



THE TORCH

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January 2026
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)

Merry Christmas!

Whether you are still celebrating the 12 days of Christmas, you take down your tree and decorations on the day after Christmas, or you will still have signs of holiday cheer around your home well into February or beyond, I hope that you continue to feel the blessings of God with us, Emmanuel. Christ has come into our hearts again, and that is always something worth celebrating!

As I look ahead into the start of the new calendar year, there are lots of ways that we will look toward the future. In November, I attended the annual fundraising banquet of Quad Cities Interfaith, an organization that “equips individuals from diverse faith traditions to grow as leaders and drive sustainable, systemic change in public policy through grassroots organizing.” This year, the banquet featured remarks from Rev. Dr. Dwight Ford, a Baptist pastor from Rock Island’s Grace City Church who is the President/CEO of Project NOW. This dynamic speaker continued on the organization’s theme of “Building Bridges for a Better Future” by emphasizing the ways that people organizing together for a collective goal can accomplish a great many things that help to bridge our divided world and build a better future.

Since that evening in November, I continue to think about the ways that our own congregation and other partners build bridges for a better future. This upcoming year, I invite you to look at the work of our congregation: gathering for worship and fellowship each Sunday, feeding our neighbors through the Trinity Food Pantry and other outreach, growing in faith through weekly Bible Studies and hosting a week of Summer Day Camp, to name just a few. In each of these components of our congregation’s ministry, there is a bridge being built toward a better future. Whether we are building the bridges between ourselves and other partners, building the bridges of listening ears among members with opportunities for fellowship, or building the bridges of a hand reaching out to help a neighbor who might be in need. Christ shows us these models of reaching out to build bridges often in the incarnation.

“And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.” – John 1:14, NRSVUE

“Now on that same day two of [the disciples] were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, ‘What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?’” – Luke 24:13-17, NRSVUE

As the Body of Christ, gathered and sent, fed and forgiven, we are called into life together, sharing in the highs and lows, always reminding each other of the presence of a God who has come near. In the looking back at 2025 and the looking ahead at 2026, we can see bridges of connection all around us. May we continue to look ahead to a God who comes near in Christ’s incarnation with us. Christmas is as good a season as any to feel that presence. The Epiphany, Lent, and Easter seasons ahead will also offer times to encounter Christ’s life and the ways that he is made known to us, coming alongside us as we work to build bridges for a better future.

Building bridges together,

Pastor Stephen Nilsen

Find out more about Pastor Stephen’s Parental Leave
on the top of Page 4 inside!

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

From the Trinity Council President's Desk...

With Christmas and the New Year upon us, I hope you are taking some time to spend with your loved ones and remembering to take a little time for ourselves to not let ourselves get spread too thin and run down. This is something I struggle with myself. Here are some updates about Council.

Council has been working with Pastor to ensure a work life balance, as he adjusts to Baby Ida joining their family so that he gets his paternity time to help out at home. Council has been working hard on our budget plans for the coming year. We spend a lot of time talking about the realities of limited funds and balancing that with the needs, hopes, and dreams for how Trinity can best serve the community. It is fitting that we pray about this, as we ask God to work with us to accomplish this great list. Emmanuel, God with Us, is a reminder that God supports us through his work using our hands.

I ask that each of us takes a little time, as we give thanks for Jesus' birth, to pray also for our needs, hopes, and dreams both as individuals and families, as well as a congregation and community. If you are the type to make a New Year's resolution, consider how you can be more effective in reaching our goals together. Perhaps you will find yourself drawn to a new volunteer opportunity this year. We have some available, such as becoming a Synod Representative (1 meeting in the spring generally), or as a Luther Properties Representative. We recently started helping Luther Properties with their tiny onsite food pantries for the residents with some of the food supplies from our own food pantry. I welcome you to reach out to Pastor, any Council Member, or Myself if you would like more information on any of these exciting opportunities.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Blessings,

Dane Crist
Trinity Council President



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 NOVEMBER 2025

Collections to date	\$154,776.41
Expenses to date	\$177, 252.70
Net to date	(\$22,476.29)
No funds have been transferred from Stewardship Reserves year to date.	

ATTENDANCE TOTALS FOR DECEMBER 2025

November	30	snow day
December	7	52
December	14	44
December	21	60
December	24	80
December	28	44

Birthdays

1 Ron Morrow
 3 Hannah Schnack
 4 Mary Shelton
 4 Joshua McBride
 5 Tonia Kennedy
 6 Kathy Naslund
 6 Cassie West
 9 Vicki Engler
 10 Pam Schroder
 12 Don Cook
 19 Luke Prather
 19 Luke Ven Horst
 20 Paxton Heidenreich
 22 Dani Dexter
 24 Melissa Aguilar
 25 Glenna Sbertoli
 30 Janet Riedesel
 31 Aiden Engler



January



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Worship & Fellowship Volunteers

	January 4	January 11	January 18	January 25	February 1
Altar Guild	Mary Shelton	Diana Mayes	Linda Busch	Diane Kaufmann	Mary Shelton
Communion Assistant	Michelle Crist	Diana Mayes	Diane Holst	Volunteer Needed	Marcia Brunsvold
Lector	Dane Crist	Dawn Brick	Sally Morrow	Ellen Opperman	Henry Marquard
Usher Greeter	Chris Kaul Lois Schurr	Al McIlrath Don Cordts	Diane Cook Ron Morrow	Paul Opperman Arnie Kaufmann	Travis Brunsvold Sharon Marquard
Worship Video Livestream Producer	Volunteer Needed	Volunteer Needed	Volunteer Needed	Volunteer Needed	Volunteer Needed
Fellowship	Mary & Tom Shelton	Diana Mayes Claudia Neumann	Volunteer Needed	Council: Annual Mtg.	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) with your replacement. Thank you.

Pastor Stephen on Parental Leave through Mid-March

Pastor Stephen is very gracious for the generous parental leave that has been granted to him for bonding with his new daughter, Ida. For the first 10 weeks of 2026, Pastor Stephen will be at home with them, while the life of our congregation continues on. A few different pastors will fill in for Sunday morning worship, but in the event of an emergency, you can contact the office (563-332-5188) or any of the four pastors listed below:



Pastor Stephanie Wood, Grace Lutheran Church, Davenport
402-659-3427

Pastor Kirsten Lee, Grace Lutheran Church, Davenport
405-248-0586

Pastor Art Blegen, First Presbyterian Church, Le Claire
910-354-8540

Pastor Annabell Blegen, First Presbyterian Church, Le Claire
563-554-9160

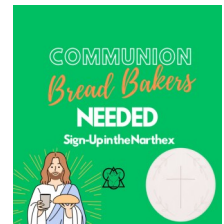
Trinity Blood Pressure Ministry *After worship on January 4*

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 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.

The partnership with our friends at the Le Claire Fareway has been remarkable! We have restocked our shelves at the pantry to the tune of \$3,400+ in store credit provided through the generosity of community members like you. If you're looking to buy something in particular: we could use some personal hygiene products. Share the good news of our Food Pantry with others in our community.

Thanks so much for your support!
Trinity Food Pantry Team
pantry@trinitylcpv.com. 563 332-6432



Annual Congregational Meeting Coming at End of January

Our Annual Congregation Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 25, 2025 after the 9:00 AM Worship Service. If your committee does not have your report turned in, please get it to Paula as soon as possible. It takes a lot of time to put the report together and have it ready for all to review before the meeting. At the meeting, we'll elect council members, endowment committee members, voting members for Synod Assembly and the Luther Property annual meeting, as well as hear about long-term planning proposals and budget plans. Email: office@trinitylcpv.com with questions. A pre-meeting will also be held Sunday, January 18 to address more in-depth questions.

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Sunday, January 25 after worship



Winter Coat & Boot Drive Returns

Every year, there are some children or families that are still in need of winter clothing later in the year than expected.



Help our community by bringing any new or lightly used coats, jackets, boots, or shoes for people who are served by Trinity Food Pantry. Items may be dropped off at the table or shipping cart in the narthex. Hats, gloves and scarves are also appreciated!

Join Trinity Prayer Chain to Connect with Community



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.

Trinity Card Crafting Ministry Spreading Joy

Thursday, January 8 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 January 8 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



Winter Scott County Library's Bookmobile Stops

The Scott County Library Bookmobile will take a break from stopping at Trinity in November due to Veteran's Day falling on the usual Tuesday, but you can plan to stop by the church parking lot through the

winter on Tuesday afternoons every three weeks. 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, January 13, February 3, and February 24 4:40-5:10 PM

For more info, visit: Scottcountyowa.gov/library/bookmobile



New Living Lutheran Website Launches

We're excited to pass along a little early good news this Advent season: the new LivingLutheran.org is live! Set up a **free digital membership** for perks like a personalized dashboard that prioritizes the stories that interest you, access to members-only content and the ability to save and "like" articles — all with a welcoming, easy-to-access format.

Living Lutheran tells the stories of the ELCA, bonding us as a church across congregations, synods, states, regions and countries. Get informed, inspired and equipped with perspectives to deepen your faith and connect with the broader Lutheran community!



Crossroads Youth Ministry Heading to Le Claire

Sundays, 5:00-7:00 PM January and February meetings at First Pres. Church in LeClaire

TLC youth from 6th through 9th grades will be joining together with First Presbyterian Church's youth (and any friends that the youth would like to bring along) for a fun, faith-filled youth group meeting each Sunday through the school year. Each meeting will include a simple dinner, games, and discussion of the developing faith of the youth.

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](#).



WEEKLY READINGS

01/04 Jeremiah 31:7-14, Psalm 147:12-20, Ephesians 1:3-14, John 1:1-18

01/11 Isaiah 42:1-9, Psalm 29, Acts 10:34-43, Matthew 3:13-17

01/18 Isaiah 49:1-7, Psalm 40:1-11, 1 Corinthians 1:1-9, John 1:29-42

01/25 Isaiah 9:1-4, Psalm 27 1, 4-9, 1 Corinthians 1:10-18, Matthew 4:12-23

Trinity Share-A-Meal Effort Serving in January

Tuesday, January 6 at 5 PM

Share-A-Meal with Churches United



As part of our community's ongoing partnership with Churches United and their meal site at Zion Lutheran Church in Davenport, Trinity will be serving a meal on Tuesday, January 6, and could use your help with either providing cookies (homemade or store-bought are fine), shopping for food, cooking food, or serving the meal to those in need.

Throughout the year, Trinity helps to serve anywhere from 40 to 80 people at these community meal nights, and your help is greatly appreciated.

You can drop off cookies in the kitchen anytime before 2 PM on Tuesday the 6th, and if you are interested in cooking or shopping, please contact Deb Anderson (563 726-1278) or Brandi Ahlers (563 370-7377).

ELCA Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry to Speak on Martin Luther King Jr. Day at Luther College



The Rev. [Yehiel Curry](#), Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, will offer keynote remarks at Luther College's 2026 Martin Luther King Jr. Day lecture on Monday, Jan. 19, 2026, in the Center for Faith and Life Main Hall.

The theme of the day and Curry's talk is "Courage for the Common Good." Supported by the Williams Endowment Fund, the day begins with Curry's address at 10:30 a.m. Following an optional community lunch at noon for attendees, two sessions are planned for the afternoon at 1:15 p.m., a youth discussion with Curry, and a panel discussion with regional ELCA bishops for all others.

The event is open to the public, and admission to the morning program and the afternoon break-out sessions are free. Lunch tickets for adults are \$10, but free for youth who are registered for the youth session. To learn more or reserve tickets, visit

[h-of-the-elca-jan-19-2026-eventhttps://www.luther.edu/news/presiding-bishop](https://www.luther.edu/news/presiding-bishop-h-of-the-elca-jan-19-2026-event)

TED x SEIA - Ideas, Inspiration, and Impact with the Children Youth & Family Network

Sunday, January 11 - 12:30-4:30 PM



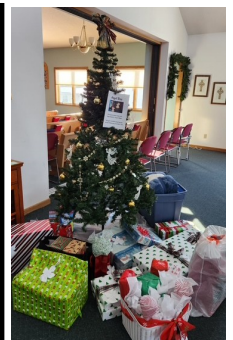
You're invited to a special TEDxSEIA on Sunday, January 11, from 12:30-4:30 PM. This gathering is designed for leaders and volunteers connected to Children, Youth, and Family ministries across Southeastern Iowa. Together, we'll explore several engaging TED-style presentations on topics like partnerships for VBS, youth-led worship, equipping volunteers and leaders, connecting with the community, and the value of prayer. The event will take place in multiple locations across the area:

- Cedar Rapids- First Lutheran Church
- Anamosa- St. Paul Lutheran Church
- Clive- Faith Lutheran Church
- Burlington- Messiah Lutheran Church

Come for connection and conversation, inspiration and learning, and reflection and next steps—plus, of course, snacks! Visit the Synod website to register.

THE ANGEL TREE

Thanks to the many generous people at Trinity Lutheran Church. We were able to help make Christmas a little brighter for 9 families within the PV School District. We provided much needed basic necessities, such as grocery gift cards, general household supplies, clothes and toiletries to many of our households. We also provided some of the Christmas magic with toys for the younger family members. Overall, we helped 20 adults and 20 children. Thank you so much to everyone for your generosity and quick response to work with such a tight timeframe this year! You all are angels!



SOME BUZZ
(A bit of information about God's creation of the Prairie)



DID YOU KNOW?

1. Pollinators look at the diverse plants in a garden setting as a salad bar. The nectar of different types of plants offer different nutrients that pollinators need for a well balanced diet. The Pollinators instinctively know which plants to visit to obtain the nutrients they need.

2. When vast areas of forest are destroyed by fire, the most common natural rejuvenation results first with small plants with shallow roots, followed by taller plants, and finally trees that become forests. The rejuvenation takes centuries. Taller plants tend to shade shorter plants out. Furthermore, taller plants' vast root systems deprive the shorter plants of needed soil nutrients.

3. Over thousands of years, the area of our great Midwest we commonly call the Great Plains withstood forestation, primarily because: normal rainfall did not support vast forests. Natural prairie fires occurred more frequently, thereby restarting the natural rejuvenation process.

4. The Great Plains actually consisted of two distinct, but similar, prairie ecosystems: The more vast Small Grass Prairie and the not as vast Tall Grass Prairie. The Small Grass Prairie, primarily found west of Iowa (Kansas, Nebraska, the Dakotas, etc.), was characterized by the prevalence of 2-4 foot tall grasses and similarly sized wildflowers. The Tall Grass Prairie was dominated by grasses and other plants that would grow over 8 feet tall in a growing season. Tall grasses were more sparse in the Small Grass Prairie. Shorter grasses grew in Tall grass prairies, but over many years taller plants would out compete them. The reason for the difference: Rainfall.

5. Before modern settlement, the State of Iowa was 80% Tall Grass Prairie. For scorekeepers, our Prairie State – Illinois - was second at just over 60% (Illinois is geographically smaller than Iowa). West of Iowa, drier climate supported only Small Grass Prairie. Longer winters to the north gave rise Evergreen forests that withstood the winter. More rainfall to the South and East gave rise to the dominance of deciduous forests.

6. Many of the wildflowers we planted in the median in 2025 are no taller than about 4 feet, but were common to both Tall Grass and Short Grass Prairies. They developed deep root systems to adequately compete for soil nutrients with the taller plants. The root systems access more water than they regularly need. Therefore they can tolerate long periods without rainfall. They are characterized as drought tolerant.

7. Tall Goldenrod that we have seen primarily in our median for the past number of years, is an example of a Tall Grass Prairie plant. Our experience demonstrates the natural succession process, with the Tall Goldenrod crowding out all other sun loving plants. Conclusion: Our median is not large enough to generally support an array of Tall Grass Prairie plants. The tall plants such as Goldenrod will simply destroy the diversity that Pollinators need (See #1 above).





Hi LSI Supporters

Save the date for **Thursday, February 26**, and plan to join us for our annual **Lutheran Day on the Hill**!

Event check-in begins at 8:00 AM, and the event will start promptly at 9:00 AM. More details including the agenda, speakers, and registration information will be shared soon. Updates will also be available at LSIowa.org/LDH.

This **free event**, sponsored by **LSI** and the **three Iowa synods of the ELCA**, is open to anyone who wants to learn more about citizen advocacy and engage with issues impacting our communities.

We hope Lutheran Day on the Hill shines a light on the critical issues facing individuals and families across Iowa.

Last year was a **record-breaking year for attendance**, and we hope you'll join us as we aim to beat it again.

Thank you for using your voice to amplify those of our neighbors.



JANUARY 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 4 – 6 PM Food Pantry	2	3 8 AM - PPALS Bible Study
4 9 AM Worship 10 AM Property 10 AM <i>Blood Pressure Clinic</i> 5-7 PM Crossroads	5 9 - 11 AM Food Pantry	6 3:30 PM Social Ministry	7	8 1-3 PM Card Ministry 3:30 PM Education 4 - 6 PM Food Pantry	9	10 8 AM - PPALS Bible Study
11 9 AM Worship 5-7 PM Crossroads	12 9 - 11 AM Food Pantry 5 PM Stewardship 6:00 PM Council	13 Bookmobile 4:40 - 5:10	14	15 4 – 6 PM Food Pantry	16	17 8 AM - PPALS Bible Study
18 9 AM Worship 10 AM Annual Meeting Info Session 5-7 Crossroads	19 9 - 11 AM Food Pantry	20	21	22 4 - 6 PM Food Pantry	23	24 8 AM - PPALS Bible Study
25 9 AM Worship 10 AM Annual Meeting 5-7 Crossroads	26 9 - 11 AM Food Pantry	27	28	29	30	31