

Trinity Lutheran Church
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God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.

(2 Corinthians 9:8)

I've been a pastor for nine years. I've spoken about stewardship at a few congregational meetings; there was one year when I even sent out stewardship letters. But I've never preached a stewardship sermon or led a stewardship campaign. I'm not sure I should take any pride in those "achievements;" it shows I'm a bit of a coward.

It takes courage to tell people that God cares deeply about every aspect of their lives—including how they spend, save, and invest their money. It takes courage to tell people that the "good old days" of crowded pews and overflowing offering plates are far behind us...and will not return.

Many congregations did not have the financial resources needed to endure the COVID pandemic and have now shut their doors. Trinity was led wisely back in those good old days; we built up a large pool of assets that have helped us through many rainy days and rainy months.

But every year, usually at the end of January, this congregation is forced to approve a budget that concedes that we will spend more than we can possibly collect in offerings and from other sources of income. Every year, we agree that, if we want to continue serving the city of St. Petersburg, we will have to deplete our "savings account" a bit more.

At this year's annual congregational meeting, scheduled for Sunday, January 28, you will hear both good news and bad news.

The good news is that we will end 2023 with less of a budget deficit than we had proposed. We "withdrew" less than we anticipated needing from our savings account of assets. The bad news is that the forty thousand dollars paid for the tenting of the facility did have to come out of those assets.

The apostle Paul reminds us, as individuals and as a congregation, that God provides us with far more than we need just so we can experience the joy that comes from being generous.

As we turn from one year to the next, I invite you to think and pray about how abundantly God has provided for your needs in 2023. I ask you to consider that God has blessed you so that you can make an end-of-year gift of gratitude to this church and pledge to give more regularly and more generously to the ministry of this congregation in 2024.

If you have ideas about how we could be using our facility to generate income, please share them with a member of the church council. But know that our congregation's continuing existence is always dependent upon generous and even sacrificial contributions from our worshippers.

Your brother in Christ, - Pr. Paul



LATIN CROSS — The Latin cross is the simplest and most common form of the Christian cross, possibly dating from the second or third century. Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians typically display a crucifix — an image of Jesus hanging on the cross — to remember his death for the sake of the world. Protestant churches often favor the empty cross, commemorating Jesus' resurrection.

Notes from the Organ Bench

Happy new year! I wonder how many other people started their article with that? I hope you all enjoyed the music on Christmas Eve! The choir, bell choir, and string quartet all worked very hard to make the pre-service music and Christmas Eve night go well.

Choir and bell choir are getting a break from mid-week rehearsals until later in January. I am going to be *very* annoying during the announcements this month, reminding you all to join the music at Trinity! Choir and bell choir are eagerly accepting new volunteers. Easter is coming up early this year, at the end of March! If you would like to contribute to and help grow the music program here, please join us!

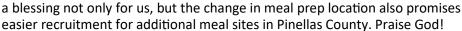
- ${\it Brenden\ Hall}$ Organist and Director of Music

COMMUNITY

Trinity Lutheran Church

Paul Gibson, Pastor
Lynne Tallon, Deacon
Brenden Hall, Organist and
Director of Music
Leah Heinicke, Office Admin
Azur H.Abdić, Facility Admin
Gretchen Frederick, Events Planner

As we begin a new year, I wanted to share some good news with you. Beginning in late December, Metropolitan Ministries finalized a partnership with the food and beverage people at Tropicana Field. They are now preparing the food at the Trop, so we are now able to pick up our hot meals there instead of driving to Tampa! This is



Last month at our hot meal serving, a lady (a guest) stopped me and told me how much she appreciated having these meals. She said: "I really thank all of you for your dedication and hard work. I don't have much, but I wanted to make a contribution to this wonderful program." She then pressed into my hand, two quarters, a dime, and three pennies. Tears were shed as we embraced. Sixty three cents.... A widow's mite???... I'd like to think so!

Grace, Amazing Grace!

Gerry Munger

Council Members

Lisa Johnson, President
Trudy Daniels, Vice President
Helen Mowrer, Treasurer
Jen Durilla, Recording Secretary
Nina All
Chris Burtless
Violet Prepost
Mike Scholz
Marty Snapp
Lynne Tallon
Pastor Paul Gibson

Resolve To Go Micro



Most New Year's resolutions are so major they seem made to be broken. Maybe that's why "micro-resolution" is the latest January buzzword. Setting smaller goals is more realistic and helps ensure follow-through, according to experts. People who try setting micro-resolutions say that approach is more positive and leads to longer-lasting change.

For example, instead of attempting to lose 30 pounds this year, make a micro-resolution to walk 10 minutes twice per day and to snack on fresh fruit at least once a day.

Micro-resolutions can also be helpful in matters of faith. If aiming to read the entire Bible in one year feels overwhelming, take five minutes each morning and evening to read a brief devotional or pray. If joining your church's missions committee isn't possible, try to talk to one new person each week about your faith or church. May God bless you as you take small steps that add up to big impact this year!

Relationship Skills for Life

In Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, everyone was welcomed and valued. Mister Rogers helped us appreciate and respect others. He opened his door to all, and warmly invited them to share their talents and ideas. He showed us the power of kindness and compassion, "You are special and so is everyone else in this world."

MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD

doesn't feel brave enough to do something on their own, or when they feel too shy to speak up, neighbors give each other courage and support. And together they applaud the big and small moments of "inside" growing.

Through his words and his songs, Mister Rogers encouraged us to find our own ways to show others we care about them.

This television program wasn't called

"Mister Rogers." Fred Rogers created it intentionally to be a *Neighborhood*. And the most important part of any neighborhood is the people.

At the core of this neighborhood was an understanding that people grow best in relationship with others.

We learn through relationships

Fred Rogers often said, "It's through relationships that we learn best and grow best." When you care about someone and know that person cares about you, you want to learn from them and strive to be your best. Mister Rogers didn't "teach" us to be caring neighbors, but he gave us many ways to understand how important we are to each other.

In *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* children can see how a wide variety of diverse neighbors – both the real neighbors we meet in the real neighborhood, and the puppets and people of Make-Believe – interact with one another with kindness and respect.

"As different as we are from one another, as unique as each one of us is, we are much more the same than we are different. That may be the most essential message of all, as we help our children grow toward being caring, compassionate, and charitable adults."

- Fred Rogers

Caring neighbors

The stories in the Neighborhood of Make-Believe showed children many different ways that people build caring relationships with one another – doing kind things for each other, talking and listening, helping and asking for help, working together to solve problems. When someone

It was a way of reminding us that as children, we weren't just on the receiving end of love and care. We could show people many different ways to show our love for them, too.

An appreciative neighbor

In his real neighborhood Mister Rogers modeled what it is to be a kind, respectful and appreciative neighbor. Whenever he met with anyone, whether a new visitor or a nearby neighbor, he showed us what social amenities look like and sound like, how you greet people, how you introduce them to your friends, how you say goodbye.

And he always remembered to say "Thank you." He wasn't teaching manners, but by example he was helping children learn how to be considerate of others.

Mister Rogers showcased the talents of others, and at the same time, he modeled being an appreciator – always showing how much he enjoys other people's talents, abilities and ideas and how he admires the time they give to practicing their art or talent.

We all work on building and sustaining relationships throughout our lives. It's not always easy. What helped Mister Rogers' neighbors get along was a foundation of respect, kindness and empathy.

Those messages resonate with us throughout our lives with people near and far. We are all neighbors.

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Predictions for the New Year

Author Ronald Wilson, in Stretching the Soul, describes being certain that four things will occur in the days ahead.

- Trouble will come. Life is difficult. I must mourn as well as dance.
- In this long journey [of life], I'm not in control. God has reminded us of this.
- Many times I will fail.
- I will find forgiveness and get up and go on. God will wipe up the mess I've made of things, take me by the hand and set me back on the right path.

Praise God for his sure presence during the joys and challenges the new year brings!

The TLC Bulletin Board



"See, I am doing a new thing! I have already begun. Do you not see it? I am making a pathway in the wilderness and rivers in the wasteland!..."

(Isaiah 43:19)

"The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Cor. 5:17)





A definition of sacrificial giving

Giving beyond your means (Giving money that you really should be putting somewhere else, not giving money that you don't have) Giving that hurts. Going without something that we want/need in order to supply for the needs of another.

-https://www.thelifegroup.org/what-is-sacrificial-giving

One Sunday morning, the pastor noticed little Alex standing in the fover of the church staring up at a large plague.

It was covered with names and small American flags mounted on either side of it.

The six-year old had been staring at the plaque for some time, so the pastor walked up; stood beside the little boy; and said quietly, "Good morning, Alex."

"Good morning. Pastor," he replied, still focused on the plaque. "Pastor, what is this?"

The pastor replied, "Well, son, it's a memorial to all the young men and women who died in the service."

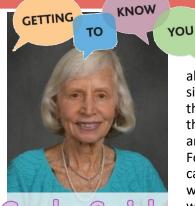
Soberly, they just stood together, staring at the large plague.

Finally, little Alex's voice, barely audible and trembling with fear asked, "Which service, the 8:00 or the 10:30?"

THINGS TO CLEAN UP IN THE NEW YEAR

- 1. Worn-out shoes
- 2. Dead plants
- 3. Burnt out candles
- 4. Expired or unneeded medication
- 5. Broken cups and mugs
- 6. Toys that your children have outgrown
- 7. Books you didn't enjoy or never finished reading
- 8. Old receipts
- 9. Clothes that no longer fit you or your lifestyle
- 10. Expired food in your pantry or fridge
- 11. Last year's birthday, holiday, and greeting cards.
- 12. Broken or outdated electronics
- 13. Empty or vucky toiletries or makeup products
- 14. Too many extra towels and linens
- 15. Supplies for hobbies you don't enjoy or have time to do
- 16. Socks with holes in them
- 17. Worn out or stained underwear
- 18. Piles of paper clutter
- 19. Newspapers or magazines laying around
- 20. Unused kitchen appliances
- 21. Things you have in duplicate
- 22. Digital clutter
- 23. Old planners and journals
- 24. Your 2023 calendar



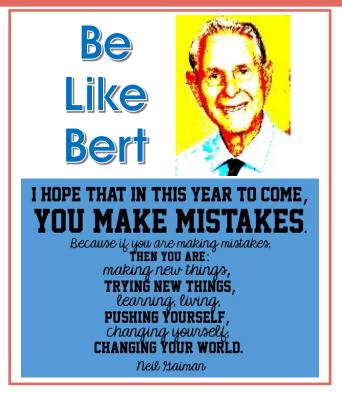


My parents owned a grocery store in
Philadelphia and we lived above the store. I had 2 older sisters and we all helped with the business. We all enjoyed the tasty delights it offered and our waistlines showed it. Fortunately, along with the calories, I also absorbed good work ethics there! When I was 4 my maternal grandmother moved in with us, giving my mother more

freedom to be involved in the business. My grandmother took over the household and caregiver duties. My sisters and I had no household chores — not even having to make our beds or set the table. As the youngest, she babied me the most and I got the impression I was not capable of doing things and reveled in it. When I was 10 we moved to the New Jersey suburbs and had our store in a neighboring town. My mother got an office job but my sisters and I helped in the store. I have dyslexia as well as issues with auditory perception and did not excel in school which only contributed to my poor self image. However, we were raised in the Lutheran church and I found acceptance and caring friends there. I did graduate and took an office job, and after 4 years I tried a community college, but only for 1 year.

Then I met my first husband Buck, got married, and moved to Delaware. I went back to an office job until our children were born. Our son, Charlie, was born 2 years into our marriage, and 19 months later our daughter, Sheryl, was born. After 10 years of marriage we were unexpectedly transferred to Michigan. While Buck worked in Detroit we lived in Southfield. It snowed 10 inches when we moved in. That was the winter of 1976 and 1977 with snow blizzards and I hate the cold! I was distressed and ate myself up to a size 24, gaining at least 70 pounds. I had been unhappy and had weight problems before, but this was a new high. Thankfully, I was introduced to a spiritually based program that has helped me address my issue of low self esteem and worked with me to develop a food plan that allows me to maintain a healthy weight. I can only do it as I progress in my spiritual journey. I give all the glory to God. With this growing self-confidence and spirituality, I was also able to begin working through some resentful feelings I had towards my parents and grandmother. This enabled me to show them love and respect when we visited them in New Jersey.

After a few years in Michigan, Buck's plant closed, but he was able to transfer to a position in North Carolina. We lived in Cary (near Raleigh) while Buck worked in a nearby town. My grandmother died suddenly as we were moving to Cary, and six months later my father also passed away suddenly. I felt very thankful that I had been able to show them the love they deserved. At this time I was blessed to attend a



Via de Cristo weekend that further supported me in effecting positive changes in my self image and spiritual growth. I still attend reunions of that group over conference calls.

I came to recognize dysfunction in our marriage and tried to encourage Buck to embrace the changes I was making for myself. But he did not accept this and was very resentful. We separated when Charlie was 16 and Sheryl was 15. Charlie stayed with his dad and Sheryl came with me. We found that we could not attend any event together without a commotion erupting. In a year we were divorced and he remarried soon afterward. Later, Buck found he had fast-moving cancer and passed away in 1998. I was blessed to talk to him before he died and let him know that I had been praying every day for his health and prosperity. He was able to appreciate that and mend our relationship.

My son was poisoned against me and very rarely made contact. I tried reaching out to him but when he graduated from college he did not invite me to his graduation. This broke my heart. I wrote to him and let him know that I loved him but he would have to contact me if he wanted to have a relationship with me. I was fortunate to have a great relationship with Sheryl. In this difficult time she did let me know Charlie was in a relationship, and was working out of state. I cannot say how much my church family helped in these times. Charlie's relationship ended 5 ½ years later and when he returned to NC he did contact me. Our relationship has grown and is better than I ever thought possible.

I did not get alimony, but I had landed an office job in a (Carla — Continued Page 7)

First, Contact

In *Unclean: Meditations on Purity, Hospitality and Mortality*, Richard Beck writes powerfully about Jesus healing a leper in Matthew 8:1-3. "What is intriguing about this story is the sequence. Jesus touches the leper first. Then the command 'Be clean!' is offered. That is, Jesus' first move is into ritual defilement. By first touching the leper, Jesus ... [is] standing in solidarity with the unclean." Beck finds this "striking" because typically we expect purification before contact. But Jesus' actions reverse the pattern: "Contact occurs first."

How fortunate for us, too, that God didn't wait to reach out to us until he had cleansed us of sin. God didn't save us from afar and only *then* come to live among us. Rather, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8, ESV). And continuously, Jesus loves us, comes to us and touches our hearts, even when we are at our worst — straying from God, trapped in sin, unworthy, unclean, unrighteous. For it's not *our* righteousness or purity that heals and saves us, but Christ's.

The Heart of Our Faith

Christianity affirms that at the heart of reality is a Heart, a loving Father who works through history for the salvation of his children. Man cannot save himself, for man is not the measure of all things and humanity is not God. Bound by the chains of his own sin and finiteness, man needs a Savior.

—Martin Luther King Jr.

Special Dates this Month

- New Year's Day, January 1, 2024
- Epiphany, January 6, 2024
- Baptism of the Lord, January 7, 2024
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day, January 15, 2024
- Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Jan 18-25, 2024

ANNUAL MEETING

Our Annual Congregational Meeting will take place at the conclusion of worship on Sunday, January 28, 2024. As in years past, we will attempt to have a way to participate in the meeting over Zoom. Both Trinity and Hope are having their congregational meetings on the same day.

The most important items on Trinity's agenda are to elect people to serve on our church council and to approve a church budget for 2024. The 2023 Annual Report of the congregation will be distributed by hand and electronically on or before Sunday, January 21. This report will include information about the candidates nominated to serve on the council and the proposed budget for your review. Please familiarize yourself with these items before the meeting; address any questions about the budget to our treasurer, Helen Mowrer BEFORE the meeting, so that we can keep discussion during the meeting as short as possible.

An item on the agenda for both congregations is the approval of a task force, made up of people from both congregations, who will, over the next six months, determine the viability of a merger of the two congregations and the preparation of an "enabling resolution" for merger, should it be recommended. This task force will conduct information-gathering meetings with the members of both churches, determine the legal requirements for a merger of two non-profit organizations, and gain a clear understanding of the assets of both congregations and how they can best be used to do the work of God in the city of St. Petersburg.

BROADWAY JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR

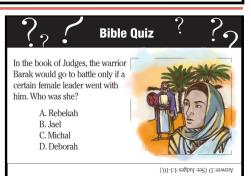
MAR 5, 2024 - MAR 10, 2024 MORSANI HALL (STRAZ CENTER) \$47.75

Tickets for groups of 10 or more are on sale now.

Interested? Email Gretchen (events@trinitylutheranstpete.org)



We are working on preparing the annual giving statements.
They should be available by the end of the month.



SERVING THIS MONTH

Get in the Rotation! Volunteer/Sign Up!

Contact: Ushers/Greeters: Lisa Johnson
Lector/Communion: Pr. Paul Gibson

Flower Sponsors: Leah Heinicke

01/07 Ushers/Greeters: Barb, Janet, Violet, & LIsa

Lector: Phil Rearick

Communion Assistants: Alan Due, Lisa Johnson

Altar Flower Sponsor:

01/14 Ushers/Greeters: Carol, Matthew, & Lisa

Lector: Gretchen Frederick

Communion Assistants: Phil Rearick, Violet Prepost

Altar Flowers:

01/21 Ushers/Greeters: Janet, Barb, Alan, & Lisa

Lector: Stephen Hewitt

Communion Assistants: Paul Frakes, Daryl Stewart

Altar Flower Sponsor:

01/28 Ushers/Greeters: Matthew, Violet, & Lisa

Lector: Teresa Zeoli

Communion Assistants: Teresa Zeoli, Kim Snyder

Altar Flower Sponsor:



Birthdays

01/01 Helena Barlee

01/01 Sharon Lutz

01/01 Chanel Mitchell

01/02 Spring Smith

01/04 Doug Forcino

01/07 Larry Lutz

01/10 Joyce Due

01/14 Diana Shipley

01/17 Brenden Hall

01/20 Paul Stavros

01/23 Alex Barlee

01/24 Lisa Valentine

(Carla — Continued from page 5)

large IT corporation before the breakup, and that helped me scrape by. During the next number of years my mother asked me to accompany her with 2 friends on vacations in the US and Canada. We all stayed in one hotel room and I drove them around to see the sights. It was a hoot. Still I was glad I was spiritually grounded.

For 10 years I worked at the same job with the tension of the company's constantly having layoffs. The computers in our office were inadequate. Finally they switched to better ones. Once I was trained I was able to transfer to increasingly better positions. By the time I retired I was in a very nice accounting position. In the meantime, after being "single again" for 8 years an old friend, John, started dating me. He was a widower 10 years my senior with 2 grown daughters. We married within a year in 1994. It was a wonderful marriage and I never laughed so much in my life. We were married 21 years before he passed away. The first half he was a very healthy, vibrant man. But as the years went by his health deteriorated. First he required open heart surgery to replace a valve and bypass. Then came diverticulitis attacks, internal bleeding, spinal stenosis, surgeries for 2 aneurysms. I retired early to help care for him. He had surgery for basal cell carcinoma cancer on his nose, had blood transfusions, and iron infusions.

We moved to a Life Care Retirement Community that had a health center where he was able to recuperate a number of times. Finally he had a colostomy. While recovering from that he contracted VRE, a blood infection, and was hospitalized 42 days and spent 3 weeks in rehab. Then his kidneys slowly shut down. He passed away 8 years ago this coming January. All through this stressful time I felt supported by my spiritual family.

My son had married and he and his wife had twin boys in December, 2009. I was able to help care for them from their infancy until I moved to Florida in January 2020. I thank the Lord for giving me the ability to do that, despite the fact that their lifestyle and mine are very different. My daughter and her husband have good careers with an IT company and work from home. They moved to St. Petersburg in 2019. When I visited them I decided I wanted to move to this piece of paradise. This was a part of God's wisdom. I had lived in NC for 40 years and all were amazed that I moved. After I moved I was going to NC in March to stay with the twins while they tracked out of school. My sister, Noreen, had come for a visit. The pandemic hit and neither of us could fly out of state. If I had been in NC I would have been in lock down in the retirement community. The twins' parents were able to work at home and the twins got their school work on zoom. Noreen decided she liked Florida, as well. and in time was able to sell her house and move here permanently. We decided we were great roommates and have been together ever since. I was blessed to have found Trinity Lutheran Church which offered the support of this loving community shortly before the pandemic, and allowed zoom services and contacts during the lockdown times. Now it has been my great privilege to help those less fortunate with the Hot Lunch program on Wednesdays and the Food & Clothing Pantry on Fridays. I am sure all was divinely orchestrated. I am so blessed.

Trinity Lutheran Church Calendar



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Sub Pastor: Sharo New Year's Eve 9:30am Choir Wa 11am Worship Si 12pm Fellowship	Jan 1 New Year's Day	2	3 • 9am Bert's Break • 11:30am Hot Lur • 5pm Fellowship \$	4	5 • 9:30am TLC Pant • 6pm First Friday	6
7 • 9:30am Choir Wa • 11am Worship Si • 12pm Fellowship • 1:30pm FRA Mee	8	9	10 • 9am Bert's Break • 11:30am Hot Lur • 5pm Fellowship \$	11	12 • 9:30am TLC Pant	13 • 10am Congregat
14 • 9:30am Choir Wa • 11am Worship Si • 12pm Fellowship • 12:15pm Band of	15 Martin Luther King • 6:30pm Council	16	17 • 9am Bert's Break • 11:30am Hot Lur • 5pm Fellowship \$	18 • 4pm Choir Practi	19 • 9:30am TLC Pant	20 Newsletter deadlir
21 • 9:30am Choir Wa • 11am Worship Si • 12pm Fellowship • 1pm Fleet Reseri	22 • 5pm Handbell Pr	23	24 • 9am Bert's Break • 11:30am Hot Lur • 5pm Fellowship \$	25 • 4pm Choir Practi	26 • 9:30am TLC Pant	27
28 • 9:30am Choir Wa • 11am Worship So • 12pm Annual Co	29 • 5pm Handbell Pr.	30	31 • 9am Bert's Break • 11:30am Hot Lur • 5pm Fellowship \$	Church office hours: Monday -Thursday 9 am - 3 pm		

¹ All church meetings now use the same Zoom link.

To participate by computer, go to: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/402615714

To participate by phone, dial (301)715-8592 and enter meeting ID: 402 615 714.

We are livestreaming our worship services on Facebook:

They are uploaded to our YouTube channel on the following business day

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVa-kol4fUtz65ttLjxD2Ng

Links can also be found on our website: https://trinitylutheranstpete.org/outreach/worship/

Color Codes for events:

✓.

Trinity Lutheran Church



Hope Lutheran Church