

Annual Congregational Report

Trinity Lutheran Church

2025



Pastor's Report

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

By the power of the Holy Spirit we have been faithful through another year of ministry at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Monroeville, Ohio. Worship has been steady and full of member events as can be seen in the tables below. Monroeville Youth Club began anew last fall with great energy, and it is already scheduled for Mondays in March of 2026. Parents and grandparents told us that vacation bible school was truly "the best ever" this past summer. We did have a nasty cold spell in December's weather which prevented *The Journey to Bethlehem* because we decided it was not our job to freeze small children as part of their Christian enlightenment, and we do not have an indoor protocol for it.

Other news includes a rather faithful New Testament bible study on Thursday nights hosted by retired clergyman Jerry Neuberger here at Trinity (currently at 4:30pm). We finished a tour of the Gospel of Matthew and began another of the Gospel of Luke. Also recently started was a Life-to-Life Discipleship bible study hosted Monday nights by Carolyn Adelman and Tonia Smith with space currently provided by faithful visitors Doug and Kim Arter at their furniture store in Norwalk (currently at 4:00pm).

If you have attended worship on the second Sunday of any month this past quarter, you were certainly blessed by vocal offerings from our choir. Director Marcia Adelman and accompanist Marlene Longer have provided our dozen choir volunteers plenty of musical expertise to further enrich our worship. (A big "thank you" to Julie Roeder and Andrew Morfier for making room for this development.)

The following membership milestones occurred in 2025, all of them celebrated in worship:

Receipt of Members	Name	Date	Means
	Garret James Nuhfer	May 4	Baptism
	Preston Mitchell Cress	June 15	Baptism
	Gilia Maria Dominica Iafolla	June 22	Baptism
	Isabella Grace Mae Iafolla	June 22	Baptism

Loss of Members	Mary Emma Darling	June 29	Affirmation of Baptism
	Name	Date	Means
	Roger Lee Dickman	April 27	Deceased
	Eric Warren Heyman	June 19	Deceased
	Charlene Grace Henney	August 9	Deceased
	Donald Robert Weltlin	August 20	Deceased

Other Milestones	Name	Date	Faith Milestone
	Lilly Grace Fleming	March 9	First Holy Communion
	Scarlett Mae Gerber	April 13	First Holy Communion
	Stella Grace Schuller	May 25	First Holy Communion
	Gilia Maria Dominica Iafolla	June 22	First Holy Communion
	Isabella Grace Mae Iafolla	June 22	First Holy Communion
	Nathaniel Lee Bixler	July 27	Baptism
	Henry Harmon Hales	October 26	Affirmation of Baptism
	Cole Robert Myers	October 26	Affirmation of Baptism

Another milestone included the beginning of saying goodbye to Sharon Heyman after at least 20 years of faithful service as our appointed treasurer. I say "beginning" because it was October 12 on which we initiated her sending with a Farewell and Godspeed service, yet she still faithfully works with us to hand off her treasurer responsibilities to Jenn Miller to keep things from "falling through the cracks" financially. Sharon will be spending a lot more time with kids and grandkids since she moved to Findlay, Ohio.

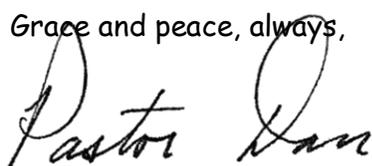
Other ways we have been faithful include attending BYLD, the youth discernment and discipleship event which replaced NEXUS, and continuing to invite seminarian Monica Nuhfer to develop her preaching and presiding skills in worship when I am absent. This included one Sunday each month from March through October when you "loaned" me to Resurrection Lutheran in Port Clinton to preach and preside over communion for them as they worked to call a new pastor. Their newly ordained pastor is Rev. John Hazzard, a member of their local worship community. We also invited a new mission district pastor, Rev. Brodie Taphorn, to preach for us one Sunday, and Becky Schultz to play the organ for us a couple of times. As far as I know, all were grateful for their chance to participate in our worship.

As far as financial stewardship is concerned, our congregation accomplished many things with the blessings God gave them. The worship space remodeling was accomplished with remarkable efficiency and many volunteers. We were not displaced from our worship space for more than a couple of weeks. We survived twin furnace replacements for the worship space. On top of all that, we helped put the North American Lutheran Church (our parent denomination) over the top of the \$5 million dollar goal for the 20/20 Vision: Today, Tomorrow and Forever Initiative, 2025 being the last year for donations to that particular cause. Our congregation knows how to maximize financial resources!

Other projects we can be somewhat satisfied finishing up in 2025 include a member directory for which data and photographs are "on the cloud" and therefore easily updated, and the final adoption of our updated constitution.

On a personal note, it was amazing to experience the love of this congregation as you released me to take care of burying my mother, may she rest in peace forever, and to help my family set my father up for successful independent living in his own home. Most of you understand what a gift this is, and I will always be grateful for your flexible support when I most needed it.

Grace and peace, always,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pastor Dan". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "Grace and peace, always,".

Rev. Daniel I. Pennington

President's Report

Dear Brothers and Sisters at Trinity Lutheran Church

It has been my privilege and a true growing experience to serve as your church council president this past year. It is truly a blessing to work with such talented, artistic, energetic, and faithful people as we have at TLC. I am truly grateful that Gary and Rob have graciously committed to another term at council. Their experience and dedication will be most appreciated in the next few years.

I would like to remark on Sharon Heyman's unwavering dedication to being our treasurer for so many years. We will miss her but wish her godspeed as she embarks on her next phase of life closer to her family. We are looking forward to working with Jennifer Miller as Sharon passes the Treasurer baton into her capable and willing hands.

Our sanctuary not only looks beautiful, but the functionality has been much improved thanks to Bret's amazing woodworking skills on the separation of the altar and attached shelf. Redirecting and moving the altar greatly enhanced the giving of communion and other facets of worship.

Missy and all of her helpers outdid themselves in decorating the fellowship hall with a western theme for bible school. It was a wonderful testament of welcome to our non-member village guests and reflected a good outreach to the community.

Our new choir has graced us with their joyous and much-appreciated voices. They have come together remarkably well in a short time. Thank you, Marsha, for taking the helm as choir director.

Pastor Dan has been hardworking and diligent in leading not only our worship but also in all of his many Pastoral duties. Challenging us to grow in our faith in Christ Jesus.

Jennifer has provided us with a clean well equipped and organized place of worship and kept us in the know with weekly bulletins and newsletters. Tonia has provided a myriad of services from scheduling meetings, contacting people, printing out bulletins, and more. They both deserve our gratitude for a job well done.

I would like to thank all of our Sunday school teachers who work so diligently to teach our children about Jesus and what it means to be a Christian.

A special thank you to Monica Nuhfer, who fills in quite admirably for Pastor Dan and whose sermons are heartfelt and inspirational.

I know that I am missing several people whose weekly contributions provide us with music, celebratory cakes, financial investments, and many other much-needed blessings. Thank you one and all.

Thank the Lord and stay in Christ.

Ken Underwood, Council President.

Property and Planning Report

Greetings, Trinity Lutheran Church started 2025 with some big upgrades.

We started in January by taking all the pews out of the church, upstairs and down, and removing the altar. We went over the pews with a cleaner, and Bret Gfell repaired the ones that needed to be repaired. Bret also redid the altar so that it has a new top and back. Missy & Bonnie painted them. New carpet was installed in the church, including upstairs, down the hallway, and in both offices. Before the new carpet was installed, all the old floorboards were screwed down, eliminating all the old creaks in the floor. We had the church painted as well. It was a huge project that we will enjoy for a long period of time. Pastor Dan's office received new paint, and 2 new desks for the office assistants.

The audio video, which for years has held its spot in the front row of the church, now sits upstairs, clear of view, and the orange cone and pole are now clear of sight. Thank you, donors, for this upgrade, and thank you, Pastor Dan and Bret, for all the wiring that looks and works great.

This past summer, our refrigerator decided to cool down for the last time. It wasn't a budget item, so we had to have a congregational meeting to approve purchasing a new one.

This past October, one of the two church furnaces decided to stop heating for the last time. Although no budget had been allocated for this repair, it was approved through a congregational meeting. I believe we got a great deal, spending \$8,800 on two new high-efficiency furnaces. Thank you, Ken, for spearheading this project.

Lastly, we wouldn't look so good in the lawn and landscape without the help of Jeff Little and Jim Pocock; it always looked well-kept. Thank you.

Submitted by Gary Underwood.



GIFT (Growing in Faith Together)

2025 was a busy year for us, and we refocused on attending to basic disciplines. Examples included...

- Most of our council meetings starting with a Dwelling in the Word exercise to consider what God might want for us each month, a very practical exercise for the guiding body of the congregation.
- Our Sunday school program began last fall to include an opening, a large group session, and featured prayer and teaching kids about offering. These offerings were more focused than simply giving money, though that was graciously accepted. One month we collected socks, another month we collected non-perishable food items, etc.
- Our Thursday night bible study, hosted by Pastor Jerry, finished up Matthew and went right into Luke.
- Recently, Carolyn and Tonia spearheaded the Life-to-Life bible study on late Monday afternoons, and they remained flexible enough to move it from Sheri's Coffee House on Whittlesey Avenue in Norwalk to Arter Home Furnishings on Main Street.
- Monroeville Youth Club kicked off again in October with a bit of rotation in roles and a change to early Monday afternoons. Almost 30 kids showed up each week for a bible story with related activities and games, much to the appreciation of local parents who picked them up.

Alongside our fairly classic Sunday morning education program and many worship opportunities, this sort of discipline, oriented toward spiritual growth and enlightenment, helps us focus on our Triune God throughout the year and invites our community to be part of it. Thanks be to God.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Dan Pennington

Worship

With attendance just a hair short of 2024's attendance, I was uplifted by the presence of more visitors in our congregation from time to time. Some of them have chosen to become members since my call started, so that makes it even harder to say we have visitors. Often those visitors are younger than 18 or older than I am. What a joy!

Along with Monica Nuhfer being invited to preach "from time to time" before 2025 even started, she had a lot more practice this year when our congregation loaned its pastor out to Resurrection Lutheran Church one Sunday each month to preach and preside over holy communion for them. Another joy for them and for us, especially witnessing Monica live into preparing for a life of ministry. Rev. John Hazzard was ordained under special circumstances and installed at Resurrection Lutheran in October such that they no longer need to borrow

our pastor. Monica has also taken many Sunday opportunities besides those in which she presided to provide a message to our young folks during our time for the children's message. Angie Swanbeck has been taking this opportunity from time to time, also.

A side benefit from helping out Resurrection was meeting Marlene Longer. It is from that experience that she was invited to be our choir accompanist. Between her keyboard expertise and Marcia Adelman's willingness as choir director and diligence in finding music appropriate for our choir to present, the second Sunday of each month has been extra special with practiced, dedicated voices.

We had several services featuring First Holy Communion kids and their families. We presided over one baptism for a visitor after a normal service for whom it only made sense to baptize him, about 20 members participating and witnessing as they were so called. As a Christian music composer/performer who confessed his belief in Jesus Christ, Nathaniel Lee Bixler knew he could not be a part of our congregation since he lives and works in Tennessee, so we simply welcomed him into the Lord's family as Jesus instructed us so to do. We welcomed one new member through affirmation of baptism and presided over four baptisms at three other regular services. Faith milestones obviously remain an important part of our worship.

By the numbers our Sunday worship was attended by an average of two people fewer than last year. We seemed to have higher high's and lower low's in attendance, so events are important to our worship community. With 125 attending our Easter service, our council moved to have an 8:00am early Easter service in 2026 in addition to our normal 10:30am Easter service. We'll have to see how to make that work for our worship musicians. Lenten services on Wednesday nights were fairly well attended with occasional visitors from other congregations, while Advent Wednesday services were attended by about 10 people fewer than during Lent. Attendance was just below 50 on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Again, we thank all those who beautify our worship space for each season, those who prepare our altar area and elements for holy communion, and those who selflessly volunteer (and substitute for scheduled volunteers) for acolyting, ushering, greeting, live-streaming and the like. And we certainly thank our musicians for their life-long expertise in helping us praise God as well as our staff who prepare our worship documents and keep our worship supplies ready. Everybody's contribution certainly makes this a worship community, as it should be. Thanks be to God.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Dan Pennington,

Christian Education

The Christian Education Team continues to be actively involved in our community through a variety of outreach efforts and meaningful programs throughout the year. As in years past, we held Youth Club and Vacation Bible School, both of which continue to be well-loved and well-attended.

As part of our community outreach, we delivered cookies, candy, apples, and water to the Monroeville teachers. We also shared treats with the local police and fire departments, the post office, the library, and village offices as a way to show appreciation and build community connections.

Our Easter celebrations were a highlight of the year. The Easter Breakfast and Easter Egg Hunt brought the congregation together to celebrate the joy of Resurrection. The breakfast provided a warm and welcoming opportunity for fellowship before worship.

During the first half of the year, we studied the New Testament using a curriculum from Sola Publishing. We also held a Valentine's Day celebration and Recognition Sunday on May 11.



Vacation Bible School took place July 20-23 with the theme Wonder Junction. We welcomed 74 children this year. Our VBS mission project supported the Love Bus, helping extend our church outreach beyond the church walls.

Our Mystery Trip for children in grades 1-6 was held on June 18 and included visits to African Safari and East Harbor. It was a fun and memorable experience for everyone involved.

The teachers held our annual Christian Education Retreat on August 17, where we planned for the 2025-2026 Sunday School year. The theme for the year is Western, with a focus on giving and offering with a purpose. Throughout the year, we incorporated monthly service projects, including collecting socks for the Love Bus in October and canned goods for local needs in November. We also introduced new ideas, such as attendance punch cards and Boomwhacker music, at the end of Sunday School. Responsibilities were divided among leaders to help strengthen and grow the ministry.

Confirmation was held on Reformation Day, October 23, for Henry Hales and Cole Myers. Rally Day took place on September 21 and included games, crafts, and pancakes to kick off the new Sunday School year.

Adult Sunday School continues under the leadership of Rob and Debbie Ludwig, with weekly study and discussion of the Revised Common Lectionary and Gospel reflections.

Catechism classes began on September 14.

A successful Youth Club was held for four weeks beginning October 6, meeting 2:30 -5:00 pm, and included lessons, cooking, music, games, and crafts.

The Christmas Program was held on December 21 during the children's service.

To welcome kids back after Christmas Break, we will be hosting a hot cocoa bar in January.

Our ongoing goal is to lay a strong foundation for each child's spiritual growth and to provide the tools, support, and encouragement they need to thrive. It is truly wonderful to see the continued support for the Christian Education and for the children of Trinity Lutheran Church.

Special thanks to the parents and grandparents for your dedication to raising young children in the faith and helping them grow in a strong, meaningful relationship with Jesus. Thank you for making church a priority in your family's life and faithfully guiding your children in their walk with Christ.

Thanks for your continued support.

Christian Ed and the Children of Trinity Lutheran Church

TLC Youth

We love our Youth and truly enjoy planning fun things for them. This year was slow for planning things. I took a minor step back from planning this due to having other obligations on my plate. Thank you, Monica Nuhfer, Paula Underwood, Gary Underwood, Darlene White, Angie Swanbeck, Missy Kluding, and anyone else I am forgetting who has stepped up to plan and carry out activities for our Youth.

We had a few of our youth celebrate their first communion this year: Scarlett Gerber and Stella Schuller.

Our younger youth went on a one-day mystery trip this year that took them to the African Safari in Port Clinton and to East Harbor State Park for a picnic.

Sam and Pastor Dan attended the Building Youth as Leaders who are Disciples o Christ (BYLD) event in July that took place at



Geneva College in Beaver, PA. This is a weeklong event that focuses on leadership skills, theological education and spiritual growth.

While we had hoped to plan our second annual TLC fishing derby, it just did not work out. We hope to get this back on the calendar for 2026.

Angie Swanbeck took the reins on planning the monthly charity collections that the Sunday School kids did. She is also working on reaching out to our older youth and young adults in hopes to start a Bible Chat on Sunday mornings.

Youth Club was held only once this year in the fall, and we had approximately 30 kids in attendance at this session. We changed the way we rotated our groups and grouped the kids, similar to the VBS group rotation. This session was one of the best sessions that we have had in a while. It is such a wonderful blessing for us to be able to share Jesus with the kids while incorporating fun crafts, games, and even cooking. Thank you to all those who stepped up and helped this year with the Youth Club. We have high hopes to hold another session in 2026.

Thank you to all of you who helped in some way or another with the programs and events that we do for our Youth here at TLC and within our community.

Respectfully Submitted,
~Jennifer Miller~

Parish Life

First off- A huge Thank You to my team members- Tonia, Jenn, Pat, Barb, and Lorie, for jumping in whenever needed, and everyone in the Congregation who also stepped up and helped with whatever needed to be done. We could not do this without all of you, so....
THANK YOU!

January 2025

We held our annual Congregational Meeting followed by a potluck dinner.

February 2025

Nothing to report.

March 2025

Soup Suppers for Lent were held on March 12, 19, and 26.

April 2025

Soup Suppers for Lent were held on April 2 and 9.

13th - Provided cake and punch for Scarlett Gerber's First Communion

Maundy Thursday Dinner was held, and Roast Pork was provided.

May 2025

4th - Provided cake and punch for Garrett Nuhfer's Baptism.

11th - Provided breakfast for Mother's Day.

25th - Provided cake and punch for Stella @ Deanna Schuller's First Communion.

June 2025

15th - Provided breakfast for Father's Day.

22nd - Provided cake and punch for Baptism and First Communion.

July 2025

Nothing to report.

August 2025

Nothing to report.

September 2025

Nothing to report.

October 2025

26th - Confirmation for Henry Hales and Cole Myers.

Provided cake and punch.

November 2025

Nothing to report.

December 2025

Soup Suppers for Advent were held on Dec 3, 10, and 17.

14th The Journey -due to the weather forecast, it was cancelled.

21st - Provided cookies and hot chocolate for the kids' Christmas Program.



Thank you,

Cindy Schuller

Mission Team

This year, we continued to support Malawi and the Orphan Care Project through various ways, such as sponsoring students, providing money to help with food, and so much more.

We are looking forward to planning a mission trip during 2027 - if you feel the call to join this mission, please reach out to Gary Underwood, Lorie Pierce, or Pastor Dan.

Sewing Group

The Sewing Group at Trinity Lutheran Church quietly did extraordinary work throughout 2025. With needles, thread, fabric, and faithful hearts, this group turned simple materials into gifts of comfort, dignity, and hope for people near and far.

All year long, members sewed beautiful quilts that were donated to homeless shelters and women's centers, offering warmth to those who needed it most. When families in our community experienced house fires, the Sewing Group stepped in quickly, providing quilts as a tangible reminder that they were not alone and that their church family cared.

Their talents also supported the life of our church. The group created the costumes for the Journey to Bethlehem, helping bring the Christmas story to life through careful craftsmanship and loving detail as well as costumes for our Sunday School Programs. They also sewed pillowcases for foster families, giving children something of their own - soft, colorful, and made just for them.

Beyond our local community their impact reached across the world. The Sewing Group made pillowcase dresses and shorts for children in Africa, turning donated fabric into clothing that brought comfort, joy, and dignity to children who needed it most.

What makes this group special is not just what they make, but why they make it. Every stitch is prayer. Every quilt is a blessing. Every project is done with love, generosity, and a deep desire to serve others as Christ calls us to do.

As we close out 2025, we give thanks for the Sewing Group - whose quiet dedication wrapped our community and the world beyond in warmth, compassion, and God's love.

The Journey to Bethlehem

As we reflect on 2025 at Trinity Lutheran Church, one moment that stands out is the Journey to Bethlehem - an event that, while ultimately canceled due to severe winter weather, was filled with weeks of dedication, teamwork, and joyful preparation.

Throughout the fall and early winter, volunteers of all ages came together to bring the Christmas story to life. Costumes were sewn and gathered, scripts were practiced, sets were built, animals were arranged, and stations were lovingly planned to help families experience the night Jesus was born in a meaningful, hands-on way. Every detail - from warm cookies and cocoa to live animals and candlelit services - was prepared with care and faith.

Although the weather forced us to cancel for safety reasons, the heart behind the Journey to Bethlehem was never lost. What mattered most was not just the event itself, but the

spirit in which it was created: neighbors serving neighbors, families working side by side, and a church united around sharing the story the Christ's birth.

The disappointment of cancellation was real, but so was the gratitude - for the volunteers who gave their time, the leaders who guided the planning, and the congregation who supported it with enthusiasm and prayer. Journey to Bethlehem 2025 reminded us that even when our plans change, God still works through our efforts, our relationships, and our willingness to serve.

This year-end, we celebrate not what didn't happen, but what did: community, faith in action, and a shared commitment to telling the greatest story ever told. The Journey to Bethlehem mya have been paused by the weather, but its impact on our church family will carry forward into the years ahead. As we move forward, we will look into new ways to present this story, perhaps indoors, so we can be certain to touch lives and no depend on the weather.

Respectfully submitted,
~Lori Griffith~



2025 Giving Summary

In 2025, total giving was \$129,031.63. (\$3,535 of which came through online giving).

Fidelity Investment Account Balance as of Dec 31, 2025: \$94,417.89

Capital Improvement Fund Balance: \$748.67

Memorial Fund Savings Balance: \$21,989.57

Malawi Mission Trip Fund Balance: \$5,428.89

American Legion Fund (Good Shepherd) Balance: \$5,776.82

Mary and Joseph Fund Balance (Christmas aid): \$629.31

Change for Charity donations: \$1,709.17

Malawi Orphan Care Project: \$1,785

Malawi Food: \$177.35

Malawi Scholarship: \$266.25

Malawi Shoes: \$-

NALC Disaster Relief: \$112.32

Ohio Mission District NALC: \$659

Treasurer's Report

Line Item	2025 Budget Amount	2025 Actual Spending
Pastor's Salary	\$49,959	\$49,959
Social Security	\$3,822	\$3,821.88
Medical	\$13,197	\$13,282.96
Pension & Disability Ins.	\$5,916	\$5,916
Continuing Education	\$1,800	1,857.46
Mileage	-	-
Musicians	\$5,400	\$5,487.34
Custodian	\$3,600	\$3,562.88
Admin. Assistant	\$6,300	\$6,175.30
Utilities	\$11,000	\$10,271.29
Supply Pastors	\$300	\$244.80
Taxes	\$1,500	\$1,221.58
Insurance	\$6,000	\$6,358.83
Bulletin, Supplies, Copier	\$9,000	\$6,042.99
Music	\$100	-
Christian Ed. Team	\$1,000	\$867.79
Parish Life Team	\$1,200	\$1,475.99
Mission Team	\$50	-
Worship	\$1,500	\$1,460.49
Miscellaneous	\$100	-
Benevolence to NALC	\$8,500	\$7,845
Annual Convention	\$1,000	\$1,222.84
Total	\$131,244	\$127,074.42