



Holy Trinity United Methodist Church

The Sail

Our Vision: *"To love God, uplift people, inspire hope, and grow disciples of Jesus Christ in our community and everywhere we go!"*

December, 2024



Advent Is the Season of Endings and Beginnings

This fall, in our worship series Re-Shaped, we focused on preparing ourselves for change – on embracing change, which is inevitable, and letting it energize us toward new possibilities and new beginnings. We also focused on a new beginning for our world – a kindness revolution, with Christ at the center.

Unfortunately, during the Advent and Christmas seasons the secular world around us doesn't always encourage us to keep Christ at the center. Every year I send my annual email to Starbucks expressing my disapproval of their playing Christmas music and using Christmas cups beginning November 1. Local radio stations also begin playing round-the-clock Christmas music on that day! Even from a secular point of view, does it not take something away from the magic of Christmas when you have been celebrating for two months?

And for weeks I have been bombarded by emails and texts from retailers regarding Black Friday sales – Black Friday being the name we have given to the day after Thanksgiving, when we begin our Christmas shopping. While many people believe the term Black Friday finds its roots in the sense of black ink (verses red ink), meaning "showing a profit; not showing any losses," this isn't actually the case. Black Friday is also used to refer to September 24, 1869, the date of a financial panic in the US sparked by gold speculators. Historically, the term black has been associated with days of economic stress as opposed to days of booming commercial success. For the sake of your own economic well-being and inner peace – boycott Black Friday!

We have other Christmas preparations that are beautiful, but they may have very little to do with the birth of Jesus Christ.

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Pastor Leigh continued...

Buying, wrapping, cooking, decorating, sending cards – these are wonderful activities that families can share. But I urge us to also leave time for Advent – time to be still, find our inner peace and wait for the light of Christ to break through the darkness. The following poem by David Whyte speaks to just that.

Sweet Darkness

When your eyes are tired
the world is tired also.

When your vision has gone
no part of the world can find you.

Time to go into the dark
where the night has eyes
to recognize its own.

There you can be sure
you are not beyond love.

The dark will be your womb tonight.

The night will give you a horizon
further than you can see.

You must learn one thing:
the world was made to be free in.

Give up all the other worlds
except the one to which you belong.

Sometimes it takes darkness and the sweet
confinement of your aloneness to learn

anything or anyone
that does not bring you alive

is too small for you.

Advent is the season of endings and beginnings. As the calendar year comes to a close, a new church year begins. God encourages us to give up the things that we cling to in exchange for the hope that is to come – the next thing. Christ's birth ushers us into new ways of living and loving, while the world as we know it spins madly on. In that first Advent, Mary was surrounded by endings – large and small, personal and political. But Mary proclaimed hope in a God who was and is making all things new. Christ's birth offered a beautiful new beginning for shepherds and Magi alike, and all the while, King Herod tried to bring Christ's story to an end.

Continued above...

And still today, when we navigate seasons filled with endings and beginnings in an unpredictable and sometimes volatile world, we need to keep Christ's birth at the center, a light breaking through the darkness, illuminating our path as we step forward into the unknown.

Our Advent series, *New Beginnings*, encourages us to do just that. It is filled with blessings – with the scriptures and reminders we need to hear again and again as we begin a new season. These reminders root us in the fundamental truths of our faith. Many of them are life lessons we teach to children – lessons that adults continue to learn and relearn. Many resemble the traditional blessings we offer to our loved ones in special ceremonies like weddings, graduations, or baptisms. We all are invited to move through this Advent season as if we are entering a sacred new chapter, holding fast to the reminders that will strengthen us for the journey ahead. For no matter what we are facing, no matter what this new day brings, Christ is our center, and love is our beginning.



Vital Signs

Coming out of November, a month where we more closely examine our vital signs (attendance, giving and ministry,) I love how concerned we are about keeping Holy Trinity alive and strong. I can see that we genuinely care about this place and its community. Most of us remember days not that long ago when we had four or more classrooms of kids divided by age, vibrant and busy every Sunday morning. But in the past decade our kids and youth numbers have been declining. I have found that a surprising number of people still identify HT as their church, but haven't attended for a long time, possibly years. Others attend when there are no conflicts but feel forced to choose activities that used to avoid scheduling on Sunday mornings. As people stopped attending regularly, families who said they were otherwise happy here left because there were so few other young kids coming. New families who visited looked around and thought, "this is a nice place, but I want my kids to be somewhere other kids go."

I admit that at times part of me has despaired at this (and many other things,) but despair is not the way of God. When I am in my right mind, I trust that, despite all appearances, God has everything well in hand. It is all unfolding, just as it has since Eden. The greatest risk to us is forgetting our motivation and losing hope, which brings us back to the WHY questions: Why church and why Holy Trinity? My personal Why for Holy Trinity is that it has been here that I have learned to see others through the eyes of Jesus, and here that I have been able to learn and practice the Love God and Love Others commandments even when (especially when) it has been challenging. I have felt called here, and the more I showed up at Holy Trinity, actively prioritizing God and others, the more committed to this path and this community I feel. The consistency of showing up is very, very important. Once a person is acclimated to doing anything habitually, they care about doing it more. Relationships grow as shared experiences bind us together.

My personal Why for church in general is that pursuing a relationship with God and seeking healing for my soul through the Holy Spirit has sustained me

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through some terrible times. It continues to sustain me. Getting closer to God and learning the gospel of Jesus has saved my life. As the darkness in the world seems to grow it is more and more imperative that others believe and are sustained. While the question of how do we grow in terms of our "vital signs" is important, I think the more important question is how can we call in and embrace those who also need hope, who need help to find light in a world that seems full of darkness? We might take it for granted that our children and others around us already know that trust in God is life giving, but there are many who don't understand why people give up their Sunday mornings or who think of churches as places that practice more judgment than love. It is possible to care about our neighbors and to know peace, hope, love and joy without church, but in my opinion, without God at the center of an active and growing faith, that joy will be incomplete, and the experience of peace, hope and love will be more fragile. The vitality of faith, for some, can be a life-or-death matter.

Having our hope and our joy in God and trusting God's mysterious plan for this world (and for Holy Trinity,) can help us be open and free in sharing God's love with our children and our neighbors. We don't have to preach; we just live as people liberated from fear and from despair. And we can share that the source of our hope is God, revealed to us and reconciled to us through Jesus and alive in us through the Holy Spirit. We don't have to have all the answers, or any answers, but we can invite them to learn more, even as we continue to learn, practice our faith, stay connected and keep our vital signs strong.

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**Spiritual
Vital
Signs**



December Mission of the Month and Christmas Offering



Alight, established in 1978 as the American Refugee Committee, works alongside displaced people to co-create high-quality services and programs that address their needs. They refer to the displaced as their "customers" instead of "beneficiaries" as a reminder that their voices guide decisions.

Over 120 million people are currently displaced globally due to conflict, climate change, and social and economic exclusion. A majority of them are women and children, who face increased vulnerability.

Alight's mission is to build a meaningful life for and with the displaced. They address essential needs such as healthcare, clean water, shelter and protection as well as building a life filled with joy, dignity, connection, and purpose.

Alight takes a collaborative, human-centered approach. Unlike traditional humanitarian aid, they co-create solutions hand in hand with displaced communities, who know best what they need.

Alight provides strategic and administrative support to their affiliates, while they maintain their identity, leadership and unique capacity to do good. Together, they're unleashing abundance with communities around the world who have been displaced from their homes.

Their 2,300 humanitarians co-create solutions with and for more than 4 million people in over 20 countries every year. They do this by working closely with them to address their needs, developing local partnerships to build resilience, and amplifying the efforts of donors who make abundance happen.



Thank you for donating
**\$1,174 to Minnesota Council
of Churches Refugee
Services as well as many
winter coats for our coat
drive during the
month of October.**



Holy Trinity has adopted four families in our area for CAP Agency's Hope for the Holidays. Please sign up and return the UNWRAPPED gifts by 12pm Sunday, Dec. 8th. <https://bit.ly/HopeForTheHolidays24>

Some reminders...

- keep gifts appropriate for the age of the family member
- each child has two gift suggestions, stay within a \$50 range per individual--not per gift (and you can purchase more than the items listed.)
- if you can't find the suggested items please use your best judgment for a substitute or gift card
- gift cards should go in an envelope with the FAMILY NUMBER & NAME of the recipient
- this is a confidential program; both sponsors and recipients remain anonymous
- return UNWRAPPED gifts tagged with name and family number to HTUMC by 12pm Dec. 8.

If all the gift options have been taken, please consider donating wrapping paper and tape (no sign up necessary) and/or bringing an undesignated toy for CAP Agency

There will be labeled boxes outside the sanctuary for each Hope for the Holidays family, for wrapping paper/tape and for CAP undesignated gifts

ALL ITEMS NEEDED BY 12PM, DECEMBER 8TH.

Core Team Corner and Announcements...

The Core Team met Monday, November 25. Highlights of the discussion included:

- Finance: It is early yet in the pledging season and 25 pledges have been received (last year a total of 62 pledges came in.) Folks are encouraged to fill out a pledge card (please contact the office if you have not received one or lost yours), and to please fulfill their 2024 pledged amount, if they are able. Any gift encourages us in ministry and congregational care. The team agreed to transfer \$13K from the Building Fund, depleting the interest accrued to cover year end expenses, including apportionments.
- Concerns about the sound system have been increasing, from both the congregation and people who use the system. A team will be assembled to consider options.
- Processes for connecting with visitors and inactive members was discussed, with a plan for creating a welcome package for new attendees, and encouragement given to people concerned about inactive members to reach out to them personally and invite them back for fellowship, events or worship, because a personal call from a friend or acquaintance is more meaningful than a call from a stranger, even a pastor.
- The Visioning workshop originally planned for Jan 12 is being put on hold while a new resource is considered. We are still planning on a January session, probably on an evening or a Saturday. More details will be shared as the plan solidifies.

The next Core Team meeting will be Mon. Jan 6 at 6:30pm. Full minutes: <https://www.htumc.org/core-team/>

Holy Trinity's **United Women in Faith** recently hosted the Lydia Zion UWFaith unit at a Fall Get-Together. Besides gathering for a lasagna luncheon, we donated specific items for Emma Norton residents and enjoyed a presentation from Shawna Nelsen-Wills, Advancement Director at Emma Norton. It took several carloads to get all the donations over to Emma Norton – thanks to all!



Holiday SHOP & SWAP

PRIOR LAKE BUY NOTHING COMMUNITY

On **Saturday, December 7th** we are opening our fellowship hall to the community for a Buy Nothing Holiday Swap & Shop Event! All are welcome!

A fun day of swapping and shopping for the holidays! Bring your new or gently used toys, winter outerwear and winter holiday decorations to share with the Buy Nothing community. Items brought should fit in one of the following categories:

1. Infant & Toddler - toys, gifts & outerwear
2. Younger Child (4yo-8yo)- toys, gifts & outerwear
3. Older Child (9yo-13yo) - toys, gifts & outerwear
4. Teen - gifts & outerwear
5. Family Friendly books/puzzles/games
6. Winter Holiday Decorations & Gift Wrapping Supplies

Drop off times are 9am-1:30pm
Swap & Shop times are 1pm - 4pm

This is a totally free event for everyone participating! Please feel free to bring items and/or shop alongside the community.
Any items left over after the event will be donated.

Church Announcements...

United Women in Faith CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Tuesday, December 10 at 11:30am

-Dangerfield's-

1583 1st Ave E, Shakopee



Lunch at your own expense.

Reservations required – by December 3

Please contact Sharon Dougherty by email at sdsrdougherty@gmail.com or call/text at 612-280-2103.

One Table Event—Sunday, December 15

Our Inclusion focus for Fall is One Table/Cultural Awareness. Our tradition of communion in church actually comes from the One Table tradition during Jesus' time. The bread and the wine that Jesus shared with his disciples during what we now call the Last Supper were actually an integral part of the Passover tradition.

We would like to invite all of you to attend and hopefully participate in our One Table Event right after worship on Sunday, December 15th. We invite you to bring a dish from your culture (or anyone else's culture for that matter) and spend time with others sharing your own immigrant experience. Please be ready to share recipes and stories. We are all parts of many communities, including the community of our own heritage. We hope you can join us!



Please submit your 2025 pledge card (even if you give electronically) if you haven't already done so. We have only received 25 pledges to date.



Christmas Eve Services

December 24 @ 5:00pm — Traditional service featuring special music from our Bell Choir, a festive Children's Time, Holy Communion, and a traditional candlelight closing. This service will be live-streamed.

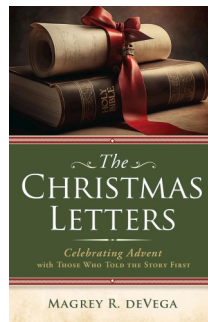
December 24 @ 10:00pm — Late Night Christmas Eve service featuring special music by the Chancel Choir, Holy Communion, and a traditional candlelight closing. This service will not be live-streamed.

Lakefront Bible Study

December 3 & 17

from 1:00-2:30pm

Lakefront Plaza Commons Room



The group is currently studying *The Christmas Letters* by Magrey DeVega.

This is a non-denominational group.

All are welcome! Call Barb Bollinger with questions at 612-670-1847.



Trinity Readers

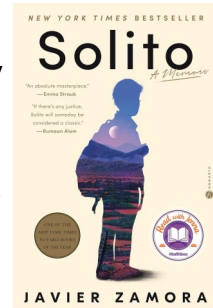
Tuesday, December 31

2:00pm Church Library

If you enjoy reading and discussing books, join us!

The book for December: *Solito: A Memoir* by Javier Zamora

A young poet tells the inspiring story of his migration from El Salvador to the United States at the age of nine in this "gripping memoir" of bravery, hope, and finding family.



Pastor Leigh will lead an advent study on *The Christmas Letters* by Magrey DeVega **Wednesdays from 5:30-6:30pm at the church, starting Dec. 4.** Bishop Lanette will also be leading the same study online on Tuesdays, Nov. 26-Dec. 17 from 7-8:15pm. If you haven't already ordered a book from the church, you will need to purchase one on your own.

Follow this link to register for the online study...
<https://www.minnesotaumc.org/2024-advent-study>

Inclusion Starts with I By Carol Ottoson

My husband Otto (Keith) volunteers at the American Swedish Institute (ASI) each week throughout the year. ASI is perhaps best noted for its Christmas Exhibition, where each Scandinavian country, including the Sami culture, creates a room that is linked to a theme (this year is a little different than their usual fare, but that has been the history). In 2020 ASI was shut down due to Covid, and in 2021, with Covid still limiting their ability to launch their usual “show,” the Swedish Institute did something completely different, completely beautiful, and completely perfect for a world coming out of a deadly pandemic. They put up a HUGE table in the third-floor ballroom, and each country and the Sami culture had at least one place at the table with place settings, a seasonal dish, descriptions of some of their cultural traditions, and a very strong feeling of unity. It was a brilliant One Table Event.

The goal of the I Team for the third quarter has been to make sure that we invite all for a place at the table. Our focus for this quarter has been to educate us all on immigrants, refugees, migrants, and undocumented immigrants. Members of the I Team researched these four aspects of immigration and shared their information in October and November, both during a church service and with a bulletin insert. We know that in both the Old and New Testament, we are actually commanded to welcome the immigrant – sometimes called stranger, sometimes called alien, and sometimes called foreigner.

Old Testament verses include a passage from Deuteronomy 10:19 which says, “You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” Deuteronomy continues in 27:19 with “Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow.” Psalm 146:9 further states, “For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors forever and ever.”

Certainly the New Testament adds even more admonishments for us to extend love to all. Colossians 3:11 gives one excellent reason why by saying. “Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.” Jesus commands us to love others throughout his teachings, especially in Matthew 25:35 and 40: “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me . . . Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of my brethren you did it to me.”

Finally, Jesus gives the greatest commandment of all in Matthew 25:40. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” We are commanded to love all, especially the last, the lost, and the least. As calls for mass deportations, for removing rights for the LGBTQ+ community, especially the transgender community, and as neo-Nazi behavior is on the rise again in this country, we, as loving Christians, need to show our love for all. We are now in Advent Season, a time for celebrating Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy. Let us remember the lessons that Jesus taught us. Everyone deserves a place at the table. I hope that you can join us for our One Table celebration following our church service on December 15. Bring a dish from your culture (or anyone else’s culture for that matter) and spend time with others sharing your own immigrant experience. Keep your mind and hearts open to all as we celebrate the birth of Christ. Remember, **Inclusion Starts with I.**





December 2024

Holy Trinity UMC

(952) 447-2990

office@htumc.org

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
1 9:30am Worship/ Live-Stream 10:30am I-Team Meeting	2 7pm Al-Anon at the parsonage	3  <i>Advent Bible Study</i> 1-2:30pm Lakefront Bible Study 7pm CoDA at the parsonage	4  <i>Advent Bible Study</i> 5:30-6:30pm Advent Bible Study at church 4pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	5 6pm Veterans AA at the parsonage	6	7  Holiday Swap & Shop 9am-1:30pm (drop off) 1-4 (shop)
8 9:30am Worship/ Live-Stream Hope for the Holidays gifts due by 12:00pm	9 7pm Al-Anon at the parsonage	10  United Women in Faith 11:30am UW Faith Christmas Lunch at Dangerfield's 7pm CoDA at the parsonage	11  <i>Advent Bible Study</i> 5:30-6:30pm Advent Bible Study at church 4pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	12 6pm Veterans AA at the parsonage	13	14
15 9:30am Worship/ Live-Stream 10:30am One Table Event 	16 7pm Al-Anon at the parsonage	17 1-3:15pm Quilters  <i>Advent Bible Study</i> 1-2:30pm Lakefront Bible Study 7pm CoDA at the parsonage	18  <i>Advent Bible Study</i> 5:30-6:30pm Advent Bible Study at church 4pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	19 6pm Veterans AA at the parsonage	20	21
22 9:30am Worship/ Live-Stream	23 7pm Al-Anon at the parsonage	24  5:00pm & 10:00pm Worship Services	25  Merry Christmas	26 6pm Veterans AA at the parsonage	27	28
29 9:30am Worship/ Live-Stream	30 7pm Al-Anon at the parsonage	31  2:00pm Trinity Readers 7pm CoDA at the parsonage				

Holy Trinity United Methodist Church



16150 Arcadia Avenue SE
Prior Lake, Minnesota, 55372

Worship: 9:30am (in-person & online)

Pastor: Rev. Leigh Brown
pastor@htumc.org

Family Ministries: Lynnette Dobberpuhl
(651) 492-8188 kidsandfamilies@htumc.org

Church Admin: Tina Chant
(952) 447-2990 office@htumc.org

Church website: www.htumc.org

December

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