

January 2017

Dear Friends of Trinity,

A new year always presents new opportunities and a chance to renew and reevaluate priorities and choices. This is true in life and in institutions. If you make New Year's Resolutions, good luck! I stopped making them a long time ago because I could never keep them. Will power is not one of my strengths.

So, let's talk about the human will. Is it free, or not? Well, yes and no. We each have volitional powers, we can choose (or will) what to wear, what to eat, and where to go. In that sense, we have free will.

In another sense, we don't have free will. The Lutheran Church teaches that our will is in bondage to sin until it is set free by Christ. Martin Luther wrote a whole treatise about this called *The Bondage of the Will*. He lays out the argument that, if left to itself, the human will is enslaved to sin. In other words, we will always choose to break the commandments and to reject the love of Christ. This makes sense because Christ comes to us in forms that can be rejected—Word and Sacrament. If the will had its own way, it will choose not to listen and not to receive. An enslaved will is really our default setting: “we are, by nature, sinful and unclean.” The will is dead in trespasses and sins.

Only Christ can set the will free to obey the Word of Christ. In reality, when we will to believe in Christ and to receive his gifts and to obey his commandments, it is God working in us both to will *and* to do these things. See Philippians 2:12-13. It is God who raises the will that is dead in trespasses and sins to new life in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. And how is this done? Word and Sacrament!

This is why attending church is so important. There's no substitute for it! Nothing else in the world will free you from the bondage of the will. Only in Christ is it set free. The gifts of the cross and resurrection of Jesus are given to you in worship at church. Not just any church. A church that is liturgical and sacramental...like Trinity! The liturgy serves as the grounding of our being in the Scriptures; the Sacraments give us the Word in physical form. Holy Communion is the Word of God made edible.

This year, recommit yourself to attending worship more often than you normally do. I know it isn't the most exciting thing you'll do all week. But, honestly, don't you have enough excitement and chaos in your life that you can't spend one reverential hour each week to receive the Lord Jesus Christ and the eternal life that he purchased for you on the cross? Come...receive and be renewed in Christ. And then be confident that God is, and always will be, with you!

In Christ,
Pastor Hoag



JANUARY 2017



We begin by saying thank you to so many.....



Thank You! Christmas services require the work of a lot of people. Some get their names in the bulletin. Many do not. We could try and list them, but inevitably, we would miss someone. So, whether you came and helped set up the tree, folded bulletins, swapped out candles, ushered, set up communion, cleaned up after communion, set up flowers, donated flowers, sang or played an instrument, a very warm and heartfelt THANK YOU! May the love that you showed be reflected back to you a thousand times over in the year to come.



Thanks to the Youth Group, and “their helpers”, for setting up and decorating the Christmas tree in the church.



Thank you to the following people who donated the poinsettia plants which adorned the Chancel for Christmas: Biff and Debbie Aiken, Duncan and Allene Bachmann, Bob and Kim Blecke (in memory of Stephen Naughton), Denise Buchanan and Family, Cuthbert Family, Les and Ginny DeCarlo, Janet DeForest, Bob and Tammy Doerrer, Betty Dunn, Ernie and Jan Falk, Paul and Pat Fuerst, Betty Hopkinson, Bill and Sally Jackson, Tom and Wendy Kaun, Mike Lyman, Jeff and Sharon Lorenz, Al McCullough, Jennifer Mudrock, Gary and Kay Purnell, Jackie and Rich Rohner, Bob and Ann Romadka, Doug and Jan Schlak, Steve and Cindy Spies, Rita Tinker Family, Rex and Jan Toepke, Ed and Judy VanderVeen, and Wheeler Family.

What we have accomplished during 2016 and what we have to look forward to in 2017, an update from Church Council President, Jeff McDonald.

As 2016 draws to a close, we look back on an eventful year with several projects being funded and completed during the year, and others still to be completed. A few of the highlights from 2016 are as follows:

- courtyard regrading project was completed with all new drainage and all new sidewalks poured and landscaping redone (check it out if you haven't been back there - it is a vast improvement both aesthetically as well as functionally now that our drains actually go right into the sewer)
- 100% of our gym windows were replaced
- security cameras were added at both the north and south entrances
- railings for the lift entrance were installed and the lift continued to see use each and every week of 2016
- cement work on the new stairs and sidewalk was completed and new limestone exterior was added to the stairs - another beautiful improvement to our church
- a new computer and laptop were secured for the church secretary and Pastor due to the need to upgrade these devices from Windows XP
- we officially added Virgil Switzer in the capacity of our custodial employee, although his contributions go well beyond that of a custodian
- the return of the congregational picnic in June was a big success
- Pastor Hoag launched a new program called "Living Lutheran" for new members and we welcomed our first five graduates of this program in December: Nicole Green, Gail Edgar, Wade Brokmeyer, Jessica Brokmeyer and Mark Razny
- I'll stop there, but there were other great events as well during the year (I would surely fail if I tried to list them all)

A few other projects that are still in our plans for 2017 (each of which has received partial funding this year) include the following:

- office moves for better usage of our space
- new flooring in the library and narthex
- stained glass window repair in the church
- new air conditioner unit (this was not part of our plans in 2016, but was identified as something that needs to be done in 2017 - we are budgeting for this now)

We also focused our efforts a little more externally in 2016 just as we had hoped to do on the heels of our 75th anniversary in 2015. Notable charities we supported other than our usual support of the English District and LCEF included Sole Hope, Tin Roofs for Africa and Morningstar Mission. We look forward to additional external reach in 2017.

As for church council, we wish to thank Phil MacPharlane for his efforts as a Director of Outreach. Phil brought great insights to this position but has elected to step down in 2017. We welcome the husband and wife team of Wade and Jessica Brokmeyer to council in 2017 as co-Directors of Outreach, serving with Bob Blecke. The balance of our council remains unchanged this year.

Finally, we welcome Kim Standard as our new church secretary in 2017. We also thank Denise Buchanan, Kim Blecke and Marilou Lerner for helping to fill this position while we sought a permanent employee for the role. We welcome Kim Standard to this role and look forward to her serving in this capacity.

Looking back at 2016, it was a busy but productive year and many positive changes were implemented. We look forward to continuing that momentum into 2017 and we thank our vibrant congregation for their ongoing support! All of the changes listed above came at a cost to us, and the generosity of this congregation allowed us to do what we did in 2016 with no additional debt. It seems inadequate to say "THANK YOU" for this, but we thank you just the same. We would welcome questions or comments about any of this at the upcoming annual congregational meeting at the end of January. Please plan to join us for that. You will hear from church council and various groups about their 2016 accomplishments and their 2017 plans. You will also get answers to questions, such as whether our attendance in 2016 was higher or lower than it was in 2015 (and the answer might surprise you). Hope to see you there!

2017 Church Council Officers



Jeff McDonald, President; Kim Blecke, Secretary; Janice Prospero, Financial Secretary; Tim King, Treasurer; Bob Blecke, Wade and Jessica Brockmeyer, Co-Directors of Outreach; Dan Bay and Jeff Lorenz, Co-Directors of Property; Ed Tatro and Diane Sewing, Co-Directors of Spiritual Life; Jeanine Welsh, Director of Social Ministry; Judi Donovan, Director of Parish Education; Michelle Hoag, Director of Youth Ministry.

Annual Congregational Meeting

Join us on Sunday, January 29th, at 12:15 p.m. All members are invited to attend.





Altar Flowers. The 2017 Flower Chart is posted in the wall case outside the church office. Order forms are attached. Flowers are placed on our altar every Sunday to enhance and beautify our altar area in memory of a loved one, to commemorate a birthday, wedding anniversary or in celebration of God's blessings. ***If you would like to give altar flowers, complete the form and place it in the Chancel Guild mailbox in the church office.*** If you select a date already chosen, it may be possible to share flowers that week. Please call Kay Purnell at 815.485.9017 or email her at purnellk51@hotmail.com. Flowers are \$8.50 per vase or \$17.00 for both vases. The flowers may be picked up after the Sunday service.

CHANCEL GUILD



All ladies of Trinity are welcome to attend and/or join the Chancel Guild. For more information please contact Denise Buchanan, President, at 815.485.2729. Our next meeting is Monday, January 2nd at 6:30 p.m.



Thanks to the choir for the beautiful singing and music in our regular church services, as well as the Christmas services. The choir meets on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. and are always looking for additional voices. We will be on a Christmas break for a couple weeks but will resume in January 11th.

Women's League



Once again, our Annual Cookie Walk was an amazing success. Thank you to all who made this possible, from the setter-uppers to the bakers to all who purchased! All profits go to the church and community needs.

Pastor Hoag will be the speaker at the January 31st meeting. It begins at 12:30 in the church basement. Hostesses are Arleen Raffanti and Pat Fuerst.



SOCIAL MINISTRY HAPPENINGS

Social Ministry will again be offering the opportunity to order TJ's pizzas. This year we are adding the dessert list which includes butter braids and cookie dough. Order forms will be available in January and must be turned in by the first Sunday in February. Delivery will be at the end of February.



St. Matthew's.

We are continuing to support St. Matthew's Lutheran church in Chicago by collecting donations of non-perishable food items, as well as household goods. Please place the food items in the collection box by the parking lot door. The household items should be placed in the storage closet area at the far North end of the church basement. Please place items carefully so they do not block the aisle to the boiler room. ***Thanks to Sandy Peters for recently hauling food, clothing and household items to St. Matthew's. Thanks to Virgil Switzer for helping her load up her car.***



If anyone is interested in helping with the hauling of these items to St. Matthew's, please contact the church office. Extra help is always appreciated.



MorningStar Mission Serving. Trinity has been helping with serving meals at MorningStar twice a month for a number of years. We help by serving dinner on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month, and need 3-4 volunteers each time. **If you are interested in volunteering, please sign the sheet on the hallway table, or call the church office.** You must be at MorningStar by 3:45 pm. If you are not able to make those times/dates you may call them at 815.722.5780 or visit their web at www.morningstarmission.org for other volunteer positions.



SCRIPTURE READERS

We are asking you to become involved in our worship services, without committing too much time! Just read The First and Second Lessons!! To do so, place your name on the Sunday you would like on the sheets in the hallway. The actual readings are available ahead of time and may be acquired by contacting Pastor or the Church Office at 815.485.6973.



GREETERS

We come as friends, a family of believers, greeting one another with a warm welcome, thankful for the gifts of a community in which we can live out our relationship with God through our relationships with one another. There are sign-up sheets located on a table near the gym if you would like to extend a warm welcome to your fellow members and visitors.

Sign-up sheets for Readers and Greeters are on the hallway table. Please take a turn and sign up.

Confirmation Class is held each Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Hoag or call the church office at 815.485.6973.

Wednesday Morning Bible Class is held at 8:30 a.m. Please join this very interesting group.



Coffee Hour A new yellow sign-up sheet is on the hallway table for volunteers for the 4th Sunday of each month in 2017. **Please take a turn.** *If you have any questions, please call the church office at 815.485.6973.*



TRINITY PRAYER CHAIN

Trinity Lutheran has a Prayer Chain that is available to anyone for prayer support by fellow members. These prayers may be for personal, congregational, community, governmental, and all other needs. All requests are kept confidential. Please call Ginny DeCarlo (815) 485-2001 to request a prayer. The Bible says, "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." James 5:16b.

If you are interested in being part of the Prayer Chain, or would like more information please give Ginny a call. You can also call the office at (815) 485-6973. We would be happy to provide you with all the information. Please consider being part of this worthwhile endeavor. You can make a difference.



Preschool Registration for the school year

beginning September 2017. **Trinity members get priority registration and may register now.** Already enrolled students may register the first two weeks in January.

Registration for new students will begin the third week of January. If you know of anyone who falls into one of these categories, please have them call the pre-school at 815.485.6973. There is a non-refundable registration fee of \$60.00 per student. The tuition per month for the school year beginning September 2017, will be \$105.00 for two day students and \$130.00 for three day students. Children must have turned 3 by September 1, 2014. For further information, please call Trinity Lutheran Church at 815.485.6973.

The next Preschool Board meeting is Sunday, January 15th at 11:30 a.m.



Wishing everyone a blessed and healthy 2017!