUS)

Twice by Mitch Albom. Mitch Albom's newest novel is a love story about a life of second chances, and how our unchecked temptations may cost us everything we've had all along. *Twice* will make the reader smile, weep, and think about his or her own second chances. (FIC ALB)

The Emperor of Gladness by Ocean Vuong. This is a story about a young Vietnamese American man name Hai who is on the verge of suicide in the fictional town of East Gladness, Connecticut. An unlikely friendship with an elderly Lithuanian widow, Grazina, changes his life. The novel explores themes of love, loneliness, labor, and finding chosen family. (FIC VUO)

Frostlines: A Journey Through Entangled Lives and Landscapes in a Warming Arctic by Neil Shea. In *Frostlines*, Neil Shea blends travel, writing, natural history, and anthropology to explore the profound impacts of climate change on the Arctic. Written with masterful prose and a spark of adventure, these stories share a powerful message that we all should know. (333.7 SHE)

Finding My Way by Malala Yousafzai. *Finding My Way* is a story of friendship and first love, of anxiety and self-discovery, and of trying to stay true to yourself. In this memoir, Malala traces her path from high school loner to reckless college student to a young woman at peace with her past. She reminds us that real role models aren't perfect – they're human. (B YOU)

BOOK RECOMMENDATION

The Lost Baker of Vienna by Sharon Kurtzman (FIC KUR)

Over the past 15 years, there has been an abundance of World War II historical novels that I find engaging and inspiring for further research. *The Lost Baker of Vienna* tells a dual timeline tale set in postwar Vienna in 1946 and also in 2018. Reading it gave me valuable insight into a historical period I previously knew little about.

Vienna 1946: Refugee Chana Rosenzweig along with her mother and younger brother had endured the horrors of war to finally be free in Vienna. But freedom doesn't look like they imagined as they struggle to make a living and stay safe.

In 2018, Zoe Rosenzweig is reeling after the loss of her beloved grandfather, a Holocaust survivor. She becomes obsessed with finding out what happened to her family during the war.

The author does an excellent job of creating suspense and character development. As I noted in the beginning of this recommendation, many novels focus on war and life under Nazi occupation – this coming-of-age novel deals with the aftermath and hope for the future.

Mary Schoenknecht
Trinity Library Committee Member

Picture Books:

- **Little Blue Truck and Racer Red by Alice Schertle.** *Little Blue Truck and Racer Red* is part of the popular Little Blue Truck Series. This story follows Blue and Toad as they encounter Red, who challenges them to a race, leading them to a fun adventure where they discover the joy of different speeds and the importance of being a good sport. (++) FIC SCH)
- **Forts by Katie Venit.** Debut author Katie Venit and celebrated illustrator Kenard Pak have crafted a lyrical celebration of the secret spaces we hold so dear. *Forts* encourages readers to explore the world around them to find the perfect place where they belong. (++) FIC VEN)
- **Bud Finds Her Gift by Robin Wall Kimmerer.** Infused with warmth, humor, and insight and beautifully illustrated by Naoko Stoop, the first picture book by renowned author and Indigenous ecologist Robin Wall Kimmerer inspires readers to treasure nature's generosity and the gifts each one of us can share with the Earth. (++) FIC KIM)

Mercy Watson Book Series:

Mercy Watson is a children's book series by Kate DiCamillo, illustrated by Chris Van Dusen. The main character, Mercy Watson, is a pig called a "porcine wonder" by her owners, Mr. and Mrs. Watson, and loves buttered toast. Each book in the series is a new adventure that children will enjoy reading.

- *Mercy Watson Goes for a Ride #2* (++) FIC DIC)
- *Mercy Watson Fights Crime #3* (++) FIC DIC)
- *Mercy Watson Princess in Disguise #4* (++) FIC DIC)
- *Mercy Watson Something Wonky This Way Comes #6* (++) FIC DIC)



NOAH'S ARK PRESCHOOL AND ECE CLASSES

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." John 14:27

This winter at Noah's Ark Preschool, learning has focused on God's winter world through stories, songs, science activities, and outdoor play. Time spent outside in the fresh air and snow has been a highlight of the season, offering opportunities for exploration, movement, and wonder.

NOAH'S ARK REGISTRATION | 2026-2027

Registration is open for 3–5-year-old classes for the 2026–2027 school year. Brochures are available in the Trinity Lobby and throughout the building. Information is also available at <https://trinity-ec.org/noahs-ark-preschool/>. Trinity members with age-eligible children will receive an email with the registration link. Public registration opens Tuesday, February 3. For more information, contact **Kim Dewey at 715.832.6601 ext. 205.**

FUNDRAISING

Thank you for supporting the January Chipotle fundraiser, which raised over \$275 for Noah's Ark Preschool.

Please save the date for the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper on **Tuesday, February 17, from 4:00–7:00 p.m.** The evening will include pancakes, kids' activities, and an art stroll.

OPEN GYM

On Mondays, January 12–March 23, from 10:00–11:30 a.m., the Trinity Room will be open for parents and young children (toddlers–preschool) to enjoy our equipment in a large, safe space.

Note: No open gym on Mondays or when Noah's Ark or ECASD are not in session.

The area will be supervised by Mrs. Bruxvoort, with story time and a snack offered during the last half hour. Members, friends, and non-members are welcome. No registration required. Cost per session: \$3 for one child, \$2 for each additional sibling.



FEBRUARY FOOD PANTRY CORNER CUPBOARD

Events

Thanks to all Trinity Members who participated in the 2025 reverse Advent calendar. There was just over 760 pounds of food donations received. That is up 15% from last year! Watch for our Reverse Lent calendar coming soon!

Community

- Auto Owners Insurance hosted a food drive and donated 32 pounds of food.
- Our bargain shopper Pat Prissel was able to purchase 194 cans of pasta sauce for only \$.49 per can. Thanks Pat for thinking about Trinity Food Pantry when doing your grocery shopping.
- First Presbyterian Church on Rudolph Rd continues to host monthly food drives delivering 90 pounds of food in January.
- Christmas greeting cards and candy bags were distributed to pantry guests, thanks Marilyn Thompson for sharing your card making talents.

December Activity/Financial:

- Number of families served: 642
- Total food costs for 2025: \$63,500
- Current dedicated account balance: \$62,000
- Average weekly food expense: \$1,200

A Note From Your Pantry Coordinator:

We had a very successful 2025 serving just under 9,000 guests at the 186 pantries we hosted. Our volunteers rescued (picked up food from local businesses), unloaded food from Feed My People, shelved, and distributed to our guests 273,000 pounds of food.

Our dedicated account balance increased throughout the year because of your generous donations, grants received and a decreased food expense of 17% from 2024 (thanks to Feed My People subsidizing free produce, free milk and reduced costs).

I would like to thank everyone for your continuous support of our mission to help those in our community who are food insecure. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have questions regarding your Food Pantry.

Sue Marczinke
Food Pantry Coordinator

"SERVING IN CHRIST'S LOVE AND SHARING THE GOOD NEWS."

A Reconciling in Christ Congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
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Phone: (715) 832.6601 • Fax: (715) 832.6700 • Website: trinity-ec.org

Join us on our Facebook pages for up-to-date information and inspiration for your faith development.

There is a general Trinity Lutheran Church page, plus pages for Children, Youth, and Family Ministries and Noah's Ark Preschool.

Pastors

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Tom Westcott - Ext. 217
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World Missions

Jabneh Christian Academy, Grange Hill, Jamaica
Blantyre Lutheran Parish, Malawi, Africa
Jacqueline & Patrick Bencke, Japan

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- Please submit all articles for the Trinity Tidings electronically via this QR code or on the Trinity website on the "Newsletters" page at the "Communications Request" button.
 - All submissions must be your own work. Any copyrighted materials (code, images, or otherwise) must include written permission from the original source.
 - Deadline for the Newsletter is the **15th of each month.**





This is the day the

Lord

has made;
let us

rejoice

and be glad in it.

Psalm 118:24