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Proclaiming Jesus Christ to the World!

From Our Pastor

Trust, but Verify: When Love Invites a New Path

My husband, Bob, has a long-standing habit of sending me articles from the many news sources he reads—usually with the subject line: “*Sermon idea?*”

I smile every time. And then I pause.

It’s not that I don’t trust him—I do. But years of marriage, ministry, and more than a few “gotcha” articles have taught me an important spiritual practice: **trust, but verify.**

More than once I’ve thanked Bob for an article, even told him I planned to use it in Sunday’s sermon—only to be met with a twinkle in his eye and a laugh as he says, “Remember... trust but verify.” We’ve been playing this game for over twenty-five years, and somewhere along the way, it has become wisdom.

Still, mixed in with the humor are moments of genuine insight—words that invite reflection, discernment, and sometimes even a change in direction. And that, it turns out, is often how faith works. We begin on one path, and then wisdom—or a dream, or an angel—invites us to take another.

That invitation came on a night in Bethlehem.

We know the story well: Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem for the census, are turned away from an inn, and Jesus is born in a cold, lonely stable. It is a tender story—but biblical scholarship suggests something different, and perhaps something even more powerful.

Mary and Joseph did not arrive at an inn. The word often translated as “inn” more accurately refers to a **guest room**—a room that was already filled with relatives who had also come for the census. Instead of being turned away, Mary and Joseph were welcomed into Joseph’s family home. In those homes, the main living space was shared by people, and at night, animals were brought inside for warmth and safety.

It was there—in a crowded home, surrounded by family, warmth, and beloved animals—that Mary gave birth to Jesus. Not alone. Not abandoned. But held in love.

And it was to that home that the shepherds came—guided by angels, stirred by wonder, and moved by trust. After they had seen the child, they left by a different road, their lives changed, the world altered forever by the love they encountered.

From Our Pastor (continued)

I'll admit: the Christmas story I had carried my whole life changed the morning I read—and verified—that article Bob sent me. What I expected to be another playful “sermon idea” turned out to be deeply true. Jesus was born not in isolation, but in community. Not in rejection, but in welcome. Love had already come down.

That realization made me ask a harder question: *Would I have listened to the angels? Would I have been willing to change course?*

I want to say yes—and I believe the answer is yes. But I also know myself well enough to pause, to pray, and to ask one essential question: **Has God ever led me down the wrong path?**

The answer, every time, is no.

God has always led me toward light, toward love, toward life—sometimes by a road I did not expect. The harder path is often the truer one. And God never promised it would be easy. What God promised—made clear in the birth of Jesus—is this: **love would come down, and we would never be alone.**

That same love has surrounded the people of Trinity for 100 years. Change has come, and change will continue to come—because that is the nature of faith. We are called to listen, to trust, to discern, and to follow, even when the road ahead feels unfamiliar. The shepherds trusted the voices of love and chose a different path. Mary and Joseph trusted love enough to welcome God into the middle of ordinary, crowded life. And so are we.

My prayer for the people of Trinity as we enter this centennial year is this: that we rest in the love of God that already surrounds us, even as we listen together for where God may be leading us next. I pray, too, that we extend grace and trust to the leaders who are serving in this season—leaders who care deeply for this community, who are listening carefully, and who are doing their very best to guide Trinity faithfully into the future. In the months ahead, you are warmly invited to be part of our listening round-table conversations—safe, open spaces where questions are welcomed, hopes and concerns can be shared, and voices are heard. These conversations are not about rushing decisions but about discerning together what new paths of ministry might look like. Change can feel unsettling, especially when familiar ways are dear to us, but we are not being asked to walk alone. Love has already come down—and that same love will continue to hold and lead us, step by gentle step.

The future of Trinity is a shared story—and your voice is part of it. Join us for **Round Table Discussions** as we talk together about future ministry and the paths ahead.

Wednesday, Jan. 7 | 9:00 a.m. in the H.O.M.

Saturday, Jan. 10 | 9:00 a.m. in the H.O.M.

Come listen, share, and help shape what's next. **Please RSVP to Kali Agosto at: 904-389-5341**

RSVP is not required but helpful.

Pr. Carol's grandmother's Christmas desert, shared in a sermon...



Makes 8 to 10 servings

You will need:

2 eggs | 1 cup sugar plus 2 tablespoons (divided) | 4 tablespoons flour
1 teaspoon baking powder | 1/2 teaspoon salt | 1 1/4 cups chopped dates
1/2 cup chopped walnuts | 2 or 3 oranges | 2 or 3 bananas
16 ounces heavy whipping cream

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

In a medium bowl, beat eggs lightly. Add sugar and beat thoroughly, until mixture is light. Add flour, baking powder, salt, dates and walnuts, and stir to combine. Place in a greased 11-by-7-inch pan and bake in preheated oven 40 minutes. Let cool.

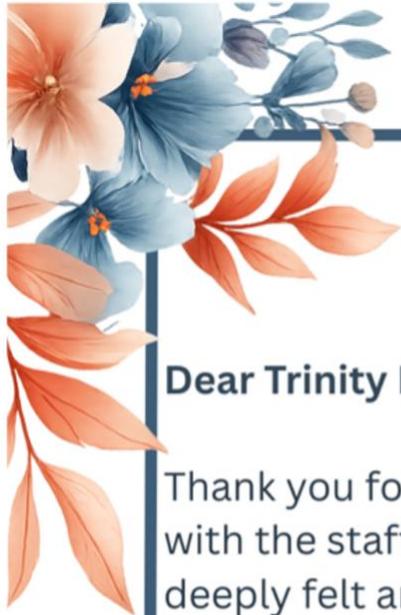
Peel the oranges with a knife to remove all the white pith, and cut them in segments into a bowl to catch the juices, halving the segments to make them bite-size if necessary. Cut the peeled bananas into half-inch slices and combine with the orange segments. Break the torte into pieces and place on a platter. Arrange the sliced oranges and bananas over the top. Let stand 1 hour.

Meanwhile, whip the cream with 2 tablespoons sugar or to taste. Scoop a portion of torte onto a small plate or into a small bowl and top with a dollop of whipped cream.

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

January 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4 <u>Worship</u> – Combined 10am Service	5 Quilters 9am	6 Choir 10:30am	7 Round Table Discussion 9am	8 Food Pantry 4-6pm	9 Food Pantry 10am-12pm	10 Round Table Discussion 9am
11 <u>Worship</u> – Combined 10am Service	12 Quilters 9am MOT 8:30 am	13 Choir 10:30am Circle Meeting 12 pm Council 6:30 pm	14	15 Food Pantry 4-6pm Lunch Bunch 11:30am	16 Food Pantry 10am-12pm	17
18 <u>Worship</u> – Combined 10am Service	19 Quilters 9am Martin Luther King Jr	20 Choir 10:30am	21	22 Food Pantry 4-6pm	23 Food Pantry 10am-12pm	24
25 <u>Worship</u> – Combined 10am Service	26 Quilters 9am	27 Choir 10:30am	28	29	30 Food Pantry 10am-12pm NFAN (H.O.M) 12pm	31 2pm – Square Dance



Thank You!

Dear Trinity Family,

Thank you for the generous Christmas gift you shared with the staff. Your thoughtfulness and kindness were deeply felt and truly appreciated.

Your gift was more than a financial blessing—it was a tangible reminder of the care, encouragement, and love that you extend to those who serve alongside you in ministry. We are grateful to be part of a congregation that leads with generosity and lives out the spirit of Christmas in such meaningful ways.

Please know how thankful we are for you, for your support, and for the joy of serving God together with you.

With sincere gratitude and Christmas blessings,

Kali Agosto, Kim Bartlett-Bloomer,
Rae Ettmyer, Dean Winter, Kathy Smith,
Scott Piersall, Pr. Carol Gates





ONE SERVICE
SUNDAY

THIS IS A REMINDER THAT WE WILL
GATHER FOR A COMBINED SERVICE AT
10:00 AM THROUGH FEBRUARY 8TH, 2026.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING EVERYONE
THERE AS WE JOIN HEARTS AND VOICES IN
WORSHIP.



Groups, Gatherings, & Announcements



THE TAKEAWAY

Want a space to talk about life and faith in a real way? The Takeaway is a relaxed, community-led Bible study where we can share honest thoughts, ask questions, and explore how the week's Gospel connects to our everyday lives. There's no pressure—just real conversation, open hearts, and a chance to grow in faith together. Come as you are, bring your curiosity, and join the discussion.

Join us each Sunday at 10:10 in the Cecil Poole room!

**If you're interested in leading the lesson, there is a sign-up sheet in the Hall of Memories*



We meet on the second Monday of each month to handle general maintenance, minor repairs, and light clean-up around the church. We start at 8:30 with a light breakfast and good fellowship. All are welcome—no skills needed. Even if you're not handy, come help, hold tools, or just supervise!



The Choir practices on Tuesdays at 10:30 am.

All are welcome!

We are excited to announce that Trinity's Website is no longer "under construction." Check Trinity out at: trinity4jax.org
Scan QR Code to donate!



Heartfelt thank you to Dustin Moore for being Trinity's Construction Manager!

Trinity Lunch Bunch

JANUARY'S DESTINATION

The Windsor
at Ortega

5939 Roosevelt Blvd
Jacksonville, FL 32244
(904) 353-9500

December 15, 2025 – 11:30am

**Sign up in the Hall of Memories. *Call Kim with any changes: (904)635-9104 Please RSVP to Kim Bloomer by 01/05/2026*



The January

Love Offering will go to the ELCA
Domestic Disaster Relief.

Trinity Food Pantry Highlights



FOOD PANTRY

Here's a recap of activity for December 2025:

41 Different Volunteers Served at the Community Food Panty during December 2025:

Date	Patrons	Family Members	# of Zip Codes
Dec 4th – 5th	203	625	22
Dec 11th -12th	243	756	25
Dec 19th -19 th	230	749	29
<u>Dec 26th</u>	<u>71</u>	<u>194</u>	<u>20</u>
Total	846	2,324	29

Thank you to all the Trinity Members and neighbors that have volunteered their time and voluntarily donated food and money to the Trinity Community Food Pantry. We provided food to 12,514 Families during 2025. This exceeds the total 10,744 Families that received food during 2024..