

Why Do We Gather

For centuries, literally centuries, the church operated from a conviction that the people needed to “come to church.” If you weren’t IN CHURCH, then you weren’t participating. You were off being spiritually lazy somewhere. You were shirking the responsibilities that came from being a member of a church community. And as a result, “go to church” became a sort of by-word.

But what happens when we cannot “go to church?”

What happens when we cannot gather together as the worshipping community?

It is nothing new. Many people find themselves weekly in that very situation either because of health reasons or work reasons or safety reasons. But what about when the larger group is at risk in the gathering?

Why do we gather?

God told his Old Testament people through the prophets that all the rituals and burnt offerings and sacrifices offended his sensibilities if they were done without their hearts in it. If they were offered without a reflected presentation in life, then the whole purpose of them is muted. The commandments were given to the people to affect an inward demeanor. They were done to bring about change within the person so that the person could bring about change in the world around them like yeast working its way through a batch of dough.

God’s end-goal to keep in mind, and the very thing that gets forgotten first or never even communicated to begin with, is that we are to be the light of the world. We are a living witness. We are people’s first experience of God when we claim to follow Jesus by our words and/or actions.

So, if nothing else, this whole situation with the COVID-19 virus has afforded us a moment to pause and ask ourselves some questions. The long-running and deeply furrowed paths that we have walked have perhaps become so familiar that we could walk them blindfolded, but now that we cannot take them for granted, we must instead stop and examine them.

My challenge would be this: if attending a worship service is not accompanied by a reflected presentation in life, then does it in fact offend God’s sensibilities? If making the sacrifice of your time and subsequent choices does not affect an inward demeanor, then what are they for? It would seem completely empty to an observer from the outside. It would give spiritual motion sickness to other people if we claim to follow Jesus with our words but deny him with our actions.

The worship service is a means to an end. It is a communal exercise for our spiritual muscles. Much like a pickup game of basketball/baseball/racquetball/whateverball is done best in a group of people gathered for the same purpose, our worship life together is an example of that community activity that provides a healthy consequence for all involved.

Our spiritual health is our awareness and understanding of how we are a part of something bigger than ourselves. We are born hard-wired for connection. But that connection does not have to be a face-to-face connection. A sense of belonging can exist at a social distance as well.

This is where we come to the new possibilities of the year 2020 for the church. Technology has made it possible for us to belong without being face-to-face gathered every single week. It is still essential for the health of the group that we connect in-person as often as possible as this strengthens the bonds of belonging in a way that distance weakens. But we can function and fulfill our God-given purpose even without “going to church.” If we have the technology, we can check in with our church at the tap of a phone screen from virtually anywhere we find ourselves. We can take our own initiative and strengthen our personal spiritual practices through daily exercises such as prayer and devotions. We can develop and practice that inward demeanor that God is looking for as a 24/7 witness to the others around us.

Will we miss one another when we are absent from each other? Absolutely. The experiences in a worship service are unique and impossible to accomplish over the internet. Church has space designed for it with all the visual aids and physical practices that we have grown to appreciate. Church has our friends and neighbors gathered together so that it feels like when the extended family gathers together at Grandma’s house for Thanksgiving. There are things that we cannot reproduce from a distance, and that’s exactly why the church gathering will endure long after this situation has calmed down again.

In the meantime, it is common that we do not truly appreciate what we have until we have lost it. In this case, we have not lost it, but it may be interrupted for awhile. That just means that when we finally return together, we will enjoy the reunion like we otherwise would not be able to.

Peace,

Pastor Panning

Trinity Lutheran Church Minutes

February 22, 2020

I. Call to order

Chairperson, Tim Garrison called to order the regular meeting of the Trinity Lutheran Church Council on January 22, 2020. Members in attendance were Tim Garrison, Adam Wollenburg, Brian Smidt, Lana Hager, Cindy Wollenburg, Jane Stokebrand, Chuck Holtmeier, Larry Pieper, Arlyn Parde and Pastor Panning. Pastor Panning led the group in devotions.

Reports

- a) Secretary's Report: A copy of the January minutes was reviewed. There was a motion by Adam and a second by Larry to approve the minutes as amended. Motion carried.
- b) Treasurer's Report: A copy of the monthly treasurer's report indicated a balance of \$22,067.30. There was a motion by Lana and a second by Chuck to accept the report. The motion carried.
- c) Investments Report: Arlyn reported that he had met with the financial adviser, Steve Houvendick, with recommendations to continue our investment portfolio as is. The current balance is \$50,997.89.
- d) Memorial Report: Brian Smidt reported a balance of \$16,370.40.
- e) Suggestion Box: None.
- f) Committee Reports
- g) Pastor's Report: See included.
 1. Spiritual Life and Growth
 - a) Social Committee: Tim reported some possible activities such as a "Dive In" movie.
 - b) Worship Committee: Adam Wollenburg reported that Lenten services will be held beginning with Ash Wednesday at Trinity Lutheran. Remaining services will be held at alternating sites of DeWitt and Wilber. Lenten services, except Ash Wednesday. Will consist of a light supper at 6:00 and services at 7:00. Maunday Thursday services will be at 6:00 in Wilber and 7:30 in DeWitt. Sunrise Services will be held at 7:30 in DeWitt. There will be no confirmation classes in DeWitt during Lent.
 - c) Evangelical/ Stewardship: Lana Hager had nothing new to report.
 2. Youth Development
 - a) Parish Ed/VBS: Jane Stokebrand reported Bible School has been scheduled for the first week in June with classes being held in the mornings. The Baked Potato Bar is scheduled for March 29th, with proceeds going to support Bible School. The congregation in Wilber is invited to take part in the Bible School program.
 - b) Youth Group Committee: Brian Smidt reported that the youth group will help set up for the sale of items remaining in the parsonage.
 - c) Confirmation: Pastor Panning reported that the confirmation class has worked ahead to accommodate having no classes during Lent. The last day of confirmation for this academic year will be April 29th.
 3. Care, Management and Overview
 - a) Property: Arlyn reported the cement in the basement of the parsonage is completed, Darcy Baker will begin cleaning. The committee has assessed the ruts in the lawn left by the equipment for repair of the bell tower. The sprinkler system will need to be inspected to determine if there is any damage there. Work will begin as the ground thaws. The area of the leak in the chapel area has not yet been detected, but will continue to be monitored for repair. The bell tower has been successfully repaired.

II. Old Business :

1. Constitutional Update: Jane reported on a recent call from the synod attorney, Bill Biggs, that the submitted constitution is verbally approved. It will be voted on at the quarterly synod meeting in March.
2. Ushers and greeters are still needed for the year 2020.

III. New Business:

1. The chairs, purchased by WELCA have arrived and are in use. The previous chairs will be sorted and any damaged ones will be discarded. Some will be retained for use at the church. The remaining chairs may be purchased at a rate of 2 chairs for \$5. Any remaining chairs will be donated to the Community Center.
2. The Call Committee is scheduled to meet this month to begin work on video and demographic profile.
3. A meeting is being tentatively scheduled with the Wilber Church Council on March 29th at 9:30 prior to the joint service at DeWitt.

There was a motion by Adam and a second by Brian to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried. In conclusion, Pastor Panning led the group in praying the Lord's Prayer..

Reminders: Next church council meeting will be March 25, 2020 at 7:30 P.M.

Communion Assistants for February 23rd is Cindy, and Jane for March 26th.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Council Secretary, Jane Stokebrand

Special Meeting Trinity Lutheran Church Council
March 14, 2020

A special meeting of the Trinity Lutheran Church Council was held at 10:00 A.M. on March 14, 2020 with a quorum present. Chairperson Tim Garrison called the meeting to order. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss precautions for Trinity Lutheran in response to COVID-19. Following discussion there was a motion and a second that the regular Sunday services will be held, but the service will also be streamed. Trinity will continue to be unlocked during daytime hours. The motion carried. There was a motion and second to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. In closing, Pastor Panning led the group in prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Jane Stokebrand
Church Council Secretary



Worship Committee will meet... TBD

WELCA board will meet... TBD

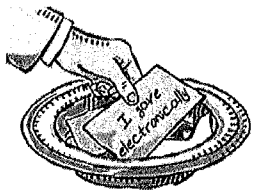
Hope Circle will meet... TBD

Church Council will meet...TBD

Shalom Circle will meet... TBD



All members of the Congregation will be asked to remember the home bound and those in need of visitation during your month assigned. Service List Leaders and Circle Chairperson are responsible for contacting facilities to set up visitation dates and/or times for playing bingo or other planned activities. **April – Hope Circle**



ELECTRONIC GIVING

Just as you rely upon receiving income on a regular basis, Trinity Lutheran relies on your regular contributions. Trinity Lutheran appreciates the efforts of congregation members to make consistent donations throughout the year. To assist you, the church provides a convenient electronic giving option for setting up regular contributions. To donate, visit the church website at www.trinitylutherandewitt.com, locate the link to our online giving page and follow the instructions.



Date	Attendance	General Offering	Benevolence Offering	Property Offering	E-giving Offering
2/23	107	\$755.00	\$50.00	\$10.00	\$511.16
2/26 (Ash Wednesday)	105	\$447.00	-	-	-
3/1	84	\$966.00	\$25.00	-	\$149.55
3/8	87	\$1110.00	\$25.00	\$5.00	\$984.55
3/11 (Wednesday Lenten Service)	56	\$10.00	-	-	-
3/15	65	\$1345.00	\$25.00	-	\$149.55
3/22 (Live Stream Only)	-	\$365.00	\$10.00	-	\$1105.98



PASTOR TRAVIS PANNING

Trinity/DeWitt: 683-3225

First/Wilber: 821-2846

Cell Phone: 239-5291

Email: pastorpanning@gmail.com

OFFICE HOURS:

Wednesday/Friday 9am-12noon at Trinity/DeWitt

Thursday/Saturday 2pm-5pm at First/Wilber

SECRETARY - JENN UHER

Church: 683-3225

Email: tlcdewitt209@gmail.com

Cell: 402-245-8198

OFFICE HOURS

Monday 5pm-6:30pm

Wednesday 10am-12noon

(Updated Hours will be posted on Office Door)

APRIL 2020

<u>SUNDAY</u>	<u>MONDAY</u>	<u>TUESDAY</u>	<u>WEDNESDAY</u>	<u>THURSDAY</u>	<u>FRIDAY</u>	<u>SATURDAY</u>
			1	2	3 Helen Michel	4
5	6 Karen Wollenburg	7 Tim Garrison Kathy Rahe	8 Don Schmidt	9 Tera Stokebrand	10 Jim Essman	11 Blake Bergmeier
11	13 Kyle Thernes	14 Larry Beerenstrauch Jack Holtmeier Lois Wattjes	15	16	17	18 Beverly Banks Jeremy Placek
19	20 Owen McDougall	21 Ann Novak	22 Nathan Morrissey	23 Shane Parker	24	25 Rylan Bergmeier Scott Friesen Jenn Uher
26	27 Aiden Kaelin Macie Kaelin Marvin Zimmerman	28	29 Larry Pieper	30		

Please keep the Brian & Amy Stokebrand Family, Mallory Chavez and Family, Chelsea Tietjen & family, Roman Dunn (great grandson of Jan & Alan Dunn), Jim Burger, Jack Garrison and Tina Groathouse in your prayers.

WORSHIP SERVICES WILL BE HELD ONLINE ONLY - LIVE STREAM until further notice!

Pastor Panning will start the Live Stream about 15 minutes early as to allow people time to "come in and sit down." The stream can be found on Facebook on either the First Lutheran or Trinity Lutheran pages or You can join on Zoom... This is a recurring meeting, Join Zoom Meeting <https://zoom.us/j/5131704161>, Meeting ID: 513 170 4161

Notice: The April Calendar and April Service Leaders are not included in the newsletter as all Services are Live Stream Only and TBD for now. Questions? Contact Pastor Panning, Tim Garrison or Jenn Uher or check our Facebook page or Website for further details.

We would like to thank all that donated to the chair and cart fund. It was greatly appreciated, and we are happy to have them paid for and in use. WELCA Treasurer – Linda Schuerman

The Call Committee is asking for your help in drafting the Ministry Site Profile, one of the key transition projects we need to complete before we can begin the call process. To aid us, we are using the Congregation Quick Check survey. We are asking each confirmed member of Trinity to fill this out. Forms have been placed in your mailbox, on the entry way counter of the church, emailed and enclosed in this newsletter. Completed forms can be placed in the ballot box in the back of the church. They'll be kept completely anonymous. To keep us on a timely pace, we are asking these to be filled out by Sunday, March 29th. Let Chris Woerner or any other member of the Call Committee know if you have any questions.

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY WILL MEET SUNDAY, MARCH 29 at 7:30 am

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY WILL MEET WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1 and WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15

Trinity hosted World Day of Prayer on Friday, March 6th. This year featured Zimbabwe. There were 17 in attendance for worship was very nice and informative about our Christian sisters in Zimbabwe. Collection was \$93 which is disbursed by World Day of Prayer USA through various grants to women and children organizations in need.

ATTENTION THRIVENT MEMBERS, it is the time of year to designate your Choice Dollars that have accumulated until December 31, 2019. You have until March 31, 2020 to call 1-800-847-4836 and say "Thrivent Choice" to designate your Choice Dollars to our church. These are rewards earned on your accounts and if you do not call, they stay in the Thrivent Financial Company account for them to use. These funds help procure items for our own church. For the 2019 year we used \$5,000 from this fund to pay the insurance deductible for the bell tower. Thank you to all members for making this possible. If you have any questions, please contact one of the Advocates - Arlyce Albert 402-239-0127, Shari Pieper 402-821-2733, or Roberta Aden 402-683-4535

Please consider using E-giving as we still need everyone's financial support to pay our monthly bills. If you require assistance in setting this up, please talk to Pastor Panning. Go to www.trinitylutherandewitt.com, and click the green OFFERING button and follow the instructions.

We are still in need of some Ushers/Greeters for the year. Please talk to Tim Garrison or Jenn Uher if you would like to volunteer.

Hope Circle

Hope Circle met at Church on Monday, March 9, 2020 with 5 members present. Kathy and Jean were hostesses. Kathy opened the meeting by reading a Lenten devotion from a Lutheran student organization pamphlet. Jean shared two thank you cards received from Betty Sharon and Day One Broadcast. Sharon also shared a thank you note she received from Betty Sharon for two cards Sharon had sent to her. Kathy stated that she had attended the last WELCA Board meeting. They have an adequate balance now and are planning to use some of it to purchase more chairs for the Fellowship Hall. Kathy also stated that Linda Schuerman wants to buy new cards for sale in the Fellowship Hall and is now selling the old ones for \$.25 each. There will be a signup sheet soon for Easter Lilies. The ELCW Spring Gathering will be held at our church on March 21st. Our Circle will donate \$30.00 to the offering that day. Sharon led the Bible Study from the Gather magazine entitled "We Are Called," based on various Old Testament passages. Our Next meeting will be held on April 13th. Jean Placek – Sec./Treas.

Lutheran Men in Mission

April- LMIM

We are starting the next study in our series in April titled Financial Stress: Making Ends Meet. April 1 Topic 1 Hard Times: Option 1 "Hitting Bottom" Luke 15:11-32 and Option 2 "Trials and temptations" James 1:1-18. April 15 Topic 2 Facing the Stress: Option 1 "Jesus faces pressure" Luke 4:14-30 and Option 2 "Relying on God" 2 Corinthians 1:1-11. 6:30am start time with coffee. Come join us if you are able and healthy!

Shalom Circle

No Report

WELCA

WELCA Board will meet...TBD

We would like to thank all that donated to the chair and cart fund. It was greatly appreciated, and we are happy to have them paid for and in use.

Greeting cards are on SALE for \$.25 each for single cards. Please check them out and help clear out these cards before the new ones come.

Congregation Quick Check Survey

Please fill out one per confirmed member of the congregation. This is due March 29th. Please leave in ballot box in the back of church prior to this date. If you chose to fill out the form that was emailed, please print it, fill it out, and send back to tlcdewitt209@gmail.com. You can call Chris Woerner with any questions at 402-641-8555.



	Poorly		Somewhat		Great
How well do these phrases describe your congregation?	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Example</i>			X		
Worship nurtures people's faith					
Deepens people's relationship with God					
A clear sense mission					
Excitement about the congregation's future					
Always ready to try something new					
A positive force in the community					
Works for social justice/advocacy					

How well does your congregation.....	Hardly at All		Well		Very Well
Incorporate new members into congregational life					
Seek out and using the gifts of members of all ages					
Build strong, healthy relationships among members					
Manage disagreements in a healthy, respectful manner					
Address social concerns (helping those in need)					
Equip members to share their faith with others					
Interact with the local community					
Help members live out their faith in daily lives					

	Declined to Not Sustainable	Declining but still sustainable	Maintaining	Growing or Increasing
	1	2	3	4
People Power: Enough people with energy to lead and participate in worship & ministries				
Financial Resources: To pay for facility, staffing, ministries, etc. <i>Do you have what you need to maintain or expand ministry?</i>				

	Under 22	Age 23-34	Age 35-50	Age 51-64	Age 65+
Please Mark Your Age Demographic					

KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS...

SERVICEMEN

SSG – Brock Johnson

Deployment Address:

Darin Bartlett
332 AEW/ECS
Unit 61804
APO AE 09321

Darin Bartlett Family

209 W. 6th
Knob Noster, MO 65336
Bartlett_Riley@yahoo.com
(Mary Garrison's Son)

Matt and Meighen Friesen

CMR 480 Box 487
APO, AE 09128
(In Navy in Stuttgart, Germany)

Please continue to keep these members in your prayers:

Janice Buhr

Villa at Flowing Springs
2211 Sunset Dr. #225
Beatrice, NE 68310

Beryl Beerenstrauch

Clark Jeary
8401 S. 33rd Street, Apt. 320
Lincoln, NE 68516

Eileen Damkroger

103 N Juniper
DeWitt, NE 68341

Herb Rehm

Wilber Care Center
611 N Main
Wilber, NE 68465

Richard Wollenburg

Heritage Crossings
501 N 13th St.
Geneva, NE 68361