

# News of the Son

Trinity Lutheran Church — Columbia, MO



## O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright:

### A Devotional Reflection on Epiphany, the Gentile Christmas

Oh, beloved in Christ, as we enter the sacred season of Epiphany on January 6, let our hearts awaken to the radiant truth of Jesus revealed to the Gentiles—the “Gentile Christmas.” While the Nativity whispers of the humble manger birth, Epiphany proclaims Christ’s light bursting forth to all nations, drawing wise seekers from afar like the Magi guided by a heavenly star. In this divine unveiling, we Gentiles find our invitation into the eternal embrace of God’s grace. Within the Lutheran Service Book, Hymn 395, “O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright,” stands as a luminous prayer, calling us to adore Jesus, the Bright Morning Star. Composed by Philipp Nicolai in 1599, this cherished chorale, the “Queen of Chorales,” beckons us into deeper understanding of Christ’s word and work. Let us meditate upon its words, allowing them to stir our souls toward worship, for in this hymn, we encounter the Savior who illumines our darkness and unites us eternally with Him.

Dear friends, consider the poignant origins of this hymn, born not in ease but in the crucible of suffering—a testament to Christ’s sustaining light. Philipp Nicolai, a faithful Lutheran pastor, penned it during a merciless plague in Unna, Westphalia, where death claimed multitudes, and he himself faced the graves of his flock daily. Yet, in that valley of shadows, Nicolai lifted his gaze to the eternal joys of heaven, crafting *Freudenspiegel des ewigen Lebens* (Mirror of the Joys of Eternal Life). Herein lies “O Morning Star,” a spiritual wedding song portraying the soul’s intimate union with Christ, the Bridegroom. Its melody, WIE SCHÖN LEUCHTET, echoes through centuries, harmonized by Bach and translated afresh in the LSB. As we sing, may we too find solace in Christ amid our trials, for He who conquered death invites us to reflect His glory even now.

At the heart of this hymn beats a profound devotion to Christ, unfolding stanza by stanza as a love song to our Redeemer. Behold the opening verse: “O Morning Star, how fair and bright! / You shine with God’s own truth and light, / Aglow with grace and mercy.” Here, we adore Jesus as the fulfillment of Revelation 22:16, the “Bright and Morning Star,” descending from David’s line to ransom us. Lowly yet holy, great and glorious—oh, what wonder in this paradox! He who humbled Himself to the cross now reigns victorious, drawing our weary hearts to praise: Alleluia! Let us pause and whisper in prayer, Lord Jesus, shine upon me, that I may reflect Your light in a shadowed world.

In the second stanza, our souls are invited into tender intimacy: “Come, heav’nly Bridegroom, Light divine, / And deep within my heart now shine.” Drawing from Ephesians 5, Christ kindles an undying flame within us, uniting His church as one body. Though earthly sorrows assail, His presence brings heavenly joy—oh, gracious Savior, how You cheer our spirits! Meditate, dear one, on how Christ’s love envelops you, turning trials into testimonies of His faithfulness. The third stanza refreshes us with His gifts: “Your Word and Spirit, flesh and blood, / Refresh our souls

January  
2026

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Knowing Christ’s Love  
Seeking His Will  
Spreading His Word

with heav'nly food." In Scripture and sacraments, we taste His mercy, our hearts warmed by the Eucharist's sacred mystery. Lord, feed us anew, that we may abide in You.

The fourth stanza lifts our eyes to eternity: "You loved us when not yet begun / Was this old earth's foundation!" From before creation, the Father's love in Christ has ransomed us (Ephesians 1:4–7), securing our inheritance. Alleluia rises from our lips in grateful adoration!

As we sing the fifth stanza, "O let the harps break forth in sound! / Our joy be all with music crowned, / Our voices gladly blending!" Christ walks with us daily, His grace our constant companion.

The sixth stanza again lifts our eyes to eternity: "What joy to know, when life is past, / The Lord we love is first and last." Alleluia rises from our lips in grateful adoration! In this final verse, we yearn for glory: "Transport us to that happy place / Beyond all tears and sinning!"

This hymn, so richly Christ-centered, mirrors Epiphany's call to the Gentiles. As the Magi followed the star to worship the King (Matthew 2:1–12), so we, from every nation, are summoned by Isaiah's prophecy: "Nations shall come to your light" (60:3). Jesus, the universal Morning Star, pierces our Gentile darkness, offering salvation not by our works but by His blood. In Lutheran worship, this hymn crowns Epiphany services, urging us to internalize Christ's light and share it boldly. Beloved, let it stir your devotion: gaze upon Jesus, the Bridegroom who claims you as His own.

In our turbulent times, "O Morning Star" remains a prayerful anchor. As plagues of doubt and division rage, sing it with fervor, allowing Christ's truth to illuminate your path. Join the Magi in humble adoration, claiming your place in this Gentile Christmas. May His light guide you, His love sustain you, until we behold Him in eternal splendor. Amen—rule and might o'er all possessing!

Your Servant in Christ,

*Rev. Brian K. Thieme*

### 395 O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright

- 1 O Morning Star, how fair and bright!  
You shine with God's own truth and light,  
Aglow with grace and mercy!  
Of Jacob's race, King David's son,  
Our Lord and master, You have won  
Our hearts to serve You only! Lowly, holy!  
Great and glorious,  
All victorious, Rich in blessing!  
Rule and might o'er all possessing!
- 2 Come, heav'nly Bridegroom, Light divine,  
And deep within our hearts now shine;  
There light a flame undying!  
In Your one body let us be  
As living branches of a tree,  
Your life our lives supplying. Now, though daily  
Earth's deep sadness  
May perplex us And distress us,  
Yet with heav'nly joy You bless us.
- 3 Lord, when You look on us in love,  
At once there falls from God above  
A ray of purest pleasure.  
Your Word and Spirit, flesh and blood  
Refresh our souls with heav'nly food.  
You are our dearest treasure! Let Your mercy  
Warm and cheer us!  
O draw near us! For You teach us  
God's own love through You has reached us.
- 4 Almighty Father, in Your Son  
You loved us when not yet begun  
Was this old earth's foundation!  
Your Son has ransomed us in love  
To live in Him here and above:  
This is Your great salvation. Alleluia!  
Christ the living,  
To us giving Life forever,  
Keeps us Yours and fails us never!
- 5 O let the harps break forth in sound!  
Our joy be all with music crowned,  
Our voices gladly blending!  
For Christ goes with us all the way—  
Today, tomorrow, ev'ry day!  
His love is never ending! Sing out! Ring out!  
Jubilation!  
Exultation! Tell the story!  
Great is He, the King of Glory!
- 6 What joy to know, when life is past,  
The Lord we love is first and last,  
The end and the beginning!  
He will one day, oh, glorious grace,  
Transport us to that happy place  
Beyond all tears and sinning! Amen! Amen!  
Come, Lord Jesus!  
Crown of gladness! We are yearning  
For the day of Your returning!

Trinity Lutheran Church  
PRESENTS

# “The Tenth Day of Christmas”

# Antique Reed Organ Concert

FEATURING  
A VARIETY OF  
ANTIQU REED ORGANS IN  
VARIOUS STYLES





In gratitude to God for His blessings upon our congregation, and in reflection of our 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we are pleased to present this special concert. It is our hope that through the music presented on these beautiful instruments that our hearts will be stirred in praise and thanksgiving for the many blessings that are ours in Christ.

**JANUARY 4, 2026**  
**3 PM**

Trinity Lutheran Church, 2201 W. Rollins Street  
Columbia

THE CONCERT IS  
**FREE TO ALL**

A RECEPTION  
WILL FOLLOW

 TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH  
**100**  **YEARS**  
1 9 2 5 - 2 0 2 5

## SERVE AND ENCOURAGE

### Grief Share

- Thursdays, January 8—March 26 at 7 pm

Are you struggling with the loss of a loved one or know someone who is? Please consider joining our Grief Share group.

The GS classes will meet on Wednesday evenings from September 4 through November 20, with a final meeting on Tuesday, November 26, from 7pm-9pm. To sign up, visit the GS website [www.griefshare.org/findagroup](http://www.griefshare.org/findagroup).

Any questions, please call/text Kevin Burns (Facilitator) at (573) 424-7514.

### Special Meeting of the Assembly of Voters

- Sunday, January 18, 2026 at 12:00 p.m.
- Fellowship Hall
- The agenda for the Special Meeting is as follows:

Call to Order

Opening Devotion

New Business

Trinity Expansion Project Motions:

1. Motion to approve the addition of a canopy
2. Motion to approve the addition of a sprinkler system
3. Motion to approve securing a construction loan

Note Bylaws 3.1.6: "Voting on any motion to approve an expenditure that would require the congregation to incur a debt must be postponed until the next regular meeting of the Assembly of Voters or until a special meeting called for that purpose."

Adjournment

Closing Prayer

## LWML NEWS

### Vesper Guild

- Tuesday, January 13 @ 5:30 pm
- Church Library

### Mary Martha Guild

- Wednesday, January 14 @ 9:30 am
- Fellowship Hall
- January ingathering: New Baby Fund

## OFFERING ENVELOPES

Thank you for picking up your box of envelopes for 2026 off the tables in the hallway. There are new numbers for most of our members, so after December 31 **please toss any unused envelopes from 2025** (or previous years) to avoid having your contribution credited to someone else. We appreciate you only using the new envelopes during 2026. If you have any questions, contact Keith Davis, Financial Secretary, at [kd921702@gmail.com](mailto:kd921702@gmail.com).

## CHURCH DIRECTORY

The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary directories are available for pick up in the hallway by the church offices. We hope every member household will receive one. Please add your name to the list if you take one. We hope it will be a blessing to our church family.

## LUTHERAN WITNESS

Are you a *Lutheran Witness* subscriber? Would you like to be? Please let the church office know if you would like to start or renew a subscription. Cost is \$20.65/year (\$1.72/issue) for 11 issues. If interested, please contact the church office via email ([church@trinity-lcms.org](mailto:church@trinity-lcms.org)) or phone (573) 445-2112 **no later than January 28, 2026**. New subscriptions will begin in April.

*Payment can be done via check or cash, using the Lutheran Witness envelope included with your contribution envelopes. If paying by check, please put 'Lutheran Witness' on the memo line. Thank you!*

## LIFE TEAM

Trinity will be observing Sanctity of Life Sunday on January 11<sup>th</sup> with a guest preacher for both services and Bible class. The theme for Life Sunday is "Fearfully and Wonderfully Made" from Psalm 139:14. The guest preacher is Rev. Dr. Aric Fenske, the executive director of Lutherans For Life, a Recognized Service Organization of the LCMS.

There will be a display with brochures about end-of-life issues as well as the 'babies', fetal models of unborn children at different stages of development. In addition, you will see baskets for a free will offering for Lutherans For Life. Please plan to support Lutherans For Life whose mission is to equip Lutherans and their neighbors to be Gospel-motivated voices for life.



# DYING CHURCH RISING HOPE

Higher Things Conference 2026

*Join us*

FOR THE 2026 DYING CHURCH  
RISING HOPE CONFERENCES  
PRESENTED BY HIGHER THINGS!

**JUNE 23-  
JUNE 26**

Washington University  
St. Louis, MO *2026*

**REGISTRATION IS OPEN**

**Trinity Youth attend  
at no cost if registered by  
January 30, 2026**

**Please contact Pastor  
McCalley with questions.**



*www.*  
**DYING CHURCH  
RISING HOPE26**  
*.org*

**HE WHO WAS SEATED ON  
THE THRONE SAID, "I AM  
MAKING EVERYTHING  
NEW!"**

*Revelation 21:5*

## Use of Colors in the Liturgical Worship of the Church

*"I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth."* Genesis 9:13

Colors serve as a powerful visual symbol rooted in Scripture and mark the seasons of the liturgical year, that is, the church year. In the Old Testament, Moses was commanded to use particular colors, especially those reflecting royalty (Exodus 28:5), for use in the Tent of Meeting, and eventually the Temple. In the New Testament Church, we are not bound by the ceremonial law. The colors associated with the seasons handed down to us through the centuries are intended to remind God's people of His presence among them, His promises, His Law and His Gospel. Here is a brief overview of the use of the seasonal colors and their meanings.

- Advent is a penitential season, and marks and reminds us of the beginning of a new church year. God graciously desires to free us from our sin so with blue we eagerly anticipate the birth of the Savior. The color blue directs us to the heavens above, reminding us of Christ's condescension.

- White, and occasionally gold, symbolize divinity, purity, light, and joy during Christmas and Easter, and highlights the perfection and holiness of Jesus Christ as revealed through the Incarnation and Resurrection. The prophet Isaiah declares, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18), emphasizing the cleansing power of God's forgiveness, and the majesty of God. In Revelation, the redeemed stand before the throne "clothed in white robes," a powerful image of victory and new life in Christ (Revelation 7:9). Also signifying perfection and celebration, all the Festivals of Christ are white, for example the Baptism of Jesus and Circumcision and Name of Jesus.

-Violet, the color for Lent, symbolizes sorrow and repentance. It also carries the meaning of royalty and dignity. When Jesus was mocked before his crucifixion, "They put a purple robe on him" (Mark 15:17), highlighting both suffering and kingship. Proverbs describes the virtuous woman as "clothed in fine linen and purple" (Proverbs 31:22), further associating purple with honor and value.

-Red is used for Pentecost and Reformation, the Feasts of Apostles and Martyrs. Representing the power and fire of "the Lord and Giver of Life", as well as blood and sacrifice, red is associated with the promise, gift, and work of the Holy Spirit. Leviticus teaches, *"For the life of the body is in its blood..."* (Leviticus 17:11) Additional uses of the color are for festive occasions, dedication, anniversaries of a congregation and its physical structure, celebration of the office of the public ministry such as ordination and installation.

-Scarlet, a vivid red that signifies blood, is in contrast to traditional red and is used during Holy Week from Palm Sunday through Holy Thursday. It is a color anciently associated with the Passion.

-Green symbolizes growth and new life within the Church. During the season of Epiphany, green is used to remind the congregation of the miracles and signs performed by Jesus, identifying Him as the long-promised Messiah. This color invites believers to reflect on spiritual growth in the teaching of Scripture as she witnesses the revelation of Christ to the world. *"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you."* (Is. 60:1-2).

-Green is also used for Pentecost, and the Season of Pentecost, exemplifying spiritual growth and renewal. Throughout this season, which extends for several months until Advent, the Lectionary focuses on nurturing Christian faith and doctrine, exploring themes like prayer, the Sacraments, and marriage. *"But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever."* (Psalm 52:8) *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."* (John:15: 5)

-Black, may be used on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and for funerals, representing mourning and penitence, signified by sackcloth and ashes. (Job 42; Jonah 3)

If you would like to see the full use of colors throughout the year, an overview of the seasons, feasts, and festivals of the church year, and the colors of each, may be studied on pages x-xi in the front of *Lutheran Service Book*.

## December 9, 2025 Board of Directors (draft meeting minutes)

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Directors was held in the Fellowship Hall on December 9, 2025, beginning at 6:30 p.m. The following board members attended: Larry McCoig (President), Pastor Thieme, Pastor McCalley, Annette Kiehne, Warren Harms, Keith Davis, David Attebery, John Frerking, Connie Coil, Kimberly Walker, Emily Derendinger, Jensen Du-enckel, Jacque Eckhoff, Robert Hall, and Debbie Antel (Secretary). The following Trinity Expansion Project Committee members were present: Jim and Mindy Cherrington (Co-Chairs), Lou Eggerding, and Daniel Hakes.

President McCoig welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order. Pastor Thieme opened with a devotion, and attendees sang Hymn 348 *The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns*. David Attebery made a motion to approve the meeting agenda. The motion was seconded. Keith Davis requested the New Business items be reordered as follows: B, A, C, and Pastor Thieme added an item to Announcements. The meeting agenda, as amended, was approved.

Keith Davis, Financial Secretary, presented the report of operating income through November 30. Regular envelopes year-to-date actual collections are \$607,581.69. Loose plate year-to-date collections are \$44,565.38. Building Fund year-to-date collections are \$134,291.36. Other year-to-date collections are \$114,932.47.

The motion to receive the Financial Secretary's report was seconded and approved.

Warren Harms, Treasurer, presented the finance year 2025 reports ending November 30, which were distributed at the meeting. He summarized the reports and noted some CDs will mature December 14. The four expansion funds at LCEF will be combined into a single account.

The motion to receive the Treasurer's reports was seconded and approved.

The consent agenda includes the minutes from the November 11, 2025 regular meeting and the following board reports: Elders, Christian Education, Early Childhood Education – Director TLCLC, Social Ministry, and Youth. The TLC Board of Endowment provided a report at the meeting. Pastor Thieme's report was distributed at the meeting and includes these membership changes:

### Transfers In:

Jonah Hensley – 11/2/25 adult confirmation

Kassen Lock – 11/20/25 from Trinity Lutheran, Clark's Fork, Boonville, Missouri

### Transfers Out:

Amanda Livesay – 11/13/25 to Bethany Lutheran Church, Naperville, Illinois

Grace Groh – 11/13/25 to St. John's Lutheran Church, Jefferson City, Missouri

David Attebery made a motion to receive the consent agenda; seconded and approved.

### **Old Business**

Sunday School Classrooms: President McCoig announced there are no changes; will leave it as is.

**New Business** (Note, the first two items were taken out of order, by agreement)

- A.** Scholarship Policy – TLC Endowment Fund: Robert Hall presented the development process and content of the proposed Scholarship Policy. President McCoig received the report as a motion, which was seconded. Discussion included preference for an emphasis on Lutheran training, teachers, and institutions, with rostered church workers and participation in the colloquy process as goals. Keith Davis noted that, after consideration, he supports approving the current motion but believes the following motion to combine the Endowment Fund Scholarship and the Trinity Lutheran Church Scholarship (*agenda item A*) should not be adopted, as the two scholarships serve different audiences. President McCoig then called for a vote on the proposed policy printed on the third page of tonight's handout. The motion to recommend the policy to the December 14 AOV was approved.
- B.** Scholarship Funds - President McCoig read the motion included in the Plan of Action Presentation: Motion to transfer funds held in the following accounts on or about December 31, 2025, to the Bourret/Elliott Endowment Fund and discontinue the use of these accounts: #243 – Scholarship Fund; #617 – Scholarship Expense; and #195 – Scholarship Fund (LCEF) Keith Davis requested the motion be defeated. The motion included in the Plan of Action Presentation was defeated.
- C.** Trinity Expansion Project – Motion for Special AOV meeting. David Attebery made a motion to schedule a Special AOV meeting for January 18, 2026, at 12:00 Noon. Trinity Expansion Project Committee members outlined the reasons for the request and addressed questions from the board. President McCoig read the motion, which was seconded and approved. The special meeting will be held in the Fellowship Hall.
- D.** 2026 Proposed Budget: Warren Harms reviewed the updated budget worksheets included in the agenda packet. The worksheets reflect figures from the November AOV meeting. To have a

balanced budget to present to the Assembly of Voters on December 14, Warren made a motion to reduce the Regular Envelopes by \$40,000 (to \$610,000); motion seconded and approved.

- E. 2026 Meeting Dates for BOD and AOV: David Attebery made a motion to submit the list of proposed dates to the Assembly of Voters on December 14; seconded and approved.
- F. Words of Worship Initiative from Concordia Publishing House: Pastor Thieme announced that we are hosting the meeting on January 10. No motion is needed; information only.
- G. Freewill Offering: David Attebery made a motion to approve the freewill offering for Lutherans for Life on January 11, 2026, per the Life Team. Motion seconded and approved.

### Announcements

AOV meeting - December 14, 2025; potluck at 11:45 a.m.; meeting at 12:30 p.m. Reports are due by 4:00 p.m. December 10.

Installation and Rededication for Board Members - January 4, 2026; 10:30 service

Reed Organ Concert – January 4, 2026; 3:00 p.m.

Orientation for Board Members – January 13, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.

BOD meeting – January 13, 2026; 6:30 p.m. Written reports from all boards (see Bylaws 7.1.7) are due to Debbie Antel, Congregation Secretary, and Heather Asbeck, Church Administrator, by 4:00 p.m. January 7.

Jensen Duenckel made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded and approved. The meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m. *Luther's Evening Prayer* was said in unison.

Debbie Antel, Secretary

## December 14, 2025 Assembly of Voters (draft meeting minutes)

The regular meeting of the Assembly of Voters was held in the Fellowship Hall on December 14, 2025, beginning at 12:33 p.m. Fifty-one people signed the attendance sheet. President Larry McCoig and Secretary Debbie Antel were in attendance.

Pastor Thieme led attendees in singing Hymn 331 *The Advent of Our King*, President McCoig read Philippians 2:5-8, and Pastor Thieme gave a devotion during the Advent season, urging us to stay faithful and to live in humble service.

President McCoig welcomed attendees, called the

meeting to order, and confirmed a quorum was present. Kassen Lock was welcomed as a first-time attendee.

Before presenting the printed agenda for approval, President McCoig addressed Bylaws 3.1.3, noting that some agenda items had not been published in full accordance with that section. He invited clarification on the phrase "by other means adopted" and explained the scheduling challenges of coordinating BOD and AOV meetings while still providing the required two-weeks' notice for agenda items. He reassured attendees that no one was attempting to do anything that was not supposed to be done. Buck Katt, representative from the most recent Constitution and Bylaws Review Committee, emphasized that the congregation had been given opportunities for input and that the bylaws, particularly those using the word "shall," are to be followed.

President McCoig announced there would be no Old Business items discussed today. Further, that Item G on New Business would not be presented today but instead deferred to the Special Assembly of Voters meeting on January 18, 2026.

Discussion followed, including three questions: whether there were any concerns about how business has been conducted in the past; how agenda item IV, which invites additions to the agenda, should be understood; and whether a motion could be made to restore those items – an action President McCoig ruled out of order.

President McCoig moved on to New Business items.

(The agenda packet included these items: November 16, 2025 Assembly of Voters minutes, Pastor Thieme's Report, Pastor McCalley's Report, Membership Changes, Financial Secretary's and Treasurer's Reports ending November 30, 2025; Board and other reports: Elders, Christian Education, Early Childhood Education Director TLCLC, Social Ministry, Youth, and TLC Endowment Fund, 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Planning, Worship Upgrades, Records Retention, Life Team)

### New Business

2026 Schedule of Worship Services: David Attebery made a motion to approve the schedule. The motion was seconded. Bonnie Lawler asked for clarification as to the time of Easter Service, as it is listed as 8:00 a.m. Pastor Thieme said it should be 7:00 a.m. The motion to approve the schedule, as amended, was approved.

2026 Meeting Dates for BOD and AOV: Keith Davis made a motion to approve the 2026 meeting dates, and the motion was seconded. President McCoig noted the bylaws say meeting dates must be approved at minimum one month ahead. Discussion centered on the two-week notice requirement for

AOV agenda items and the time needed to prepare financial reports. Phil Glenn briefly moved to table the motion but later withdrew it. Keith Davis made a motion to approve the following dates: BOD on January 13 and February 5 and AOV on January 18 (Special) and February 22 (Regular). The motion was seconded and approved.

2026 Proposed Budget: President McCoig accepted the budget report as a motion, and it was seconded. Warren Harms reviewed the proposed budget and requested to add \$7,000 to Line 547 – Church Maintenance Non-Routine and to change 301 – Regular Envelopes from \$610,000 to \$617,000 to fund the air-duct cleaning project by the trustees and maintain a balanced budget. President McCoig called for a vote on the revised budget. The motion was seconded and approved.

Nominating Committee Report: A few updates were made to the printed slate of candidates for 2026. David Attebery made a motion to approve the amended slate, and the motion was seconded and approved. The following people were elected to fill the 2026 vacancies:

- President: Larry McCoig
- Secretary: Debbie Antel
- Treasurer: Warren Harms
- Financial Secretary: Keith Davis
- Board of Elders: Benjamin Asbeck and John Frerking
- Board of Christian Education: Connie Coil and Karen Provost
- Board of Early Childhood Education: Kendal Reaser and Kylie Sterling
- Board of Evangelism: Nelson Akpabli-Tsigbe and Kassen Lock
- Board of TLC Endowment Fund: Hunter Kevil
- Board of Social Ministry: Travis Vellema
- Board of Stewardship and Finance: Lori Dickes and Mason Reaser
- Board of Trustees: Conrad Brown
- Board of Youth: Jacque Eckhoff and Brooke Cameron

Nominations for LCMS Positions: David Attebery made a motion to approve the following nominations: President: Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison; First Vice-President: Rev. Peter K. Lange; and Regional Vice-President: Rev. Benjamin T. Ball. The motion was seconded and approved.

Scholarship Policy – TLC Endowment Fund: Robert Hall presented the proposed policy and the enabling document from the Bourret/Elliott Endowment Fund. The motion to adopt the scholarship policy was seconded and approved.

**Announcements**

Installation and Rededication for Board Members - January 4, 2026; 10:30 service

- Reed Organ Concert – January 4, 2026; 3:00 p.m.
- Words of Worship in-person event – January 10, 2026
- Orientation for Board Members – January 13, 2026; 6:30 p.m.
- BOD meeting – January 13, 2026; 6:30 p.m.
- Special AOV Meeting - January 18, 2026; 12:00 Noon.
- BOD Meeting – February 5, 2026; 6:30 p.m.
- Regular AOV Meeting - February 22, 2026; 12:30 p.m. (potluck at 11:45 a.m.)

**Adjournment**

David Attebery made a motion to adjourn; seconded and approved. Pastor McCalley led the attendees in the Lord's Prayer and Common Doxology. The meeting adjourned at 1:39 p.m.

Debbie Antel, Secretary

**2026 Trinity Lutheran Church Officers and Board Members**

**President**

Larry McCoig

**Secretary**

Debbie Antel

**Treasurer**

Warren Harms

**Financial Secretary**

Keith Davis

**Board of Elders**

Benjamin Asbeck

David Attebery

Mike Brame

Jim Cherrington

Ron Dickes

John Frerking

Carey Smith

**Board of Christian Ed.**

Connie Coil

Karen Provost

Hillari Roberts

**Board of Early Childhood Ed.**

Jordan Bedsworth

Tom Myers

Kendal Reaser

Kylie Sterling

Dan Watts

**Board of Evangelism**

Nelson Akpabli-Tsigbe

Kassen Lock

James Roberts

**Board of Social Ministry**

Emily Derendinger

Jessica Kespohl

Travis Vellema

**Board of Stewardship and Finance**

Jon Berendzen

Lori Dickes

Mary Frerking

Richard Mangold

Karen Niederjohn

Mason Reaser

**Board of TLC Endowment Fund**

Pat Hansen

Hunter Kevil

Chuck Murphy

**Board of Trustees**

Aaron Bedsworth

Conrad Brown

Jordan Duenckel

**Board of Youth**

Jenny Brame

Brooke Cameron

Jacque Eckhoff

## Letter from CTSFW Seminarian David Hart



To the saints at Trinity Lutheran Church,

I wanted to reach out and give a brief update as I finish my first quarter of classes. It certainly was a busy quarter filled with a lot of thought-provoking material and worthwhile assignments. I am thankful for a two-week break between quarters and have been enjoying the extra time I've been able to spend with my family.

We now officially have a one-year-old and two-year-old in our household as Otto turned one in October. It has been so fun to watch their relationship as brothers grow, and we feel blessed as parents to shepherd them through these fun phases of life.

We were also grateful that during the break we were able to close on the sale of our house in Michigan. It has been a huge relief to have closed that chapter and be able to fully focus our attention on Fort Wayne.

The continued prayers and support from the congregation at Trinity is a huge blessing, and we truly appreciate it. We pray that you all have a blessed Advent season as we await the arrival of Christ's birth.

God bless you all,

David Hart and Family

## Letter from CSL Seminarian Ben Wagner

Greetings!

I hope this letter finds you well as we move deeper into the semester. I wanted to share some updates about how things are going here at school.

### Academic Life

I'm grateful to report that my studies continue to go very well. I'm maintaining straight A's in all of my classes, and I'm thankful for God's grace in helping me stay focused and engaged with the material. The workload is challenging but rewarding, and I'm learning so much that will serve me well in ministry.

I recently finished two of my biggest papers of the semester—one was 8,000 words, and the other was 6,000 words. They took a lot of time and effort, but I'm relieved to have them completed and turned in. It's satisfying to see major projects like that come together after weeks of research and writing.

### Community and Ministry

One of the greatest joys of seminary life has been the friendships I've been building. I've been having a ton of fun with my friends here, and we've been doing a lot of events on campus together. We've organized extended evening prayer services and preaching opportunities, which have been wonderful times of worship and growth. There's something special about learning alongside people who share your calling and passion for ministry.

### Personal Updates

Things continue to go very well with my girlfriend. Our relationship remains a real blessing, and I'm grateful for her support and encouragement during this busy season.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support. It means so much to have faithful people like you walking alongside me during this formative time. Your investment in my education and ministry preparation is truly making a difference.

Blessings,

Handwritten signature of Ben Wagner.



**Life Newsbytes**

In Canada, where abortion remains legal at any stage of pregnancy without restrictions, healthy babies are routinely killed in the third trimester for reasons as simple as changing one's mind about parenthood. That's according to undercover investigations and abortion clinic admissions revealed in recent years. A 2023 undercover operation by pro-life advocate Alissa Golob, co-founder of the group RightNow, exposed what she described as a stark contradiction to claims that late-term abortions are reserved for dire medical emergencies. Posing as a pregnant woman seeking to end her third-trimester pregnancy, Golob visited abortion clinics in Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver. The resulting videos, edited from hour-long conversations, captured staff discussing options without requiring proof of fetal or maternal health risks. "You can tell the clinics anything, and they will accept it as a valid reason to abort a third-trimester viable baby," Golob said in reflections on the investigation ... "But there doesn't have to be a reason. It could just be, 'I don't want to be pregnant,'" said a Vancouver social worker ... Later-term procedures, defined by the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada as after 20 weeks, persist without legal barriers. (Source/read more: [www.lifenews.com/2025/11/24/healthy-babies-are-killed-in-late-term-abortions-in-canada-for-birth-control](http://www.lifenews.com/2025/11/24/healthy-babies-are-killed-in-late-term-abortions-in-canada-for-birth-control))

THAT THEY MAY HAVE

LIFE

2026 Lutherans For Life Essay Contest

**Our 2026 LFL Essay Contest Theme: *That They May Have Life***

**Our theme verse: "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).**

The Lutherans For Life Council of Federation Presidents sponsors an essay contest each year for students in two grade categories: 6-8 and 9-12.

- This contest is available for students in all states who attend a Lutheran school or a Lutheran church.
  - State essay contests precede the national essay contest. State essay winners in the two grade categories will be entered into the national contest.
- Note: Individual state rules may vary slightly, so be sure to access those rules through the state links and listings below.
- Some states have LFL State Federations. If you are a student in a state without a federation, you can participate through the Non-Federation Essay Contest.

We look forward to students across the nation participating in our contest and letting their voices be heard through their life-affirming essays!

Questions? Please contact Michele Hartshorn at [mhartshorn@lutheransforlife.org](mailto:mhartshorn@lutheransforlife.org).

[lutheransforlife.org/2026-lutherans-for-life-essay-contest](http://lutheransforlife.org/2026-lutherans-for-life-essay-contest)

You can watch and learn more about our 2025 winners at the link above.

**Speaking up For Life**

"Do you ever doubt the love of God? Perhaps you are just 'looking for love in all the wrong places,' if you'll pardon the expression. Don't look to your own feelings and emotions, which can change with the wind, but look to Bethlehem and the manger. See God's love in this: that His only begotten Son was sent to be humbled and to die for you. Understand that at Christmas, 'God so loved the world that He gave ...'" *Daily Devotion, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Sister Lakes, Michigan*

"If heaven had been our home, would we have wanted to enter a world of grief and pain, of evil and death? Yet enter it Jesus did to give us His home to be ours forever. So, He loved us in undeserved grace. And so will we sing in the heavenly Jerusalem a refrain like that of our choirs: Hail, thou ever blessed morn, Hail redemption's happy dawn, Sing through all Jerusalem: 'Christ is born in Bethlehem.' Alleluia." *Richard Gurgel, President, Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota*

[lutheransforlife.org/resources/life-quotes](http://lutheransforlife.org/resources/life-quotes)



Order LFL Resources

at [cph.org](http://cph.org)

SERVING THE LORD IN

# Latin America & the Caribbean: missionaryMAC



December 2025

News from Volunteer Coordinator Erin Mackenzie | [missionaryMAC.blogspot.com](http://missionaryMAC.blogspot.com) |  [erin.mackenzie5](https://www.facebook.com/erin.mackenzie5)

(If you received a hard copy of this and would like to help me be green and save on postage, please email [erin.mackenzie@lcms.org](mailto:erin.mackenzie@lcms.org).)

New York City trades grime for glitter this time of year: the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree, the bona fide toyland that is FAO Schwarz. And just think of the classic holiday films with an NYC skyline for a backdrop: *Elf*, *Home Alone 2*, *Eloise at Christmastime*, *Miracle on 34th Street*, *Serendipity*. Given the number of flights to and from JFK and EWR and the number of Dominicans who reduce the entire US to the Big Apple, you'd *think* it would figure into a list of the

### Top 5 Cities with the Most Dominicans Per Capita

Surprisingly, it doesn't! Instead, these top the list:

1. Lawrence, MA (52.1+%)
2. Hazelton, PA (45+%)
3. Perth Amboy, NJ (42.1%)
4. Haverstraw, NY (41.1%)
5. Patterson, NJ (27.6%)

## Clean Hands



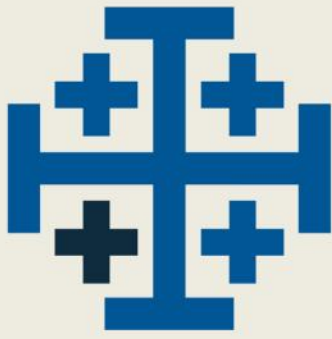
Some days, I spent hours in my kitchen, getting ready to host guests or take a dish (es) to an event, or meal prepping. When I do, I wash my hands often with the "Pumpkin Pecan Pie" hand soap I bought on impulse —after cracking an egg, crumbling feta, or, this time of year, kneading flour into sugar cookie dough. When I finally take a breather, my dry skin craves some hand lotion.

Just before Advent began, fellow missionary [Dana](#) hosted a ladies' event for missionaries and seminary wives at the regional office (pictured). Guided by a PowerPoint slideshow, we alternately meditated on several prophetic Psalms and sang Advent hymns. One such Psalm was Psalm 24, which ponders who is worthy to "ascend the hill of the Lord" and "stand in his holy place" (v. 3). The answer: "He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully" (v. 4). Dana had a whole slide dedicated to the Hebrew nuances of "clean" (empty, completely absolved, innocent, blameless) and "hands" (palm).

Even after a good scrub with the "Autumn Spice" soap in my master bathroom (I like fall, OK?), how often are my hands *unclean*? How often do they hold or touch things they shouldn't? How often do they neglect to do things they should? No amount of sickly sweet lather can wash away the filth of sin.

First century hygiene practices notwithstanding, our Savior's hands were metaphorically as clean as they come. Nevertheless, Roman soldiers drove nails through his undefiled palms. And yet, the resurrected Christ beckons his disciples—and us—"See my hands and my feet" (Luke 24:39). Look on them, and give thanks that because He was pierced for YOUR transgressions, YOU "will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of [your] salvation" (Psalm 24:5).

**Making  
Disciples  
for Life** 



### Praises and Petitions

1. Thanksgiving for the safe arrival of [Makia Adler](#) (Belize) and the [Rev. Jonathan Anderson](#) (Panama) to the DR for 4 mos. of orientation.
2. Thanksgiving for the confirmation of Santiago Christian School teacher Joseph Tan at my church in Licey al Medio, DR.
3. Thanksgiving for the installation of [Vicar Gavin Johnson](#) (DR) at Iglesia Luterana Pueblo Nuevo on 11/30.
4. For the [Wildauer](#) family (Belize), as Robin begins breast cancer treatment in the US.
5. For comfort in the wake of losing my 16 yr. old furry friend, Freddy.

### See Us After School...

...if you're one of the dozen or so kids registered for Concordia Lutheran School's pilot after school program, that is! After months of planning and consulting with parents, the initiative kicked off November 3. One logistical hiccup was transportation: the regular *guagua* driver didn't want to do a 2nd daily run. Taxis would add up too much, but thanks be to God a church member stepped up to help and the funds to compensate him fell into place. A typical school day ends at noon; participants in the *sala de tareas* get a hot lunch and guided, multidisciplinary yet Gospel-based programming that runs through 3 pm, Monday through Thursday. Though one of the classroom teachers (not currently a Lutheran but open to catechesis) is the paid lead, other staff can often be found volunteering for the pure joy of seeing children grow in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior. The trial period ends just before the Christmas break, at which time school, church, and mission leadership will powwow to discuss the viability of making the program a permanent fixture.



*Below, left:* Abutilon ("Chinese Lantern Plants") in Constanza. The base of the overlapping petals is pentagonal! *Below, center:* Thankful for friends who bake pull-apart cookies, decorate tiny



cardboard Christmas trees, eat ice cream, and watch Christmas movies with you. *Above, right:* The last photo taken of my sweet kitty (with my sweet fiancé), in October 2025.

### Quote of the Month

"Unless we make Christmas an occasion to share our blessings, all the snow in Alaska won't make it 'white.'"

– Bing Crosby

To support the LCMS through me, you may give a tax-deductible gift...

- **online**, securely from any device: [lcms.org/givenow/mackenzie](https://lcms.org/givenow/mackenzie);
- by **phone**: 1-888-930-4438 (donor care rep) or text **LCMSMACKENZIE** to 41-444;
- by **sending a check** (with "Mackenzie/Latin America" on the memo line) to:
  - ⇒ LCMS, PO Box 66861, St. Louis, MO 63166-6861; or
  - ⇒ Mission Central, 40718 Highway E 16, Mapleton, IA 51034.





## Birthdays & Anniversaries

**1**  
Nelson Akpabli-Tsigbe  
Hans Ferm

**2**  
Elena Scharlott

**3**  
Gail Schuster

**4**  
Doug McDowell

**5**  
TJ Marler  
Bob Watts

**6**  
Corie O'Neill  
Reece McMillen

**7**  
Chase Hemmer  
Andrew Saeger

**8**  
Andy Luetkemeier  
Joanna McDowell  
Sadie Schneider

**10**  
Nathan Eckhoff

**11**  
Patty Kespohl  
Brian Thieme

**12**  
Sophia LaFoy  
Terri Shank  
Stephanie Stansell

**15**  
John Banks  
Melba Hall  
Jordan Stambler

**16**  
Heather Asbeck  
Jon Harpert

**18**  
Jeffrey Arnall  
Nancy Chunn  
Josiah Thieme  
Keri Thoroughman

**19**  
Mallory Compas  
Emma Harlan-  
Raisch  
Larry McCoig

**20**  
Connie Coil

**22**  
Kimberly Cameron  
Denise Tackitt

**23**  
Debi Derendinger  
Colton Douglass  
Sophia Thompson

**24**  
Mya Monroe

**25**  
Jordan Bedsworth

**27**  
Emilee Buchheit

**28**  
JoAnn Schoenike

**29**  
Debbie Antel

**30**  
Wayne Armbrust

**31**  
Meredith Stone

Jon & Karly Berendzen ..... January 19, 2008  
Beau & Stephanie Baehman ..... January 20, 2006  
Chuck & Jessica Murphy ..... January 21, 2009  
Justin & Marilyn Ferris ..... January 22, 2021  
Bill & Joyce Raines ..... January 27, 1963  
Gary & Patty Kespohl ..... January 27, 1968

Dear Church Family,

**Please contact the Church Office when:**

- a member of your family is admitted to the hospital so visits can be made
- someone you know is very ill or has passed away
- you would like to be assigned a Stephen Caregiver to help you through a difficult time
- your class, board, or group would like to use the church for a meeting or event so it can be scheduled on the church calendar
- your contact information or address changes
- a new baby arrives in your family
- a member of your family leaves home for college, joins the military, or is getting married
- you would like to have a member call you to visit or assist you in some way
- you have a prayer request
- you would like to share your time and talents
- you feel the church can assist you in any way

# January 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>28</b> 8a Divine Service 930a Sun. School 1030a Divine Serv	<b>29</b> 530p Trustees 6p Divine Service	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> <b>New Year's Eve</b> 12p Divine Service 7p Divine Service	<b>1</b> <b>New Year's Day</b> <i>office closed</i>	<b>2</b> <b>Pastors' Day Off</b>	<b>3</b> 10a Organ Concert Rehearsal
Youth Germany Trip						
<b>4</b> 8a Divine Service 930a Sun. School 1030a Divine Serv +Board Member Installation 3pm Reed Organ Concert	<b>5</b> 9a Bible Study 6p Divine Service	<b>6</b> <b>Epiphany</b> 6p Epiphany Serv	<b>7</b> 9a LC Chapel	<b>8</b> 9a LC Chapel 930a Church Undecorating 545p Pickleball 7p GriefShare	<b>9</b> <b>Pastors' Day Off</b>	<b>10</b> 730a Words of Worship Initiative
Youth Germany Trip						
<b>11</b> <b>Life Sunday</b> 8a Divine Service 930a Sun. School 1030a Divine Serv 12p JCC	<b>12</b> 9a Bible Study 6p Divine Service	<b>13</b> 12p Worship Up- grades Comm. 530p Vesper Guild 545p Pickleball 630 BOD + Board Member Orien- tation	<b>14</b> 9a LC Chapel 930a MM Guild	<b>15</b> 9a LC Chapel 11a Communion @ Lenoir 545p Pickleball 6p Evangelism 7p GriefShare	<b>16</b> <b>Pastors' Day Off</b>	<b>17</b>
Germany	Pastor Thieme out of town					
<b>18</b> 8a Divine Service 930a Sun. School 1030a Divine Serv 12p Special AOV 12p JCC	<b>19</b> 6p Divine Service	<b>20</b> 545p Pickleball	<b>21</b> 9a LC Chapel	<b>22</b> 9a LC Chapel 545p Pickleball 6p Elders 7p GriefShare	<b>23</b> <b>Pastors' Day Off</b>	<b>24</b> 9a Beltz Birthday Party
Pastor Thieme out of town						
<b>25</b> 8a Divine Service 930a Sun. School 1030a Divine Serv 12p JCC	<b>26</b> 9a Bible Study 6p Divine Service	<b>27</b> 545p Pickleball	<b>28</b> 9a LC Chapel	<b>29</b> 9a LC Chapel 545p Pickleball 7p GriefShare	<b>30</b> <b>Pastors' Day Off</b>	<b>31</b>

Trinity Lutheran Church  
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**Rev. Brian Thieme, Pastor**  
**Rev. Joseph McCalley, Pastor**

**Divine Service:**

Sunday 8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.

Monday 6:00 p.m.

**Bible Study & Sunday School:**

Sunday 9:15 a.m.

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