



# THE TORCH

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December 2025  
Sunday Worship  
9:00 AM

Trinity Lutheran Church • 18137 Criswell Street • Bettendorf, Iowa 52722 • 563-332-5188  
Pastor Stephen Nilsen 563-332-6432 (office) 319-540-1172 (cell) snilsen@trinitylcpv.com (email)

"Aloha!" to all you Awaiting,

December is here again, and like my few years before as a pastor, I find myself stuck thinking of where I will go with this article. In my daily life, I see everyone getting ready for the commercial side of Christmas: ads and news stories about retail, plans with family and trying to check off every gift and task on the lists we make. In my life as a pastor, preparing for worship at the end of one liturgical year and the beginning of Advent, however, it's a very different story.

If you attended worship in November, you were probably hearing a theme of what many theologians call "little apocalypses": Jesus warning of a new age and how things will change, cautioning his followers and temple elite that "the world is about to turn" (as Canticum of the Turning would call it). Things continue in this way with the first few weeks of Advent every year and this year is no different:

*"Then two will be in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken, and one will be left. Keep awake, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming."* – Matthew 24:40-42, NRSVUE

This passage is contained within an almost two-chapter-long discourse that Jesus has during the events of Holy Week, while things are rapidly heating up for Him in Jerusalem. Some could say this was a messianic figure, who knew the end was near and reminded people to "keep awake" for a reason, because He was aware of what is to come. I wonder about the stories we are seeing around us this year as well.

Where stories (both personal and in the larger world) have we seen that need us to keep awake? What does it feel like to continue to wait for something that has already come but not yet? What else do we imagine another coming of the Lord will be like?

People have pondered these questions for generations, and I likely won't find the answer by the bottom of this page either, but I will point us toward something I heard Professor Rolf Jacobsen say on a recent episode of the *Sermon Brainwave* podcast: "Jesus comes in history, mystery, and majesty." This gives room to the notion that Jesus had already come in the first century (history), that we crown him with many crowns (majesty), and that he comes to us as one unknown (mystery). We are always working on coming to terms with this: how can it be that we see it so plainly in Scripture but lose sight of the ways Christ is present with us all the time?

One thing that I am clinging to in this new church year (and looking toward in the new year 2026 ahead) is storytelling. How do we tell the stories of Christ's presence in our lives? There are many of us who get shy when a pastor might ask us that question on the spot, but there are those of you who I know share some of these stories (in even the mundane ways) through your conversations around tables in the Fellowship Hall, in restaurants around the Quad Cities, and in your own homes with family members. These stories of Christ in our life connect us to the bigger story of God's work in the world today. I give thanks for all of these stories, as ways that we see God's presence, remind ourselves of what we have done to keep awake, and look toward the future, no matter how mysterious it might be!

I love hearing your stories as well. I also love sharing the bigger stories of our congregation. Stop by my office, give me a call, or shoot me a note via text or email any time if you'd like to share a story.

Waiting together,  
*Pastor Stephen Nilsen*

Trinity Office Hours Tues, Wed, Thurs - 9AM-1PM  
Pastor Stephen's Office Hours Mon, Tues, Wed, Thurs -10AM - 2PM

### **From the Desk of the Council President...**

Hello Trinity! I hope you have had the opportunity to go out and enjoy the many Fall colors on the trees lately. Thanksgiving is on the horizon, and many of us have been thinking about what we are thankful for, as well as how we can support causes important to us through the end of the year. Council, Stewardship, and Pastor have been fielding questions about how best to help the church and its ministries lately. I recently gave a short talk at church on Sunday the 16<sup>th</sup>, addressing that concern.

I am sure we are all experiencing the effects of inflation on our budget that is seen in many areas of our economy. The church is not immune, but our Council and Committees have worked hard to control costs and to be responsible stewards of the resources we are given. There are some other trends as of late, one of which is a decrease in general giving to the general operating fund at Trinity, and an increase in defined, special fund giving to support specific ministries. Don't get me wrong, it is awesome to see the support and dedication of so many to our ministries and outreach. Together we are being God's Hands in the world. Secondly, people are creatures of habit, and if you are anything like me, when Sunday comes around, you make out your envelope, the same amount each Sunday and place it in the collection plate.

Have you thought about if we all give the same amount week to week, month to month, and we habitually do it that way for years, and add that to some declines in membership and increases in inflationary costs, how that affects the church budget? Many of the ministries still need us to keep the utilities on and the church property to be kept up, functional, safe, and accessible which take funds. Some of us even give a set amount each Sunday let's say, like \$10, and we feel obliged to give to support a ministry and we take \$5 and give it to that ministry leaving just \$5 for the general fund. It is a little bit more difficult for Council to balance out the needs of the whole congregation if we over concentrate on specialized giving, and don't continue with our normal contributions to the general fund. So, we are asking, if you do give to special ministries, please prayerfully consider keeping your General Fund contributions normal (or even increase it a little to make up for inflation) and give a separate amount in support of your chosen ministry support.

We have a lot to be Thankful for, the love and support from our congregation for this church and our work in the world is awesome to see. If anyone still has questions about giving, please direct your questions to Council, Stewardship, or Pastor as we would be happy to help guide you.

Blessings,  
Dane Crist, Trinity Council President

#### **Please Join Us For A Baby Sprinkle**

Big sister Leslie has plenty to share, it's just a sprinkle to show we care. Not much is needed just the basics will do like diapers, wipes, gift cards and an outfit or two.

Join us to celebrate Pastor Stephen, Leah and Leslie's new baby girl, Ida Jane on Sunday, December 7, during Fellowship. Please RSVP on the sheet in the Narthex. Deadline date is November 30.



#### **WANT TO CONNECT THE WITH WEEKLY HAPPENINGS AT TRINITY?**

Sign up for our weekly email bulletin that will let you know what's happening in the week ahead and have other great upcoming announcements, as well as the weekly bulletin for worship. Call (332-5188) or email Paula (office@trinitylcpv.com) in the office to sign up!

#### **YEAR TO DATE FINANCIAL INFO THROUGH OCTOBER 2025**

|                                                                        |               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Collections to date                                                    | \$136,386.41  |
| Expenses to date                                                       | \$154,854.24  |
| Net to date                                                            | (\$18,467.83) |
| No funds have been transferred from Stewardship Reserves year to date. |               |

#### **ATTENDANCE TOTALS FOR NOVEMBER 2025**

|          |    |       |
|----------|----|-------|
| November | 2  | 69    |
| November | 9  | 61    |
| November | 16 | 73    |
| November | 23 | 13661 |

**BIRTHDAYS**

1 Rudie Eberlein  
 3 Debra Anderson  
 5 Henry Marquard  
 6 Annabelle Denain  
 11 Ed Kaufmann  
 12 Helen Stubbe  
 13 Debbie Claussen  
 13 Neil Baker  
 16 Paula McIntosh  
 18 Adrienne Picchiotti  
 21 Susan Varilek  
 24 Judy Rutledge

**ANNIVERSARY**

2 Randy & Claudia Neumann  
 29 Travis & Marcia Brunsvold

# Worship & Fellowship Volunteers

|                                   | December 7                 | December 14                    | December 21                  | December 24       | December 28       |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Altar Guild                       | Linda Busch                | Sally Morrow                   | Diane Kaufmann               | Mary Shelton      | XXXX              |
| Communion Assistant               | Sally Morrow               | Marcia Brunsvold               | Lois Schurr                  | Diana Mayes       | XXXX              |
| Lector                            | Henry Marquard             | Susan Varilek                  | John Newman                  | Claudia Neumann   | Volunteer Needed  |
| Usher Greeter                     | Ron Morrow<br>Lois Schurr  | Chris Kaul<br>Travis Brunsvold | Arnie Kaufmann<br>Diane Cook | Volunteers Needed | Volunteers Needed |
| Worship Video Livestream Producer | Volunteer Needed           | Volunteer Needed               | Volunteer Needed             | Volunteer Needed  | Volunteer Needed  |
| Fellowship                        | Hot Team<br>Baby Sprinkler | Volunteer Needed               | Volunteer Needed             | XXXX              | Volunteer Needed  |

If you would like to help us in our Sunday Gathering by doing any of the above tasks, please contact the church office to be added to the list of volunteers.

If you are unable to fulfill your duties, please find a replacement and call or email the church office (332-5188 or [office@trinitylcpv.com](mailto:office@trinitylcpv.com)) with your replacement. Thank you.

## Trinity Food Pantry Continues Feeding Our Neighbors

**Pantry Hours: Mondays, 9-11 AM and Thursdays, 4-6 PM**

*"These are people in real need. They're doing everything they can, and they deserve our love and help." – Alice Cordts, Food Pantry Volunteer.*

Our community food pantry continues to serve our neighbors, and we are blessed with many volunteers, but more are always welcome. We welcome volunteers for other aspects of the food pantry beyond the times when we are open, such as organizing the food in the pantry and sorting new donations. If you would like to help out, please reach out to Dane Crist or Pastor Stephen or email [pantry@trinitylcpv.com](mailto:pantry@trinitylcpv.com).

You can also pick up one of the Food Pantry flyers or Food Pantry business cards to spread the word for those in the community that you know could use the help. Items needed for Trinity Food Pantry.

- Protein - canned meats, tuna
- Hearty soups or one-pot meals
- Hygiene items like toothpaste, shampoo, and soap

Thanks so much for your support!

Trinity Food Pantry Team

[pantry@trinitylcpv.com](mailto:pantry@trinitylcpv.com). 563 332-6432



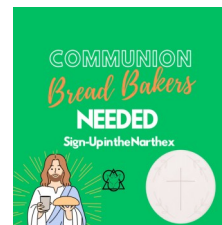
### Trinity Blood Pressure Ministry *After worship on December 7*

Trinity will be offering this ministry the first Sunday of each month by our qualified congregational nurse members. There are several stories of health monitoring, helping the lives of those who have joined in this ministry.



### What's Baking? Communion Bread *Sign-Up in the Narthex*

Each week's Communion Bread is baked by volunteers from around our congregation, bringing forth the bread of life from the shared community we have here at Trinity. If you'd like to sign-up to bake the bread, there is a sheet in the narthex, and a recipe available there as well as online.



### Trinity Card Crafting Ministry Spreading Joy

**Thursday, December 11 - 1:00 - 3:00 PM**

Trinity's card ministry meets monthly on the second Thursday of the month at 1:00 pm in the lower level of the church. The next meeting will be December 11 from 1:00-3:00 PM. All are welcome to join us with no experience necessary!

Each month we make and deliver cards to the residents of Aspire of Pleasant Valley Nursing and Rehab (Formerly River Manor). We also make and mail greetings to members and friends of Trinity. In addition, the committee has been working to replenish the supply of greeting cards for sale in the Fellowship Hall. All cards are \$2.00.

Thank you for your support of this ministry. If you have any questions, please contact Chris Kaul, Linda Busch, Claudia Neumann, Cathy Newman, Marcia Brunsvold or Pastor Stephen.



Trinity Card  
Crafting  
CRAFTED WITH LOVE

### Join the PPALS Bible Study

*Saturdays 8 AM  
Trinity Lutheran Church*

Join together in a new Bible Study with Christians from around the PV, Princeton, Argo, and Le Claire area that make up PPALS. We encourage you to grab a coffee or beverage and join in for readings and discussion of the Bible. For more information, see [Randy Goslin](#).



### Winter Scott County Library's Bookmobile Stops

The Scott County Library Bookmobile stops at the TLC church parking lot through the winter on Tuesday afternoons every three weeks. December 2 is the first winter date for TLC. Anyone with a library card from a library in Scott County can check out books and other media. We'll have snacks and drinks available in Fellowship Hall. More stops will be coming in the spring too!

We hope to see you there!  
Tuesday, December 2,  
4:40-5:10 PM.

For more info, visit:  
[Scottcountyia.gov/library/  
bookmobile](http://Scottcountyia.gov/library/bookmobile)



### Annual Report 2025

As we move into fall, life gets busier as does church life. Kids are back in school, Confirmation classes begin, church committees and other activities continue. Please turn your annual reports to Paula ASAP.



### Crossroads Youth Group

*Sundays, 5:00-7:00 PM*

*December meetings at Trinity Lutheran Church*

Young folks from 6th Grade through 9th Grade have learned a lot and continued to have fun forming faith while also gathering for a simple meal each Sunday evening. After a month at First Presbyterian Church in LeClaire, the group will return to Trinity for November and early December.

If you are interested in sharing your culinary talents (or providing some money for pizza or some other delivery meal), simple meals will be provided for youth, so we would welcome you bringing food for the beginning of the sessions starting November 2! Please contact Pastor Stephen if you would like to donate the meal.



### WEEKLY READINGS

**12/07** Isaiah 11:1-10, Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19,  
Romans 15:4-13, Matthew 3:1-12

**12/14** Isaiah 35:1-10, Psalm 146:5-10,  
James 5:7-10, Matthew 11:2-11

**12/21** Isaiah 7:10-16, Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19,  
Romans 1:1-7, Matthew 1:18-25

**12/24** Isaiah 9:2-7, Psalm 96,  
Titus 2:11-14, Luke 2:1-14

**12/28** Isaiah 63:7-9, Psalm 148,  
Hebrews 2:10-18, Matthew 2:13-23

## Angel Tree Gift Tags Coming Soon



With the recent changes at the Bettendorf Police Department, we are shifting our partnership for our annual Angel Tree giving opportunities around the holidays. As the Bettendorf and PV School Districts work to get these families and their wish lists to us, we will get those tags hung on the angel tree in the narthex as soon as possible. If you would like to help but may not

have time for shopping in a shortened window in early December, you are welcome to purchase a gift card to Wal-Mart, Target, or another similar store for our elves to do their work.

Please bring all gifts wrapped with the Angel tag attached.

## Join Trinity Prayer Chain to Connect with Community



**Prayer Chain**  
CONNECTING COMMUNITY  
HELPING EACH OTHER

A community that prays for one another is transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. We have been praying for and with each other for a long time here at Trinity Lutheran Church, but often we don't know exactly what we are praying for in those instances. If you would like to share in brief emails when there are prayer requests sent in to the office or to Pastor Stephen (at the times when permission is given), please email [Pastor](#) or the [office](#) to be added to the Trinity Prayer Chain. These will likely be brief emails to provide a notice when an emergency has happened or when someone is requesting prayers for a family member. Prayer requests will be asked, whether they would like any details shared with the prayer chain, when they make those requests.

## Advent Wreath Candle Lighters Needed

During our worship services in Advent, beginning November 30, we will have families or couples light the candles of the Advent wreath each week and lead a brief prayer. We have one more Sunday to sign up, if you're interested. Sign up on the form in the Narthex.



## Poinsettia Orders

*Now through December 14*

It's time to think about ordering our poinsettias for Christmas services. This year, poinsettias will cost \$10, and orders need to be in the church office by December 14th. There will be paper order forms in the bulletins at worship, or you may fill out the form in the weekly email.

## Servant Leaders Needed

*Have you ever thought about trying out what it might be like to serve on council as a leader in this congregation? What about helping in the annual meeting for either Luther Properties or the Southeastern Iowa Synod?*

*If any of these sound like exciting opportunities to you, see Pastor Stephen or a council member today to find out more!*

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

# SERVANT LEADERS NEEDED

Our Congregation's Council Leadership Team is seeking a new representative to serve a 3-year term

**MORE INFO**  
Call/Email  
Pastor Stephen  
563-332-6432  
snlsen@trinitylcpv.com

**JOIN NOW**  
FIND OUT MORE:  
Ask one of the current council members for more information

## Advent Education Opportunity: *A Stable Lamp Is Lighted*

*After Worship: November 30, December 14 & 21*

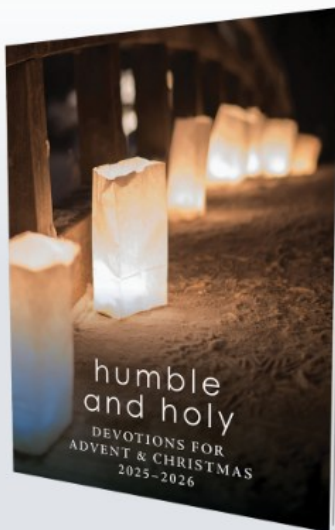


Join Pastor Stephen as we encounter the ELCA World Hunger's Advent educational resource, titled *A Stable Lamp Is Lighted for 2025*. *This discussion will dive into three of the partners in ministry that our work with ELCA World Hunger supports and dive into how those groups intersect with each other and the world. Each session will be open to any who have a hunger to learn more!*

The study guide can be read [here](#), and the accompanying video may be viewed ahead of time [here](#).

## Free Advent Devotional Booklets Available

There are copies available of this year's Augsburg Fortress Advent Devotional, *Humble and Holy*, which carries a reader through a journey of Advent and the Christmas season all the way up to Epiphany. Written by a number of Lutheran pastors and theologians, these make a great way to grow your study of scripture as we do some Advent waiting. Find out more [here](#).



## humble and holy

DEVOTIONS FOR ADVENT  
& CHRISTMAS 2025-2026

*Humble and Holy: Devotions for Advent and Christmas 2025-2026* continues a centuries-old Christian tradition of setting aside time to prepare for the celebration of Jesus' birth and to anticipate his return. With devotions from the first Sunday of Advent (11/30/25) to Epiphany (1/6/26), this devotional will help you pause, reflect, and pray through this season of blessed waiting. Perfect for family, group, and individual use by all ages. Ask about Large Print and ebook versions.

**Pick up your copy this Sunday!**

## FALL CLEAN UP DAY



## FARMER'S MARKET



## PIE SUNDAY





*LSI proudly serves Iowans in all 99 counties through our services of Mental Health, Early Childhood, Foster Care & Adoption, Global Greens, People with Disabilities, and Immigrant & Refugee Community Services. We serve individuals of all ages, from families with newborns navigating the early stages of parenthood, to Refugee and Immigrant elders, as well as children at every stage of development. Our heart beats for the people we serve. We empower families and communities by recognizing and honoring the strengths and gifts of every individual.*

**Your SUPPORT makes this Testimony possible...**  
**November is National Adoption Month: A Success Story**

"I started in foster care at just 17 days old. Life was full of challenges and obstacles, but I was determined to rise above them. At age 5, I was adopted by a family in a small town. At first, it felt like I was living in a real-life Cinderella story—with strict rules and little freedom. By age 10, I was sent away because I was considered 'too much.' The trauma I experienced left little room for healing.

I was placed in a treatment facility in Missouri, where I stayed for two and a half years. It was there that I began to discover my true potential. I explored new interests, found joy in learning, and started to excel in school. From facility to facility, my journey continued until I was 14. Just before high school, I was placed in a foster home with people I barely knew. It was a bumpy start, and I was hesitant to trust or enjoy life.

School became my constant, my anchor. I joined the cheer squad, theatre, and choir, slowly finding confidence in myself. At 15, I began searching for a permanent home. After many interviews, weekend visits, and calls, I met a family willing to take a chance on me in April 2020. Despite the challenges of that year, I felt an immediate connection. By May, I moved in permanently and finally felt truly welcome.

My new family supported my dream of becoming a teacher. With my new family's encouragement, I pursued my passion and am now student teaching at a local elementary school—four years later.

What made the biggest difference was love, support, and encouragement. Hearing "I'm proud of you" and feeling believed in even when I wanted to give up, helped me persevere.

My advice to foster families and youth: don't give up. Keep fighting for what you believe in, let your voice be heard, and most importantly—be yourself. Mom and Dad, if you read this, thank you for giving me the chance to be me. You've given me the opportunity of a lifetime, and I couldn't have done LSI's dedicated Adoption & Foster Care staff featured above!

With 347+ years of combined experience and a 97% staff retention rate last year, this incredible team is committed to serving Iowa's children and resource families. Every day, they ensure that kids feel safe, supported, and connected to caring adults—making a real difference in the lives of the children and families we serve. Let's honor the past, celebrate today, and look toward a future full of hope and opportunity this without you.



# DECEMBER 2025

| Sun                                                                                                       | Mon                                                                         | Tue                                    | Wed                                                                     | Thu                                                          | Fri                           | Sat                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                           | <b>1</b><br>9 - 11 AM<br>Food Pantry<br>2 PM Education                      | <b>2</b><br>4:40—5:10 PM<br>Bookmobile | <b>3</b><br>10 AM Bible Study<br>11 AM Worship &<br>Music               | <b>4</b><br>4– 6 PM<br>Food Pantry                           | <b>5</b><br>Pastor's Sabbath  | <b>6</b><br>8 AM - PPALS Bible<br>Study  |
| <b>7</b><br>9 AM Worship<br>10 AM Property<br>10 AM <i>Blood Pressure<br/>Clinic</i><br>5-7 PM Crossroads | <b>8</b><br>9 - 11 AM<br>Food Pantry<br>5 PM Stewardship<br>6:30 PM Council | <b>9</b>                               | <b>10</b><br>10 AM Bible Study                                          | <b>11</b><br>1-3 PM Card Ministry<br>4 - 6 PM<br>Food Pantry | <b>12</b><br>Pastor's Sabbath | <b>13</b><br>8 AM - PPALS Bible<br>Study |
| <b>14</b><br>9 AM Worship<br>5-7 PM Crossroads                                                            | <b>15</b><br>9 - 11 AM<br>Food Pantry                                       | <b>16</b>                              | <b>17</b><br>10 AM Bible Study                                          | <b>18</b><br>4– 6 PM<br>Food Pantry                          | <b>19</b><br>Pastor's Sabbath | <b>20</b><br>8 AM - PPALS Bible<br>Study |
| <b>21</b><br>9 AM Worship<br>5-7 Crossroads                                                               | <b>22</b><br>9 - 11 AM<br>Food Pantry                                       | <b>23</b>                              | <b>24</b><br>10 AM Bible Study<br><b>Christmas Eve<br/>Service 7 PM</b> | <b>25</b><br>Food Pantry closed for<br>Christmas Day         | <b>26</b><br>Pastor's Sabbath | <b>27</b><br>8 AM - PPALS Bible<br>Study |
| <b>28</b>                                                                                                 | <b>29</b><br>9 - 11 AM<br>Food Pantry                                       | <b>30</b>                              | <b>31</b><br>10 AM Bible Study                                          |                                                              |                               |                                          |
|                                                                                                           |                                                                             |                                        |                                                                         |                                                              |                               |                                          |