



TRINITY STEEPLE NOTES

September-October 2026

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Stay connected with Trinity Lutheran Church by signing up for our weekly email. Each week, you will receive updates on upcoming events and volunteer opportunities.

Contact Rachel in the church office to make sure you are on the list!

SERVICE LEARNING: OUR FAITH IN ACTION

BY DEACONESS DEBORAH GRAF



Ready for the journey to Baltimore.

From June 14 to 19, a small but strong group from Trinity made the trek from Reading to Breath of God Lutheran Church in Baltimore, Maryland. Jacinda, Declan, Danielle, Andrew, and I experienced a week full of new experiences and new friendships, as we battled the heat and humidity, sleeping in a sanctuary with no air conditioning and driving to the local LA Fitness for showers each day.

When we arrived on Sunday afternoon and entered the building, we were swept into the social hall to participate

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READING BERKS CROP HUNGER WALK

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11 AT 1:00 PM
GRING'S MILL**

Some give by walking. Others walk by giving. You are invited to join the youth and families of Trinity as we walk to fight hunger locally and globally. As programs and support systems are being drastically cut, our participation is even more important. Twenty-five percent of donations will be given to Helping Harvest, and the remainder will be distributed through the work of Church World Service, a partner of ELCA World Hunger.

In honor of our founding year, 1751, our 2026 goal is \$751. WE CAN DO IT!

Scan the QR code to register to walk, to donate to Team Trinity, or both. You can also speak with Deaconess Deborah for more information.



GOD'S WORK. OUR HANDS. SUNDAY

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2026 AT 10:00 AM

Joining with our Common Ground Recovery Community ministry, where God's grace embraces our brokenness.

We will participate in a Common Ground worship service led by Pastors Tom Scornavacchi and Molly Haggerty. Please note that we will be seated around tables for this service, just as Common Ground gathers on Monday afternoons. After worship, we will share food and fellowship, reflecting on what we have heard and taking part in service projects: creating caring cards and tokens for those who need a message of hope and love. Common Ground will make the same projects on Monday at the Drop-In Center.

We will be taking a special offering throughout September to bless those at Common Ground who use the Refresh Berks shower trailer on Monday afternoons. Besides monetary donations, the items most needed are women's sports bras, especially sizes small and medium; men's dark boxer briefs, especially size medium; and dark socks.

We hope you are able to join us for this special Sunday. Scan the QR code to learn more about Common Ground.



THE WONDERS OF WORSHIP

BY DEACONESS DEBORAH GRAF

Throughout the past program year, our congregation participated in an experimental program, The Wonders of Worship, which integrates worship, learning, and artwork of the natural world. As a result of participating in that program, Dr. Wentz and I received full scholarships to attend the 2026 Conference on Worship, Theology, and the Arts at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, on July 20–22.



St. Olaf Chapel.

After a tumultuous, circuitous journey (one that rerouted us from Harrisburg to Rochester, Minnesota), we arrived on time for three days full of worship, workshops, and time in the country air. We connected with people whom we had only seen online, heard engaging speakers, and helped create banners in the brief span of an hour. And we slept in the older college dorms, where we walked down the hall to the bathrooms.

The artist who created the Wonders of Worship poster and original trading cards shared her colorful, detailed art with us. We heard the Minnesota Boychoir sing during worship in the marvelous chapel, which displays flags from the



Flags on display in the chapel.

countries and Native nations of students attending St. Olaf. (I was cheered to see the UK flag hanging right next to Germany's—a nod to my own family.)

While we didn't complete the entire liturgical year, we will continue this fall to teach our young people about the wonders of each part of our worship together.

FROM THE DEACONESS

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in the congregation's annual Crab Feast fundraiser. Pastor Mark Parker ushered us to a table where we were each given a mallet and a crab to crack! Everyone was brave enough to try, and we agreed that it's a lot of work with little return.



Breath of God Lutheran Church annual Crab Feast.

That evening, we were joined by a youth group from Pleasant Grove United Methodist Church in Raleigh, North Carolina. We shared pretzels and whoopie pies from Pennsylvania, and they shared Cheerwine and other North Carolina specialties.

The beauty of service-learning camps is the emphasis on learning and accompanying. So often, church groups want to barge in for a week and get as much DONE as possible. Our week was about getting to know the places we served as well as helping the organizations there.



Declan tending the community garden.

Projects included cleaning up a community garden; weeding and cleaning up at Patterson Park; clearing rogue morning glories off a fence at Amazing Grace Lutheran Church



Danielle clearing morning glories.

FROM THE DEACONESS

while hearing about the work that congregation does in the community; cleaning oyster cages in Baltimore Harbor and learning how that work is helping to repair the ecosystem (even though we never saw an oyster);



Jacinda cleaning oyster cages.

moving many boxes and supplies at Patterson Park Public Charter School; and painting many areas at Breath of God. We were joined by members of SOMOS, a Baltimore student-led service organization.

We also had the opportunity to learn how to sail. This was not a passive experience with everyone sitting on a large sailing vessel. We were divided into groups of four, and each of us took a turn at the helm and the rigging, steering and tacking back and forth. We were treated to an authentic Mexican dinner one night and dined at a Cuban restaurant another.



Volunteering at Patterson Park.

Our conversations were rich and deep as we wondered about the intersectionality of addiction and poverty, and what the Church's role is in responding to the needs of our neighbor.

We returned home tired yet grateful for the time we had together. Thank you to everyone who supported our trip. We look forward to sharing more with you later this fall.

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A SUMMER OF CHAOS

BY PASTOR HANS BECKLIN



For me and my family, this has been a chaotic summer. Nels just turned one; renovations are at full speed both at church and at our home. I have been traveling a lot, both for work and for pleasure. Despite all this, I am in good spirits.

A major part of my good spirits has to do with things here at Trinity. There is a lot of chaos, but it is good chaos. Remember Genesis 1? God brought order out of chaos, and He is doing it again here.

Our renovation is moving along nicely, on time and under budget. We didn't discover any additional defects in our crumbling building, so

we can be assured that it won't still be crumbling for very long. Because of these savings, our committee has been able to add a few aesthetic touches that had been cut due to cost—like new carpet in the Narthex, a higher railing for the choir loft, a new ADA-accessible pew, and fresh paint everywhere in the sanctuary. These are minor in the grand scheme of the project, but they make a real difference.

Summer brings even more chaos—like worship in a fellowship hall, mysteriously high electrical bills, and unpredictable attendance at worship (100 one week and 65 the next). However, despite all of this, God is still working at Trinity! We track down the cause of the spikes in the electric bills, trust that there will be enough bulletins (even if everyone is back from their summer vacations simultaneously), and believe firmly that God will still show up in all His promised ways, even if we are temporarily tarrying in the All Saints Room. If our bewildered visitors can find us, Jesus certainly can.

Deaconess Deborah's retirement brings about additional chaos. In hectic weeks, I am grateful that her flexible, kind spirit can tag in to do a hospital visit, plan a lesson, preach, or just bring some calm to the equation. That said, I trust that the Spirit will bring order out of this chaos, helping us to discern what, exactly, Trinity needs in its next chapter.

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A YEAR OF MUCH MUSIC

By DR. CAMERON LEE WENTZ



Another program year will soon be upon us! Choosing the music and crafting the year's layout are always joyful but daunting tasks. The work means blending big dreams with practicality, mindful of ability, willingness to be challenged, and of course finances. That said, Trinity is blessed not only with so many talented folks who form our ensembles, but also with a uniquely appreciative and knowledgeable congregation that listens with rapt attention.

Our core ensembles: Trinity Choir, Trinity Ringers, Mixed Ensemble, and Trinity Youth Ringers will resume rehearsals in mid- to late September, with Trinity Choir's first Sunday

back in worship being on September 20th. Mixed Ensemble and Trinity Ringers will help lead worship later in October. While there is no major connecting theme throughout the year's music, do keep an ear out for wider use of different languages: not only Spanish and German, which both have ties to our congregation and to the cultural makeup of the City of Reading, but also French and perhaps Portuguese!

Our 275th anniversary concert series will resume on November 22nd with Nicole Keller presenting an organ recital. The winter will bring an Epiphany Vespers service led by Tom Trenney with the Trinity Choir. The spring brings the return of the Brentano String Quartet.

Because of the ongoing renovations, Trinity is unable to host Fall Festival of the Arts events this year, but I encourage you to make note of two musical concerts happening at Christ Episcopal: Brian Giebler, tenor, on September 20th, and John Painter, organ, on October 9th.

There is much to look forward to in this upcoming program year, and I am eager to have our ensembles up and running. I can't wait to make much music with them and share it with our community!

SERVICE LEARNING: OUR FAITH IN ACTION

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POSTSCRIPT

People often ask me, “Why do you travel for a service-learning trip? We have so many needs in our own community!” To which I respond, “Yes, and...”

When we travel together, there is more time for reflective conversation as well as for simply being with one another. When we are not sleeping in our own beds, we are not worried about our responsibilities at home or whatever else is going on.

We can be fully present with one another, play car games, and teach great camp prayers to other youth groups.



Group building at Breath of God Lutheran Church.

And then when we return home, we are more attuned to the needs of our own community—and we respond. (Our youth will be participating in

the Potato Project in September, walking in the CROP Hunger Walk in October, and serving dinner at Opportunity House in November.)

POST POSTSCRIPT

Youth from Trinity also participated in the West Berks Mission District Mini-Mission Trip, July 27–29. You can ask Grace, Danielle, and Abbie what it was like to help out at the Common Ground Recovery Community Drop-In Center



Mini Mission Trippers at Helping Harvest warehouse.

and the Refresh Berks Shower Trailer. They can tell you about weeding the community garden at Café Esperanza or helping distribute nourishing food at a food pantry. Ask them about standing on an assembly line and filling senior food boxes. And thank them for serving in the name of Jesus, who empowers us to live our faith and values every day.

A SUMMER OF CHAOS

Continued from page 6.

This fall, we will be engaging in the chaos of major planning—far more extensive than we have done in more than a decade here at Trinity. Using our new strategic plan, we'll be assessing what kind of staffing model we need and how responsibilities might be reassigned. We'll also be building a new budget from zero—helping us to reassign and reimagine how our resources might be allocated. Chaotic, for sure.

We usually think that chaos is a bad thing. And it can be. But it can also be that creative, primordial stew from which God creates something new and exciting. That is the kind of chaos we face now at Trinity. How poetic that this is happening in a year when we celebrate our unchanging witness in downtown Reading, 275 years, and God is not done with us yet—not even close!



Mini Mission Trippers at Common Ground.



Grace at Hope's Food Pantry distribution.



Harvesting from the Community Garden.

The sanctuary ceiling was repaired this summer, not replaced. Crews rebuilt two roof trusses from inside the attic, setting steel rods into the original timbers and bolting steel plates through the joints. Above the ceiling they strengthened the original plaster where it sits and repaired the keys that grip the lath. New ductwork replaced the old. Then the shoring came down, the holes were filled, and the ceiling was bonded, reinforced, and skimmed smooth. The crown molding on the high wall was brought back. Outside, on the Washington Street side, masons began setting brick in lime mortar, shaping each piece by hand to fit a wall raised in the 1790s.

You will not see most of this work when you next sit down in the sanctuary. Here is what it looked like.



A temporary work deck goes in over the whole sanctuary, putting the crew within arm's reach of the ceiling.



Steel and scaffolding take the weight, reaching up through the ceiling to hold the trusses while they are repaired.



Above the ceiling, in the attic, the work begins on the original plaster — this process is known as consolidation.



A consolidant is sprayed onto the back of the plaster to strengthen it where it sits.



The consolidant makes quite a mess but dries clear.



Repairing the plaster keys — the ridges of original plaster that squeezed through the lath and have gripped it ever since.

Everything waited on the trusses. Two of them needed repair before the shoring could come down, and the shoring is what left the holes in the ceiling. The crew kept the original timbers. They set steel rods into the wood, bonded them in place, and bolted steel plates through the joints. All of it happened in the attic, in July, in a space where a person cannot stand upright.



Two of the roof trusses are repaired from inside the attic.



A two-part epoxy is injected into the truss cracks to bind the wood together.



Steel gusset plates are bolted through the tie-beam joint, tying the new work to the old.



Truss repairs are complete!



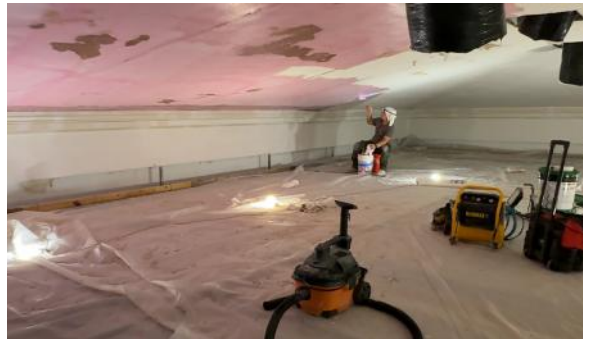
New ductwork is hoisted into the attic.



New ductwork is installed and insulated.



The holes left by the shoring, filled and ready for what comes next.



The pink is a bonding agent, dyed so the crew can see at a glance that no spot was missed.



Reinforcing mesh goes on next, bridging every seam so the joints never come back as cracks.



Then the first skim coat covers all of it.



BEFORE — July 3. The crown molding on the high wall, before any work began.



AFTER — August 24. The same run of molding, fully repaired.



Worn brick comes out of the Washington Street wall, course by course.



The pediment, opened up where the brick had failed.



Lime mortar was used when our church was built and is the correct mortar to use now.



The surface must be wet for the mortar and new bricks to be set.



Smaller pieces are shaped with a brick hammer.



The shaped brick is set into place.



Checking the course for plumb.



Finishing the last few pieces from the inside.

YOUR VESTRY

GET TO KNOW YOUR LEADERSHIP

The congregation elects members to the Vestry, who serve three-year terms and guide the work of Trinity's committees. Here is who is serving in 2026–2027 — they welcome your questions, your ideas, and your willingness to lend a hand.

NAME	ROLE	COMMITTEES	EMAIL
*Martha Good	President	Educational Assistance, Personnel	mgoodconf@gmail.com
*Joe Speece	Vice President	Stewardship, Media & Evangelism	jrspeeceiii@comcast.net
*Maggie Shelly	Secretary	Outreach & Service	shellym325@gmail.com
*Erica Hofmann	Treasurer	Finance, Educational Assistance	eshofmann@gmail.com
*Franki Aitken	Member	Property	frankia@bccf.org
Don Bechtel	Member	Worship & Music	dbech@comcast.net
Amy Heins	Member	Congregational Care	amy.heins@comcast.net
Allison Kalbach	Member	Fellowship, Congregational Care	allisonkalbach5@gmail.com
Andrew Smith	Member	Learning Ministries	musicman9697@gmail.com
*Hans Becklin	Senior Pastor		hbecklin@trinityreading.org

*Serves on the Executive Committee