



# TRINITY

## LUTHERAN CHURCH

*Connecting Friends, Family & Faith*

# Annual Report

September 1, 2019—August 31, 2020  
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, ELCA  
235 N. Stevens Rhineland, WI 54501



# **Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, ELCA**

## **235 N. Stevens Rhinelander, WI 54501**

<b>Leadership Directory</b>	p.3-4
<b>Minutes</b>	
Annual Meeting – September 29, 2019	p. 5
Annual Elections – August 24, 2020	p. 6
<b>Faith Life Events</b>	p. 6
<b>Financial Reports</b>	
Financial Results Summary August 31, 2020	p. 7
Financial Status as of August 31, 2020	p. 8
Designated Gift and Memorials as of August 31, 2020	p. 9
Children’s Offering	p. 9
Balance Sheet as of August 31, 2020	p. 10
Profit & Loss Budget vs. Actual	p. 11
Financial Plan Summary	p. 12
Audit Committee	p. 13
<b>Committees</b>	
Outreach Committee of the Council	p. 14
Faith Formation Committee of the Council	p. 15
<b>Reports</b>	
Pastor Timothy Vadis	p. 16-17
Pastor Kari Vadis	p. 18-19
Council President – Kevin Eggers	p. 19
Statistics/Worship Attendance	p. 20-21
Musician Report	p. 22
Board of Witnessing	p. 22
Missionaries	p. 23
Board of Worship	p. 24
Women of the ELCA – Financial	p. 25
Board of Property	p. 26
Board of Education	p. 26
Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp	p. 27
Letter from NGLS Bishop Finnegan	p. 28

# Trinity Leadership Directory 2019-2020

**Pastor Kari Vadis-Cell: 715-437-0770**

**kvadis@cometotrinity.com**

**Pastor Tim Vadis-Cell: 715-437-0774**

**tvadis@cometotrinity.com**

**Secretary: Pam Karoliussen: 715-362-4258; tlcsecretary@cometotrinity.com**

**Financial Treasurer: Marina Benoy: 715-362-8901; mbenoy@cometotrinity.com**

**Choir Director/Lead Musician: Tiffanie Ory**

**Custodian: Eva Mahner**

<b>Council Officers</b>	<b><u>First Elected</u></b>	<b><u>Term</u></b>	<b><u>Term Up</u></b>
Kevin Eggers, President	9/2016	2 year	2020
Josh Pudlowski, Vice President	9/2019	2 year	2021
Jerry Dykstra, Secretary	9/2018	2 year	2020
Robert Wienandt, Trustee	9/2017	2 year	2021
Mary Taylor, Trustee	9/2019	2 year	2021
Lori Grinde, Trustee	9/2018	2 year	2020
Education: Jody Doro	9/2015	2 year	2021
Property: Peter Leick	9/2018	2 year	2020
Witness: Carole Hansen	9/2019	2 year	2021
Worship: Margo Morey	9/2018	2 year	2020

## **Board of Worship**

Margo Morey	9/2018	2 year	2020
Robin LeMoine, Secretary	9/2018	2 year	2020
Sue Underberg	9/2015	2 year	2021
Laura Hetland	9/2016	2 year	2021
Jen Thomas	10/2019	2 year	2021

## **Board of Property**

Peter Leick, Chair	9/2018	2 year	2020
Bob Thome, Secretary	9/2019	2 year	2021
Guy Hansen, Custodian Supervisor	9/2015	2 year	2019
Josh Hanold	9/2015	2 year	2020
Brett Foley	9/2019	2 year	2021
Derek Westphal	9/2019	2 year	2021



## Trinity Leadership Directory 2019/2020 continued

<b>Board of Education</b>	<b><u>First Elected</u></b>	<b><u>Term</u></b>	<b><u>Term Up</u></b>
Jody Doro, Chair	9/2015	2 year	2021
Kelly Meyer, Secretary	9/2019	2 year	2021
Amy Johnson	9/2016	2 year	2020
Vacant			
Vacant			

<b>Witnessing</b>			
Carole Hansen, Chair	9/2019	2 year	2021
Tammy Wienandt, Secretary	9/2016	2 year	2020
Robin Harrison	9/2018	2 year	2020

### **Endowment**

Vacant  
Vacant

### **Nominating Committee**

Vacant  
Vacant

### **Auditing Committee**

Judy Nosser	3 year	2020
Hugh Jones	3 year	2021
Peggy Feight	3 year	2022

### **Finance Committee**

Larry Petersen, Chair  
Harvey Mathisen  
Gary Peterson

### **Stewardship Committee**

Jerry Dykstra, Carole Hansen, Al Hofstetter, Pastor Kari Vadis,  
Pastor Timothy Vadis

### **Synod Assembly Voting Members**

Pat and Jerry Dykstra



# Trinity Lutheran Church

## Annual Congregational Meeting

September 29, 2019 – 10:45 AM

**Call to order:** President Kevin Eggers called the meeting to order.

**Opening Prayer** was offered by Pastor Kari Vadis.

**Approval of Minutes:** A motion to approve the minutes from last year's Annual Meeting with a minor change was made by Guy Hansen, seconded by Al Hofstetter, and carried. The results of the annual election meeting were received for information.

**Celebrating Ministry:** Kevin highlighted the Live Stream feed that we now offer. Several members of the congregation are making use of this option. Margo Morey outlined the exciting changes taking place in the Board of Worship. Carole Hansen celebrated our day camp, which reached a great number of kids who don't attend our church. She also gave thanks for the excitement that the kids have for the children's offering.

**Narrative Reports:** All narrative and statistical reports in the Annual Report were received for information.

**Financial Reports:** Kevin outlined the highlights of our financial status as of the end of the fiscal year. Harvey Mathisen pointed out that our contingency fund balance is down to \$18,000.

### **Approval of 2019/2020 Financial Plan:**

After some discussion, a motion to approve the 2019-2020 Financial Plan was made by Al Hofstetter, seconded by Sue Johnson, and carried with 3 members voting against the motion.

**Old Business:** None.

**New Business:** None.

**Thanks to Officers:** Al Hofstetter expressed thanks to all staff, officers, and volunteers serving in the past year.

**Prayer and Adjournment:** We closed with prayer and Kevin declared the meeting adjourned.

■ Jerry Dykstra, Secretary



# Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

## Annual Elections

The elections were held via email and mail. The slate of candidates was distributed August 10th with any negative responses due by August 24th. All candidates were elected. The results were as follows:

President	Josh Pudlowski
Vice President	Kevin Eggers
Secretary	Deb Johnson
Trustee	Jody Doro
Board of Property	Peter Leick
Board of Worship	Robin LeMoine

■ Jerry Dykstra, Council Secretary

## Faith Life Events

### September 2019 – August 2020

#### Baptisms – 5

Brooks Owen Quesinberry  
Windsor Rose Mannikko  
Emerson Belle Mikkelsen  
Tait Scott Bessa  
Summer Kay Hildebrand

#### Confirmed – 0

#### Marriages – 1

Robert Sabatke, Jr. and  
Tia Fish

#### Member Funerals – 5

Fred Voss  
Larry Wold  
Harry Hicks  
Helen Swanson  
Delores Counter

#### Non Member Funerals – 2

Donald Pelletier  
Brian Kotarski

#### New Members – 15

*Fall 2019*  
Ron Hankel  
Jean Hankel

Darrell Juedes  
Betsy Juedes  
Curt Krouze  
Julie Krouze  
David MacFarland  
Laura MacFarland  
Jacob MacFarland  
Evelyn MacFarland  
Eric Ory  
Tiffanie Ory  
Nolan Ory  
Olivia Ory  
Simon Ory

# Trinity Lutheran Church

## FY 2019/2020 Financial Results Summary

### August 31, 2020

\$	163.83	AUGUST 31, 2019 CASH BALANCE
	34,000.00	PPP LOAN/GRANT DATED 4-28-20
	372,712.39	2019/2020 FISCAL YEAR INCOME
	379,100.82	2019/2020 FISCAL YEAR EXPENSES
	18,120.80	2019/2020 FISCAL YEAR MORTGAGE PAYMENT
<hr/>		
\$	9,654.60	AUGUST 31 2020 CASH BALANCE

FROM FINANCIAL STATUS REPORT ON THE NEXT PAGE

\$	1,617.52	AUGUST 31, 2020 GENERAL FUND CASH BALANCE
	537.04	AUGUST 31, 2020 RESTRICTED FUND CASH BALANCE
	7,500.04	AUGUST 31, 2020 PAYROLL FUND IN BALANCE SHEET

---



Thank you for your generosity through your faithful giving.  
Praise be to God!



Trinity Lutheran Church  
Financial Status  
As of  
August 31, 2020

CASH REQUIREMENTS:

GENERAL FUND BILLS:

\$0.00	DIRECT DEPOSIT LIABILITY
\$789.52	PAYROLL LIABILITIES ( <b>EMPLOYEE WITHHOLDING</b> )
\$650.00	PASS THROUGH ACCOUNTS
<hr/>	
\$1,439.52	TOTAL CASH NEEDS
\$3,057.04	GENERAL FUNDS IN CREDIT UNION ( <b>CHECK BOOK</b> )
<hr/>	
\$1,617.52	<b>CASH OVER OR (SHORT) IN GENERAL FUND</b>

RESTRICTED FUNDS:

\$4,582.39	YOUTH FUND - OLDER GRADES
\$1,222.72	G&M (UNDESIGNATED)
\$14,875.01	G&M (DESIGNATED)
\$498.42	ENDOWMENT EARNINGS
\$22,750.00	ENDOWMENT
\$1,207.83	FAITH IN ACTION
\$3,462.38	CAMPERSHIPS
\$0.00	BOARD OF WITNESS WEEKLY ADVERTISING
\$0.00	WEDDING FACILITY MANAGER
\$52,000.00	RESERVED FOR CONTINGENCIES
\$874.42	GARDEN FUND
\$0.00	PRIOR YEAR INCOME DEFERRED
\$14,133.32	INCOME DEFERRED
\$115,606.49	<b>TOTAL RESTRICTED FUNDS</b>
\$116,143.53	<b>CREDIT UNION RESTRICTED SAVINGS ACCOUNT</b>
<hr/>	
\$537.04	<b>CASH OVER OR (SHORT) IN RESTRICTED FUND</b>

---

---

MISSIONS (INFORMATIONAL ONLY)

\$37,288.84	\$370,289.85	CURRENT OFFERINGS X 9.26% +3000 IN MISSIONS BUDGET
\$37,289.00	ACTUAL EXPENDITURES ( <b>PAID TO DATE</b> )	

MARINA BENOY, TREASURER



# Trinity Lutheran Church

## Designated Gift and Memorials

### as of August 31, 2020

Gift and Memorial Category	Amount Designated
Pastoral Needs	\$1,508.02
Music Etc.	\$1,400.12
Altar Guild	\$111.30
Digital Sign	\$779.00
To Be Determined	\$1,684.78
Bench/Library	\$120.00
Outdoor Banners	\$171.93
Carpet/Remodeling Project	\$9,099.86
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$14,875.01</b>

## Children's Offering

### September 1, 2019 – August 31, 2020



Total Income:		\$1,753.67
Expenditures:	Lutheran World Relief-Hurricane Dorian	\$ 393.50
	Youth Leadership Conference	\$ 328.43
	A.C.E.S./Salvation Army	\$ 606.47
	Scholarships	\$ 339.27
	World Hunger	\$ 86.00
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$ 1,753.67</b>

TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Balance Sheet

09/01/2020 11:14 AM

Consolidated - August 2020

Page: 1

	Current Year
<b>ASSETS</b>	
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>	
CASH - CHECKING	\$3,137.04
CASH - SAVINGS/INVESTMENT	123,643.57
Subtotal Current Assets	126,780.61
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>	625,000.00
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<u>\$751,780.61</u>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>	
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	
PAYROLL WITHHOLDINGS	\$789.52
PASS THROUGH ACCOUNTS	650.00
FUNDS ACTIVITIES	115,606.49
Subtotal Current Liabilities	117,046.01
<b>LONG TERM LIABILITIES</b>	137,743.70
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	254,789.71
<b>GENERAL EQUITY</b>	<u>\$496,990.90</u>
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	496,990.90
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b>	<u>\$751,780.61</u>



TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
Income and Expense Statement

09/01/2020 11:17 AM Consolidated - August 2020

Page: 1

	Current Period	Year to Date	Year to Date Budget	YTD Budget Difference	YTD Budget Percentage
INCOME					
CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS	\$36,404.42	\$370,289.85	\$405,900.00	-\$35,610.15	91.23%
NON-CHARITABLE INCOME					
PROGRAMS INCOME	39.51	2,422.54	5,100.00	-2,677.46	47.50%
TOTAL INCOME	36,443.93	372,712.39	411,000.00	-38,287.61	90.68%
EXPENSES					
GENERAL EXPENSES					
SALARIES & COMPENSATION	\$20,177.62	\$240,523.19	\$254,300.00	\$13,776.81	94.58%
ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES	35,391.63	61,252.64	37,700.00	-23,552.64	162.47%
WORSHIP EXPENSES	0.00	2,715.03	4,700.00	1,984.97	57.77%
WITNESS EXPENSES	0.00	449.77	2,200.00	1,750.23	20.44%
PROPERTY EXPENSES	1,579.75	32,511.47	39,100.00	6,588.53	83.15%
EDUCATION EXPENSES	72.00	4,359.72	9,200.00	4,840.28	47.39%
MISSION EXPENSE	3,626.00	37,289.00	40,600.00	3,311.00	91.84%
TOTAL EXPENSES	60,847.00	379,100.82	387,800.00	8,699.18	97.76%
EXCESS INCOME\EXPENSES	-\$24,403.07	-\$6,388.43	\$23,200.00	-\$29,588.43	-27.54%
Mortgage Payments	2,046.23	18,120.80	23,200.00	<b>5,079.20</b>	
Spending Under/(Over) Income	<b>(26,449.30)</b>	<b>(24,509.23)</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>(24,509.23)</b>	

# Trinity Lutheran Church Financial Plan Summary

	2019-2020 PLAN	2019-2020 ACTUAL	PROPOSED 2020-2021 PLAN
<b>INCOME</b>			
OFFERINGS	\$405,900	\$370,290	\$375,400
PROGRAMS & MISCELLANEOUS	\$5,100	\$2,422	\$4,600
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$411,000</b>	<b>\$372,712</b>	<b>\$380,000</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
PASTORS (SALARY/BENEFITS)	\$194,000	\$188,776	\$176,355
STAFF	\$60,300	\$51,747	\$56,000
ADMINISTRATIVE	\$37,700	\$61,252	\$38,095
WORSHIP	\$4,700	\$2,715	\$4,500
OUTREACH COMMITTEE	\$2,200	\$450	\$1,500
PROPERTY	\$39,100	\$32,511	\$34,700
FAITH FORMATION COMMITTEE	\$9,200	\$4,360	\$7,100
MISSIONS	\$40,600	\$37,289	\$37,550
% OF OFFERINGS	10.00%	10.00%	10.00%
<b>SUB-TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$387,800</b>	<b>\$379,100</b>	<b>\$355,800</b>
MORTGAGE PRINCIPLE	\$23,200	\$18,121	\$24,200
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$411,000</b>	<b>\$397,221</b>	<b>\$380,000</b>
<b>NET EXPENSE VS. INCOME</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>-\$24,509</b>	<b>\$0</b>

Our mission is  
to help people of all ages  
become active and engaged  
followers of Christ.







# Audit Committee Report

## October 8, 2019

Committee Members: Peggy Feight (for absent Hugh Jones), Judy Nosser, and Matt Whalen. Also Present: Marina Benoy, Church treasurer and Harvey Mathieson, Financial Committee Representative.

The Audit Committee met on Tuesday, October 8, 2019 at 6:30pm to examine Trinity's financial records, reports and internal controls for the fiscal year September 1, 2018 to August 31, 2019 to reasonably verify their reliability and assure that Church assets are being safeguarded. The audit was conducted within guidelines that were restructured to co-ordinate with the bookkeeping system that is now in place.

The following financial records were reviewed:

**Cash Receipts:** Reviewed the trail of cash collections to the final deposit which included tracing count sheet deposits to treasure's records, identifying the recording of funds designated for special purposes, verifying a sample of members donations and the recording of them, observing the count team to verify proper procedure.

**Bank Accounts:** Examined two random bank statements to verify deposits to weekly count sheet and then reversed to verify count sheet to deposit.

**Expenses:** A random selection of two bank statements where 6-8 expenses were verified from invoice to payment and then reversed to verifying payment to expense.

**Payrolls:** Viewed W-4's and verified on-line filing and payment of W2's, 941's and WT-6.

**Credit Cards Transactions:** Random selection of credit card transactions were reviewed.

**Petty Cash:** Cash and receipts were inspected and verified.

**Insurance Policies:** Policy was available for inspection; premium payments for liability and workman's compensation amounts were verified.

**Weekly Offering:** Offerings were deposited by two members into the safe. Safe was

emptied on Monday morning by two counters and delivered to Marina's office where the offering was counted, recorded and deposited by a team of 3 or 4 members in the presence of Marina.

**Conclusion:** The financial records of Trinity Church are thorough, readily understandable and appear to be done in an orderly and timely manner. It is the opinion of this Audit Committee that Trinity's financial records are in order and accurately represent the financial position of the Church.

Respectfully submitted,  
■ Judy Nosser, Chairperson,  
Audit Committee

# Outreach Committee of the Council

The Outreach Committee has been formed by the Church Council to further our witnessing efforts at Trinity Lutheran in a deliberate and purposeful way. The primary leadership of the committee will be one council member and one pastor with the goal of involving other members of the congregation. The committee structure will provide a direct connection to the council and allow us to see how we might more effectively involve gifted members, who are unable to make long-term commitments, in the work of the congregation. The Outreach Committee will have the room to create a strategic outreach plan to further our mission. The work of the Outreach Committee is organized around three main points of emphasis: Community Outreach, Marketing, and Assimilation.

## Community Outreach

Ministry is not just about nurturing the faith of your existing members. It also means seeking out the unchurched and helping them find their way to Christ. The Community Outreach emphasis will help our congregation pursue efforts to reach out to unchurched and disconnected people in our Rhinelander community in an effort to invite them to explore meaningful faith connections to Christ and His Church.

Duty	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed
<b>Community Outreach</b> Develop and maintain skills as a committee to speak to or share with external contacts regarding faith and faithfulness. Create and administer programs to develop the skills of congregants to share stories and witness to their faith when opportunities arise. Search out people or groups (natural groups or affinities*) in need of faith transformation and create and leverage opportunities to share. Create and sustain strategies to maintain and refresh contacts with those with whom we have initiated relationships.	Lead Pastor, Committee	Chairperson	Council	Congregation

## Marketing

Marketing is a word that churches often shy away from, largely because they don't wish to be seen as "selling" Christianity. However, effective church marketing doesn't have to be manipulative or peddling. When you promote your church, you offer people a place to explore a need they already have — it's their choice whether or not to respond. Without marketing, how can people find you if they don't know where you are and what you have to offer?

Duty	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed
<b>Marketing</b> Coordinate with the church office and calendar to publish all relevant events (not services) in all available local outlets including print and online media. Proactively seeks out and capitalizes on publicity opportunities such as local events, news stories or unique situations which could justify input from our staff or inclusion in coverage with local media.	Committee	Chairperson	Pastors	Council Congregation

## Assimilation

Did you know that 91% of visitors will not return if you don't have a strategy in place for turning guests into members? Assimilation is a critical component of church growth. It will help us provide a clear path for people who are new to our congregation make ministry connections and pursue their calling to follow Christ.

Duty	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed
<b>Assimilation</b> Create and sustain strategies to engage new attendees to maintain their faith journey including small groups. Identify attendees who may not have the benefit of a small group to serve as a support system and create ways to identify and provide needed services within the boundaries of our faith community.	Team Pastor, Committee	Chairperson	Lead Pastor	Council

\*Affinity groups are people with a common background, interest or need that can be approached holistically.

## Faith Formation Committee of the Council

The Faith Formation Committee has been formed by the Church Council to develop a more holistic approach to our efforts at Trinity Lutheran to build up and support people of all ages in their journey of faith. The primary leadership of the committee will be one council member and one pastor with the goal of involving other members of the congregation. The committee structure will provide a direct connection to the council and allow us to see how we might more effectively involve gifted members, who are unable to make long-term commitments, in the work of the congregation. The Faith Formation Committee will seek to refocus our programming that helps people explore what it means to be active and engaged followers of Christ.

Due to changes in vision, family dynamics, an evolving definition of church membership, attendance patterns, technology and church organization our approach requires modification. Based on dated paradigms, the board has been focused almost exclusively on youth rather than holistic faith formation. In addition, given difficulties in recruiting board members with the necessary qualifications, dedication and vision, the duties and who completes them need to be reconsidered. The committee will seek to expand the approach to faith formation from purely a classroom model of learning to a more participatory and experiential one.

Duty	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed
<b>Leader Development</b> Select, develop and support Faith Formation leaders	Team Pastor, Board/ Committee	Chairperson	Lead Pastor	Council
<b>Cross+Gen Programming</b> Develop or procure programming that supports cross+generational experiences Coordinate with the church office and Outreach Committee to publicize all relevant events Internal marketing to expand our vision for changing needs of faith formation <b>Age Specific Programming</b> Develop programming with consideration of needs that may be age specific including youngests and oldests.	Team Pastor, Board/ Committee	Chairperson	Lead Pastor	Council Congregation
<b>Small Group Liaison</b> Align faith formation activities with small group ministry	Team Pastor, Board/ Committee	Chairperson	Lead Pastor	Congregation

## Lead Pastor Report—Pastor Timothy Vadis

Before the worldwide pandemic we are in the midst of, the need for new approaches to ministry were rapidly increasing. Now the reality has been amplified as the Church is having to find its way in a very strange landscape. Most of the things that we do as a church community are no longer givens such as gathering in the building, singing together, shaking hands or giving a hug, sharing in food and fellowship time before and after services. All of these limitations are challenging ideas of how we have experienced life as the church. But the call to adapt the way we be the church is the great opportunity that the Spirit is providing.

I commend our council leadership who diligently found ways to address the needs of our church. I am especially grateful for their pursuit of the PPP Loan/Grant that they secured to help support our staff. It is just one example of the extra duties that had to be administered during the past several months.

I am thankful for our staff who have been supportive in our need to be flexible and find new ways to perform essential functions in their work.

I am also very appreciative of how so many of our members have sent encouragement, been praying for our ministry, participated in the new forms of worship, and made the extra effort to share their offerings. It all helps us stay vibrant as a congregation.

I am grateful that we already had a solid start to our online service options as the pandemic erupted



and we had to completely switch how we held a weekly worship service. I am so thankful for all the behind the scenes work that Jody Doro and Chris Bartelt had done to put us in a position where we had the technology tools **already available to us.** The online service has definitely seen growth in both putting the service together and in those who are tuning in each week. Pastor Kari and I have been working hard to keep the services fresh and to increase our technology skills to film, edit and put things together. We were also blessed by the help of Faith Bartelt who was home from college. Faith offered us great worship leadership with the music and also shared her skills of putting together some really awesome segments for our services. I also appreciate all those who were willing to be part of the service by leading prayers via zoom or other parts of the services. The other development that happened this summer was to hold Drive-in style services at the church parking lot. I have great memories of Drive-In Worship because when I was growing up

my home congregation had this kind of service in the summer months and it was actually held at a Drive-in movie theater. Once again we were blessed by one of our members, Dave Melvin who helped us get the transmitter and has generously provided his time to help with sound and let us use other equipment he has to allow us to be able to broadcast. We hope to be able to take advantage of the warm weather as long as possible into the fall to hold these unique outdoor worship services.

Another significant development that we will be implementing this next year is to shift our focus of what we measure. In her article, *"10 Metrics Instead of Butts and Bucks"*, Katie Langston makes the case that with a changing culture and a changing Church we need new ways to measure what success looks like in congregations. The old model that has been the standard for decades has been to measure how many people sit in the pews on Sunday and how much money is put into the offering plate. If the numbers are going up then the congregation feels



like it is being successful and if the numbers are going down it says the opposite. This method probably worked well years ago in a vastly different context where “church participation was a cultural given, and the question was just which slice of a baked-in market share a particular congregation could capture.”

Langston goes on to write, “It’s time for new and different metrics to help us identify if and how our church community is living into God’s mission, deepening faith, and reaching our neighbors.” The things we measure can help us enhance our ministry and shape people’s lives.

With this in mind the council has adopted five new metrics that we will focus on tracking this next year:

### **#1 People involved in a small group.**

What percentage of your membership is involved in a small group? Are new groups being started for new people? Are people who have not joined your congregation being invited to join a small group? A variety of groups for people of different stages of life and areas of interest will help increase the number of connecting points.

### **#2 Stories of God’s presence.**

Where has God shown up for your community members? Ask them to share daily encounters with God at work, at school, at home. Share the stories on social media, in worship services, in your monthly newsletter. Make storytelling and story-sharing an integral part of your culture, and keep tabs on how many people are sharing and what they’re experiencing.

### **#3 Length of time in a particular volunteer or leadership role.**

Keep track of how long a particular volunteer spends doing the same thing. One person fulfilling a single role month after month and year after year can lead to stagnation and burn-out. Imagine ways to help congregation members live into their gifts, find variety in ministry opportunities, and stretch themselves. Ask volunteers and leaders if they pushed their comfort zone? Are they leaving their current role to pursue something different that expands their capabilities and our mission?

### **#4 Interactions with Visitors and Guests.**

How many visitors have you greeted in a month? Of those, how many have returned? This eye-opening metric can give you a clear sense of how accessible and welcoming your congregation really is.

### **#5 Pints of blood.**

Track service in the community:

meals served, blood donated, blankets distributed, neighbors helped—specifically among those who are not involved in the congregation.

As we shift the ways we measure success in ministry, we need to keep in mind that numbers are tools to help us recognize and describe God’s activity and to keep our ministry efforts focused on what’s most important. Metrics, no matter how creative or innovative, are best utilized as part of a Spirit-led discernment process—not ends in themselves.

I am also very excited about how these new metrics will work with two new committees of the council that have been formed for this coming year. We will have an Outreach Committee and a Faith Formation Committee. The emphasis of these committees will help us to advance our test-and-learn culture and explore how we can increase people’s involvement in their life of becoming active and engaged followers of Christ. ■



## Team Pastor Report—Pastor Kari Vadis

It is my passion and spiritual gift to build authentic relationships. There is nothing I enjoy more than spending time with people of all ages and learning about how God is active in our lives and in the world. I love this because it's often in these conversations with others that God shows up and I realize I'm on holy ground.

Prior to the pandemic, Small Groups were raised up as a ministry priority for helping people become active and engaged followers of Christ because there is something powerful and impactful when people take the time to read scripture together, pray together, and open up about their faith experiences, questions and struggles. When time and space is created for this to happen, people unexpectedly find themselves standing on holy ground.

Now that we are in a pandemic and need to make the best decisions we can when it comes to groups and in-person gatherings, being part of a small group is even more essential. I remember hearing a story where a man wants to be a Christian all by himself and one day he sort of realizes that his faith feels distant and he talks to a pastor around the campfire. As they look at the fire, the pastor takes out one little ember and it goes out immediately. Then he puts the ember back in the fire and it ignites.

We live in a world that says "Do it yourself!" and "You don't need anybody!" But God's design is for us to be interconnected. To make discoveries together about ourselves and about God. To serve one another and to enrich one another and the community



with our spiritual gifts which God has given us for the benefit of sharing the gospel. This pandemic has pushed us into a more isolated reality than ever before, and it's not spiritually healthy. Virtual Worship or Drive-In Worship combined with holy conversations with a small group is life-giving and life-changing.

This summer we trained seven new small group leaders. Our current groups include: two men's groups, two couple's groups, seven women's groups, a college/young adult group and an adult group (*not gender specific but just a group that wants to be together.*) And we are looking to train more leaders and form more groups as well as grow the current groups. Most groups have been meeting in person outside but



some groups have continued to meet over Zoom. In Pastor Tim's report he spells out how Small Groups fit into our metrics as we seek to impact lives here at Trinity.

The best part of this work for me is that I get to hear stories of life change. Katie Leonard (*a small group participant*) put it this way, **"This is truly what I needed this morning. It's nice to share all our stories and worries and leave with a prayer. Thank you."**

Small Groups lead to life change. The early church had a two-ingredient recipe for disciple making: large group worship and small groups in the home. *"And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah."* Acts 5:42.

I give thanks to God for our current small group leaders: Sheryl Seefeldt, Mandi Olson, Rob Weinandt, Julie Krouze, Becca Klem-



me, Amy Schmitz, Chris Barteldt, Karen Rietz, Laura Hetland, Harvey Mathisen, Ellen Mathisen, Ellen Leick and Kevin Eggers. I'm grateful for their excitement about serving and their willingness to use the gifts God has given them to build up the body of Christ.

This past year has been absolutely weird! Since March, we've had an outdoor baptism and funerals at the cemetery. I've learned how to utilize YouTube and I've broken a few tri-pods trying to get the angle and the lighting "just right." Yet, in all of this strangeness, I have seen God show up because of this faith community.

Paying attention to how God shows up for me and listening as others share how God is active in

their lives has become my spiritual practice during this time of pandemic.

You, people of God, have been the greatest gift to me and my family this year! Through cards with beautiful notes and requests for how to help people who are suffering I am overwhelmed often by your heart for Jesus. Your financial generosity has revealed an increase of over 6% from last year and there was at least one donated stimulus check to ACES (*Association of Churches for Emergency Support*) to help people facing eviction and other emergency needs during this difficult time. Not only did this prevent families from being evicted/homeless and provide nights of shelter in emergency situations, it also allowed us to offer love, comfort and hope in a time of

desperation. In a real and visible way we got to say, "Jesus loves you!"

During this time, I have run into people in town who have shared with me great losses as well as great hope because they know that Jesus and their Church family is with them. In these conversations I realize that I'm standing on Holy Ground and in the presence of God. And I thank you for that!

Worship is looking different and gatherings look different but God continues to weave us together. We are united through our baptism into Jesus' life, death and resurrection, making us children of a loving God. In this time, that is what I am holding onto. God is Good! May we reflect that goodness into the world. ■

## Report of the Church Council President

Greetings Brothers and Sisters,

This is my final report as your president. It has been an honor to have served you the last four years, and the last six months have been a real challenge. I began counting all the emails, texts and phone calls I've had since March and COVID-19—hundreds—I was shocked.

While it may have seemed that nothing was happening while we were shut down, the exact opposite was true. We had to find a way to worship. Our Pastors have

done a great job at that. We needed to work to secure funds via the CARES Act and apply for the PPP loan/grant. Our financial team is still working on some of the paperwork to assure grant status. We have partnered with EHS (Environmental Health and Safety) in an infectious disease reopening plan that will be put in place shortly. We were able to complete the enhancements to our gathering area and fellowship hall, and we have found that our digital presence has a far greater impact than we ever dreamed. It will be a tremendous tool for ministry in the future.

One of the comments from our leadership was that we "come back better". I do believe that we will. Things will look very different as we begin to reopen, and we ask for your patience and cooperation with the plans and the steps we will be taking to keep everyone safe.

God has richly blessed this congregation, and with your support we will continue to live out our mission and have an even greater impact on our world and the lives of those in our community.

Praise be to God.

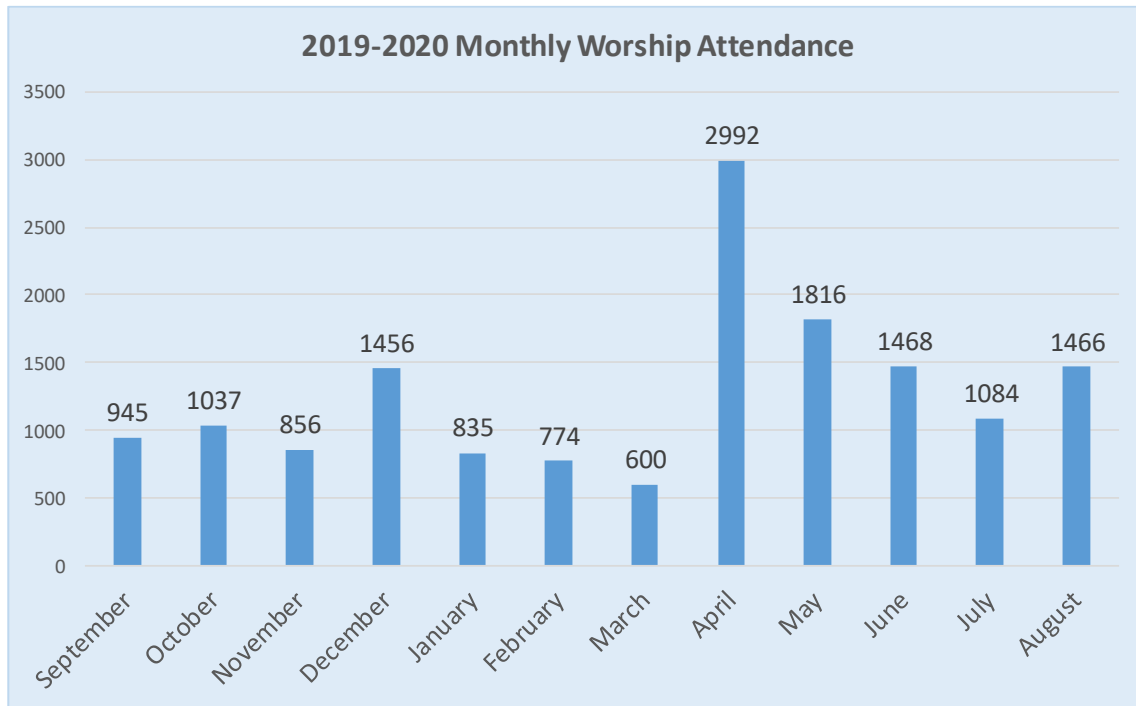
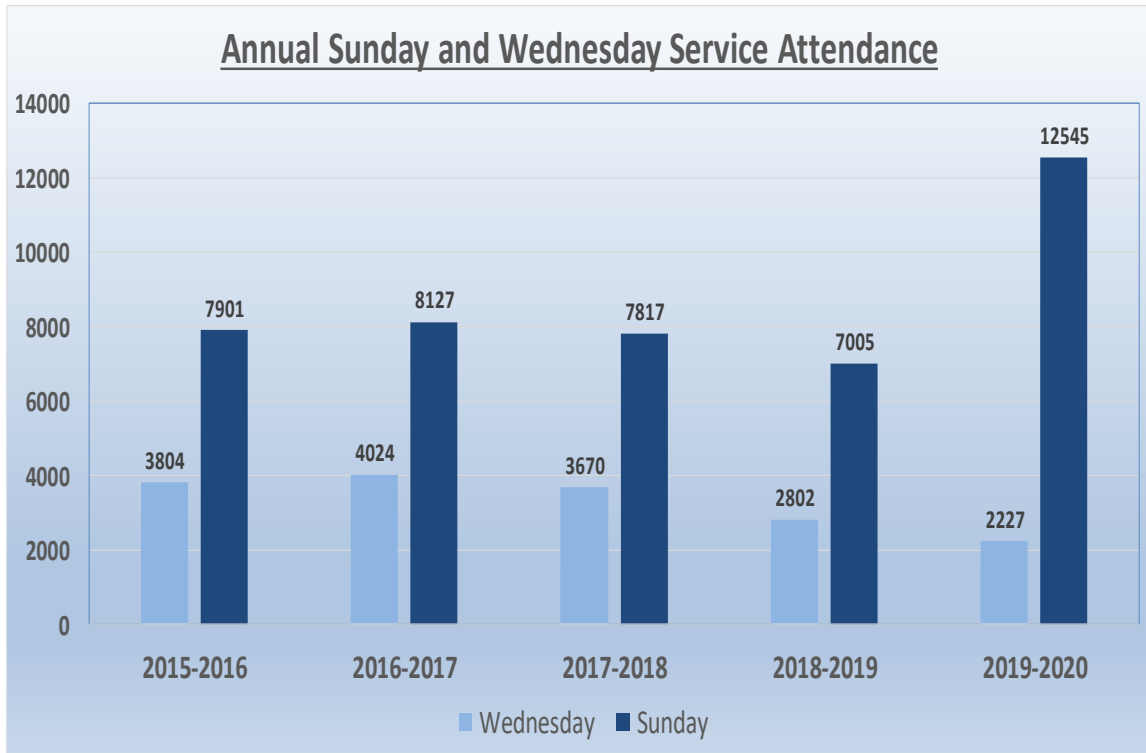
■ Kevin Eggers,  
Congregation President

## Personal Profiles in Power Church

We use a church database called “Power Church” to manage our membership and the various connections our church has with people. This system is also used for all of our accounting and financial records. With changing participation patterns we have worked to accommodate people’s needs in our system.

Status	Description	Count
<b>Baptized</b>	Persons who have been received by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism in this congregation, or having been previously baptized and have been received by certificate of transfer from other Lutheran congregations or by affirmation of faith.	71
<b>Voting</b>	Confirmed, communed and given contribution of record within last two years; includes high school age children who are also considered Voting members.	396
<b>Associate</b>	Lives in Rhinelander part of the year and wishes to retain a membership connection. May also hold membership in another congregation.	18
<b>Spouse of Member</b>	Has opted not to pursue membership; status helps identify couples and enables us to communicate with households on special occasions.	30
<b>Regular Attender</b>	Participates by attending worship, gives, may volunteer, but has opted not to pursue membership. Does not have voting privilege.	43
<b>Deceased</b>	Uncheck “include in mail outs” box in the household key.	63
<b>Child of Member</b>	Children out of high school; Parent is a current member (note in profile who parents are) has their own family profile and is retained for sentimental reasons; does not have voting privilege.	36
<b>Former Member</b>	Those who transferred to another church; or terminated membership with Trinity Lutheran. Don’t uncheck any boxes without Pastor discussion.	231
<b>Termed</b>	After review, Trinity Lutheran moved them from membership due to lack of response and participation, or they moved without requesting a transfer or indicated they no longer wish to be a member of Trinity.	8
<b>Prospective</b>	Has indicated interest in pursuing membership. Keep in this profile for only two years. Note any contact in profile.	21
<b>Contact</b>	Examples: Mr. Cash, NAMI, non-member employees, non-member day camp, NGLSynod, other Congregations.	196
<b>Transfer</b>	Members who have moved and asked to be transferred to another ELCA or partner congregation.	8

# Sunday and Wednesday Worship Attendance



Due to COVID-19 and the need to stop in-person worship in March 2020, Wednesday service attendance counts are lower.

Per ELCA instructions, online worship counts are the number of views multiplied by two.

No attendance counts were taken at drive-in worship services.



## Musician Report

Music ministry is looking quite a bit different at Trinity these days! Though we began the year in much the same way at the previous, things changed drastically when COVID-19 forced the closure of our church building. Many of our church musicians have been contributing in new and different ways over the past several months. It has been

exciting to see their innovation and creativity! We began recording familiar hymns to be used during the online church services. Faith Bartelt provided music for online devotions and worship services. There was church hymn caroling at some of the homes of members. There has also been music at each of our drive-in

worship services throughout the summer and into the fall. Though we are certainly facing unprecedented challenges, it is inspiring to see the unique ways our church continues to grow and adapt. We will continue to be creative in our goal to enhance worship our faithful God with beautiful music! Stay well!

■ Tiffanie Ory

## Board of Witness Annual Report

What a year for the Board of Witness. We started our year with investigating ways to make our board truly a witness—to each of us in our congregation, to our visitors and seekers, to our community and to the world. We realized that just doing activities that kept us busy may not be a witness.

We are a strong, serving family of believers. We knew our commitment to NATH in the way of furnishing an evening meal once a month was important, but there seemed to be only a small handful of members who participated in this ministry. We were in the process of finding someone who would like to be the contact person for this project.

We also knew our commitment to Rhinelander Area Food Pantry was another important commitment for Trinity. We have many members

involved in the different aspects of volunteering—**morning workers** who pick-up food from Walmart, unload trucks, go through the produce so the pantry is handing out healthy attractive produce, and stock shelves for the three days each week food is distributed. Others volunteer for the **distribution of food:** every second Monday of each month, for the second Monday seniors bus, packing baskets for food for the homebound. Others are **serving** on committees of the Pantry and many are **giving** financially. We are so blessed with many who feel called who are committed to feeding our less fortunate neighbors.

One activity we started at the beginning of Lent was bringing in the items needed for the Health Kits of Lutheran World Relief. We had collected about half of the items before Covid-

19 came on the scene. We will give those items to those who in the past have made up the health kits in the fall of the year.

Covid-19 has stopped much of our in-person activities. We had made plans for the annual Good Gifts project to be held in August or September.

By February, our board had dwindled to only half its size. It was soon after this time that the Council felt the Board of Witness needed restructuring, so for this coming year, the council will have the board under their wing, hoping to try a new direction to energize all of us to truly be witnesses of God. We are thankful for all you have done. The board will be back, but in a different format. That sounds exciting and faith building.

■ Carole Hansen



# Hello From Hungary



Did you know that our congregation is a covenant sponsor for a missionary couple serving in Budapest, Hungary? We support Pastor Zachary Courter and Pastor Rachel Eskesen as they serve through the ELCA Global Mission Ministry. Their daughter Dorothy celebrated her first birthday this past June.

They are coordinators for the Young Adults in Global Mission Program in Hungary and Serbia, guiding young adults as they serve, and cultivating them to be future leaders in the ELCA and the world. They are also strengthening relationships with the Lutheran Church in Hungary, diaconal ministries there, and NGO's working to dismantle Anti-Gypsism in Central Europe.

They have decided to stay in Hungary rather than returning home as they wait out the worldwide Covid-19 Pandemic. Here is a greeting from them:

Seriously though, we miss you. Calling these hard times for us all is really saying the least. These days are unprecedented. You may know that we were planning to visit many of you in person this Spring and Summer. Sadly, we are unable to visit because of travel restrictions associated with the pandemic.

And yet, we're grateful for the ways we have been able to connect virtually—the sermons, the devotions, the emails—it's powerful to feel connected at a time like this.

It is my fervent prayer that we all feel the ways that we are connected to one another, even as these days we are living through require thoughtful distancing. May God's Spirit be working through

us all—so that we may be reminded of our connection to one another and be sustained as we live out our faith. Amen. ■



## Global Service in the ELCA

ELCA Global Mission personnel serve in more than 40 countries in assignments that range from a few months to eight years or more. Positions fall into four categories of service:

- Long-term**  
(usually four or more years)
- Global Mission**  
two-year program
- Self-funded volunteer**  
(varied length) - includes teachers and health care professionals
- Young Adults in Global Mission** (usually one year)

ELCA global personnel are invited by companion churches or related organizations to serve in specialized assignments, such as pastors, health care professionals, development workers, administrators, seminary teachers, librarians, accountants, and teachers of English, and other subjects.

Over 240 ELCA missionaries serve in more than 40 countries around the world, invited by global church partners to work together hand-in-hand. Some are doctors in rural areas. Others teach children where there are few opportunities to go to school, or work in seminaries that prepare pastors and future church leaders. Others support, nurture and preach in some of the fastest growing Lutheran congregations in the world. And still others are young adults, engaging in a life-changing, year-long experience through the Young Adults in Global Mission.

## Board of Worship Report

This past year has been an interesting and exciting one for the Board of Worship. Our thanks to Mary Taylor who completed her term on the board. Sue Underberg and Laura Hetland agreed to extend their time of service, and Jennifer Thomas was brought on as a new member.

The major thrust of this past year for the Board of Worship has been restructuring, focusing on forming committees of volunteers to serve in various capacities throughout the church

year. The idea behind this is to engage more of our membership in active service, focusing on their talents and interests without forcing long-term commitments and causing burnout. A Volunteer Appreciation Sunday was held on September 22<sup>nd</sup> to express gratitude as well as to encourage future volunteerism. The Decorating

Committee, headed by Laura Hetland, began its work in September in preparation for All Saints Day in early November. The Altar Guild Committee, headed by Sue Underberg, has grown but is still looking for additional members to serve.



One of the biggest changes in worship this year occurred on Wednesday nights beginning in September. Family Faith Night incorporated an open meal time from 5:15-5:50 p.m., a time of singing, prayer, inspiration, and praise from 6:00-6:25, and break out groups from 6:30-7:00. Different groups of families and friends volunteered and worked together

to provide the meals for this weekly event. Once per month, a Cross+Gen experience was provided. The new format met with approval and generated excellent participation.

Due to the onset of COVID-19, the Board of Worship has not met since early March. We commend our pastors and musicians for providing meaningful and creative online worship experiences these past months. Our sincere thanks to all who have contributed to Trinity's worship throughout the entire year.

For all of those who serve Trinity both during worship or behind the scenes in preparation for worship, we are so grateful.

Blessings and peace,

■ The Board of Worship –  
Margo Morey, Laura Hetland,  
Sue Underberg, Jennifer  
Thomas, and Robin LeMoine



**TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH WOMEN OF THE ELCA  
2019 FINANCIAL REPORT**

**Checking Account**

Balance 01/01/19	\$4,719.33
Receipts	\$8,878.27
Disbursements	\$9,424.76
Balance 12/31/19	<u><u>\$4,172.84</u></u>

**Receipts**

Circle Offerings	\$86.00
BP Dividends	\$1,288.32
Funerals	\$799.27
Memorials/Gifts	\$435.00
Rummage Sale	\$1,580.13
Bazaar	\$4,623.55
Transfer from Savings	\$66.00
	<u><u>\$8,878.27</u></u>

**Savings Account**

Balance 01/01/19	\$118.49
Circle Hunger	\$66.00
Dividend-Ripco	<u>\$0.60</u>
	\$185.09
Transfer to Checking	\$66.00
Balance 12/31/19	<u><u>\$119.09</u></u>

**Disbursements**

Tanzanian Student	\$300.00
Funerals	\$528.41
Tri-County Council	\$352.50
WELCA Offerings	\$200.00
World Hunger	\$200.00
Quilt Shipping	\$100.00
Thankoffering	\$200.00
Katie's Fund	\$100.00
SWO Convention	\$100.00
NATH	\$200.00
PEP	\$100.00
TLC-Tables/BOP	\$1,328.00
ELCA Good Gifts	\$1,077.00
RAFP	\$790.13
Quilting Expense	\$2,258.03
Circle Projects	\$1,328.29
Bazaar Expense	\$247.45
Check Charge	<u>\$14.95</u>
	<u><u>\$9,424.76</u></u>

Lynnann Ferch, Treasurer

**Our Purpose Statement:**

*"As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world."*



## Board of Property Report

Our main function is to maintain our church building and grounds, make repairs and improvements as needed or desired and supervise our custodian. We have a Long-Range Improvement/Major Maintenance Plan, as well as our spring and fall Preventive Maintenance Schedules to guide us.

Major tasks completed in fall 2019 and 2020 with considerable help, include:

- Installed heat tape and gutter on roof by elevator shaft.

- Safety upgrades – installed fire extinguisher signs and numbered door signs.
- North sanctuary windows clad with aluminum.
- Gathering area walls re-modeled and heritage display cabinet moved.
- Painted Gathering area and Pastor Kari's office.
- Carpet tile installed in Gathering/Office area.

Many thanks to all who contributed to the gathering area remodel and new carpet. It looks great!

Projects in the next year fiscal budget include:

- Parking lot sealing and restriping (if funds are available)

Thanks to all BOP members and volunteers who worked to keep our church and grounds looking beautiful.

■ Peter Leick,  
Board of Property Chair

## Board of Education Report

Some of you may remember from last years report, we are embracing the test and learn approach to our BoE, charged to us by church counsel. Overall it has worked well. Individual members worked directly with our Pastors and were able to accomplish all of our goals without having the direct BoE involved (less meetings!!!). Going forward and still working within our test and learn culture, we will "suspend" the BoE. Instead, the duties previously performed by the BoE, they will be performed by a newly formed committee of the church council including one pastor, one council member

and individual church member(s) as needed for each event or project. This "fluid" committee will report directly to the church council. This will provide the ability to be flexible for each event and/or project, adding and removing individual members geared toward their individual gifts and time schedule as opposed to a fixed two-year commitment to every event and project. We will be using new metrics to measure our success and failures. In 2019/2020 the test and learn BoE approach continued to engage our youth in Christ through Confirmation and QUAKE, our youth and adults

through the yearly Christmas Program and the ongoing Living Your Strengths classes. Because of our current COVID-19 pandemic all spring and summer, "normal" activities were canceled. Both pastors have been trying creative ways to engage our youth and adults. Supporting our Pastoral Staff was a primary focus in any way possible. We will continue to develop, improve and support Christ-centered educational experiences for all ages with the help of Trinity's dedicated volunteers, competent support staff and gifted pastors.

■ Jody Doro



## Ministry Partner: Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp

*For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.*  
PSALM 100:5

If we had gathered for summer camp at Fortune Lake in 2020, this would have been our theme verse. We would have heard those words chanted daily, and they would have been reinforced in our play, our songs, our Bible studies, and our caring conversations.

As the financial reality of a canceled summer and reduced retreat season sets in, your sustained generosity affirms the truth of God's word: "the LORD is [indeed!] good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations." A look at our roots and a glimpse at our present illustrate this clearly.

Camping at Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp began in 1930. Early leaders recruited participants for the 1931 program with these words: "Here we may dwell apart for a season. . . And enjoy undisturbed communion with God as He has revealed himself in His handiwork and in the Sacred." These heroes did the difficult work and committed their meager resources during a difficult time in U.S. history to set

aside this beautiful property to God's glory. (Sound familiar?)

Our language may be a bit different, but the message remains the same, as we work through our own difficult time in history. God's faithfulness endures! Our mission statement reads, "Seeking to connect God's word with God's world, Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp is a place of grace where all may grow in faith." Fortune Lake exists—a full 90 years later—to provide similar experiences for people today; and we need them all the more! Modern day heroes like you provide generously to ensure that this "Place of Grace" will be here for generations to come.

COVID-19 has proven to be a formidable foe for individuals, communities, businesses and non-profits worldwide. Fortune Lake is no different. Closures and cancellations have significantly impacted our budget during what would have normally been our busiest months. Thanks be to God, through the generosity of many and the solid management by your board of directors, we have held our own and haven't yet had to borrow for our operational expenses.

When 2020 began, we have just begun a fundraising campaign to renovate our highest-use buildings. Like many other plans for this year, these too have been revised. The renovations are moving forward, but at a slower pace. Our normally bustling summer camp is not serving as a peaceful retreat for families. We lean into God's steadfast love as we discover new and creative ways to share it. We thank you for your support and generosity.

■ Amanda Rasner,  
Camp Director



**FORTUNE LAKE**  
*A place of grace in Crystal Falls, MI*

The mission of Fortune Lake is: Celebrating God's creation, Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp welcomes all people to experience God's grace while growing in faith, hope, and love.

FLLC is owned and operated by the 80 congregations of the Northern Great Lakes Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and several other Lutheran congregations in the U.P. It is licensed by the State of Michigan.

For more than 85 years, Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp has been a special place where God's abundant grace is not simply taught, but experienced.



## NGL Synod Bishop Katherine Finegan

*4The rabble among them had a strong craving; and the Israelites also*

*wept again, and said, "If only we had meat to eat! 5We remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; 6but now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at." ~Numbers 11: 4-6*

Dear Friends in Christ,

Does your strength feel dried up? Is there nothing at all but online worship or half-empty pews to look at? Do you remember when we took regular in-the-sanctuary worship for granted? We remember the fellowship, the potlucks, the singing, gathering around the altar for the Lord's Supper. Do you have a strong craving for going back to the way things used to be?

The thing is...we are in the wilderness. We have left Egypt (the good and the bad) behind, and God is making us, the church (and maybe society too), into something new. And if the experience of the Israelites is any guide, we are only in the beginning of our journey. If, as Dr. Osterholm says (an epidemiologist) we are only in the second inning of a nine-inning game, then we are only in the first decade of a forty-year journey, or in the first months of what will take a year to two years.

It is rather remarkable how the wilderness experience of the Israelites and our own pandemic wilderness experience is similar. Moses was under a lot of stress, and so is your pastor.

Every day is full of new decisions. There is much to take into consideration and pastors are being pulled and pushed into exhaustion. Do we resume in person worship? How? When? What if cases in the community are rising? What if someone shows up and won't wear a mask? What if more people show up than we can accommodate for social distancing? What if the most vulnerable come, how can we be sure they'll be safe? What do I say to someone who doesn't believe the threat is real?

Please be patient with your pastor and your leadership. The way forward is far from clear... for returning to worship, fall programming, and so much more.

When the pandemic first started, your pastoral leader scrambled to provide resources and/or an online worship. There wasn't time to recruit volunteers, there was too much else to do. He or she may not have had the means or initiative to get the council or others involved in meeting the needs of ministry in the congregation, much less the community. But now, as we settle in for the long haul, councils and other congregation members would do well to ask their pastor how they can help, if they are not already doing so. Ask:

~Who needs a phone call and to be prayed with?

~What new technology can I learn that would help?

~Are there mailings I can help put together?

~Are there email lists and cell phone lists that need to be updated?

~Can I be a part of the online worship effort?

~Can I help someone use ZOOM?

Or please simply send a note of thanks and affirmation, so your pastoral leader knows their efforts are appreciated, and hold them in prayer.

We are practicing our faith differently. At a time when we have not been gathering for worship as we used to means that feeding one's faith is not as easy as simply showing up to worship. This pandemic has challenged us to find new ways to deepen our discipleship and our relationship to God in Christ Jesus. Many pastoral leaders have done their best to provide online devotions, Bible studies, emails of encouragement, phone call prayers, and more.

As your leaders consider next steps, please understand that their priority is your health. And their primary challenge is how to nurture your relationship with God in Christ Jesus while observing the best practices for the safety of all. So, as you travel this wilderness journey, watch out for your friends and neighbors. We don't want to lose anyone along the way. Check in on each other. Pray. Take your own initiative to deepen your discipleship and care for your congregation and community. Your pastor can only do so much.

And just as God led the Israelites through the wilderness, so does God lead you and me. These are trying days that will stretch into months and longer. But God is with you, your congregation, and with the Church that is the body of Christ. ■