



TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, TOWANDA, PA

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2020

## WINNERS WINNERS!!!



**Pastor's 12th Annual Chili Cook Off  
was a great success! Eight chili's  
were entered-Taco, Mexican, Chicken, &  
Venison to name a few.  
Little Mavis & Ember won for the  
"most traditional"  
Aggi Cook had the "hottest" and  
Cindy Estelle had the "most unusual"**

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### Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

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**Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.



## Pastor's Message



### Becoming an Invitational Congregation



**A Message From  
Pastor Jira  
Albers**

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

*Matt. 8:19-20*

Here is the reality of the American church situation: it is in decline. This is no big secret. We can see it ourselves when we look around the sanctuary, but I think that it just needs to be stated.

The second reality is that this decline is, for the most part, not our fault. The peace immediately following World War II led to a boom of babies. That boom in babies led to the necessity of the nation's infrastructure to grow. Schools were built. Neighborhoods were created. Churches expanded and added large educational wings. Following generations of the church population, however, did not produce those great numbers of children, and our church's populations started to shrink again. In fact, the church's population has been shrinking since 1950 when it topped out.

So, here we are; left with a smaller congregation and fewer resources. So, what do we do? This has been studied extensively, and we actually know what we need to do. We have known for quite a while. Individual members of congregations need to pray, need to invite, and need to clear out anything from the church (sometimes literal clutter) that gets in the way of someone

new getting to know Jesus Christ.

Here is the thing: the traditional church population may have decreased, but there are certainly plenty of people who are not followers of Jesus (or are followers, but have not connected with a church). Though the decline is not our fault, failing to faithfully invite others to Christ is our fault. Put bluntly, the death of the church institution is not our fault, but allowing it to continue to die is something that we choose to do. Many congregations have an idea of what they need to do in order to share Jesus with their neighbors, but they refuse to make the changes needed to actually do it. They actually choose to die.

It does not need to be this way. If we want to “make disciples of all nations,” then we will pray for guidance about how to do just that, each member will intentionally invite other people within their lives to worship, Bible study, and serving Jesus, and we will not be afraid to make the changes needed to make all of that happen.

We are choosing to be an invitational congregation. We are choosing to make disciples. We are choosing to be the people of God. Jesus will lead us.

### **The Question Box**

*(Questions About Our Christian Life)*

***What is the biggest challenge to people joining our church?”***

The biggest challenge to people joining our church, of course, is being invited in the first place. Taking someone out for breakfast (or lunch) and attending worship together is an easy step to get us started in being invitational. But, the biggest hindrance to keeping new people in the congregation is intentionally getting to know new people, and then actually caring about them. When talking to people who do not join, their answer usually has to do with not connecting with others and someone being mean to them. — Pastor Jira Albers



## Parish News



**“Sweets Sounds Café”  
February 16, 2-4 pm  
Wysox Presbyterian Church  
Music provided by local musicians  
Sweet and Savory snacks  
Benefit for Grace Connection**

### COMING UP FOR THE CONGREGATION:

#### FOCUSING ON YOUR OWN SPIRITUAL GIFTS

**WHAT IS GOD CALLING ME TO DO?**

**WHAT ARE SOME OF MY GIFTS?**

**I FEEL CALLED BY GOD TO MINISTER IN WHAT WAY?**

**Pastor Jira and Joe Snyder will be giving more information on these topics in February.**

**JUST A REMINDER THAT-  
CONTRIBUTIONS ARE ALWAYS NEEDED FOR:  
CANDLES/BULLETINS, ANY JANITORIAL  
SUPPLIES, MONEY TOWARDS THE ELECTRIC,  
GAS OR TELEPHONE SERVICE. A FIVE, TEN OR  
TWENTY HERE AND THERE IS ALWAYS HELPFUL!!!**

#### Worship Highlights

### FEBRUARY

**23– Transfiguration of  
Our Lord  
26– Ash Wednesday  
Service @7:00 PM**

### MARCH

**4– 7:00 pm Lent Service  
Prayer of Service &  
Meditation**

**11– 11:45 am Lenten lunch  
Service @ 7:00 pm**

**18– 11:45 am Lenten lunch  
Service @ 7:00 pm**

**25- 11:45 am Lenten lunch  
Service @ 7:00 pm**

### APRIL

**1- 11:45 am Lenten lunch  
Service @ 7:00 pm**

**9– Maundy Thursday  
Service @7:30 PM**

**10– Good Friday  
Service @7:30 PM**

## Adult Education Opportunities



**Morning Fellowship at 9:00 AM**  
Studying the scriptures with enjoying each other's company.  
**February 4, 18, 25 and March 3rd.**  
Continue after Easter



## Parish News continued



**Lent luncheons** begin on March 4, 11, 18 & 25- and April 1st 11:45 am at the First Methodist Church, Main St. Towanda.

Trinity will be preparing the lunch on March 25 and Pastor Jira will be giving the message.



**Ash Wednesday** is February 26, 2020 and our service is at 7:00 PM with the distribution of ashes



We will continue Lent services every Wednesday night @7:00 pm. (March 4th, Service of Prayer & Meditation, 11, 18, 25 & April 1st)



**CHILD'S FAITH SERVICE ON MARCH 22nd.**

### Columbarium Space Available

As you make your end of life arrangements do not forget that the church has columbarium space available.

### *Thank You Members Of Christ!*

- \*Thank you to all who contributed to the "Love Baskets" and to the Vesper Guild and Thrivent for all their help!
- \*Thank you to the members of the prayer chain for offering prayers to friends and families in need.
- \*Thank you to Cassidy Estelle for cleaning the church while our regular cleaning person is in Florida.
- \*Thank you to Bill Serfass for filling in for Pastor Jira so Pastor could attend his Father's funeral in Iowa.



## MORE PARISH NEWS:



Vesper Guild meets only once a month or when there is something that needs immediate attention. Next meeting is scheduled for February 11 and March 10 at 10:00 am.



Thank you church family for the wonderful love basket. It was so full of delectable edibles and all the decorative items. I will be hanging the lovely calendar in my kitchen. Cranberry is my favorite flavor drink. I am truly appreciative of everything. Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas! Love, Rose Treimann

Thank you from Grace Connection for your donation. Your kindness is certainly appreciated by the many families who turn to the ministry of Grace Connection when they are in need.

Thank you very much for giving me a blessed basket of wonderful goodies. I counted 32! Thank you, Carol Cunfer

Thank you so much for the Love Basket. We are so well blessed to have a wonderful church family and GREAT Pastor! God bless all of you. Bob & Helen Fleck

Receiving all the beautiful Christmas cards from members of Trinity was a very pleasant surprise! We want to thank all those who sent us those good wishes and we want to return the compliment. We hope all is well at Trinity! Sincerely, Jeanne & Kenneth Trexler

Thank you for remembering us at Christmas time again. We have joined a lively church here with lots of youngsters of all ages. It has 2 services a week-8:30 am & 10 am. With love and fond memories, Bill & Marian Feathers

We were surprised & grateful to have received a Love Basket this past Christmas. We had such fun unpacking it with all the delicious treats and very useful items. The basket lived up to its name. Because we could sense the love from the congregation. Thank you to all of our Trinity family. Gene and Shirley Schaeffer

Thank you so very much for your very generous ongoing donation to Hezekiah's Hands. Many lives have been touched with your generosity. Ramps will be built, floors reconstructed, rooms and houses painted, sheet rock hung are just a few of the projects made possible by your giving. Thanks again, Hezekiah's Hands Volunteers



# A Closer Look at the Bible – Pastor Jira Albers

## Even You Can Lead a Bible Study!

This time around, I want to challenge you to lead a Bible study. Really, I mean it. Gather together one or two other people. They can be friends. They can be other members of the church (this would probably be the easiest for a first time). Get together at church or in your home and simply follow the instructions for the Bible Study. Your only rules as the leader are to **not** offer the “right” answer and to leave plenty of silence for people to answer. I really, actually want you to try it this month. Go!

### Guide For Bible Study

**Share one joy you’ve had from the week.**

**Share one sorrow that you’ve had from the week.**

*Have participants relax and simply listen at first. Carefully and slowly read a Bible selection through twice.*

**What one word or image captures your attention? Why?**

*Read the Bible selection again, or invite a volunteer to read.*

**What does this reading say about human nature?**

*Read the Bible selection again, or invite a volunteer to read.*

**What does God care about according to this reading?**

*Read the Bible selection again, or invite a volunteer to read.*

**What is God saying to God’s community through this reading?**

*Read the Bible selection again, or invite a volunteer to read.*

**How does this reading speak to *you*? What are you taking away from this Bible study?**

**Close with a prayer of thanks to God for the insights brought through God’s encounter with you.**

## Matthew 5:13-20

[Jesus said:] <sup>13</sup>“You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

<sup>14</sup>“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. <sup>15</sup>No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup>In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

<sup>17</sup>“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.

<sup>18</sup>For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. <sup>19</sup>Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup>For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

# SYNOD NEWS

## Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

### Mission Trip to Puerto Rico



Imagine riding in one of two fifteen-passenger vans, both navigating a narrow two-lane road that twisted and turned up into the tropical mountains of central Puerto Rico. The views were spectacular. Palms, giant philodendron, and the fiery flowers of the Flamboyant Royal Poinciana tree grace the roadsides and green mountain walls. Small, compact, and humble homes supported by what looks like toothpick legs hug the steep slopes. A morning journey brought the volunteers to the town of Comerío, where the streets have yielded to the mountain's natural topography, reminiscent of the hilly streets of San Francisco.

On June 30, 2019, under the guiding eye of Lutheran Disaster Response working through Lutheran Social Services of Puerto Rico, 25 Lutheran volunteers from 5 Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod churches traveled to Puerto Rico to repair homes damaged by Hurricane Maria.

The volunteers divided into four teams. One team repaired a house needing to have the roof power washed and sealed, as well as its interior ceiling and walls scraped and painted. This house had stood empty for the past two years and was unlivable in its current state. The family who had lived there pre-Maria were hoping to return to their home as soon as possible.

Thanks to God and the excellent guidance and organization of Lutheran Social Services of Puerto Rico, the team was able to power wash their roof and seal it. They scraped ceilings and painted the interior of their home. Much of their nearly new furniture, now moldy and warped, still awaited removal. All their kitchen appliances had been destroyed.

And yet, because of the hard work of the team, and a generous grant from The Witness and Service Ministry Team supported through Mission Support giving to the Synod, the work was accomplished. Donations of various gift cards from a number of congregations enabled the team to purchase a new refrigerator for the family. What a joy to see faces of hope as these homeowners came so much closer to reclaiming their home. Truly the team used its hands to do God's work!



### Don't Be Fooled by Email Phishing Scams

There have been several phishing attempts recently that appear to be emails from Bishop Zeiser asking for "help." Two were phony Gmail addresses (bishopnepsynod@gmail.com and rzeiserbishopr@gmail.com). Neither the bishop nor any of the synod staff will ever email you directly asking for "help." This is a scam. Please don't reply; even better, just delete the email without even opening it.



## Parish Secretaries' Christmas Luncheon



On December 10 the fourth annual Parish Secretaries' Christmas Luncheon was hosted by the Synod's Support Staff at The Lutheran Center in Schoenersville. This year the luncheon was opened to all lay workers in the congregations of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod. There were 45 people in attendance. After greetings from Bishop Zeiser, a hot, catered lunch was served, introductions were made, and there was time for some get-to-know-you games and plenty of fellowship.

The luncheon always has some return guests and some first-time attendees. This year there was a parish secretary who

was in her sixth week of church work, and one who has been serving in the church for 50 years. Pastor Laura Csellak went above and beyond by driving two secretaries from Ashland in Schuylkill County to The Lutheran Center so they could be a part of the festivities. The cost of the luncheon was subsidized with Thrivent Action Team grants.

About 45% of the staff members who attended were treated by their congregations and/or pastors. Let's try to increase that percentage next year and encourage congregation workers to take advantage of a fun, relaxing afternoon in the middle of the Advent season. It's a wonderful opportunity to build partnerships with other church workers and the synod. Look for a keep-the-date card with next year's date at the synod assembly.



## New Director of Youth, Young Adults, and Faith Formation



Sammy Kelly (she/her/hers) is a 2019 graduate of United Lutheran Seminary at Philadelphia where she earned a Master of Arts in Ministerial Leadership. She continues to be on staff at New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church in New Tripoli, where she has served for the past five years. Her husband, Billy Miller, was just hired as Youth Director at Lenape Valley Church in Doylestown and is pursuing the Crossroads Lay Leadership program at Moravian Theological Seminary. They are both excited to enter into a new year of life and ministry in 2020!

In this newly formed position, Sammy will provide leadership and support to both the Youth, Young Adult, and Family and the Faith Formation Ministry Teams of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod. She looks forward to dreaming with and working alongside the many church leaders who love our youth, young adults, and Jesus. She is a 7 on the enneagram, always open to swapping dog stories, and would love if you were to email her at [sammy@nepsynod.org](mailto:sammy@nepsynod.org) to introduce yourself and/or set up a time for conversation.

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View the full color edition online at <http://nepasynod.org>.



## February 2020 Birthdays and Anniversaries

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1 Bob Stoudt
2 John Secor	3	4	5 Maurine Gehring	6 Scott Bracken	7	8
9	10 Dale Griffith David Weed	11 <b>Joe &amp; Heather Snyder</b>	12	13	14 Cathy Bellanca <b>Butch &amp; Terri Brion</b>	15
16	17 Eric Secor	18	19	20	21 Kathy Smith	22 Kynlee Kunkle Stacey Kwader
23	24 Lois Carrington David Horn	25 Emily Chilson Colleen Woodrig	26 Kristy Cook Richard Feusner	27 Sue Sites	28 Tanner Kunkle	29

## March 2020 Birthdays and Anniversaries

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2 Satchel Manchester	3 Braylee Brimmer	4	5	6 Carolyn Lacey	7 Timothy Hart <b>Jim &amp; Brenda Giffen</b>
8	9 Morgan Post	10	11	12 Michael Cantellops	13 Frank Zukerman	14 <b>Sven &amp; Pat Thomason</b>
15 Aaron Lineberry Mavis Pugh Gene Vanderpool	16	17 Heather Manchester	18	19	20 I	21
22	23	24	25 Wendy Keeney	26	27	28
29	30 Paul Sites	31 Brian Manchester Cindy Sites				

## February 2020 Meetings and Events

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4 9:00 am Bible Study Noon-W/P mtg	5	6	7	8
9 Time & Talent Talks	10	11 No Bible study 10:00 am V. Guild	12	13	14	15 Noon-2:00 pm BC Humane Society Animal Valentine's Day
16 2-4 pm Sweets Sounds Café@ Wysox Presb.	17 NO SCHOOL	18 9:00 am Bible Study	19	20	21	22
23 Time & Talent Talks Trans. Of our Lord	24 COUNCIL MEETING @6:30 PM	25 9:00 am Bible Study	26 ASH WED. Service @7:00 PM	27	28	29

## March 2020 Meetings and Events

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3 9:00 am Bible Study	4 11:45 am Lent Lunch 7:00 PM Service	5	6	7
8 DAYLIGHT SAVING BEGINS	9	10 No Bible Study 10:00 am V. Guild	11 11:45 am Lent Lunch 7:00 PM Service	12	13	14 HALL OCCUPIED
15	16	17 NO BIBLE STUDY	18 11:45 am Lent Lunch 7:00 PM Service	19	20	21
22 CHILD'S FAITH	23 6:30 pm Council Mtg.	24 NO BIBLE STUDY 6:30 PM VBS mtg. Grotto Hall	25 11:45 am Lent Lunch 7:00 PM Service	26	27	28 HALL OCCUPIED
29	30	31 NO BIBLE STUDY				

# Trinity Leadership Directory

## Officers & Staff:

Pastor – Jira A. Albers, MDiv..... 265-5322  
Organist - Kay Champluvier..... 746-3641  
Vice President –  
Office Mgr/Treas.– Cindy Estelle... 265-5184  
Fin. Secretary – Doreen Secor .....265-3832  
Ministers—All the members of Trinity

## Council Members:

Maureen Engelhard..... 247-2678  
Doreen Secor .....265-3832  
Joe Snyder.....412-2796  
Paul & Agnes Cook.....247-7383  
Cassidy Estelle.....506-9644

## *Contact Trinity*

Office Telephone: 570-265-5322  
Homepage: <http://www.trinluth.com>  
Email: [trinluth@epix.net](mailto:trinluth@epix.net)  
In case of emergency, you can contact Pastor Jira at  
his home: 570-363-2951  
Office Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday–

## **Serving us in worship:**

**The Rev. Jira A. Albers, presiding minister**

## **Altar Guild– February**

**Maureen Engelhard**

## **Alter Guild– March**

**Cindy Estelle & Beverly Serfass**

## **February 2—Presentation of Our Lord**

Acolyte– Emily Chilson  
Lector– Bill Serfass  
Communion Assistant– Bill Serfass  
Ushers– Ron and Ruth Russell  
Children’s Church-Rebecca Hodgdon  
Counters-Cindy Estelle

## **February 9– Fifth Sunday after Epiphany**

Acolyte– Kynlee Kunkle  
Lector– Cindy Estelle  
Communion Assistant– Cindy Estelle  
Ushers– Paul and Aggi Cook  
Children’s Church-Chris Griffith  
Counters-Doreen Secor

## **February 16—Sixth Sunday after Epiphany**

Acolyte– Delaney Carrington  
Lector– Bree Carrington  
Communion Assistant–Dave Estelle  
Ushers– Lois and Duane Carrington  
Children’s Church– Cindy Estelle  
Counters-Joe Snyder

## **February 23—Transfiguration of Our Lord**

Acolyte– Jennifer Kaniuka  
Lector– Ron Cunfer  
Communion Assistant– Maureen Engelhard  
Ushers– Sue Alexander and Joyce Detharidge  
Children’s Church-Maureen Engelhard  
Counters-

## **March 1—The First Sunday in Lent**

Acolyte– Emily Chilson  
Lector– Bill Serfass  
Communion Assistant– Bill Serfass  
Ushers– Ron and Ruth Russell  
Children’s Church-Rebecca Hodgdon  
Counters-

## **March 8—The Second Sunday in Lent**

Acolyte– NEED  
Lector– Joe Snyder  
Communion Assistant– Joe Snyder  
Ushers– Paul & Aggi Cook  
Children’s Church-Cindy Estelle  
Counters-Joe Snyder

## **March 15—The Third Sunday in Lent**

Acolyte– Delaney Carrington  
Lector– Bree Carrington  
Communion Assistant– Cindy Estelle  
Ushers– Janet Seaberg & Thelma Allis  
Children’s Church-Chris Griffith  
Counters-Doreen Secor

## **March 22—The Fourth Sunday in Lent**

Acolyte– Kynlee Kunkle  
Lector–Ron Cunfer  
Communion Assistant– Maureen Engelhard  
Ushers– Lois & Duane Carrington  
Children’s Church-Maureen Engelhard  
Counters-Maureen Engelhard

## **March 29-The Fifth Sunday in Lent**

Acolyte-Jennifer Kaniuka  
Lector-Bill Serfass  
Communion Assistant– Bill Serfass  
Ushers– Cindy Estelle and Doreen Secor  
Children’s Church-Rebecca Hodgdon  
Counters-



Trinity Lutheran Church  
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Towanda PA 18848

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## **TRINITY TRUMPETER FEBRUARY/MARCH**

**“Challenged to witness and share Christ’s love with all”**

**Sunday Morning Schedule  
Service of Holy Communion at 9:30 AM**

Spreading Christ’s word of peace to all through service.

