



TRINITY STEEPLE NOTES

March-April 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!

O, LOVE, HOW DEEP



As we transitioned to Lent, we heard the familiar tune DEO GRACIAS in several iterations. First, we sang it together in “O Wonderous Image, Vision Fair” as our hymn of the day on Transfiguration Sunday. Then the choir sang a setting of it in Carl Schalk’s “O, Love, How Deep” for Ash Wednesday and the first Sunday in Lent.

Finally, I will perform a large concert work by John Weaver, utilizing the tune for a set of variations.

I love using this tune as a thread between seasons, moving into and/or out of Lent. The text of O, Love, How Deep recounts Christ’s life and sacrifice for us, and set to the delicious rhythm and minor key, it sets us on a dance of contemplation. The dance-like rhythm also links us back to Advent, which shares Lent’s penitential nature and is filled with dance-metered hymns.

Originally known as the Agincourt Carol, the tune we sing was composed in 15th century England. While our modern use of the word “carol” refers to a Christmas hymn, in medieval Europe a carol was also a song used to commemorate a momentous occasion.

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PRAYING WITH OUR WHOLE SELVES

Join Pastor Hans as we conclude our detailed walk through the Lord's Prayer. Come with your family to learn more about our faith's most important prayer.

MARCH 1 FORGIVE US... AS WE FORGIVE

This week we'll wrestle gently and honestly with the words, "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us." Together we'll reflect on God's abundant mercy, why forgiveness can be so hard, and how grace can set us free. Our craft will be a "forgiveness paper chain" that names both hurts and hopes, later shaped into a cross or heart as a visual reminder of God's reconciling love. The session will be accessible for children while still offering depth for adults.

MARCH 8 DELIVER US FROM EVIL

We conclude our series with "Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil." Using Psalm 23 and Romans 8, we'll talk about the real fears people carry at different ages and the promise that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ. Participants will create simple "God is with us" prayer cards or mini-booklets to take home as tools for prayer in anxious times. We'll finish by praying the Lord's Prayer slowly and thoughtfully one more time, having walked through it line by line together.

TRINITY YOUTH SOUP FOR SERVICE!

2026 SUMMER SERVICE/LEARNING TRIP FUNDRAISER

On June 14, Trinity youth and chaperones will embark on a journey to Baltimore, MD for a week of learning and service. To help offset the cost of our trip, our youth and families will be making quarts of soup that will be available on March 29, just in time for Holy Week.

Order forms will be available in the narthex and are due by March 22.

2026 LENTEN OFFERINGS

Through our special Lenten offerings, Trinity continues to support the ministry of the **LightHouse Women's and Children's Center** as we fulfill our pledge to sponsor a room. LightHouse Center provides a safe home and holistic support for women and their kids as they work towards healthy, independent living.

THE DISCIPLINE OF LENT

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to a discipline that contends against evil and resists whatever leads us away from love of God and neighbor. Pastor Hans and Deaconess Deborah invite you to explore the discipline of Lent—self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love—strengthened by the gifts of word and sacrament.

MARCH 15

PRAYER & FASTING

Chocolate, Alcohol, Social Media, etc. These are only some of the things people choose to give up during Lent. What is fasting and why does it matter? Why do Lutherans fast even though it is not required? Come explore the history and purpose of prayerful fasting.

MARCH 22

SACRIFICIAL GIVING & WORKS OF LOVE

“Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:7

What is sacrificial giving and why does it matter? What do works of love look like in today’s world? Come share your experiences and ideas that may inspire others to do likewise.

MARCH 29

PALM SUNDAY PRAYER WALK

We gather at 9:00 a.m. in the Hintz Room to write prayers for our community and the world, at 9:15 we embark on a brief walking journey, praying our prayers and shouting “Hosanna! Hosanna!” while sharing palms with our neighbors (including the Subway on Penn Street!)

APRIL 5

EASTER SUNDAY!

Celebrate the Resurrection together. There will be coffee available for fellowship prior to our festive worship service. Stay after and participate in our Intergenerational Egg Hunt.

Stay Tuned to Trinity Tidings for our April/May Trinity Together Forum topics.



Matthias Grünewald's Crucifixion from the Isenheim Altarpiece gives "O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High" an image with the same theological weight the text is trying to carry: love that is not an idea,

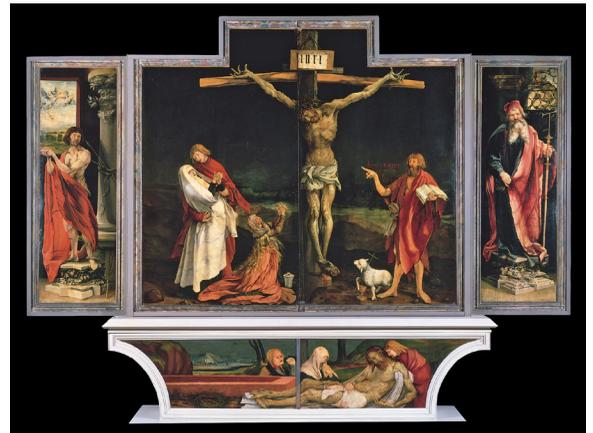
not a mood, not a general benevolence, but a love that enters the human condition completely and bears it from the inside.

The hymn moves through the arc of Christ's life—his coming among us, his sharing our ordinary days, his choosing the path that leads to rejection and suffering—again and again insisting that this is what divine love does. Grünewald's crucified Christ embodies that verb-like character of love. The painting refuses to let the cross be perfect and tidy, as is common in art from the period. Instead, it shows a body strained, exposed, and unmistakably mortal. In other words, it shows love not as a neat sentiment but as pained solidarity: God does not merely gaze upon human pain; God draws near enough to be wounded by it.

That is precisely where the hymn's superlatives—how deep, how broad, how high—stop being poetic exaggeration and become a claim about reality. "Deep" is the descent into flesh, limitation,

vulnerability. "Broad" is the scope of that embrace: not a select circle, but the whole mess of human life, including fear, illness, shame, and grief. "High" is not a denial of suffering, but the strange height love reaches by passing through death into life. Grünewald paints the "deep" with almost unbearable clarity, and, paradoxically, that very clarity makes room for the "high": if love truly goes this far down, then nothing is outside its reach.

The painting also sharpens a subtle note in the hymn: Christ's love is personal without being private. The cross is not merely an example to



admire, it is a gift given for others—for all of us. In the Crucifixion, the viewer is not allowed to stand at a safe distance. The scale and intensity pull us into a kind of moral and spiritual proximity—an invitation to receive what the hymn proclaims: that the center of Christian faith is not our ascent toward God, but God's self-giving descent toward us.

Pondered alongside the hymn in worship, the image can do what good liturgical art always does: it slows us down. It keeps the congregation from singing familiar lines too quickly, as if they were only comforting. It makes the words costly again—love made flesh, love enduring, love given—and then, having told the truth about the cost, it makes the hymn’s joy sturdier: not optimism, but resurrection-shaped confidence that love has gone all the way down and still holds.

-Pastor Hans Becklin

O, LOVE, HOW DEEP *continued*

In this case, it was written to celebrate Henry V’s victory in the Battle of Agincourt during the 100 Years War between England and France. As we sing verses for the hymn, the tune was similarly used for the verses depicting the King’s victory. However, tune name, DEO GRACIAS, comes from the choral refrain that acted as an introduction and interlude to the verses. Schalk’s anthem mimics this with trumpet interludes between verses.

A Sample of the Agincourt Carol text:

Intro/Chorus

Deo gratias Anglia redde pro victoria!
[Give thanks, England, to God for victory!]

Verse

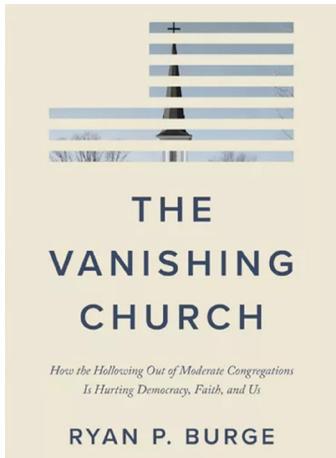
Owre Kyng went forth to Normandy
 With grace and myght of chyvalry
 Ther God for hym wrought mervelusly;
 Wherefore Englonde may call and cry

Chorus

Deo gratias!
Deo gratias Anglia redde pro victoria!

The English text we sing today (O, Love, How Deep) was translated by Benjamin Webb in the 19th century from the original 14th century German text attributed to Thomas á Kempis. Webb, born in London, was a priest who received his education at Trinity College, Cambridge. Trinity is where one of two 15th century manuscripts containing the carol reside. Known as the Trinity Carol Roll, it includes thirteen carols and is one of the earliest examples of English polyphonic music. The union of Webb’s 18th century translation and the 15th century carol manuscript lets us lift our voices across time as we 21st-century Christians continue to raise its glorious strain. Deo Gratias!

-Dr. Cameron Lee Wentz, Cantor



I'm delighted that Pr. Becklin invited me to review this fascinating and timely study and encourage you to have a look at it.

It's no secret that, over the last four decades, 'mainline' Protestant churches

(Methodist, Presbyterian, UCC, Lutheran, and Episcopal) have lost significant membership and influence in the United States, as the so-called "evangelical/born-again" churches have grown in visibility and power. Author Ryan Burge analyzes this dramatic shift, its causes and consequences, in his recent book, "The Vanishing Church--How the Hollowing Out of Moderate Congregations is Hurting Democracy, Faith and Us." (Brazos Press) Citing a host of studies and including many fascinating graphs, he describes how mainline churches of the past were more moderate politically, welcoming a diversity of opinions, with the likelihood of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents sitting side-by-side in the same pew. While discussion of social concerns and needs might have been included in sermons and forums, partisan politics or divisive rhetoric was rarely evidenced.

In recent decades, however, 'evangelicals' have taken center stage with a strident right-of-center political view that allows for little diversity or debate. They have allied with like-minded Roman Catholics to oppose abortion and homosexuality, making them the primary or even sole issues in voting decisions. That's resulted in large numbers of people choosing church membership based on political affiliation or choosing not to belong to a church because of the extremist positions prominent in public media. (Burge documents that people with no religious affiliation have ballooned from just 5% of the population in 1976 to 28% in 2020.)

Bad news: In many ways, religion in America has become more 'tribal identity' than various communities of a shared faith. Tribalism breeds rancor and fear of the 'other.' Good news: We may not actually be as polarized as the 24/7 media often portrays it. In fact, far more of us are likely somewhere in the center than at the fringes. But it's the fringes that make the headlines.

Burge sees the hollowing out of mainline congregations as detrimental to our well-being as a nation, depleting moderating influences and 'safe spaces' for diversity and respectful debate. When extremism holds sway, democracy is threatened and faith is compromised, so he encourages moderate congregations to assert their importance

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as places of worship and welcome. He concludes the book with this affirmation: “People gathering under one roof to sing together, pray together, and work in common cause to create a better community and a better society will certainly move us closer to the ideals that were set forth by the Founding Fathers of our country...The fate and future of American democracy may be at stake.”

-Fred Opalinski

Ryan P. Burge is Professor of Practice at the Danforth Center on Religion and Politics at Washington University. The author of several books, he's been featured on "60 Minutes" and has written for the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and Politico. He was the pastor of an American Baptist church for over 17 years and lives in Mt Vernon, IL.

SHARE YOUR REVIEW IN STEEPLE NOTES

Have you read an interesting book recently that you think would interest the congregation at Trinity? Have you recently seen a movie that you can connect to our Christian faith and practice?

Write to Matt Mellen, Editor of Steeple Notes, or Pr. Hans Becklin, to propose your topic. We'd love to include your review in an upcoming issue!

SURPRISE!

INTERGENERATIONAL EASTER EGG HUNT AFTER WORSHIP ON APRIL 5

Just as the joy of the resurrection was a surprise to the women at the tomb, the Trinity Easter Egg Hunt will surprise people of all ages.

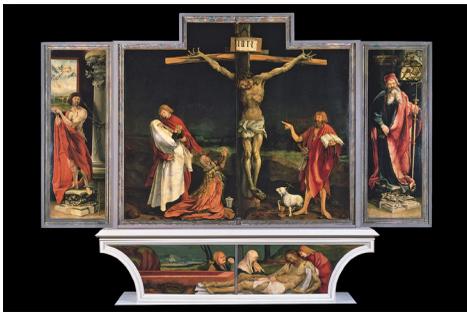
In the past, our hunt was for young children; older youth hid eggs full of candy and small gifts. This year, the eggs will also contain surprises for older youth and adults. We will gather in the Hintz Room after worship to begin the hunt together.

(Please wait for Deaconess Deborah to join you.)

Donations of candy and small trinkets (to fit inside the eggs) are welcome and appreciated.

They can be dropped off in the Bard House at any time.

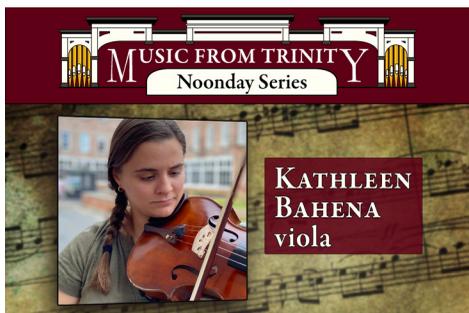
STEEPLE NOTES EVENT CALENDAR



MIDWEEK LENTEN WORSHIP

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 11, 18 AT 12:05 PM

Our theme will be “Questions Jesus Asks”, integrating the gospel story with personal reflections from Pastor Hans.



KATHLEEN BAHENA, VIOLA

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25 AT 12:05 PM

You’ve seen her leading the Berks Sinfonietta or performing with the Reading Symphony, but you won’t want to miss Kathleen Stevens Bahena in this intimate solo spotlight.

Kathleen is currently completing her graduate residency at Temple University under the mentorship of the Philadelphia

Orchestra’s Kerri Ryan. Before she graduates this spring, she is bringing a stunning program to the stage that balances power and beauty—from the fiery *Legenda* by Wieniawski to the haunting, modern echoes of Pulitzer Prize-winner *Caroline Shaw*.

Come support a local educator and performer who gives so much to our community through the Orchestra Zone and Temple Music Prep.

AMERICA CELEBRATES 250 CONCERT

READING CHORAL SOCIETY AND THE RINGGOLD BAND

SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 4PM AT SCOTTISH RITE CATHEDRAL

Together with the Ringgold Band, Reading Choral Society and Music Director Dr. Graham Bier will celebrate America’s 250th anniversary with patriotic music, including featured piece “A Testament of Freedom - Writings of Thomas Jefferson” by Randall Thompson.

Tickets in advance (\$15 adults, \$10 students) are available online using the QR code or from RCS singers Rachel Gambone, Matt Hayes, Pat McMahon, and Fred Opalinski. Tickets at the door are \$20 for adults and \$10 students.



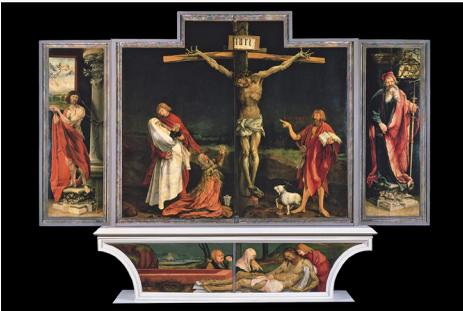
STEEPLE NOTES EVENT CALENDAR



SUNDAY OF THE PASSION / PALM SUNDAY

SUNDAY, MARCH 29 AT 10:00 AM

During the Trinity Together, join Dcs. Deborah and Pastor Hans for a short prayer walk and procession throughout downtown Reading. At 10:00, worship will be focused on the palm procession and the premiere of Dr. Wentz's choral settings paired with St. Matthew's Passion.



HOLY WEEK MIDDAY WORSHIP

MONDAY, TUESDAY, AND WEDNESDAY AT 12:05 PM

Our theme will be "Questions Jesus Asks", integrating the gospel story with personal reflections from Pastor Hans.



MAUNDY THURSDAY

THURSDAY, APRIL 2 AT 7:30 PM

We mark a high-point of Jesus' earthly ministry with his institution the Eucharist, washing of his disciples' feet, and his command to love one another. Dcs. Deborah will preach at this choral Eucharist, and we will conclude with the stripping of the altar. Music provided by the Trinity Choir.

STEEPLE NOTES EVENT CALENDAR



GOOD FRIDAY

FRIDAY, APRIL 3 AT 12:00 PM

We gather at 12 noon, the time when Jesus was crucified, for a service centered on the combination of bitterness and glory that emanates from Jesus' trial and crucifixion.

This service will last around one hour and will include the solemn reproaches, the bidding prayer, the reading of St. Luke's passion, and a sermon from Pastor Hans.



EASTER SUNDAY

SUNDAY, APRIL 5 AT 10:00 AM

This service will feature The Mixed Ensemble, Trinity Choir, and Trinity Ringers with anthems by Mark Miller and Elaine Hagenberg.



KUTZTOWN UNIVERSITY CHOIR

SUNDAY, APRIL 26 AT 4:00 PM

The Kutztown University Choir will present a spring concert under the direction of Dr. Derrick Thompson. The choir is composed of students across majors and has performed across the east coast and premiered new works. We will be partnering with the Thomas Ford campus of Reading School District to provide our most vulnerable students with needed support.

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EASTER FLOWERS AND WORLD HUNGER GIFTS 2026

We invite you to support Easter Sunday flowers and the ELCA's World Hunger program. You may bring your flowers home after Easter Sunday worship or share them to be delivered to homebound members and/or planted to beautify Trinity's courtyard. Donations of any amount are appreciated.

You may contribute in honor of or in memory of someone you love. Gifts will be acknowledged in Trinity publications. Use the form below and send it with your gift to Trinity's office no later than **March 22, 2026**. May your Easter be blessed with the love and peace of Christ.

\$ _____ Easter Flowers

\$ _____ ELCA World Hunger

Given by _____

In honor of _____

In memory of _____

_____ I want to bring my flowers home on Easter Sunday.

_____ I want to share my flowers with homebound members and Trinity's courtyard garden.

MARCH BROADCAST SCHEDULE

SUNDAYS

6:00 PM

WORLD VIEWS

Hindu Temple Ritual and Practice

6:30 PM

MUSIC FROM TRINITY

O, Love, How Deep

7:00 PM

TRINITY WORSHIP SERVICE

WEDNESDAYS

4:00 PM

TRINITY WORSHIP SERVICE

5:00 PM

MUSIC FROM TRINITY

O, Love, How Deep

5:30 PM

WORLD VIEWS

Hindu Temple Ritual and Practice

APRIL BROADCAST SCHEDULE

SUNDAYS

6:00 PM

WORLD VIEWS

Antisemitism Past and Present

6:30 PM

MUSIC FROM TRINITY

Benjamin Small, saxophone

7:00 PM

TRINITY WORSHIP SERVICE

WEDNESDAYS

4:00 PM

TRINITY WORSHIP SERVICE

5:00 PM

MUSIC FROM TRINITY

Benjamin Small, saxophone

5:30 PM

WORLD VIEWS

Antisemitism Past and Present

TRINITY TV

Trinity broadcasts can be watch on Comcast Channel 190. We also stream our worship service live on Sunday mornings to YouTube and Facebook.

Past **Music From Trinity** programs, **Beneath the Steeple** episodes, and **Worship/Music** clips can be found on:

YouTube



Facebook

