



TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

JANUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER

ADVENT SOUP SUPPER THANK YOU

Thank you to all who came to our soup suppers during Advent! You supported our 17 youth going on the Estes Park, CO Adventure Trip this summer, and we cannot thank you enough. Keep an eye out for the soup suppers coming later for Lent!

MUSIC AND MOVEMENT

We have space available in our adult/child Music and Movement class on Wednesdays from 10:30–11:30 a.m., running January 14–May 20. Please contact kim@trinity-ec.org for more information.

New Submission Process for Church Communications

We're streamlining how information is shared in our church publications! If you have announcements, event details, or ministry updates you'd like included in the bulletin, newsletter, or social media, please use our new online submission form. Simply follow the link provided to submit your content. All submissions are due by the 15th of each month for inclusion in the following month's publications. Thank you for helping us keep our communications organized, timely, and engaging!



WITH GRATITUDE

Offering Update as of November 30, 2025.

- Amount Budgeted to Date: \$526,415
- Amount Received to date: \$415,872
- Expenses to Date: \$446,823
- Deficit/Surplus: -\$30,951

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

Trinity Quilters

- In memory of Nancy Winters: Glen & Beverly Tamke
- In memory of Andree Biles: Bruce Eastenson
- In memory of Reverend William Yueill from Jeff & Karla Halloin

Food Pantry

- In honor of Dan & Jackie Helgeson: The Caspers
- In honor of Margie Larsen: Pam Burrows
- In honor of Sonnie Jacobson: Loreen Juneau
- In memory of their daughter: Dan & Darlene Tiegs
- In memory of Donna Boos: Steve & Sue Marczinke
- In memory of Judy Knoll: Astrid Nilsen

In Loving Memory

We remember and pray for:

- The family of Michelle Messer upon her passing.
- The family of Debra Karker upon her passing.

COMMUNITY TABLE

Thank you very much to all my faithful volunteers to The Community Table during this past year. It is a pleasure to volunteer with you. Thanks again. See you in 2026 Phyllis Grohn. Next serving date is January 8th, 2026

MEN LIVING WITH CANCER

The "Men Living with Cancer" group will meet Tuesday, January 27th at 6:00 in the Fireside Room. This group is for all men who have had, are currently in treatment, or just received the diagnosis of cancer. All men are welcome whether this is your first time or you are a regular attendee.

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK:

January brings us into the season of Epiphany, a time in the church year when God is revealed — often in ways we least expect. Epiphany begins not in a palace or a place of power, but with a child, a star, and a group of foreign travelers searching for truth (Matthew 2:1-12). From the very start, Epiphany tells us that God shows up beyond our assumptions, outside our comfort zones, and far beyond what we might predict or plan.

The Magi are an unexpected part of the story. They are not insiders, religious authorities, or people with all the right credentials. Yet they are among the first to recognize who Jesus is. God meets them where they are, speaks through the language they understand, and leads them to Christ. This is good news for us, because it reminds us that God's grace is not limited by boundaries we create — cultural, religious, or personal.

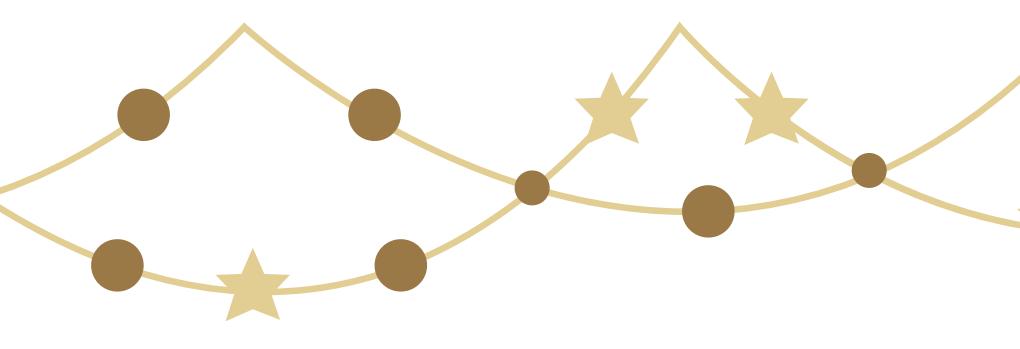
This is central to who God is: a God who comes to us before we ever seek God out. We confess that faith itself is a gift, given through the Word and made alive by the Holy Spirit. God does not wait for us to be ready, worthy, or certain. God appears in surprising places — in water and word, bread and wine, in neighbors, and in moments we might otherwise overlook.

Epiphany continues with stories of Jesus' baptism, his first miracle at Cana, and his ministry among the marginalized. Again and again, God's presence is revealed not through force or spectacle, but through humility, compassion, and relationship. The light of Christ shines not only in moments of glory, but in vulnerability and grace.

This season invites us to pay attention. Where might God be showing up in ways we did not expect? In a difficult conversation? In a stranger's kindness? In the quiet persistence of hope when answers are not clear? As people freed by grace to love and serve our neighbor, we trust that God is already at work — often ahead of us — inviting us to join in what God is doing in the world.

As we move through January and the season of Epiphany, may our eyes be opened to God's surprising presence among us. May we learn to expect the unexpected — and to give thanks that God's love refuses to stay within the lines we draw.

With hope and trust in God's surprising grace,
Pastor Patrick and Pastor Tom



Sabbatical Announcement

Beginning May 17, Pastor Tom will enter a 13-week sabbatical centered on the theme "Be Where Your Feet Are — A Sabbatical of Presence and Renewal."

A pastoral sabbatical is a gift of intentional rest and renewal, rooted in the biblical rhythm of Sabbath. This time allows space to step back from daily ministry responsibilities in order to rest, pray, reflect, and reconnect — with God, with family, and with the deep calling of pastoral vocation. It is not time away from ministry, but time for ministry, ensuring long-term health and sustainability in leadership.

The theme "Be Where Your Feet Are" invites a renewed attentiveness to God's presence in the here and now. During these 13 weeks, our Pastor Tom will focus on cultivating spiritual renewal, family presence, and mindful living — practices that will strengthen ministry and relationships upon return.

This season is also an opportunity for our congregation to live into our shared calling. Guest preachers will join us periodically, lay leaders will be encouraged to join Pastor Patrick and our staff to support our ministry, and we invite all members to practice their own rhythms of rest and presence during this time.

We ask you to hold Pastor Tom and his family in prayer throughout the sabbatical and to trust in God's faithful provision for our church in every season. We look forward to welcoming them back later this summer with gratitude, renewed energy, and a deeper sense of God's abiding presence among us.

CARE & CONCERN

The following are words from Annette Langdon, Lutheran Faith Community Nurses Association

The season of Epiphany invites us to wonder, to be curious, to seek to see the appearance or manifestation of God in our midst. Perhaps we might imagine the journey of this year like the journey of the Magi: we're heading out without an exact map of where we are going; we will need to rely on the light of a star, which may not be visible all the time; and we are joined by others making this journey. As eyes of our hearts seek God's presence in each day, our hearts may quicken in surprising places. We may find kindness in the midst of chaos, gentleness in the midst of stressful tension or encouragement from an unlikely person. God is present in our world in shocking places... including our own hearts. May your journey in this year be rich with sightings of faith and hope and love. May you be stretched to learn and quick to let go of illusion and control. And may you recognize God also bringing light and life into the world through you.

FRIENDS OF FLYNN

The Flynn Elementary staff and students continue to feel the strong support of Trinity Lutheran Church. During December, every student received a brand-new book to take home and keep. With the help of Flynn's media specialist and partnership coordinator, students were able to choose a book they were excited about—an experience made possible through the generosity of our congregation and a grant from Thrivent.

In addition to books, each student also received a new pair of socks. A special thank you to Cindy Beck for requesting the socks through Bamba's donation program, and to Bamba for continuing to offer this wonderful opportunity.

Contributions to the Friends of Flynn fund help provide books, school supplies, snacks, meals, shoes, boots, and other essential school needs throughout the year. Donations are always welcome. Please make checks payable to Trinity Lutheran Church with "Friends of Flynn" in the memo line.

The students and staff at Flynn Elementary are deeply appreciative of this ongoing support. Thank you for helping make a meaningful difference.



JANUARY FOOD PANTRY

CORNER CUPBOARD

Events

Donations from the Reverse Advent Calendars are currently being weighed—watch next month's newsletter for the totals.

Thank you to all the lefse makers and purchasers. Profits of over \$600 from this event were donated directly to the Food Pantry.

Thank you to everyone who donated food and monetary gifts to make the Thanksgiving food distribution a success. Volunteers distributed over 3,300 pounds of Thanksgiving food items to guests. Special thanks to Marilyn Thompson for providing beautiful Thanksgiving greeting cards for all guests.

Food Drives & Community Partners

Please take time to thank these businesses and events for supporting Trinity Food Pantry:

- 1st Presbyterian Church (Rudolph Rd) is now hosting monthly food drives and has delivered over 340 pounds of food in their first two collections.
- Peace Church's Tuesday Morning Bible Study hosted a food drive and delivered 218 pounds of food.
- Angel Breakfast collected 40 pounds of food.
- Stucky Chiropractic collected and delivered 165 pounds of food, along with a monetary donation.
- Northwestern Bank donated a food credit to our account at Feed My People.

Activity/Financial:

- Pounds of food distributed YTD: 260,000
- Total food costs YTD: \$61,000
- Current dedicated account balance: \$57,000
- Number of guests served YTD: 8,600

Sue Marcinke
Food Pantry Coordinator

CAREGIVER TIPS FOR THE START OF THE NEW YEAR

For January 2026, caregiver tips focus on setting realistic New Year goals, prioritizing self-care, building strong support networks, and creating a safer home environment, especially with cold weather, all to combat burnout and improve care quality. Focus on small, achievable changes like scheduling regular breaks, asking specific people for specific help, and planning for winter-specific needs like hydration and fall prevention.

Self-Care & Support

- **Set realistic goals:** Make doable resolutions, like boundaries or small daily joys, rather than overwhelming ones.
- **Schedule breaks:** Block out time daily for yourself (20 mins) for walks, reading, or hobbies to recharge.
- **Connect with others:** Meet friends, join support groups (online/in-person), or schedule calls to combat isolation.
- **Ask for help:** Be specific with family/friends (e.g., errands, chores) and say "yes" to offers.
- **Prioritize health:** Maintain balanced meals, stay hydrated, and don't skip your own checkups.
- **Consider respite care:** Look into adult day care or in-home help for temporary relief.

Home Safety (Winter Focus)

- **Prevent falls:** Add non-slip mats, tack down rugs, remove clutter/cords, and ensure good lighting.
- **Hydration/Nutrition:** Ensure the care recipient eats regularly and drinks warm fluids (avoid alcohol).
- **Use assistive devices:** Ensure walkers/canes are the correct height and used consistently.

Stay connected with family and friends: Schedule regular activities (movie nights, puzzles) with your loved one and maintain your own hobbies. Invite family and friends over to visit.

HOW TO AVOID WINTER SLIPS & FALLS- MAYO CLINIC

Winter ice and snow increase the risk of falls. The CDC reports that about 1 million U.S. adults are injured from slips and falls each year.

To reduce your risk:

- Wear proper footwear with good support; consider shoe grips.
- Take your time and walk slowly, watching your steps.
- Use assistance such as handrails, canes, or walkers when needed.
- Take small steps, shuffling slightly to maintain balance.
- Stay indoors on especially icy days if possible.

If you do fall, avoid catching yourself with your arms. Try to land on your back or buttocks and wait for help before getting up.

Remember to always use your best judgment when out and about in the ice and snow. Be careful and aware of your surroundings, and you will be on your way to a safe and healthy winter.



LIBRARY TIDINGS



New Books:

The Girls of Good Fortune by Kristina McMorris. Set in Portland in 1888, this historical fiction focuses on Celia, a half-Chinese woman who is drugged and shanghaied into forced labor through the city's infamous Shanghai Tunnels. It is a captivating tale of resilience and hope and explores the complexity of family and identity. (FIC MCM)

Theo of Golden by Allen Levi. Theo of Golden is about a kind-hearted older man who moves to a Southern city and anonymously performs acts of generosity, transforming the lives of his neighbors. The book explores themes of purposeful living, community, and finding beauty in simple things. (FIC LEV)

The River Is Waiting by Wally Lamb. This Oprah's Book Club selection is about Corby Ledbetter, a new father whose addiction leads to a tragedy, resulting in his incarceration and a journey toward redemption, forgiveness, and healing through the harsh realities of prison life and the support of others. (FIC LAM)

The Names by Florence Knapp. This debut novel explores how a single decision, a baby's name, can create three different life paths for a mother and her son, set against a backdrop of domestic abuse. The story follows three parallel timelines: if the son is named Gordon (as her husband wishes), Bear (as her daughter suggests), or Julian (her own choice). (FIC KNA)

Family of Spies by Christine Kuehn. This memoir is a never-before-told story of one family's shocking involvement as Nazi and Japanese spies during WWII and the pivotal role they played in the bombing of Pearl Harbor. (B KUE)

BOOK RECOMMENDATION

Gone Before Goodbye by Reese Witherspoon and Harlan Coben

Gone Before Goodbye is a thriller novel about a disgraced former combat surgeon, Maggie McCabe, who takes a secret, high-paying job for a mysterious, wealthy patient, only to become a fugitive when the patient vanishes, pulling her into a global conspiracy. The book is praised for its fast-paced plot and cinematic scope. And Maggie McCabe is a compelling heroine.

This book is a page turner. It was worth staying up until 3:00am to finish it. Well written with many twists and surprises. I highly recommend it.

Vicki Deuringer
Trinity Library Committee Member

Picture Books:

- **On This Special Night** by Claire Freedman. On a silent winter's night, one special star burns brightly in the sky. Little kitten and Mother Cat join the animals journeying toward the starry light. When they get there, they discover that the star shines with peace, love, and joy on this very special night. (++ FIC FRE)
- **Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Sleigh!** by Mo Willems. What is Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Sleigh about? The Pigeon dreams of driving a sleigh during the holiday season. Will this enthusiastic bird's Christmas wish finally come true – a must read for all Pigeon fans. (++ FIC WIL)
- **Billie Jean Peet, Athlete** by Andrea Beaty. In this The Questioners picture book series, Billie Jean feels overshadowed by her musical siblings until a basketball game mistake leads to a musical, game-winning shot, showing her she can blend her love for sports and music. (++ FIC BEA)
- **Dreamers** by Yuyi Morales. **Dreamers** is a beautiful, autobiographical picture book about the author's journey immigrating to the U.S. from Mexico with her baby son, finding a new home and voice through the magic of stories and a local library. It celebrates resilience, hope, and the gifts migrants bring. (++ B MOR)
- **Sleep Tight Farm: A Farm Prepares for Winter** by Eugenie Doyle. It is December, and there are many things for the family to do around the farm to get it ready for winter. (++ FIC DOY)

Books for Youth

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Partypoooper by Jeff Kinney. **Partypoooper** is the 20th book in the Wimpy Kid series. In the story, Greg Heffley plans an epic birthday party for himself, but it quickly devolves into chaos due to a growing guest list, failed decorations, and family fiascos. (+ FIC KIN)

New Graphic Novel Series by Nidhi Chanani:

- **Super Boba Cafe #1: Super Boba Cafe & Super Boba Cafe #2: Home Sea Home** (+ FIC CHA)

The Skunk and Badger Stories by Amy Timberlake

- **Skunk and Badger #1 & Eggs Marks the Spot.**

TRINITY BOOK CLUB

Our January meeting is on Monday, January 19th at 6:30 in Room 208.

Lula Dean's Little Library of Banned Books by Kirsten Miller is a satirical novel about a small Georgia town where a self-appointed censor, Lula Dean, creates a "wholesome" little library, only for a prankster to secretly replace the books with banned literature, leading to unexpected community change and conflict. Lula's arch enemy, Beverly Underwood is on the school board and Lula is on a mission to rid the public libraries of all inappropriate books, including classics, LGBTQ+, romance, and Black history--none that she has actually read.

The book humorously tackles serious issues like book banning, censorship, and small-town politics.

ADRC GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

Meets on Wednesday, January 21st from 10:00am -11:20am in the Fireside room at Trinity. This Grief Support Group is facilitated by individuals with lived experience. This is a supportive and compassionate group for older adults experiencing grief and loss in any form: death, health, and life transitions.

- Guided conversations, shared experiences, and emotional support.
- Find comfort, connection, and healing.
- A safe and understanding environment.
- Grief related education and resources

You can sign up or call the **ADRC at 715-839-4735**. Walk-ins are also welcome.

CHILDREN, YOUTH, & FAMILY

NO FIRST SUNDAYS IN JANUARY!

We will NOT have a First Sunday family faith formation event in January! Instead, enjoy an additional week off to spend with family. Have a great and safe New Year!

Christmas Tree Disposal Fundraiser

To raise funds to attend the Estes Park, CO Adventure Trip this July, Trinity youth will pick up your Christmas tree from your curb and deliver it to the city's brush site. Simply sign up online or at Clipboard Central, pull your Christmas tree to the curb by 11:00 a.m. on Sunday, January 4, and a group of young Lutherans will dispose of your tree for you! This service is available to Trinity members and the community, so tell your friends and neighbors to sign up by January 1!

Date: January 4 after 11 a.m.

Cost: \$20 per tree, payable at time of pickup – simply leave an envelope with money taped to your front door. We accept cash or checks payable to Trinity Lutheran Church.

Locations: Any address in Eau Claire, Altoona, and immediately surrounding areas only

Questions: Contact Katie Conner at katie@trinity-ec.org

LUTHER PARK BIBLE CAMP

There is always s'more to love about going to Luther Park Bible Camp in the summer! Trinity children and youth are invited to join us for a fun week at Luther Park in Chetek this summer. Trinity encourages students to attend Luther Park during our "Trinity Week," from June 21-26. To learn more about Luther Park's day camps and overnight camps, talk to Katie Conner, Trinity's Children, Youth, and Family Ministry Director, or visit lutherpark.org. Registration on Luther Park's website is open now!

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE! Trinity is happy to pay 25% of the registration cost for one session per child each summer. Use the discount code TLEC at registration.

ADVENT SOUP SUPPER THANK YOU

Thank you to all who came to our soup suppers during Advent! You supported our 17 youth going on the Estes Park, CO Adventure Trip this summer, and we cannot thank you enough. Keep an eye out for the soup suppers coming later for Lent!

NOAH'S ARK PRESCHOOL AND ECE CLASSES

Happy 2026!

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts." — Colossians 3:15

As we celebrate Advent and Christmas with the children of Noah's Ark and our ECE classes, we are filled with joy watching them learn about Baby Jesus and share the Christmas story with their families during our class programs. It is a true blessing to see their excitement and to witness the peace of Jesus shining through them. We look forward to His light guiding us into 2026.

When January begins, our days will move at a gentler pace as the children return eager to reconnect with friends and ready to play, explore, investigate, create, and learn. We are also hoping for some good winter weather so the children can enjoy outdoor play in the snow—bundled up, of course!

As we look ahead to 2026, we do so with hope and gratitude. God's love and our message of peace remain at the heart of all we do with the children. We are excited to celebrate Noah's Ark Sunday on February 1 at the 9:45 a.m. worship service. This will be a wonderful opportunity for the congregation to see more of our life together at Noah's Ark. Information about the 2026–2027 classes will be available on our website, and we invite you to visit our open house in the Noah's Ark classroom following worship.

Registration for the 2026–2027 school year will open to congregational members on **January 27** through our online registration system. If you have a young child in your life and would like more information about our program or the registration process, please contact me at **kim@trinity-ec.org or 715-832-6601**.

In peace, Kim Dewey

MUSIC AND MOVEMENT

We have space available in our adult/child Music and Movement class on Wednesdays from 10:30–11:30 a.m., running January 14–May 20. Please contact **kim@trinity-ec.org** for more information.

NOAH'S ARK OPEN HOUSE

All interested families are invited to attend our Preschool Open Houses on:

- **Sunday, February 1, at 10:45 a.m.** following the Noah's Ark Sunday worship
- **Monday, February 2, at 6:00 p.m.**

Come visit the Noah's Ark classroom, learn about our program, ask questions, and gather 2026–2027 school year registration information. You will meet Kim Dewey, Noah's Ark Preschool Director, along with teachers Gina Toutant, Nicole Kaeding, and Katie Pribnow. Members of the 2025–2026 Noah's Ark Preschool Committee will also be available to share their experiences and answer questions.

Registration for Trinity members opens Tuesday, January 27, at 8:00 a.m. Brochures for the 2026–2027 school year will be available in the Trinity Lobby, throughout the building, and online.

OPEN GYM

On Wednesdays, 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 when school is 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.



“SERVING IN CHRIST’S LOVE AND SHARING THE GOOD NEWS.”

A Reconciling in Christ Congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Trinity Lutheran Church, 1314 E Lexington Blvd, Eau Claire, WI 54701
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.

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Early Childhood Enrichment Teacher

Kelly Bruxvoort

Early Childhood Enrichment Teacher

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Adult Choir Accompanist

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World Missions

Jabneh Christian Academy, Grange Hill, Jamaica

Blantyre Lutheran Parish, Malawi, Africa

Jacqueline & Patrick Bencke, Japan

- 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**.

