

The JOURNEY — Walking Daily with Jesus

From the Pastor's Desk

"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me" (John 17, 20-23, ESV)

Welcome to 2026. I pray that this past year has been one full of blessings in the Lord. Let me share a profound blessing that I experienced.

I lost a friend last week. I will just call him Rick. I had placed a phone call to set up an appointment to meet with him and one of my dear parishioners, when I was told that Rick had died that morning. I was taken by surprise by the suddenness of his death, yet I rejoiced because Rick was a Christian. We who follow Jesus know that when a brother or sister in Christ dies to this earthy realm, that we will be with them again in the heavenly kingdom. So, yes, I mourn that my earthy journey with a friend has come to an end, but I rejoice that Rick has gone to be with the Lord.

I met Rick while ministering to a parishioner a few years ago. We became friends fairly quickly. We held a common bond which develops among military veterans, a bond which quickly opens doors for conversation.. But more importantly, we held the bond which comes with being a believer in Jesus Christ. Rick was a Lutheran, and he held to some teachings which differed from mine. But we had what the Augsburg Confession referred to as "true unity in the church" (Article 7: About the Church, 2). He and I experienced a true unity because we were in agreement about the "teaching of the gospel and the use of the sacraments."

I wish that I could say that our understanding of this unity came instantaneously. For Rick and me, it took a little time for us to get past some of the barriers that our various faith traditions have put in place which precluded our being "one" in Christ. It took us a little bit of time to fully grasp that our differences in man-made doctrines did not make us "enemies," but these differences were merely a reflection of the grace upon grace that God has shown as He calls sinful human beings into faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Jesus prayed to His father that we might experience unity among believers. Rick and I found that true unity in Christ's church surpasses even the divisions of faith traditions.

So, a friend has "gone home." And I will miss our conversations and our times of fellowship. But I rejoice for the times we were blessed to have together. For we "do not grieve as others do who have not hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

For this New Year, my prayer is the same as that of Jesus, I pray that we as believers may experience "true unity in the church." I pray that we may focus more on what Christ has done for us through His cross, instead of boasting in our faith differences. For we know that the only reason that we can boast is because of Christ Alone (1 Cor 1:31). Happy 2026.

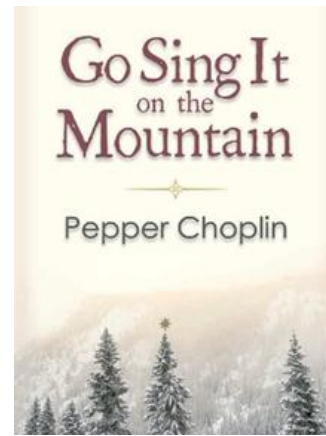
In Christ,

Pastor Dan

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Go Sing it on the Mountain

Thanks to everyone who made our Christmas Concert, *Go Sing it on the Mountain*, such a success! The choir members were awesome, and I especially thank them for the gift card to Two Sisters! The Women of Trinity provided yummy appetizers for our reception and Sue Svitak went above and beyond on decorating tables.

We had 70 people come to hear the beautiful music and message. Praise the Lord for this opportunity to spread the Word of Jesus' love.

Joanne Schilling, Choir Director



Singers! Mark your calendars for **January 7**, for our first Choir and Praise Team rehearsals for the new year. If you sing in the pew, you are welcome to sing in the Choir. The Choir will rehearse from 1:00-2:00pm, followed by the Praise Team at 2:00pm (Normally. The Choir rehearses from 1:00-2:30pm). The Choir sings on the first and third Sundays of the month, and the Praise Team sings on the second Sunday. Questions? Call Joanne Schilling at 715-651-4875.





JANUARY-SUNDAY WORSHIP ASSISTANTS



	Jan 4 9:00a	Jan 11 9:00a	Jan 18 9:00a	Jan 25 6:30p
GREETERS	Terri Freeman	Char Mohns	Brenda Mackey	Karen Brantner
USHERS	Rob Freeman Wally Thom	Wes Mohns Needed	Tom Svitak Needed	John Schieffer Kevin Ploessl
COMM. ASSTS	Dan Dahl	Ellen Ehrich	Pat Mackey	Joanne Schilling
READER	Kathy Thom	Ellen Ehrich	Needed	Dianne Buxton



- 1/1 Sue Capra
- 1/2 Colette Sandow
- 1/3 Carol Raether
- 1/18 Steven Tracey
- 1/25 Connie Dahl
- 1/25 Maryann Cowan
- 1/26 Jeff Arvesen



SHOP TOPS for the MISSION FIELD

Trinity is offering an opportunity to purchase Lands' End shirts/t-shirts, vests or other tops for men, women and children with the Trinity logo 'Trinity Lutheran Church, LCMC' embroidered on the apparel. Pastor Dan has graciously provided a few of his own shirts with the Trinity logo for some examples of what is available. You can find these displays in the Narthex near the welcome center.

In order to keep shipping costs down, we will place a bulk order after the first of the new year.

To make your selection, you may shop the catalog, (there is one located on the welcome center near the shirt displays) or go online. (see online address below)

Please see Julie with your selection and she will then place the order on the established Trinity account. We are available to assist with any questions regarding location and thread colors of the logo.

Payment will be made to Trinity.

Online site: business.landsend.com

Acts 1:8 says "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Your sister in Christ, Kathy Thom



Meeting

NEXT MEETING OF . . .

- Birchwood Food Pantry Open. Jan 5 & 19, 10:30a-12:30p**
- Worship & Music Team. Jan 5, 9:00a**
- Christian Life Meeting. Jan 5, 10:30a**
- Women of Trinity Jan 10, 10:00a**
- Trinity Council meeting. Jan 27, 6:30p**

Christmas in Birchwood at TLC



THANK YOU to the **MANY** who supported Christmas in Birchwood at Trinity Lutheran on December 6th! There were so many helpers involved making lefse, making chili, making cornbread muffins and desserts, making crafts, making prayer shawls, shopping, set up, serving, selling, teardown and clean up! Oh my, so much activity with so great a reward!

Your God given gifts and talents will grace others in much greater need. Some of those organizations the Women of Trinity support include: Embrace, Pregnancy Help Center, Love Fund, ADRC, Lutheran Social Services, Benjamin House and the Rice Lake Community Health Foundation. We also received requests for prayer! We are blessed with those gifts God has given us which in turn will continue to bless others. Over \$2200 were generated!



Women of Trinity December Happenings

Good Winter Day! To say our weather is indecisive is an understatement! This is your WOT president offering you an update this month of our December meeting.

The women have been very busy this month. We started out December 6 with our participation in Birchwood's Christmas Fest. We hosted a Christmas craft sale with items made by members of our congregation. In conjunction with the sale we sold a chili lunch. Both endeavors were successful.

We prepared items for our Christmas Bake sale on Saturday, December 13, directly after our monthly meeting. We also put together containers of treats for shut-ins and recipients of Meals on Wheels. Our sale was conducted on December 14 before and after our church service and at the Cantata.

I am happy to report we are able to donate approximately \$4000 to various non-profits in our area as a result of our fundraising efforts throughout 2025.

Upcoming events include doing a thorough cleaning of the kitchen on January 20 (Service Committee 1) and January 21 (Service Committee 2). Please check your WOT booklet to see which committee you are part of. In February we will show our appreciation for the Birchwood School employees by providing treats the week of February 9-13.

My heartfelt thanks for all the baking, cooking, crafting and organizing done by so many helpers throughout this past year. I pray you receive many blessings in the upcoming year.

Hope you see you at our January 10 meeting.

Cindy Rubin



From Barb Kleven, your Associate Pastor

Every January is a “New beginning” for the church. Each year Trinity Lutheran has been moving forward in our vision, growth, and service. As the family of God each of us has a gift to share to further God’s kingdom. Being involved in the church community and the mission of our church is essential for spiritual growth and getting to know our brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus.

There is so much to be involved with here at Trinity Lutheran from hearing the Gospel faithfully preached each Sunday, the beautiful choir music, singing hymns, the reading of God’s Word, and connecting with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

During the week we can find meaningful Bible Studies for deepening our relationship with God and defining our vision as a church to be strong in our faith and share the Gospel with those around us. Ephesians 6:10 tells us to “....be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Here are some questions that we need to answer as we face a New Year:

What is it that you need?

What spiritual discipline will you build?

Who in our congregation needs help?

How can we serve those who need help?

What bold prayer can we pray for ourselves, our church, our community, and families?

Jesus said in Matthew 7:7-8 “Ask, and it will be given to you, seek, and you, knock and the door will be open.”

This year, let us be encouraged in our faith by actively seeking the Christian fellowship and spiritual connection that we need to grow in faith and seek to understand how God wants to use us for His glory to effectively reach out to our community and beyond with the “Good News” of our Savior’s love.

Acts 4:12- “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

May God’s peace and joy be yours,
Pastor Barb

2025 Operations Report

2025 was a busy year for projects. Start off with replacing the roof above the Sanctuary and entryway to church. Then the sealing and painting of the parking lot. Then a new lighted cross was installed in front of church. A railing installed on the walkway to the Sanctuary. The closet near the library was remodeled with ceiling replacement from water damage. Along with fixing the ceiling and painting in the library hallway. All of the church windows were washed. A well done job was removing the tree stumps and raking at the Parsonage. A big thank you to all the folks with their help to get things done.

God Bless them,

John Schieffer, Operations

Mission and Outreach

In December, Snacks and Fact was blessed to have Dawn from Neighbor to Neighbor and Roger from the Birchwood Area Food Pantry speak. With so many in need, it is truly a blessing that we have these two organizations here to ease their burden.

Thank you all for making this years Adopt-A-Family Tree so successful. The gifts were collected by the Birchwood schools on Monday 12/15. We are thrilled that two families will have a brighter Christmas due to your loving care.

Mark your calendars, the next Snacks and Facts is on Tuesday 1/13/26. Joshua Estreen from Thrivent will be speaking about “Tax Efficient Investments and Estate Planning”. Qualified charitable donations will also be addressed.

If you have suggestions for Snacks and Facts topics please let Gelene Tabor or Elaine Ploessl know. We are always looking for new topics.

Thank you all for your kind generosity supporting Mission and Outreach.

Elaine Ploessl



7 Reasons to Become a Stephen Minister

Is God calling you to become a Stephen Minister? In Stephen Ministry, members of our congregation are trained and equipped to meet once a week, one to one, with someone going through a difficult time. Stephen Ministers provide a caring presence, a listening ear, and comforting words—supporting care receivers throughout their journey. There are many reasons people become Stephen Ministers. Here are a few reasons to think about as you prayerfully consider whether Stephen Ministry is the right place for you to serve.

As a Stephen Minister, you will . . .

1. Make a real difference in the lives of people who are hurting. Stephen Ministers walk alongside people going through life challenges like grief, divorce, a medical crisis, job loss, and more. They offer care, support, and encouragement, connecting hurting people with Christ's healing love during the hardest times in their lives.
2. Help our congregation ensure that no one suffers alone. Caring for one another is a hallmark of the Christian faith. As a Stephen Minister, you will play a crucial role in helping our congregation carry out that mission so that, even if we can't take away their pain, those who are suffering know our church truly cares.
3. Learn what to say and do—and what not to say and do—to care effectively for people who are suffering. Stephen Minister training teaches highly practical caregiving and relational skills that equip and empower you with everything you need to effectively care for others. In addition to preparing, you for caring ministry, these skills can help you deepen and enhance relationships in all facets of your life—with family, friends, coworkers, and others Galatians 6:2 “Bear one another's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.
4. Be involved in meaningful ministry that uses your spiritual gifts. Serving as a Stephen Minister gives people an opportunity to put their spiritual gifts into action—gifts such as faith, mercy, compassion, and encouragement. Ministry that draws on your gifts is personally fulfilling and touches people's lives in powerful ways.
5. Deepen your faith as you see God at work through your ministry. Providing care while trusting in God is at the core of Stephen Ministry. Stephen Ministers regularly say how their faith deepens as they experience training, learn to use distinctively Christian caring tools, and witness God at work in the lives of their care receivers.
6. Be part of a group of caring Christians who support each other as they care for those who are hurting One of the blessings of being a Stephen Minister is being part of a community of people who care, all of whom lift one another up as they strive together to provide the best possible ministry. The strong relationships you'll form are both rewarding and a great source of support. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 “Therefore encourage one another and build up each other.”
7. Join a worldwide tradition of caring ministry. Congregations all over the world use Stephen Ministry—and have trained hundreds of thousands of Stephen Ministers who have gone on to care for millions of hurting people. It's this ongoing tradition of “Christ caring for people through people” that you'll join as a Stephen Minister.

Next steps: If this article piqued your interest in our Stephen Ministry, contact one of the Stephen Ministry Leaders. Pastor Dan, Jim McGraw, or Gelene Tabor would be happy to give you more information about the ministry. No pressure or commitment for just asking questions.

January 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 OFFICE CLOSED No Women's Bible Study	2 OFFICE CLOSED	3
4 8a Text Study 9a Worship w/ communion	5 9a Quilters 9a WMMT mtg 10:30 Christian Life mtg 10:30a-12:30p—Food Pantry Open 2:30p Women's Bible Study 7p AA, Fellowship Hall	6	7 6:30a Men's Bible study 8:30a Prayer 1:00p TLC Choir Reh 2:00p Praise Team Reh	8 10:00a Women's Bible Study	9 OFFICE CLOSED	10 10a WOT mtg
11 8a Text Study 9a Worship w/ communion	12 9a Quilters 2:30p Women's Bible Study 7p AA, Fellowship Hall	13 2:00p Snacks & Facts	14 8:30a Prayer 1:00p TLC Choir Reh	15 10:00a Women's Bible Study	16 OFFICE CLOSED	17
18 8a Text Study 9a Worship w/ communion Love Fund/Food Pantry Offering	19 9a Quilters 10:30a-12:30p—Food Pantry Open 2:30p Women's Bible Study 7p AA, Fellowship Hall	20 Journey Deadline	21 6:30a Men's Bible study 8:30a Prayer 1:00p TLC Choir Reh	22 10:00a Women's Bible Study	23 OFFICE CLOSED	24
25 8a Text Study 9a Worship w/ communion Prayer Shawl Sunday	26 9a Quilters 2:30p Women's Bible Study 7p AA, Fellowship Hall	27 6:30p Council Mtg.	28 8:30a Prayer 1:00p TLC Choir Reh	29 10:00a Women's Bible Study	30	31

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Snacks & Facts
Jan 13 @ 2:00p
Topic: Tax Efficient Investments
and Estate Planning Strategies



The JOURNEY

January 2026

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

Rev. Daniel Tabor—Pastor

Pastor Barb Kleven—Associate Pastor

Julie Sunderland, Parish Administrator

Joanne Schilling, Choir Director

Donna Rae Carrell, Custodian

501 E. Chetac Ave ♦ PO Box 8 ♦ Birchwood, WI 54817

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JOURNEY Editor ♦ Julie Sunderland ♦ tlcbirchwood@gmail.com

Adult Sunday School	8am
Office Hours	8 – 11:30 am, 12:30 - 3:00pm (M-Th)
Bulletin deadline	9 am Tuesdays
JOURNEY deadline	Tuesday - 3 rd week of the month
Pastor's Office Hours	Mondays (8 am—3:00pm)
	Wednesdays (8—11:30 pm) other days by apt.



SUNDAY WORSHIP

Jan 4 — 9:00a worship service w/communion

Jan 11 — 9:00a worship service w/communion

Jan 18 — 9:00a worship service w/communion

Jan 25— 9:00a worship service w/communion

KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS

Debbie Davis	Bill Rice
Andy Hedman	Ro Sackmann
Lora	Carter Sackmann
Sharon Mackey	Timothy Wallace
Tracy Reid	Donna Willis

In the military: Rigil Christensen, and all those serving in the military.