



Trinity In Touch

December 2025

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Mission

Our Mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Vision

We strive to be an inclusive faith community that extends God's love in our neighborhood and world.

Core Values

Diversity & Inclusiveness: Seeking to affirm every person as a child of God.

Scripture, Tradition, Experience and Reason: Searching for truth in our faith community.

Peace & Justice: Striving for positive social change in our neighborhood and world.

**Trinity UMC
1100 Lake Drive SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506
616.456.7168
office@grtumc.org**

Behind the Worship: Rituals and Relevance

This time of year always brings a certain kind of energy to our life together. We felt it last week in a big way. To our normal rhythm of worship, we added the orchestra. After worship, we shared an incredible Thanksgiving feast. And after that meal, many of you stayed late to deck the halls for the season ahead. It was a phenomenal Sunday. It felt full. It felt like community at its best.

Advent, however, gives us a different kind of invitation. Not to try and slow the world down, because it won't. Not to pretend life magically eases up at the holidays, because it doesn't. The invitation we receive is for us to take a moment and look at all of the things that fill our lives and ask a simple question:

What am I giving my time to, and does it lead me toward the life God calls me to live?

Time moves at the same pace every second of every minute of every hour of every day of the year. The difference is whether we notice it. Advent helps us to take note. It offers us a natural pause in the middle of all that life heaps on us, so that we can realign, reset, and remember what matters most to us.

This year we will spend the season with a series called Unwrapped: What We Didn't Know We Needed. Each week we will look at one gift hidden in plain sight, a gift you already have, a gift that invites you to live with more purpose and more joy. I want to encourage you to use this month for one simple practice. Find ten minutes each week to look at your calendar and your commitments and ask yourself one honest question:

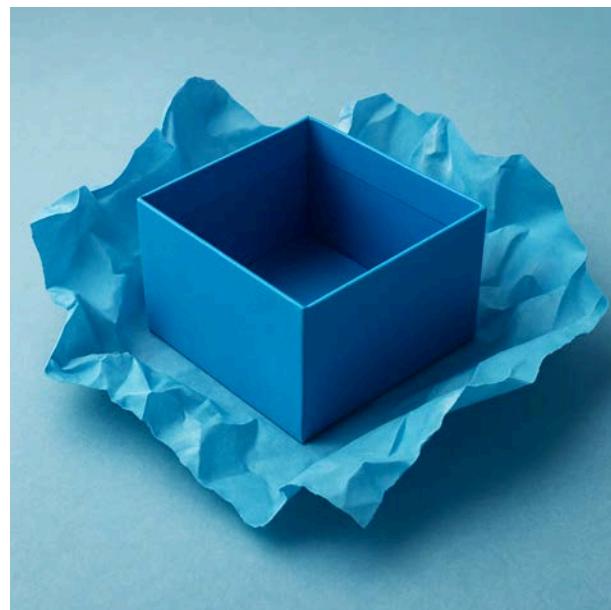
Does this reflect what I say is important in my life?

If the answer is yes, hold on to it. If the answer is no, Advent is the perfect time to shift, to move in a better direction, to recommit to spending your life on the things that matter, to give your attention back to what shapes you toward love, compassion, and hope.

As we begin this season, remember that God meets you in the time you have. Know that small choices can make a big difference, and trust that you are being drawn toward a life shaped by hope.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Mike



Ministry Spotlight

At the heart of our church's commitment to compassion and justice is **My Life in Pieces**, a powerful ministry that creates space for honest storytelling, deep listening, and meaningful growth. This program tackles some of the most difficult, intimate topics people face—grief, abuse, immigration, family trauma, identity struggles, and more—while offering participants tangible steps toward healing and empowerment.

Each gathering centers on a personal story shared by a member of our community or a guest speaker. These stories are often raw, courageous, and deeply human. But the purpose of My Life in Pieces goes beyond sharing lived experiences. Every session includes actionable takeaways, giving attendees tools they can use in their own lives—whether that means practicing healthier coping strategies, learning how to advocate for themselves or others, or discovering new pathways to support those experiencing similar challenges.

My Life in Pieces is more than a program—it's a reminder that every story matters, and that when we bring our pieces together, we build something stronger, braver, and more whole.

All are welcome to attend, listen, learn, and grow. If you or someone you know could benefit from a supportive space to explore life's toughest topics, we warmly invite you to join us.



UWF (United Women in Faith)

UWF Soup Cook-Off coming Sunday, January 4, 2026 following worship! Amazing soups, artisan breads, salad bar and dessert. This annual favorite supports United Women in Faith and their social justice and mission work!

Donation of \$8 is suggested.

If you would like to donate your favorite soup we would love to have it! You may win the prize! Contact Nichea VerVeer Guy orangecelt00@aol.com.

All are welcome to enjoy this warm-winter fellowship!



Finance

Dear Trinity Siblings in Christ,

As we approach the end of 2025, our hearts are filled with gratitude and growing excitement for all that God is doing through Trinity. This year has been marked by growth, connection, and generosity. Together, we have shown what it means to be All In - offering our time, energy, and resources so that others might experience the love and grace of God.

We are writing to you as the pillars of generosity in our congregation. Through your faithful giving and participation, you have sustained the ministries that make Trinity strong and vibrant. Now we are asking for your help to finish 2025 strong - with a clean ledger rather than a deficit - so that we can enter 2026 from a place of health and hope.

Our financial reports show that expenses have been higher than receipts. As of the end of September, we are about \$17,000 behind. The Finance Committee believes it is important to begin 2026 with a positive balance. Our ministries are thriving, and we want to continue that momentum into the new year.

We are inviting you to help close this 2025 gap. If each of us contributes at least an additional 5% of our 2025 annual giving, or whatever amount as we are able, we can meet and even exceed this goal. Some will give more and some less, but every gift matters. Imagine the joy of stepping into 2026 with strong finances, thriving ministries, and a shared spirit of gratitude. You can indicate your additional giving to this appeal on your connection card, via mail or email, or online at bit.ly/TrinityPillars and select the 2025 Special Appeal.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the work God is doing through Trinity. Together, we can finish 2025 strong and step into 2026 even stronger.

With deep gratitude,
Your Finance Committee

2026 Budget Summary

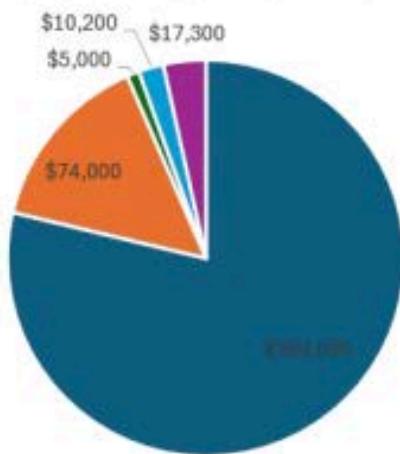
THE BIG PICTURE: Ministry Area Breakdown & Impact



Ministry Areas:

Discipleship	\$79,300	16%
Worship & Music	\$74,500	15%
Mission & Outreach	\$79,500	16%
Office Services	\$74,880	15%
Building Use & Facilities	\$95,520	19%
Pastoral Support	\$97,300	19%
	\$501,000	100%

SOURCES OF FUNDS: The Where



- Pledge Giving (79%)
- Identified Non-Pledge & Plate Giving (15%)
- Other Income (1%)
- Use of Facilities (2%)
- Payment of Boiler Loan from Endowment Fund (3%)

BUDGET NARRATIVE: The Details

We are called to share God's love in our community and the world through our mission and ministries. This budget represents how we the people of Trinity seek to do this transformational work.

Discipleship: Facilitates education, programming, and fellowship opportunities for all ages including the applicable supplies and materials. Salaries of the Director of Discipleship, Youth Director, Child Care Coordinator, and two Child Care Providers.

Worship & Music: Supports the creation of blended Sunday service & special worship throughout the year including the annual Festival of Music. Covers audio-visual and live streaming, stipends for guest preachers & musicians, and other music materials. Salaries of the Director of Worship Arts, Children's Choir & Bells Director, and Organist.

Mission & Outreach: Focuses on supporting community and worldwide partners in works of mercy, justice, and peace. Includes worldwide mission thru Ministry Shares as well as support of HAPI and Cameroon missions. Due to the extensive use of our building and gym in outreach to our neighbors and local partners, 20% of the building facilities budget is included in this category. The Trinity Community Ministries program has its own separate budget but this area includes the parts of that budget Trinity contributes.

Office Services: The communication hub of the church. Includes computer network server, Internet, copiers, mailings, office supplies, accounting software, church management software, and more. Salaries of the Church Administrator and Treasurer. As noted above, 20% of this category is in Outreach.

Building Facilities: Building maintenance and housekeeping to ensure safe and hospitable facilities for all. Includes utilities, property insurance, lawn/snow services, and more. Salary of the Custodian. As noted above, 20% of this category is in Outreach.

Pastoral Support: Pastor's compensation package as the spiritual leader and the administrative officer of the church.

2026 Budget Summary Continued



**ALL THE PICTURES:
Our Church. Our People.
Belong. Be Love. Be You.**



THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT!

Questions about our 2025 Budget? Contact the Finance Team.

Haven't filled out your Pledge Card yet? Hard copies available in the Office or go online to grtumc.org.



Trinity UMC celebrates the beautiful diversity of the human community. We affirm the sacred worth of each person as a recipient of God's love and grace. As followers of Christ, we are an open and inclusive congregation. We live this out by welcoming into full participation all persons regardless of gender, race, national origin, physical or mental abilities, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, marital status or economic condition.



Intention Word

Our intention word for December is Open. Not sure what an intention word is? Pastor Mike wrote an introduction to this concept in September 2022's Newsletter. Check it out online at:

<https://bit.ly/Sep2022Newsletter>

Church Family

ALTAR FLOWERS

December 1-24: ADVENT

December 28th: Dave and Mary Waskiewicz in memory of their mother, Susan Marks.

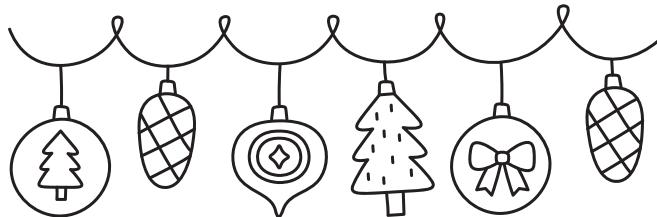
PRAYERS AND CARE

Condolences to Christian Bell and his family on the passing of Christian's father, Robert Bell, on Monday, November 24, 2025. Please keep Christian and his loved ones in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.
cshbell@gmail.com



Opportunities to Engage

Designed for Trinity families & friends ages 18 & up, God's Naturehood: Adult Edition is a great opportunity to visit a new park, get to know members of your Trinity family better, and get your daily steps in. The details on our fall meet-ups are below.



Friday, December 12 from 10:30am-2:30pm

Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park at 1000 E Beltline Ave NE, Grand Rapids, 49525. Meet inside the Welcome Center but before ticketing.

This God's Naturehood is extended so that we can take a wintertime walk outside as well as visit the Christmas & Holiday Traditions Exhibit and eat lunch together in the café. Participants are responsible for covering their own admission & lunch although we usually have plenty of free passes to share. If cost is an issue, contact Laura about options, as we never want price to prevent participation!

RSVPs are requested but not required. Contact Laura Johns at l.johns@grtumc.org.



Our last Popcorn Party of 2025 is **Friday, December 19 from 6:30pm-8:30pm**. Get in the holiday spirit with the beautifully animated film *Klaus* about a selfish postman and a reclusive toymaker who form an unlikely friendship, delivering joy to a cold, dark town that desperately needs it. Like always, we'll provide the popcorn and beverages. There may even be a few extra holiday treats...

Not just for kids, not just for grown-ups – Popcorn Party Time is a chance for the whole Trinity family to get together for fellowship and fun.

Calendar Note: We will not have Popcorn Party Time in January because there will be Faith at the Movies film screenings every Friday night, but keep an eye out for the spring dates.

Questions? Contact Laura Johns at l.johns@grtumc.org.



Faith at the Movies is back this January and the line-up is exciting!

Join us in worship each Sunday at 10:00am for messages featuring costumes, props & more.

On Friday evenings at 6:00pm, come on out for movies screenings with your Trinity family & special guests from St. Paul's United Methodist. Popcorn and drinks will be provided and you're welcome to pack your own picnic dinner. We cannot wait to screen all these amazing films together!

January 2nd & 4th: Moana (PG | 2016)

January 9th & 11th: National Treasure (PG | 2004)

January 16th & 18th: The Sandlot (PG | 1993)

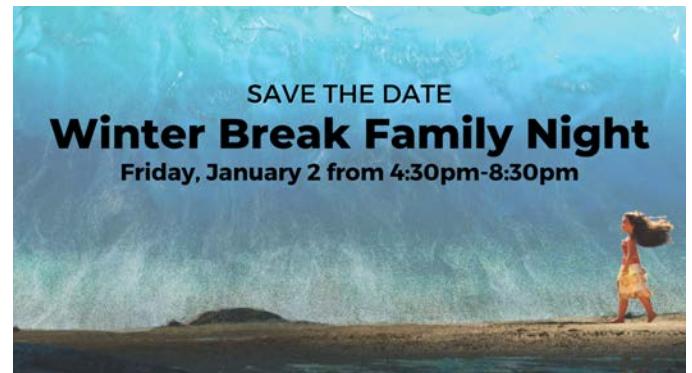
January 23rd & 25th: Come From Away (PG-13 | 2021)

Questions? Contact Pastor Mike at m.desotell@grtumc.org.

Great news! You don't have to find out "just how far you'll go" to escape your Winter Break blues. You can do it at Trinity. That's right, friends, Winter Break Family Night is back in 2026!

Celebrate the end of your long winter break with us on Friday, January 2 from 4:30pm-8:30pm!

Don't miss "Moana" themed crafts, gym time, dinner, dessert & an epic glow dance party. Plus, we'll join our church-family for the Faith at the Movies film screening!



What can we say except, "You're Welcome!" Seriously, you are welcome at this event. Regardless of your age, whether you have kids, whether you are a demi-god of the wind & sea, or whether you can sing all the words to all the Moana songs – you are welcome and have a place here with us!

In order to plan supplies and food appropriately, we need folks to RSVP. There is a suggested donation of \$10 per person; maximum \$35 per family to help offset food & supply costs. That said, we never want price to prevent participation, so you're always welcome to select the subsidized options on our online form.

Get all the details and register at: <https://tinyurl.com/TUMC-WBFN26>.

Questions? Contact Laura Johns at L.johns@grtumc.org.

Adult Small Groups



Fall 2025

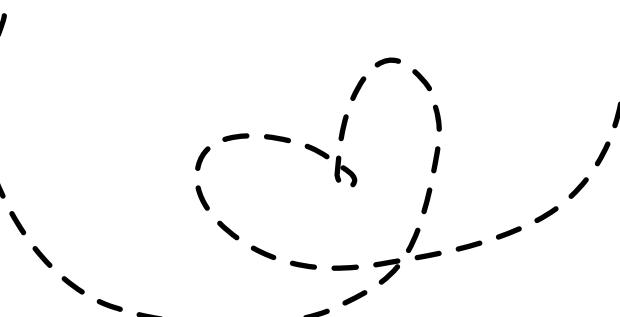
Pints with the Pastor
Select Sundays at 6:00pm at Taco Borracho

Sept. 28 Oct. 19 Nov. 16 Dec. 14



Monthly Mahjong
Third Wednesday of Each Month at 1:00pm

Gather in Fireside on the third Wednesday of each month for an opportunity to practice your mahjong skills or learn new ones. All ages & abilities are welcome - beginner to expert! Contact the Office for more information.



Spiritalk Book Club

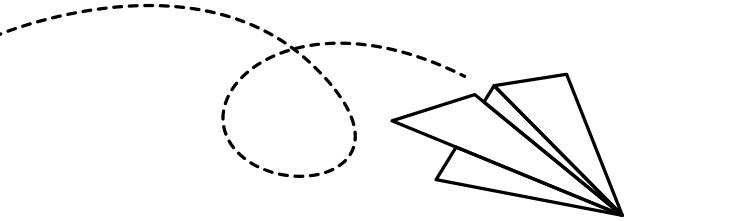
The United Women in Faith Spiritalk Book Club is wrapping up our fall series and will be back in 2026.

Join us for our last meeting of 2025 on December 16 at 7:00pm.
We're reading Baptizing America by Kaylor & Underwood.

Start reading our January book now so you're ready!
Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

Contact Joy Murphy for more info at joymurphy@grtumc.org.

Fall 2025

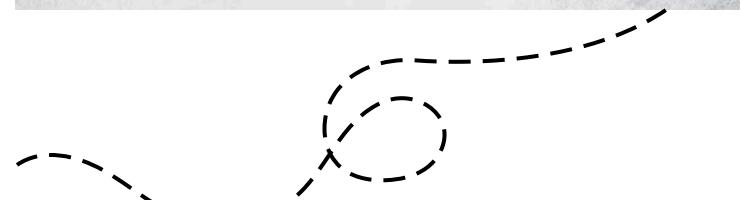


Gophers

Tuesdays from 9:15am-10:00am
Most Tuesdays from October 7, 2025 thru May 5, 2026

Join a fun group of older adults for a weekly exercise class featuring tai chi, strength training, balance work, and more. This low impact opportunity is great for all ability levels.

Stick around after class for Coffee & Conversation!

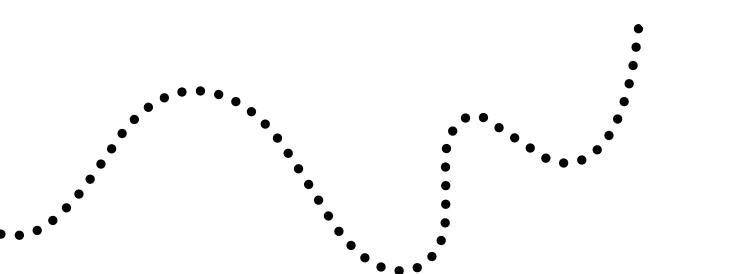


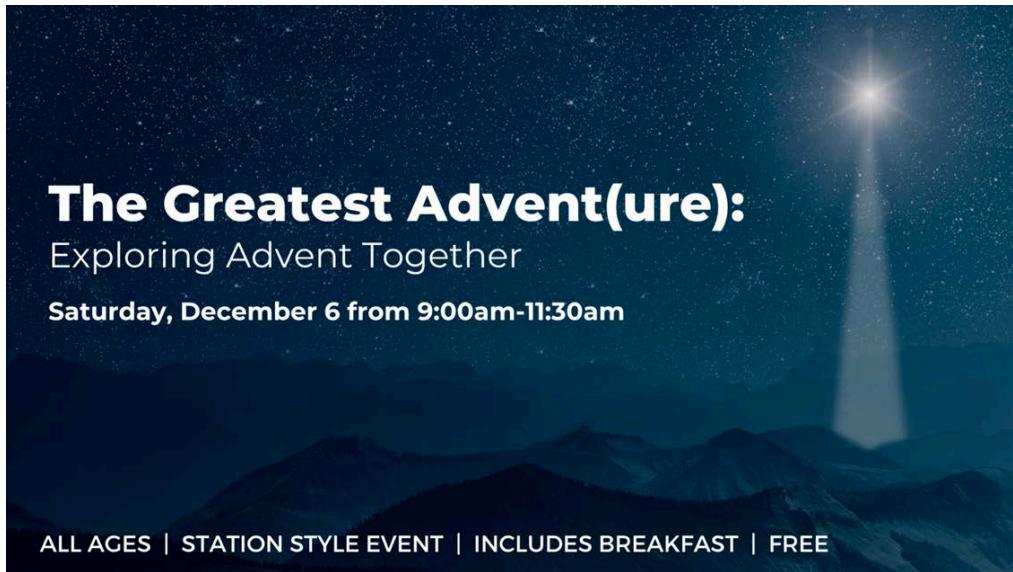
Sacred Justice Book Club

Join us as we dive into a variety of different non-fiction justice titles!

Meetings are every three months on Tuesdays at 7:00pm. Come for deep conversation, meaningful action, and dessert!

August 5, 2025 Jesus Feminist Sarah Bessey	November 4, 2025 How to Be an Antiracist Ibram X. Kendi	February 3, 2026 The Story of More Hope Jahren	May 5, 2026 Queer & Christian Brandan Robertson
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The Greatest Advent(ure) is back! Join us on **Saturday, December 6 from 9:00am-11:30am** for an all-ages Advent experience. Our Advent(ure) will start with a light breakfast from 9:00am-9:30am. Once you're fortified, you'll have 90 minutes to complete your quest – an epic journey through the four weeks of Advent!

Crafts, activities, prayer stations, a mission moment, and more will guide adventurers toward deeper understandings of the hope, peace, joy, and love we celebrate each Advent. You won't want to miss the opportunities that will be found around every turn including a NEW special family Advent craft.

At 11:00am, we will all gather again as a group for a hot cocoa bar, a time of sharing, and a storybook reading!

Come – all ye faithful – and experience *The Greatest Advent(ure)* as we prepare our homes, our families, and our hearts for Christmas. Come explore Advent with us!

Questions? Contact Laura Johns at l.johns@grtumc.org.



**SPECIAL
LINKS
&
SIGN-UPS**



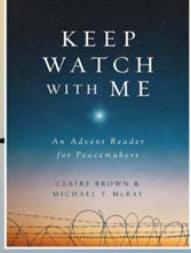
Keep Watch with Me

AN ADVENT READER FOR PEACEMAKERS



Sundays, Nov. 30 to Dec. 21 at 11:30am

Adult Faith Formation | Discovery Room



With the coming of Advent, plan to join us for a special Adult Faith Formation opportunity. We'll be reading the daily devotional *Keep Watching with Me: An Advent Reader for Peacemakers* and then discussing select passages and practices on Sunday mornings at 11:30am from November 30 to December 21. Books are available on the counter near the office with a suggested donation of \$15 per book. That said, you don't have to read to participate!

The Adult Ministries Council is really excited about this resource! Why? *Keep Watch With Me* is a collaborative daily devotional featuring diverse contributors: black, white, LGBTQ, Latinx, Palestinian, incarcerated, Native American, Australian, Americans, Irish, South African, clergy, laity, activists, authors, organizers, and more. The season of Advent, as the church prepares for the birth of Christ, is a penitential season of reckoning with our need and the needs of the world. *Keep Watch With Me* offers stories, reflections, prayers, and spiritual practices to sustain and challenge the faith of those who work for justice and peace, and long for the coming of God with us.

If you have questions, contact Laura Johns at l.johns@grtumc.org.

FoRT (Friends of Rohr at Trinity) is a group of over 40 folks who enjoy studying Father Richard Rohr's writings. Together we desire to integrate action and contemplation in our lives. As we gather each week to discuss our reading and enjoy fellowship together, we find we are "growing Deeper, loving Better, seeing God more Clearly." You're invited to join us!

DBC meets on Sundays from 5:00pm-6:30pm in the Fireside Room and just completed *The Divine Dance*. In January, we'll be starting *The Tears of Things: Prophetic Wisdom for an Age of Outrage*. Everything Belongs (EvB) gathers in the upstairs Library on Thursdays from 6:15pm-7:30pm and is discussing *The Naked Now*. Please see our holiday schedule below as both groups alter their meeting schedules in November & December.

Questions about any of these acronyms or the amazing groups of people they represent? Contact Laura Johns at l.johns@grtumc.org or other members of the FoRT Leadership Team: Merrita Tumonong, Penny Murray & Steve Murray.

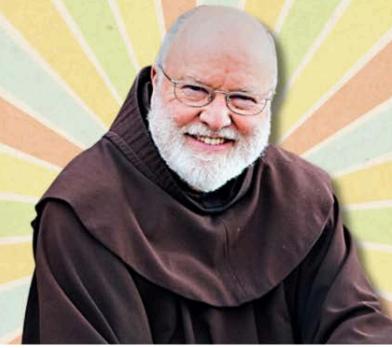
Holiday Schedule 2025

Nov 23	DBC at 5:00pm
Nov 27	No EvB - Thanksgiving
Nov 30	No DBC - UWF Event
Dec 4	No EvB - Shop Hop
Dec 7 & 14	No DBC - Holiday Break
Dec 11 & 18	EvB at 6:15pm
Dec 21	All FoRT Christmas Party in Trinity Parlor at 5:00pm
Jan 4	DBC Resumes in 2026
Jan 8	EvB Resumes in 2026



FoRT:

Friends of Rohr at Trinity



Thanks for Thanksgiving



A huge thank you to the over 100 friends who joined us for the Mission Work Camp Fund Thanksgiving Dinner on November 23. Through your generosity, we raised over \$1,200 that will allow us to continue to put our faith into action in our neighborhood and around the world.

A big shout out to everyone who donated food items or helped with cooking, serving, and clean-up. This event wouldn't happen without your hard work!

A special thank you to Jill & Ken Reider who in addition to assisting on Saturday & Sunday, spent parts of Monday & Tuesday turning turkey bones and extra meat into 46 quarts of frozen soup that will go out with our *Food is Love* Congregational Care deliveries the next 1-2 months. A perfect example of how one big meal not only blesses those who help prepare it and eat but also ripples out in many wonderful ways.

During this season of gratitude, please know how grateful we are for each and every one of you and your generous support!





Thank you to everyone who participated in TNT (Thursday Nights at Trinity) this autumn! We've had an amazing few months of good food, great fellowship, amazing small groups, and fantastic music.

Our last night of TNT programming for 2025 is Thursday, December 18. If you're involved in any type of music programming at Trinity, make sure you get that day on your calendar, as it will be the dress rehearsal for Christmas Eve services.

TNT will not be offered December 25 or January 1. All choirs and our Everything Belongs Small Group will take a break during that period. We will kick off 2026 on Thursday, January 8!

Please watch your email in the coming weeks for a new 2026 dinner reservations link. And remember, even if you're not participating in any other Thursday night programming, God loves you and invites you to join us for dinner!

UPCOMING EVENTS

SAVE THE DATE

SAVE THE DATE

SAVE THE DATE

SAVE THE DATE

AGING WORKSHOP

Resources for anyone who plans to get older or loves someone who is.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2026

10:00AM-1:30PM AT TRINITY UMC

Returning for a fourth year, this workshop is for seniors, caregivers, family & friends. Together we will explore topics related to aging. There will be multiple sessions with expert speakers, refreshments and a light lunch.

More info coming soon!

Questions? Contact Laura Johns at 616-456-7168 or L.Johns@grtumc.org.

The Youth Connection Corner

YOUTH EVENTS FOR THE MONTH OF



It's the most wonderful tiiiiime of the yeeeeeeear---and I'm so excited to spend this Advent season with our incredible youth group! As we finish up our fall and head into the festive festivities, we'll be taking a short break from *What's YOUR Story?* and giving you something really special for the month of December. Like the Trinity adults, we'll be diving into the book: *Keep Watch With Me: An Advent Reader for Peacemakers*. Each week, we'll read, reflect, and discuss what it means to be people of peace in a noisy and messy world.

We've also got lots of events that will make our December merry and bright! Grab your cocoa and your calendars because this month is full of faith, fun and fellowship! Mark your calendars for...

The Greatest Advent(ure) on December 6th

See page 10 for all the details. And for a youth specific bonus, finish your passport and meet me in the Parlor during cocoa time! If the youth can share with me something they learned at the event, I'll have a holiday surprise for them. Come explore Advent with us!

Donuts & Discussion on December 14th

You "donut" want to miss this yearly event on **Sunday, December 14th during service!** We'll start with donuts up and hang out time in Pellowe where we can talk about anything (and everything!) as we snack. Once Pastor Mike begins his sermon we'll sneak up into the balcony (with our donuts of course) and play a little sermon bingo for a fun prize!

Popcorn Party Time: Klaus on December 19th

See page 7 for all the details. This is one of my personal favorite films, so bring your holiday spirit and a friend! It'll be a "reel" good time!

Youth Christmas Party on December 21st

We're wrapping up the year in style with our first ever Youth Christmas Party on **Sunday, December 21st** during Youth Group! There will be games, music, snacks, cookie decorating with the younger kids and more!

Please note, **there will be no Youth Group on Sunday, December 28th or Sunday, January 4th!**

As we head into this beautiful season of Advent and prepare our hearts for Christmas, my prayer is that our youth feel wrapped up—not just in cozy blankets, but in God's endless love. Merry Christmas my Trinity Family and Friends—and thank you for making this year tree-ly one to remember!

Annie Slabaugh, Youth Director - a.slabaugh@grtumc.org



Community Ministries

What an exciting stretch of exciting programming...

The Community Ministries Program has been busy these last few weeks and there is no end in sight as we start Advent and the Christmas Holiday Season! Here is a glimpse of what we've been up to!



My Life in Pieces

What a beautiful night of sharing personal grief stories and practical advice for those walking in grief and those who may be a family member or an ally to someone on that journey. Our speakers did an excellent job of honoring their grief but also showing that grief does not have to define you. We've heard so many positive comments from those in the room and how it is impacting how they themselves may walk into this journey in the future.



My Life is Pieces is a program that we offer twice a year that invites people into hearing personal stories on a subject in a very raw and intimate way. These tough discussions help offer insight into someone's life along with their struggles and joys along the way!



A Night to Remember

If you have never been to this event at Trinity, you have missed out on some amazing evenings of ministry, storytelling, sharing from our friends and community partners all while having great music and a wonderful dinner as well. The singing and cello playing alone were off the charts and the stories shared of the impact that our ministry is having here at Trinity would make everyone proud.

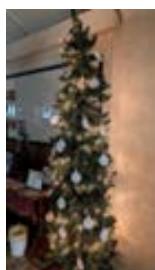


Do us a favor and ask to see if you can find someone who was at this event and ask them about it and see their excitement about what they saw and heard and make sure you get signed up when it comes around next year around this same time, you won't want to miss it.

Murphy Ainsworth Memorial Ride

Every year we try to take the kids on a unique experience where we take the CM Kids to a horse farm where we learn about, feed, brush and even get to ride horses around the arena. This is such a great experience for students who get to have these awesome interactions and explore different hobbies and animals.

Huge thank you to the families who have helped us bring this program forward to honor Murphy, a former Community Ministries Program volunteer and avid outdoor adventurer who still is making a difference in the lives of children in our community.



CM Program Gift Tree

Don't forget to grab an ornament off the CM Program Gift Tree located outside the sanctuary at Trinity UMC. Purchase the item and return it unwrapped to the CM Office on or before 10/14. You can also order online and have it sent to CM Program Manager, Matt Witkowski, at 1164 Treeway NW Sparta, MI 49345. Please do not send items to Trinity. Questions call Matt at (616)550-2418.