

TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, TOWANDA, PA

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2021

**We are resuming in-person worship!** There will be assigned seats, masks are required and safe distancing must be practiced. Communion will be given as sealed bread & cup.



For those who still need to remain at home, on-line worship will continue on our Facebook and YouTube pages.

FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/towandalutheran/>

YOUTUBE: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNgDmUAn58rX7b2ixuQrHZA>



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#### Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

908 S. Main Street  
Towanda, PA 18848

570-265-5322  
[trinluth@epix.net](mailto:trinluth@epix.net)  
[www.trinluth.com](http://www.trinluth.com)



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



## Pastor's Message



**A Message From  
Pastor Jira  
Albers**

*"Pray  
without  
ceasing"*

*1 Thessalonians  
5:17*

### Prayer: Praying the Scriptures

Every once in a while I am asked why I prayed for a particular thing in worship. For example, "Not that they should not be prayed for, but why did you pray for astronomers?" Or, "Not that they don't need prayer, but why do we pray for the poor so much?"

There actually is a method to some of these seemingly random prayer petitions. I do admit that some prayer petitions come from specific requests from people, or concerns of my own, but the vast majority of prayers come from praying the scriptures.

What is praying the scriptures? Well, there are two ways that you can pray the scriptures. The first way deals with finding a Psalm or other scripture that speaks to your own joy or struggle, and you then simply use those words as the words of your prayer. We do this sort of praying in "official" prayers and liturgies of the church all of the time. You will notice that a vast majority of words in any liturgy are not the creation of the liturgy writer, but are simply prayed pieces of scripture.

The second way of praying scripture is the one that addresses the question of seemingly random prayer petitions in church. These petitions are not random at all actually. Instead, the one writing the prayers reflects of the scriptures chosen for the day, explores the concerns and subjects raised in the scriptures, and uses those concerns and subjects as the basis for prayer. Since God cares a lot about the poor, and that concern is throughout much of the scriptures, you will be hearing that prayer often. But, a seemingly random prayer petition for "astronomers" actually comes from the mention of stars, celestial beings, or star gazing wise men.

You see, these prayers are not random at all. If we truly believe that the scriptures of God direct our faith and our lives, then we will naturally pray the prayers that the scriptures inspire. The joys and concerns of God should be the basis of our own joys and concerns.

Praying the concerns of scripture may be new to you, but it is a great way to enter into a life of prayer.

### ***The Question Box***

*(Questions About Our Christian Life)*

***How can such a divided world find unity?"***

I understand the pessimism of our current age. Most of us are more than tired of the pandemic and its restrictions. Most of us are more than tired of the division within our politics. Most of us are tired of there being "bad guys" and "good guys." Most of us are just tired, period. How can such a divided world find unity? Jesus provides an answer for us. After-all, Jesus says that it is his intention to "draw all people to myself." It all starts with prayer. I was criticized recently for a prayer for a political leader whom the person viewed as their enemy. But, it is precisely the enemy who Jesus explicitly instructs us to pray for. If we desire unity, Jesus lets us know that it must start with prayer for our enemy. - Pastor Jira Albers

# MARK

## SET FREE IN CHRIST

A SERMON SERIES  
JANUARY 24TH - FEBRUARY 14TH

We start out this year focusing on “the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Over the next few Sundays we will focus closely on the beginning of the gospel of Mark. We will focus on how Christ sets us free in multiple ways in our lives. I pray that this in-depth exploration of the beginning of the gospel will help you be set free from all that holds you hostage in life. But, before we start the exploration of “Mark: Set Free in Christ” in worship I would like to provide a little Bible background on Mark.

The first thing that you should know is that Mark may not be the first gospel listed in the Bible (that is Matthew), but it is the first gospel written. Matthew and Luke used the gospel of Mark extensively in order to write their own gospels. In other words, they plagiarized Mark to write their own works.

Mark was written for a community of Christians outside of Palestine (some people think in Rome) right around the time of the destruction of the second Jewish Temple. This was the Jew’s 9/11, and it affected belief, culture, and preaching for years to come. Mark was also written soon after the persecutions of Emperor Nero. If you remember, Nero was the Emperor who set fire to Rome, but blamed it on the Christians. He was also the emperor who fed Christians to the lions, using them as political scapegoats. Therefore, these persecutions, deaths, and the temple’s destruction were fresh on the minds of the writer of the gospel as well as the community of believers to whom the gospel writer was preaching. If I spend time preaching in reaction to the pandemic, the darkness, and the loneliness of our time, Mark spent his time preaching to the persecutions, destruction, and harshness of Rome in his time. These people needed to know who they are to be in tough times and they need good news.

The first words of a gospel are important, because they set the tone for the whole book. Mark writes, “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Right away, “the beginning” should conjure up some biblical imagination. It transports us right to the start of creation. Therefore, this story too is a divinely influenced beginning of some sort. We find out what very soon. This is the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Greek for “good news” here has a hint of “saving” within it. Therefore, you could say that we are about to hear the “saving news” of Jesus Christ. Just a reminder that “Christ” means Messiah, which in turn means “Anointed One.” Pouring oil on the head was the way that the ancients designated a ruler of Israel. So, Mark is letting us know that we are about to hear the saving words of the one who has been anointed to rule over us. Jesus later confirms this notion in his first sermon of the gospel (Mark 1:14). Always take note of first words, they are important. Jesus’ first sermon is: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” In other words, “The wholeness of time is about to happen, the time that God will rule the earth has come near (literally near with Jesus standing right there), so stop what you are doing, turn your life around and “trust” in the saving news of Jesus the anointed one. The purpose of this gospel (this extended sermon about Jesus) is to develop faith and trust in disciples who find themselves in a persecuted state in a time of uncertainty and destruction. There is certainly a lot that we can learn from the Gospel of Mark. I look forward to sharing more!



## Parish

## News



**JUST A REMINDER THAT-  
CONTRIBUTIONS ARE ALWAYS NEEDED FOR:  
CANDLES/BULLETINS, ANY JANITORIAL  
SUPPLIES, MONEY TOWARDS THE ELECTRIC,  
GAS OR TELEPHONE SERVICE AND FOR  
STAMPS!**

**A FIVE, TEN OR TWENTY HERE AND THERE IS  
ALWAYS HELPFUL!!!**

### **TODAY'S INSPIRATIONAL QUOTE**

**"When our community is in a state of peace, it can  
share that peace with neighboring communities, and  
so on. When we feel love and kindness towards others,  
it not only makes others feel loved and cared for, but  
helps us also to develop inner happiness and peace."  
-Dalai Lama**

### Worship Highlights

#### **FEBRUARY**

- 14- Transfiguration of  
Our Lord**
- 17- Ash Wednesday  
Service @Wysox  
Presbyterian**
- 21- First Sunday in Lent**

#### **MARCH**

**Wednesday Lent Services  
are undetermined at this  
time.**

- 28- Palm Sunday  
Distribution of Palms**

#### **APRIL**

- 1- Maundy Thursday**
- 2- Good Friday**
- 4- Easter**

## Adult Education Opportunities



**Morning Fellowship at 9:00 AM-VIA ZOOM**  
Studying the scriptures with enjoying each other's company.  
**February 2, 9, 16 and 23**  
March to be determined



## Parish News continued

### NEWS FROM OUR PARISHONERS AND FRIENDS:

#### **-Love Baskets:**

\*Thank you for the beautiful love basket. It was so thoughtful & means a lot to me. I love my Trinity family, Ruth Russell.

\*Thank you for the warm wishes and the lovely basket. Your thoughtfulness is greatly appreciated. In Christian love, Bill and Beverly Serfass.

\*I want to thank you for the lovely love basket and all the presents. Ronnie loved the cookies and I did too! We thank you for everything. Bless your hearts. Love, Carol Cunfer.

\*Thank you so much for the beautiful love basket. It was just wonderful and we really enjoyed it. We miss our church family and hope we will be back soon. Sincerely, Sven & Pat Thomason

\*Thank you for the wonderful gift basket. Your kindness and generosity are greatly appreciated. God bless. Sincerely, Jeff Roos

#### **-Christmas Greetings:**

\*Love and prayers, Theresa Sauerstein

\*Merry Christmas & Happy New Year to all! Rick Landers

\*Merry Christmas and wishes for blessings in 2021. It has to be better than 2020. So many things canceled, but nothing can cancel God's gift to us of Jesus! Love, Bill and Marian Feathers

#### **Columbarium Space Available**

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

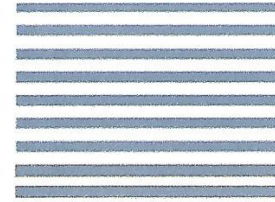
#### ***Thank You Members Of Christ!***

- \*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 Nathan Milarta for cleaning the church for us.
- \*Thank you to Dave Estelle for fixing the Pastor's door.
- \*Thank you to Maureen Engelhard for taking care of the recyclables.



# SYNOD NEWS

NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD, ELCA



ISSUE NO 2 | FEBRUARY 2021 | VOLUME 29

## From Our Bishop: Vital Signs for Now

As I write this in January, I have no way of knowing what our situation – national, state, or local – will be like. But I have no doubt in two truths. First, God will be with us and for us. Second, the big challenges will still be upon us. As people who believe in and follow Jesus, we always have these promises: *Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again*. This means, wherever we are, and wherever we're headed, that nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:39).

In the midst of all we face, across this Synod – our congregations, leaders, members and ministries – are playing *vital roles* in God's work to bring life out of death, love out of hate, hope out of despair, and joy out of sorrow. The Holy Spirit is revealing *vital signs* in our midst because of what Christ has done for us on the cross. So, I ask you: as part of the Body of Christ, *what are our vital signs right now?* How are we doing these three things:

### *Healing the hurting? Loving the land? Engaging the stranger?*

As a Synod going forward, I'm calling these three, our *Vital Signs for Now*. Ways we are called by our God to address this moment through which we are now living:

- *Heal the Hurting* can include helping all of us, suffering through this pandemic. Those who are facing economic struggle. Those who are also ill from other afflictions, including addiction, anxiety and depression. Those having a hard time finding health care and security. And those in pain and fear from our large divides over politics.
- *Love the Land* can include the realities of climate change. The need to make our communities more livable for everyone. And deciding what is best to do with our buildings and properties, to bring more life to our neighbors as well as ourselves.
- *Engage the Stranger* can include anyone who feels estranged, inside and outside our churches. It includes all the ways that have made us estranged from each other and our core Christian values: the lack of welcome for all people, especially foreigners and our LGBTQIA+ siblings; racial injustice and white supremacy; the disregard of facts and the lack of listening to the "other side".

In these first days and weeks of 2021, as a Synod, let us work on these three things. And let us share with each other, what is working and how the Spirit is moving and leading. Let's tell each other and ask your pastors and councils to share with our deans and Synod staff. We will then share with the whole Synod. Let's go and grow more alive and vital, together, as church, by the grace of our great God.

**Bishop Christopher deForest**



## Vital Signs!

When Pastor Michele Kaufman decided she wanted to have Palm Sunday and Easter services in-person last spring at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Mountaintop, she and members of the congregation decided to hold drive-in services on the church grounds. Jim Doxsey, a member of the congregation, purchased a low-frequency FM radio transmitter so members could listen to the service inside their vehicles. The concept worked well, and the outdoor services continued throughout the spring and summer.

In the spring, the congregation completed work on a prayer garden at the rear of the church where Pr. Kaufman conducted the services. Recently, the church moved its 9 a.m. service indoors, but kept the 11 a.m. gathering outside. As late fall arrived, the congregation came up with an idea to allow the pastor to continue to conduct the outdoor service, even in inclement weather.

## They built her a Pastor Pod.

"The 9 a.m. service was moved indoors, maintaining social distancing and requiring masks," Pr. Kaufman said. "But we wanted to keep one of our services outdoors because several members of the congregation were dealing with cancer and other health problems. We wanted to make sure they could attend services but be safe."

The approximately 6x8 foot "Pastor Pod" is located adjacent to the church parish hall. It was constructed using two-by-four supports, has a platform, and a roof – the entire structure enclosed in plexiglass.



The congregation and surrounding community embraced the concept of the Pastor Pod with great enthusiasm. "We have people from as far as 25+ miles traveling to worship with us. We have several families from neighboring congregations and different Christian traditions attending on a regular basis because of the safety factor. The creativity and **innovation and resilience** this congregation has displayed in these trying times has been an inspiration. It has been our modern-day Reformation! We are church in every sense of the phrase!" reported Pr. Kaufman.

## St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Mountaintop

Born and raised in Richmond, VA, I graduated from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, VA with a public policy and economics degree. After a year of itinerant youth ministry in the Midwest and 18 months as an inventory analyst, I admitted that the rustling in my gut was not indigestion but a call to sacramental service in the Church. I went to Southern Seminary in Columbia, SC, where I learned to appreciate the rhythm of daily life, shrimp and grits, theology, and Friday night cookouts. Since ordination, I've served St. James, Hobbie and St. John, Mohnton. I continue to be gobsmacked for the gift to be about what God is up to in the world—to point out Jesus, crucified and risen.

*Pastor Rachael Dietz*



I cheer for the Steelers and Packers passionately, stretch daily, roast coffee regularly, and travel through life curiously.

## February 2021 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 Joe & Heather Snyder	12	13
14 Cathy Bellanca Butch & Terri Brion	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						

## March 2021 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 Jim & Brenda Giffen	8	9 Morgan Post	10	11	12 Michael Cantellops	13 Frank Zukerman
14 Sven & Pat Thomason	15 Aaron Lineberry Mavis Pugh Gene Vanderpool	16	17 Heather Manchester	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25 Wendy Keeney	26	27
28	29	30 Paul Sites	31 Brian Manchester Cindy Sites			



## February 2021 Meetings and Events

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9:00 am Bible Study	10	11	12	13
14	15	16:00 am Bible Study	17 ASH WEDNESDAY	18	19	20
21 First Sunday In Lent	22 Council meeting At 6:30 PM	23 9:00 am Bible Study	24	25	26	27
28						

## March 2021 Meetings and Events

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22 6:30 pm Council Mtg.	23	24	25	26	27
28 Palm Sunday	29	30	31			

# Trinity Leadership Directory

## Officers & Staff:

Pastor – Jira A. Albers, MDiv..... 265-5322  
Organist - Kay Champluvier..... 746-3641  
Vice President – Doreen Secor..... 265-3832  
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  
Agnes Cook.....247-7383  
Cassidy Estelle.....506-9644  
Thelma Allis.....265-4230  
Ron Cunfer..... 814-234-8796

## *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

## **Serving us in worship:**

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

## **Altar Guild– February**

**Maureen Engelhard**

## **Alter Guild– March**

**Cindy Estelle & Beverly Serfass**

## **February 7—Fifth Sunday after Epiphany**

Acolyte– Jennifer Kaniuka  
Lector– Ron Cunfer  
Communion Assistant– Maureen Engelhard  
Ushers– Ron and Ruth Russell  
Children’s Church–Chris Griffith

## **February 14– The Transfiguration of Our Lord**

Acolyte– Kynlee Kunkle  
Lector– Korrie Kunkle  
Communion Assistant– Dave Estelle  
Ushers– Paul and Aggi Cook  
Children’s Church–Maureen Engelhard

## **February 21—The First Sunday in Lent**

Acolyte– Delaney Carrington  
Lector– Bree Carrington  
Communion Assistant–Cindy Estelle  
Ushers– Lois and Duane Carrington  
Children’s Church– Rebecca Hodgdon

## **February 28—The Second Sunday in Lent**

Acolyte– Trinity Pugh  
Lector– Bill Serfass  
Communion Assistant–Bill Serfass  
Ushers– Joyce Detharidge and Sue Alexander  
Children’s Church– Cindy Estelle

## **March 7—The Third Sunday in Lent**

Acolyte– Jennifer Kaniuka  
Lector– Ron Cunfer  
Communion Assistant– Maureen Engelhard  
Ushers– Ron and Ruth Russell  
Children’s Church–Chris Griffith

## **March 14—The Fourth Sunday in Lent**

Acolyte– Kynlee Kunkle  
Lector– Korrie Kunkle  
Communion Assistant– Dave Estelle  
Ushers– Paul and Aggi Cook  
Children’s Church–Maureen Engelhard

## **March 21—The Fifth Sunday in Lent**

Acolyte– Delaney Carrington  
Lector– Bree Carrington  
Communion Assistant– Cindy Estelle  
Ushers– Lois and Duane Carrington  
Children’s Church–Rebecca Hodgdon

## **March 28—PALM SUNDAY**

Acolyte– Trinity Pugh  
Lector– Bill Serfass  
Communion Assistant– Bill Serfass  
Ushers– Joyce Detharidge and Sue Alexander  
Children’s Church–Cindy Estelle

Trinity Lutheran Church  
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## **TRINITY TRUMPETER FEBRUARY/MARCH-2021**

**“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.

