



TRINITY STEEPLE NOTES

July-August 2026

IN THIS ISSUE

- The Spirit is Moving on Mondays
- What does it mean to be first?
- Blessings in Abundance
- 2026 Berks Pride Fest
- WBMD Mini-Mission Trip
- Congratulations Graduates!
- Sanctuary Renovation Highlights

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!

SANCTUARY RENOVATION HIGHLIGHTS

MATTHEW MELLEN (PHOTO ESSAY)



On day One work began on preparing the organ with pipes being removed and four guys moving the organ console out.



More Sanctuary Highlights on page 10.

THE SPIRIT IS MOVING ON MONDAYS

DEACONESS DEBORAH GRAF

On Monday, June 1, the campus at Trinity experienced A LOT of changes. Our sanctuary was cordoned off, organ pipes and pianos were gently moved, and Common Ground Recovery Community (CGRC) shifted their ministry time and day to Mondays! After 10 years of Sunday worship, this ministry has a brand-new rhythm.

In partnership with Pastor Tom Scornavacchi and Pastor Molly Haggerty (newly called to our synod) and with Chef Mal Mitchell and House Manager Gloria Berrios, we are living into this new, streamlined schedule.

It allows more time for personal interaction with the people of CGRC. There is now a space for playing games, creating art, and having deeper conversations. Along with the new activities, the Refresh Berks Mobile Shower Trailer is available for anyone who wants to be refreshed.

OUR NEW MONDAY SCHEDULE:

11:30 AM

Set Up for food and clothing distribution; set tables for the meal; help Gloria in whatever way she needs.

1:00 PM

Clothing and food distribution
(Appointments made with Gloria Berrios up to 2:00 PM)



Refresh Berks Mobile Shower Trailer
(until 3:00PM)



GOOD NEWS & GATHERINGS

2:00 PM

CGRC Drop-In Center: Arts & Crafts, puzzles, games, conversation, etc.



Volunteers are welcome and encouraged to help with everything from setup, to leading an activity, to serving and cleaning up meals, to just hanging out with people. (We call this the ministry of presence.)

You can sign up for CGRC here:



Refresh Berks here:



4:00 PM

Common Ground Worship



Please keep the work and leaders of Common Ground Recovery Community and Refresh Berks in your prayers as we serve the most vulnerable people in our community.

4:30 PM

Delicious Meal

5:00 PM

Clean Up

More Good News & Gatherings on page 8.

FEATURED ARTICLE

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE FIRST?

PASTOR HANS BECKLIN



At Trinity, we are proud to be the first house of worship in the city of Reading. Sometimes people erroneously state that Trinity is the oldest church in Berks County—which isn't true.

But our Lutheran confession was the first to emerge here, and Trinity's history is deeply intertwined with this uncommon fact.

In 1720, Swedish Lutherans settled in what is now Douglassville, and Germans relocating from upstate New York founded a Lutheran congregation along the Tulpehocken in 1723. This fertile area grew over the decades and briefly shared a pastor with Trinity at the latter's later genesis.

In our century, we often assume that this is the natural order—that rural places are more filled with Christian believers and Christian congregations than urban places. But that is not the picture we get in the New Testament. The earliest Christian congregations were in multicultural, urban spaces, connected by trade routes across the Mediterranean.

Most importantly, they were united with one another in one city—Paul writes to the “church at Corinth” in First Corinthians, using the Greek word *ekklesia*, which we often translate as “church” but which really means “a body of people regularly assembling for a purpose.” Even as the church grew, the idea that all the believers in one city were united held, with the office of bishop developing by the second century as a pastoral office of oversight that kept separate churches in the same city united.

In this apostolic model, cities are the normative place for churches, since they are reachable centers of trade and government. As Christianity found its home in North America, many places had a European state-church outlook, and their understanding of the church was different from the outsider status that the apostles held. Virginia was for Anglicans and Massachusetts was for Puritans, so every town needed a church to promulgate the government's approved tradition regardless of size.

Pennsylvania was different—it was for all faiths, and none got any boost from the proprietors in London or Philadelphia. Consequently, most cities in our Commonwealth didn't have a single denomination or a single church at their genesis, but Berks County and Reading did. I think this fact, more than any other, helps to explain Trinity's unique place in the religious history and fabric of our region.

FEATURED ARTICLE

As the first church, every subsequent house of worship had to define itself over and against Trinity, which means that every new group had some sort of relationship to this congregation. Most often, this was done on the basis of language or confession. Downtown, our Episcopal and Quaker neighbors attest to this fact from Reading's early history—but as the city and its suburbs expanded, it was also done on the basis of location. Nevertheless, Lutheranism was the faith of 70% of Reading's inhabitants long into the 20th century, and Trinity occupied the role as Mother and first among equals among these Lutheran churches and the role as pulpit premier among the Christian churches of the city.

With the passing of time and demographic change, Reading has lost its status as a majority-Lutheran city. Although Lutheranism is still the largest Protestant denomination in Berks County by a significant margin, it is the faith of less than 10% of our county's population. As these factors fade from view with new generations, Trinity's

role as the Christian default against which all is measured will continue to change. We may indeed retain our role as first among equals in a shrinking Lutheran community, but that should be limited comfort given the dire state of the ELCA and its congregations.

So, how should we understand ourselves? Standing at 275, it's an important question. Given these changes, we may need to find a new reason for being—standing for something instead of simply pointing to the fact that we have been standing the longest.

In an increasingly secular society, I think we can stand for the Gospel through a Lutheran lens of Word and Sacrament, using our long-held advantages of location, longevity, and vitality to point to Christ in the midst of modern life's chaos. In this, our metropolitan position—at the center of it all—may prove to be an advantage rather than the disadvantage it has sometimes seemed to be.

BLESSINGS IN ABUNDANCE

NURTURING MUSICAL TALENT IN OUR CITY AND CONGREGATION

DR. CAMERON LEE WENTZ



Berks County is blessed with a swath of incredible music groups, so much so that it can be difficult to schedule concerts that garner deserving attendance. While frustrating, it's a good problem to

have, knowing that music is so appreciated by the community you live and work in. Within those groups is also a large cohort of young musicians who are incredibly talented, ranging in age from 8–18. They're so talented, in fact, that they often win scholarship money from the Reading Musical Foundation, for which they get to showcase that talent at Trinity each spring.



Mia Perezous, marimba

In May, Trinity hosted the RMF scholarship winners' recital, and for the second year I had the joy of accompanying many of them. It was great getting to work with new students, but even more special to accompany those I worked with last year and to see their exponential growth. It was astounding to hear many students from last year progress so effectively in just a year and to see that hard work pay off.



Steven Dudas, violin

Having grown up just down the road in York County, I'm aware of how much the state of Pennsylvania has to offer for musicians. The talent I saw each year at District Choir and District Orchestra auditions seemed normal to me then, but as an adult I appreciate how much talent—and more importantly, SUPPORT for that talent—exists in our state. Having had a stellar music program at my high school, going off to college and hearing about my classmates' experiences was eye-opening: it was depressing to know that we are not the norm but the exception, and inspiring to see folks make it into music school despite not having the same access.

BLESSINGS IN ABUNDANCE

A lot happens at Trinity, and it can be overwhelming and, for some, a bit frustrating. But all that activity is a blessing: Trinity is blessed with a strong, supportive congregation, and a central location that has allowed us to make important connections to support our worship and our outreach to the community. Did you know that we host several music teachers in our classroom spaces as part of the Reading Symphony & Reading School District's Orchestra Zone program? Pupils from the Reading School District are provided instruments and receive weekly lessons for free.



*Maya Kraft, clarinet
Mason Shultz, viola*



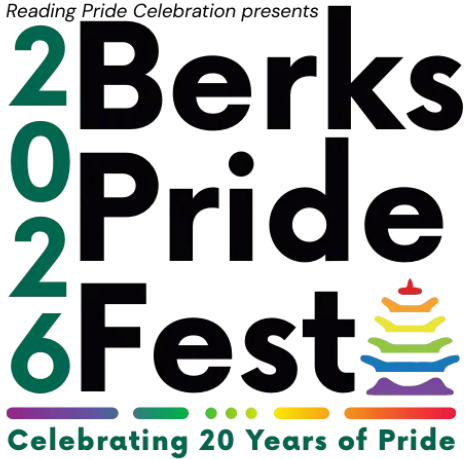
Zoe Beneito, flute

Blessings are also evident in the yearly recital we host for the Reading Musical Foundation, and its president, Keri Shultz, is incredibly gracious and grateful for our support. But we also get to reap the benefits of our generosity: like last year, several of those talented students will perform during worship this summer, some new, and some returning faces.

It is a privilege for Trinity to support and nurture the talents of our city's youth. It is an honor to strive to support opportunities for their participation in our community, like hosting events and inviting them to worship with us. It's also a joy to nurture our own youth members, who sing, ring bells, and study dance, voice, and other instruments beyond the walls and windows of our sanctuary (or All Saints Room!). When you listen to these talented students play this summer, remember how fortunate we are, and ask yourself what you might do to further support them even more.

2026 BERKS PRIDE FEST

Reading Pride Celebration presents



Trinity and Common Ground Recovery Community will be sharing a table at the 20th Annual Berks Pride Fest.

You are invited to volunteer for an hour or two and sit at our table. In the shade. Under a tent/canopy. It's easy. All you need to do is: Welcome people. Tell them about our ministries. Smile.

This year we plan to try something new. We want to host Story Time for all God's Children either on the hour or half hour. When you sign up to help, please indicate in the comments if you would like to read a children's book. Deaconess Deborah will contact you with more information.

Bring a water bottle (it can be brutally hot!)
*Each person will need a ticket to enter the festival. 2026 Berks Pride Fest Tickets (\$4.00 plus processing fee. 12 and under are free.)

Order you tickets here:



Sign up to help here:



GOOD NEWS & GATHERINGS

ALL GOD'S CREATION: A WBMD MINI-MISSION TRIP

JULY 27–29 - FOR GRADES 6 AND UP

This summer, West Berks Mission District is offering a three-day “Mini-Mission Trip” from Monday, July 27–Wednesday, July 29. This experience is open to any youth who have completed 6th grade and up.

Participants will spend three days learning and loving God's Creation in the world, participating in service projects, gathering in community,

and worshipping together to give our youth the experience of a mission trip, and pique their interest in future mission trips.

The group will gather around 8:30 AM each of the three mornings, and conclude by 5:00 PM on Monday and Tuesday. On Wednesday evening we will conclude at 7:30 PM.

Cost is \$20 per participant with scholarships available. Registration is due by Sunday, July 12, 2026.

WBMD Mini Mission Trip Registration
Questions? Contact Deaconess Deborah at dgraf@trinityreading.org or 610.763.1595.

CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!

We celebrate these important milestones with our Trinity Young Adults. Please keep them in your prayers as they prepare for the next step in their lives.

My name is **Veronika Shick** and I'm graduating from Lancaster Catholic High School. I am going to Temple University for biology and to pursue a collegiate athletic career in fencing on the Temple team. My biggest goal is to pursue a medical career.

My name is **Robert Spece**. I graduated from Susquehanna University with a bachelor's in music education. Next year I will begin a

Master of Music program at New England Conservatory in Boston, MA. During my senior year I won the outstanding senior performance award from the music faculty. This summer I traveled to Italy to perform the tenor solos in the world premiere of Giuseppe Bruni's *Lux et Pax* Mass with Orvieto Musica. I will also be premiering a close friend's song cycle of childhood poetry during my recital on July 25 at 6:00 PM at Atonement Lutheran Church in Wyomissing.

My name is **Emma Care** and I graduated from Penn State with a B.S. in marketing and a minor in ethics. I graduated as a member of the Sapphire Leadership Academic Program with a 3.85 GPA. I am pursuing a career in marketing and am actively searching for a position based in New York City.



Both pianos in the Sanctuary were also moved out. We now have a new piano in the All Saints Room.



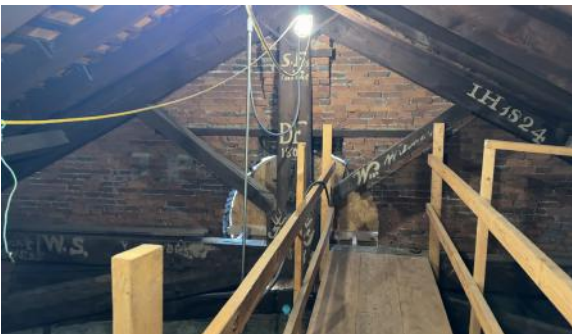
Outside the oculus window on the East wall was hoisted down to be restored.



One of the circle windows along Washington Street being removed.



Pieces from the circle window including a signed piece of casing from 1796!



More signed work in the attic facing the East wall.



Early work on the interior scaffolding.



Once they reach the top level a floor is installed where they will work and is known as the “dance floor.”



Further along with the installation - can you see the stairs in the middle?



Shoring for the truss repair begins at the ground level - literally!



This is the view from the Chapel hallway after they built the foundation for the rigging to stand on.



Notice how the steel I-beams are bracing the Sanctuary floor joists above.



Shoring continued on the main level of the Sanctuary and will extend into the balcony.

SANCTUARY RENOVATION HIGHLIGHTS



Cutting another section for the front rigging to be able to brace the balcony.



This is what the shoring looks like bracing the balcony above.



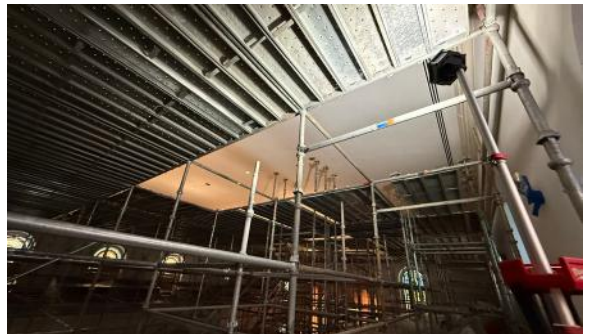
Here is a view from the balcony with most of the shoring in place.



I happened to be in attic filming when I heard a noise from below.



Another look at that light from below. They are getting ready for the next step of shoring.



The "dance floor" is nearly complete. This shot was taken less than an hour before we printed this issue!