



TRINITY STEEPLE NOTES

May-June 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!

JOURNEY TO GUATEMALA



Hogar Miguel Magone Chapel under construction in 2007

RETURN TO HOGAR MIGUEL MAGONE

From 2007-2009, Trinity sponsored intergenerational groups to serve in Guatemala. In 2007 we served at Hogar Miguel Magone, a home for children in the small village of Aguacate on the outskirts of Mixco, between Guatemala City and Antigua.

Our service included sorting clothing donations, playing with the children, and helping build a chapel. Other years we helped build a slide at a Lutheran school, provided medical care, and distributed donations of clothing and shoes in a remote village.

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TRINITY TOGETHER SUNDAY FORUM AT 9:00 AM

APRIL 26

PR. HANS PRESENTS THE DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

Join Pastor Hans for the first of three forums on Trinity's proposed 2026–2031 Strategic Plan. We will explore what brought us to this moment and the three-part vision for Trinity's next generation.

MAY 3

PR. HANS CONTINUES PRESENTING THE DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's forum focuses on the new programs and rhythms at the heart of Trinity's proposed Strategic Plan: the Gather formation events, the Discover Trinity membership pathway, the Circles program, and more. Join Pastor Hans to hear how Trinity's weekly and quarterly life will look and feel different starting in 2027, and to ask your questions before the congregational meeting on Trinity Sunday, May 31.

MAY 10

PR. HANS FINISHES PRESENTING THE DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

In the third and final forum, Pastor Hans and the Vestry will walk through the financial framework, the planned giving campaign, and the accountability structures that will keep the Strategic Plan honest and actionable over five years.

MAY 17

DR. MARTHA GOOD PRESENTS ON TRINITY'S SUPPORT OF THOMAS FORD SCHOOL

Trinity has long been committed to supporting education in the city of Reading. This year we chose to support the work of the Red Knight Accelerated Academy at Thomas Ford. Dr. Good will present on the state of the school and the difference our support has made throughout the year.

From May 24th onward, Sunday Forum will be on Summer Break. Look for new opportunities to engage with Pr. Hans and Dcs. Deborah starting in the fall!

Full details will be announced soon, but are pending the progress of our restoration project.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING ON MAY 31ST!

Following our longstanding tradition, Trinity will hold its Annual Meeting on Trinity Sunday, which falls on May 31st this year. We will receive reports from our ministers, Vestry, staff, and committees as well as take action on the draft Strategic Plan. Those new to Trinity may be surprised by the midyear meeting—note that we also hold an annual budget meeting in December for the purpose of considering financials and approving the budget for the following year.

Following the meeting we will have a festive, hearty Coffee & Conversation in the Hintz Room.

ATTENTION GRADUATES! (HIGH SCHOOL/COLLEGE/POST GRAD)

We would love to celebrate you and your accomplishments! Please contact Deaconess Deborah by June 4th with your name, school from which you are graduating, and future plans so we can share with our congregation.

EDUCATION ASSISTANCE APPLICATION UPDATE

The committee is currently making revisions to the online form we used last year. They anticipate the form will be ready for use on May 1. Look for an update in *Trinity Tidings*.

TRINITY PROUD! READING PRIDE FESTIVAL SUNDAY, JULY 19 11AM-5PM

Trinity will once again have a booth at the Reading Pride Festival, held at Jim Dietrich Park. Use the QR code below to learn more.

We will be offering something new this year:

Trinity Story Time – where kids and adults can hear an uplifting story honoring the worth of all God's people.



Volunteers who like to read and those who want to represent our congregation are very welcome. Opportunities to sign up will be forthcoming in *Trinity Tidings*.

TRINITY YOUTH HEADING TO BALTIMORE TO LEARN AND SERVE

From June 14 – 19, youth and adults from Trinity will be traveling to Charm City. We will be joining another youth group from North Carolina and staying at Breath of God Lutheran Church on the east side of Baltimore.

Thank you to everyone who supported our Soup's On FUNdraiser. Please keep us and the people we will serve in your prayers as we prepare for the journey.

Good News & Gatherings continues on page 13

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A part of my heart has remained there when I remember the faces of the children and families and hold them in my prayers.



Child in Aguacate

This past Lent I had the privilege to join an intergenerational group of Lutheran church leaders and their families to return to Guatemala to see various ministries including Hogar Miguel Magone! It was humbling to see it 19 years later where the completed chapel is surrounded by



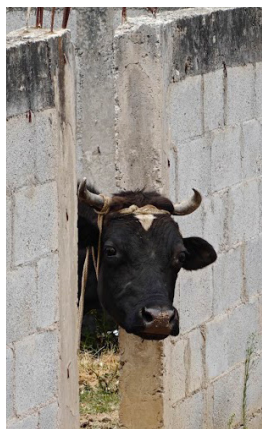
Hogar Miguel Magone Chapel

several new structures including a music center and a building where children meet with trained counselors to help them cope with the trauma they experience in their everyday lives. The director of the home, Karen Rodas, whom we met way back in 2007 continues to lead and develop the ministry which now includes a home for girls and incorporates learning trades such as welding and a new sewing room!



Hogar Miguel Magone Sewing Room

The village of Aguacate hasn't changed much in 19 years. People still live in homes with no running water, dirt floors and corrugated tin roofs. And



Life in Aguacate

while there is no tuition to attend school, families are required to pay for uniforms and all supplies. And if there is money to send children to school, the boys take precedence.



Hope Academy from the 2nd floor

WE ARE... HOPE ACADEMY!

“I am strong and intelligent! I am brave!
I am unique and creative!
We are hope! We are the light of the word
creating a brighter future! We are an integral
part of the global community!
We are Hope Academy!”



Hope Academy

Every day at school the young girls at Hope Academy in Santa Lucia Milpas Altas, Guatemala, chant these words in English and then in Spanish. Living in a society where women are deemed less than, they are consistently hearing messages of personal value, empowerment, and strength. Hope Academy is the only Bilingual STEAM school for girls in the entire country. Girls from the home as well as the village of Aguacate ride a school bus or van to attend.

Our small group was welcomed to each classroom and treated to traditional dances, songs including *This Little Light of Mine*, and a dramatic presentation of *Blancanieves and the 7 dwarves!* The school is completely bilingual, preparing the girls for future work.



Classroom Presentaion

Time and again, studies have shown that when we empower and educate women in communities in need, their societies transform, their economies improve, overall health and wellness increases, and rates of poverty and violence plummet.

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There is a particular kind of hope that comes not from wishful thinking,

but from an honest assessment from looking clearly at who you are, what you have been given, and what might yet be possible. That is the hope animating Trinity as we prepare to present our Strategic Plan in preparation for our 275th Anniversary.

We have spent the better part of two years in careful discernment. Cottage meetings, Vestry retreats, staff conversations, financial analyses, and prayerful reflection have all contributed to a document that is not a wish list, but a working roadmap—a five-year plan grounded in Trinity’s particular gifts, our remarkable heritage, and the challenges and opportunities that lie before us.

And the opportunities are real.

Consider where we stand today. We have just authorized a \$3,000,000 building restoration, a vote of confidence in this sacred place that has shaped the spiritual life of Berks County for over two hundred years. The complete renewal of our 1791 sanctuary, starting not from one or two evident problems but from a comprehensive

assessment, is not merely maintenance.

It is a statement of faith in the future of this congregation, one of American Lutheranism’s most consequential. It says: *we intend to be here, and to matter, for generations to come.*

At the same time, our congregation has experienced genuine renewal. Worship attendance has meaningfully grown. Our worship, preaching, teaching, music, and service to our community are truly excellent. New people from across our community are finding their way to our pews. The question before us is not whether Trinity has vitality. It does. The question is how we channel that vitality wisely and intentionally.

That is precisely what this Strategic Plan attempts to answer.

The plan is organized around three interlocking commitments that I think of as the engines of our common life together. The first is **attracting and welcoming**—cultivating Trinity as a place where newcomers feel genuinely received, where the beauty of our liturgy and the warmth of our community are experienced as one. This includes a formal membership pathway called *Discover Trinity* and new investment in hospitality and communications that help us extend our reach across Berks County.

The second commitment is **discipling and retaining**—going deeper with those who are already here. Faith formation cannot be a footnote to congregational life; it must be woven into its fabric.

BUILDING TRINITY, TOGETHER

The plan introduces *Gather*, a series of quarterly formation events for all ages, and *Circles*, a small group ministry designed to build the bonds of friendship, accountability, and spiritual growth that sustain people through every season of life.

The third commitment is **sustaining and growing**—ensuring that Trinity’s financial health and institutional strength are worthy of our mission. This includes a planned giving campaign, responsible stewardship of our endowment, and strategic investments in staff capacity and program infrastructure. We are blessed with remarkable resources. This plan is about deploying them with imagination and discipline.

None of this exists in isolation from the wider community. Trinity has always understood that our calling extends beyond these walls—to the neighborhoods of Reading, to our ecumenical partners, to the vulnerable and the searching. The Strategic Plan deepens that commitment, seeking to align our programs and our partnerships with the needs of the world around us.

I want to be honest with you: a strategic plan is only as good as the conversations that have shaped it and the multi-year commitment that sustains it.

That is why I am inviting all of you to participate in three presentations this spring during Sunday Forum—on **April 26, May 3, and May 10**—where we will walk through the plan together, answer your questions, and hear your voice before we bring the plan to a vote at the Annual Meeting on Trinity Sunday (May 31st).

This is not a plan that the Vestry, Staff, and I are handing to you as imperial fiat. It is a plan we have built with *you* and for *you*.

Trinity Lutheran Church has been a place of worship, witness, and welcome in Berks County for 275 years. The generations who worshipped here before us were faithful. The people who worship here now are faithful. I believe, with deep conviction, that the best chapters of our great story are still ahead.

Let’s build it together.

Pastor Hans Becklin
Senior Pastor

BEING A SOCIAL MEDIA EVANGELIST

How we can promote the dynamic and unique qualities of Trinity through our personal social media to open our doors to new faces?

We are blessed at Trinity, through the forethought of our ancestors and the support of our current congregation to have a uniquely robust media department to promote our church online and in the local media community. Just in this past year we have had segments on WFMZ, 69 News



(Use the QR code to watch.)
and a wonderful headline of Pastor Hans on the front page of the Reading Eagle on the history of our media ministry.

These things wouldn't happen without the hard work of our media ministry team led by Matt Mellen. But Matt can't do it all. As in all our work at Trinity, we need to support the media team's efforts and push out these media items into our community to reach a broad audience of potential like-minded folks who would bring significant contributions to our Church.

A Social Media Evangelist

Every other month our staff puts together the newsletter, *Steeple Notes*, detailing events and items of interest which occurred over the past two months and previews things which will be occurring over the next two months.

This gives us all a great preview of the events, worship opportunities, and fellowship experiences which have been finalized and are available for all to join. Instead of simply reading these articles for ourselves, we can be a social media evangelist and share these events on our personal accounts for our friends and family to see and possibly be enticed to join us in these endeavors.

In addition to *Steeple Notes*, Matt prepares and sends out a more limited, call it reminder newsletter, *Trinity Tidings*, each week so we can look forward to coming events for the next few weeks. This is also a great opportunity to share a shout out to our Trinity Events on your social media. In sharing these Trinity events and items

“we can be a social media evangelist and share these events on our personal accounts...”

of public interest, it is important that we include some personal notes or reflections of why and how we believe these events are beneficial to us and how others would also benefit from attending. This personal component is vital in making the personal connection to your “followers” - yes we are all influencers now.

We can undertake this small personal step that, when multiplied by our congregation as a whole, will send ripples out into the community and hopefully those ripples will reach a wider audience than simply relying on the professional posts and community notices by our media team alone. These posts and shares can be brief, in the digital world brevity is the key to attracting eyes and “views”.

Remember as well that every week our service is broadcast live both on YouTube and Facebook and those links are very easily shared on our own pages on those platforms. They can also be linked from other popular social media streams such as “X” (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok which may reach some younger audiences. As a personal note, I often change my profile pictures on these platforms to the liturgical seasons using photos and images of our beautiful sanctuary (both the altar and our Tiffany windows) to highlight the wonderful physical space in which our worship occurs.

Our ability to be good stewards of Trinity, and good evangelists of Christ’s Word, can be effective in this digital world on our own social media, somewhat passively, less intrusively, and even naturally through small occasional posts on our social media. We can continue our mission at Trinity in Reading, and broaden our innovative media ministry and keep it at the forefront of ever changing and evolving media landscape.

Joe Speece, Evangelism & Media

So, what is this committee and what do they do? The title of this committee says it all! What does that mean? Let's find out...



"Blessed are the caregivers"

Our mission is to help and care for Trinity's family. We do that in different ways under the leadership of Deaconess Deborah Graf, our staff liaison, and Beth Welz, our committee chairperson. Members of the committee, along with Deaconess Deborah and Beth, are: Linda Grim, Marian Jameson, and Donna Osborne. This committee also helps to keep Pastor Hans and Deaconess Deborah apprised of any new information with our members.

We have several sub-committees:

Bread Ministry: Coordinator is Linda Grim. When one of our members enter the Church Triumphant, this committee provides a loaf of bread to Trinity family members. This not only feeds the body, but the soul as well with the comfort of wonderful bread. This has been an active group for some time and we have had and continue to have devoted bakers. We would like to recognize all those who bake or have baked: Mary Drehs, Suzy Evans, Elsa Heintzelman, Erica Hofmann, Linda Grim, Berni Ilgen, Bobbie Lykens, Charlene Norton, Robin Oberholtzer, Jan Opalinski, Amy Reinsel, Sue Shellong, Dar Unger, Pam Wasmuth, and Beth Welz. Thanks to all!

Lay Eucharistic Ministers: Coordinator is Deaconess Deborah Graf. Our Eucharist Ministers are Donna Osborne, Ralph and Vickie Unruh, and Beth Welz. These are folks who have been trained to offer communion to those who are homebound, hospitalized or for other reasons can no longer attend worship services. It is a wonderful way to connect with all of our family and offer an intimate and life-giving gift.

Prayer Card Ministry: Coordinator is Donna Osborne. This is a ministry of letting our homebound, and hospitalized members know they are not forgotten through handwritten cards and/or notes. We also include our staff.

As staff continue to minister to us, we feel it is important for staff to know we are here to minister to them as well. We have 11 dedicated senders and as of right now, 37 recipients.

Trinity Transporters: Coordinators will be Beth Welz and Donna Osborne. This will be a newly created ministry beginning in the Fall of 2026. This will be for members who can no longer drive or have medical issues. It will provide transportation to those who have medical appointments or outpatient surgeries. There will be no fee associated with this ministry. More information will be coming about this later.

So, this is TCCC (as we call it!) If you are interested in serving in any of these ministries, please contact the coordinators or Deaconess Deborah Graf at dgraf@trinityreading.org or church office telephone (610) 374-4861.

We are so grateful for all who minister.

Donna Osborne, TCCC member

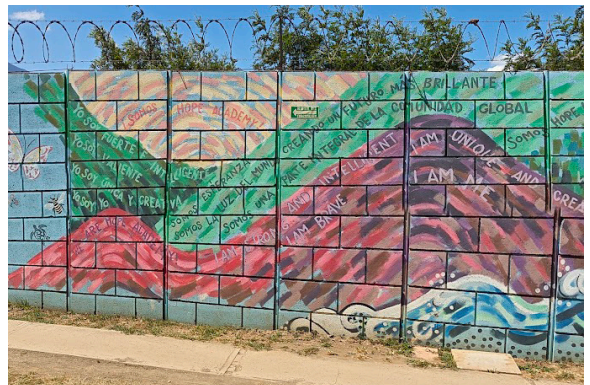
HOSPITAL VISITATION

Pastor Hans, Deaconess Deborah, and Trinity volunteers regularly visit our members in the hospital. We don't always know when you or a loved one is admitted. If you desire a pastoral care visit please make sure you contact the church office and/or Pr. Hans or Dcs. Deborah.

JOURNEY TO GUATEMALA

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I envision our congregation re-connecting with Guatemala in whatever way God reveals to us. Some may question why we would do so when the needs in our city and county are great. I believe we can do both. Mark Twain famously quipped in his book, *The Innocents Abroad*, "Travel is fatal



Hope Academy Mural

to prejudice, bigotry, and narrowmindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts." When we see another part of the world and make connections with people in other countries, we broaden our views and increase our understanding of our own community and where we might serve here when we return.

Does this vision excite you? Would you be willing to explore how you might participate in the future? Let's talk!

Dcs. Deborah Graf
Deacon for Formation and Service

275TH ANNIVERSARY

275TH KICK OFF THIS MAY!

In 1751 Conrad Weiser established a trading post at the corner of Fifth and Penn Streets in the City of Reading where Lutherans started gathering in community to worship.

275 years later, the congregation of Trinity Lutheran Church, Reading continues this tradition of worship and community. The TLC 275th anniversary committee has been working over the last several months and continues to work on planning the 275th anniversary celebration which will kick off with a reception and congregational worship on **Trinity Sunday, May 31, 2026**.

The year-long anniversary celebration will focus on the pillars of our congregation: music, history, service, and community. You will have the opportunity to enjoy musical offerings including an organ recital, hymn fest, violin concert and string quartet performance, along with a history lecture series that will be offered periodically throughout the year.

Guest Musicians include Nicole Keller, Tom Trenny, Peter Sheppard-Skaerved, and The Brentano String Quartet.

Dr. Wentz will open the year-long celebration with an organ recital on **Trinity Sunday**. This will be the last time we hear the organ before we begin renovations on the sanctuary!

The 275th anniversary committee with the artistic talents and direction of **Kristen Opalinski** will launch a 275th anniversary logo to be featured on commemorative items to mark this milestone in the history of the congregation.

A special anniversary luncheon will be served on **Reformation Sunday, October 25, 2026**, at the WCR Center for the Arts to mark the highlight of the year.

There will also be a service project to reflect our mission to the community. Anyone who is interested in serving on a committee focused on the 275th anniversary service project please contact Amy Litvinov, Joseph Speece, or inform any staff member of your interest. As this service project takes focus, the congregation at large will be asked to contribute by means best suited to their talents and skills as the body of Christ.

The 275th celebration year will then conclude on Trinity Sunday, May 23, 2027.

Further announcements will be made in the weekly Trinity Tidings email and future editions of Steeple Notes.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION: SUMMER WORSHIP PLAN

As we look ahead to the summer, worship will feel a bit different as we move into the All Saints Room for several months while the sanctuary undergoes restoration. Like last summer, the staff have planned two liturgies, Summer 1 and Summer 2 that will span about 8 weeks each. Also, like last summer, musicians from the congregation and wider community will be invited to play each week.

The biggest differences (aside from being in a new space!) will be singing with the piano instead of the organ, and a potentially different seating arrangement than we're used to in the sanctuary. The services will continue to be recorded and live-streamed – Matt will likely use the meditation room as the media center.

While this may seem overwhelming (four months without access to our organ is a terribly depressing thought!), I think in the end it will be a fun and enlightening experience, worshipping in a space that offers flexibility of set-up and movement, and in the end we will be that much more joyful when we return to the sanctuary in the Fall!

THANK YOU! MERCI! GRACIAS! DANKE!

A hearty shout out to all the volunteers who helped make our Holy Week and Easter services so meaningful and worshipful. Trinity is truly blessed through your gifts of time and talent. Thank you for your faithful service.

NEPA SYNOD ASSEMBLY

JUNE 4-6 AT SPLIT ROCK RESORT
IN LAKE HARMONY, PA



Under the theme IMAGINE, the Northeastern Pennsylvania (NEPA) Synod Assembly will gather to worship, conduct business, and discern

the church's mission together. It serves as the primary decision-making body of the synod, where rostered ministers (pastors and deacons) and elected lay voting members from congregations come together to conduct the official business of the synod.

Voting members will consider resolutions, elect leaders (this year we will also hold an election for bishop), hear ministry updates, and engage in learning opportunities. The assembly also encourages fellowship and collaboration among congregations, strengthening the shared work of the church in the region.

Trinity voting members, Amy Litvinov and Joe Speece, will be attending with Pastor Hans and Deaconess Deborah.

Use the QR Code to learn
more about the assembly.



STEEPLE NOTES EVENT CALENDAR



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 collecting a free will offering to support the Thomas Ford campus of Reading School District to provide our most vulnerable students with needed support.



BEFORE & AFTER SUMMER

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29 AT 12:05 PM

From the stages of Philadelphia to the heart of Berks County, join us for a special performance by baritone Jonathan Mortensen.

Experience the profound beauty of Thomas Hardy's poetry set to music by Gerald Finzi. Baritone Jonathan Mortensen

(AGMA, Philadelphia Symphonic Choir) performs the song cycle "Before and After Summer" a moving exploration of memory, nature, and the passage of time.

STEEPLE NOTES EVENT CALENDAR



CARL ORFF'S CARMINA BURANA

SUNDAY, MAY 3, 4:00 PM,

MUHLENBERG HIGH SCHOOL

**FRIDAY, MAY 8, 7:30 PM, SCHAEFFER AUDITORIUM,
KUTZTOWN UNIVERSITY**

Reading Choral Society, directed by Dr. Graham Bier, with the Kutztown University Orchestra and the choirs from Kutztown University and Muhlenberg High School presents

this thrilling and percussive masterpiece, setting 12th century poetry to 20th century music. Soloists: Olivia Prendergast, soprano; Antonio Watts, baritone and Augustine Mercante, countertenor. Tickets: \$15 adults in advance, \$20 at the door; \$10 students. Singers connected to Trinity include Rachel Gambone, Matt Hayes, Pat McMahon and Fred Opalinski.

Use the QR Code to purchase advance tickets.



OUR HOPE FOR YEARS TO COME

SUNDAY, MAY 31 AT 4:00 PM

Dr. Wentz begins our year long celebration of Trinity's 275th anniversary with an organ recital featuring a wide variety of works from across the European and American landscape written by composers from the renaissance era to the 21st. century.

Bookending the concert will be J.S. Bach's Prelude and Fugue in E-flat Major, often called the St. Anne because of the fugue's use of the tune (which we sing to O God our Help in Ages Past). This will be the last time we hear the organ before the renovation of the sanctuary!

MAY BROADCAST SCHEDULE

SUNDAYS

6:00 PM

WORLD VIEWS

Islam, Basketball, and Leadership

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

Islam, Basketball, and Leadership

JUNE BROADCAST SCHEDULE

SUNDAYS

6:00 PM

WORLD VIEWS

Contemporary Quaker Tradition

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

Contemporary Quaker Tradition

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

