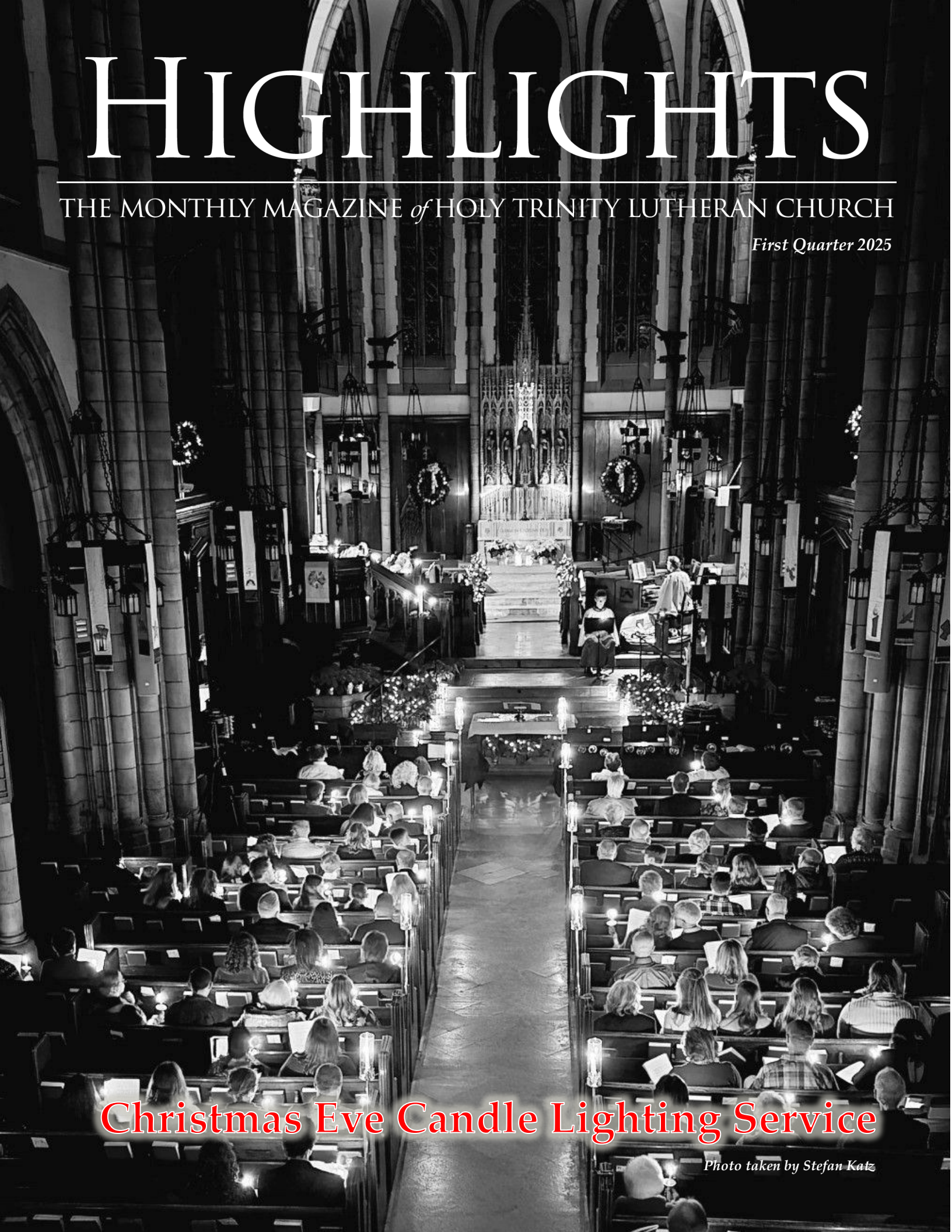


HIGHLIGHTS

THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE *of* HOLY TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

First Quarter 2025



Christmas Eve Candle Lighting Service

Photo taken by Stefan Katz

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Annual Congregational Meeting Sunday, January 26, 11 a.m.

Attend in person or online
In Person – Sanctuary | Online – Zoom Meeting

Items of business will include:

1. Recommendation to combine the Care & Fellowship Team and Education & Youth Teams to form the Congregational Care & Connect Ministry Team.
2. Recommendation to change the start time of Sunday worship from 9:30 a.m. to 10 a.m.
3. Recommendation to pay the \$20,000 audit fee from the Budget Endowment Fund.
4. 2025 Budget.

The 2024 Report to the Congregation will be sent separately. Hard copies will be available at the Welcome Center and in the Narthex two weeks prior.

If you wish to participate via Zoom Meeting, please see the instructions to the right. You must register in advance in order to participate via Zoom. Registering through the church's website is the only way you can receive the Zoom access link †

REMINDER ... The 2025 Church Council officers and members will be installed on Sunday, January 19. They are:

President – **Diane Chambers**

Vice President & Cabinet Liaison – **Alexa Sandmann**

Secretary – **Liz Anacki**

Treasurer – **John Guran**

Members: **Mike Ameling, Frederica Cohen, Deborah Ickes, Amy Indorf**
and **Pastor Becki Verbridge**. †

To Participate via Zoom

You must register in advance to participate via Zoom. Please visit the church's website, holytrinityakron.org. Under the 'Noteworthy' section on the home page, click the link for the Annual Congregational Meeting. Once registered, the Zoom Meeting link will be sent to you along with a meeting reminder a few days prior.

IMPORTANT!

Each household member must register and must log in to the Congregation Meeting separately in order to cast a vote. If this is your first time using Zoom, you will need to download it to your computer or mobile device. †



Update on Collaboration Discussion with Faith Lutheran Church, Fairlawn

On Thursday, November 21, 2024, the Church Councils of Faith Lutheran Church, Fairlawn and Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Akron, along with a few additional congregational leaders who had been part of the Project Isaiah 43 gatherings, met together at the NEOS office in Cuyahoga Falls.

Those who attended from Holy Trinity were: Mike Aemling (Call Committee & Council), Amanda Archbold (Call Committee), Diane Chambers (Council), Val Clark (Council), Frederica Cohen (Council), Lesli Eisenhart (Council), Amy Indorf (Council), Rachel Nunez (Staff), Velma Pomrenke, Jacquie Wert (Call Committee), and Pastor Becki Verbridge.

The meeting was facilitated by Pastor Jonathan Stufft, Assistant to the Bishop for Congregational Vitality & Director for Evangelical Mission. He led the group through a guided conversation that included: reviewing the collaborative activities held to date, ascertaining how further collaboration might strengthen/expand each congregation's ministries going forward, identifying "non-negotiables," and discerning "next steps" in the collaboration process.

Pastor Jonathan compiled the input gathered at the meeting and sent it to Pastor Becki and Pastor Jean Hansen. They will meet at the beginning of January to review the input and devise a plan for gaining input from additional congregation members through "listening sessions." These "listening sessions" would be held over the course of one or two weeks at each church in February, with members signing up to participate either in-person or via a zoom group. The size of the groups would likely be limited to 8-15 people. Two congregational leaders would be assigned to each group, with one leader guiding the discussion focusing on key questions, and the other leader recording the responses. The hope is that the input from the listening sessions would be compiled before the beginning of March.

Once that information has been collected, the Pastors along with the Church Councils, will determine if/how to move forward with the collaboration.

The purpose of the collaboration discussion is how the two congregations might work together to support and strengthen the ministries of each in their existing locations. †



Festival of Lessons & Carols

It was the final activity in our collaborative series with Faith Lutheran Church ... a joint performance featuring the choirs and musicians from both congregations. It was an annual holiday tradition that did not disappoint! From beginning to end, the audience of more than 150 people recounted and celebrated the Christmas Story through the reading of lessons by Pastor Becki and Pastor Jean Hansen from Faith Lutheran, each followed by the singing of some of our favorite carols.

And no Lessons & Carols would be complete without a festive reception where wassail and delicious cookies were enjoyed by concert-goers. †





ARTS 
HOLY TRINITY

*Previous page (counterclockwise from top):
 The choirs from Faith and Holy Trinity Lutheran Churches perform at the Festival of Lessons & Carols. Pastor Jean Hansen and Pastor Becki read the lessons of the Christmas story. Holy Trinity's Bell Choir under the direction of David Lines, Director of Music Ministry.*

Pictured at top: The Bell Choir from Faith Lutheran under the direction of Bob Mollard, Choir Director & Organist.



*Pictured above, left and right:
 Concert goes enjoyed the reception that followed the Festival of Lessons & Carols.*





Task Force Appointed to Evaluate Second Floor Area for Congregational Use

At the recommendation of the Congregational Care & Connection Team, the Church Council has appointed a Task Force to investigate and make a recommendation for renovation/updates of second floor area. This would include: the Welcome Center, Staff Offices, Chapel Lounge, Library, Men's & Women's Restrooms, Room 202, and the adjacent hallways. These are the areas currently used by the congregation for small groups and larger gatherings. Together, the persons listed below represent all areas of Holy Trinity's ministry. They will begin meeting in January, under the leadership of Bruce Mansour, with the expectation that they will formulate a recommendation in the first half of 2025.

- ◆ Bruce Mansour (Chair) - HTLC Staff (Building Supervisor)
- ◆ Frederica Cohen - Worship & Music, Invite Welcome Connect, Council, Second Sundays, Chancel Choir, Bell Choir
- ◆ Rich Williams - Congregational Care & Connection, Bell Choir, Second Sundays, Men's Bible Study, DLM Volunteer
- ◆ Diane Chambers - Congregational Care & Connection, Social Outreach, Council, Book Club, Women's Bible Study, Second Sundays, DLM Volunteer
- ◆ Deb Ickes - Worship & Music, Altar Guild, Council
- ◆ John Hamilton - Property, Money Counter
- ◆ Don Parsisson - Property, Social Outreach, Second Sundays, DLM Volunteer
- ◆ Rachel Nuñez - HTLC Staff (Director Congregational Care & Connection) †

Organ Repair Work to Begin

Have you noticed low vibrational sounds like an idling truck or an air compressor running in the sanctuary? This became especially noticeable during worship on Sunday, December 22 and audibly affected the stability of the sound coming from the rear organ including the horizontal trumpets.

We have been raising money through the Sponsor-a-Pipe program for this repair to the air pressure system for a couple years. It has only recently become audibly disturbing, but has been a known issue for some time. As the vibration continues, it shakes the wind supply to the rear pipes and only gets worse as the stabilizing mechanism gets looser and looser.

We have raised enough money so far to just cover this repair which has been scheduled for the end of January with Leek Organ Company, who currently maintains and tunes our legacy organ. Scaffolding will be set up in the balcony so that the air reservoirs can be removed and taken to the factory for rebuilding. For now and into February, both sides of the rear antiphonal organ will be disconnected and unplayable, leaving the top keyboard of the console completely silent.

The cost approved for the Leek repair was \$28,358. The scaffolding is estimated to be an additional \$10,000-\$13,500 (dependent on a variety of factors). The project is expected to begin Monday, January 20, and should be completed within three weeks.

Eventually this work needs to be continued into the main organ to keep it stable and useable for the coming years. Hopefully it doesn't become an emergency as the back organ has. Your continued support of Sponsor-a-Pipe is much needed and appreciated. †



Photo taken by Stefan Katz.

Candlelight Concerts

These candlelit performances allow you to experience live music in a completely new way. Picture a mesmerizing sight: a stage bathed in the gentle glow of hundreds, or even thousands, of candles. The shimmering ambiance created by candlelight swaying to the rhythm of your favorite music will leave you spellbound. Here are upcoming concerts being held at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church:

- **January 11:** 90s Unplugged (6:30 p.m.) and Tribute to Taylor Swift (8:45 p.m.)
- **February 8:** 90s Unplugged (6:30 p.m.) and Tribute to Coldplay (8:30 p.m.)

Tickets must be purchased in advance from [feverup.com](https://www.venue.com) †



This is a good time of year to remind everyone of Holy Trinity's Winter Weather Cancellation Policy. If Akron Public Schools are closed due to inclement weather, the church office will be closed. If a Sunday worship service needs to be canceled due to inclement weather, the Pastor will make the decision, in consultation with the Building Supervisor, Council President, and Sexton, and an email announcing the closure will be sent as quickly as possible.

Save This Date!

Women's Lenten Retreat

Connection - Contemplation - Community

Saturday, March 1

8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
50 N. Prospect Street, Akron

Cost: \$10 per person

Materials, continental breakfast
and soup luncheon included

Scan the QR Code to register or email Rachel
Nunez, Director of Congregational Care &
Connection at rnunez@holyltrinityakron.org





Mid-Week LIFT (Living In Faith Together)

Join us for food, fellowship, and conversation around the table!

Faith5 Friday Check-In & Prayer—9 a.m. via Zoom

We check-in with each other and SHARE our prayer concerns, READ a scripture passage or poem, TALK about it and how we can apply it to our lives, PRAY for our concerns, each other, and Holy Trinity, and end our time with a BLESSING for the day ahead. Our time together lasts between 20-30 minutes. This is a wonderful opportunity for connection and encouragement! Invite other to be a part of this community... all are welcome! If you have any questions and need the Zoom link, contact Rachel Núñez, Director of Congregational Care & Connection, at (330) 634-6597 or email rnunez@holyltrinityakron.org. †

Lenten Lunch & Devotions

Wednesday, March 12, 19, 26 & April 2 & 9 @ Noon
Room 202 @ Holy Trinity Lutheran Church

Saturday LIFT (Living In Faith Together)

Hike & Seek

There is no Hike & Seek in January.

February 8 @ 9 a.m. — F.A. Seiberling Nature Realm
1828 Smith Road, Fairlawn

Look for details of future activities in the Midweek Word.

Men's Bible Study

January 4 & 18 @ 8:30 a.m.

February 1 & 15 @ 8:30 a.m.

March 1 & 15 @ 8:30 a.m.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church – Main Office Conference Area

Women's Bible Study

There is no Women's Bible Study in January.

February 15 @ 9 a.m.

March 15 @ 9 a.m.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church — Room 202

March 1—Women's Lenten Retreat (*see previous page*). †

Sunday LIFT (Living in Faith Together)

Sunday, January 5

Coffee & Conversation with Church Council in the Chapel Lounge

Sunday, January 12

Coffee Fellowship in Chapel Lounge

Sunday, January 19

Coffee Fellowship in Chapel Lounge

Sunday, January 26

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Coffee Fellowship in Chapel Lounge

Sunday, February 2

Coffee & Conversation with Church Council in the Chapel Lounge

Sunday, February 9

Coffee Fellowship in Chapel Lounge

Second Sunday, 4-6 p.m. in Chapel Lounge

A time of informal worship, storytelling, communion and a meal together.

Sunday, February 16

Coffee Fellowship in Chapel Lounge

Sunday, February 23

Holy Trinity Goes to Breakfast at Akron Family Restaurant

Sunday, March 2

Coffee & Conversation with Church Council in the Chapel Lounge

Sunday, March 9

Coffee Fellowship in Chapel Lounge

Second Sunday, 4-6 p.m. in Chapel Lounge

A time of informal worship, storytelling, communion and a meal together.

Sunday, March 16

Coffee Fellowship in Chapel Lounge

Sunday, March 23

Holy Trinity Goes to Breakfast at Akron Family Restaurant

Sunday, March 30

Coffee Fellowship in Chapel Lounge †



Paragon Brass in Concert

What an amazing performance by Paragon Brass!! The members of this group along with guest musicians wowed an audience of nearly 90 people on November 3 with a series of classical and contemporary pieces featuring brass, organ and percussion. †

Pictured above (from left): Paragon Brass members and guest musicians Matt Dudack, Abby Hawke, Stephanie Blaha, Lauren Rudzinskas, Christopher Blaha, Justin Kohan and Gary Davis.



ARTS @ HOLY TRINITY

**FREE
Concert!**

*Four decades of
bringing music to
the community.*



Summit Choral Society

**Sunday
March 2
4 p.m.**

Join us for an enchanting afternoon of choral excellence as the Summit Choral Society proudly presents its Winter Concert under the direction of Dr. Britt Cooper. This year's event is a celebration of the rich and diverse repertoire written for Tenor & Bass voices, and Soprano & Alto choral sections. Our featured ensembles—the Metropolitan Chorus and the Performance Choir—will be joined by invited singers from Northeast Ohio, creating a powerful and harmonious blend of voices.

Featuring the Metropolitan Chorus, Performance Choir, and Special Guests.

Concert is held at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church at 50 N. Prospect Street, Akron.

Doors open 30 minutes prior. For details, visit artsholytrinity.org.



**HOLY TRINITY
LUTHERAN CHURCH**

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ARTS HOLY TRINITY

**FREE
Concert!**

*Four decades of
bringing music to
the community.*



Gold Tones Jazz Band

**Sunday
March 16
4 p.m.**

The Gold Tones Jazz Orchestra is the premier jazz performance ensemble at Cuyahoga Falls High School. Founded in 1960 by Robert Feldbush, the Gold Tones was one of the earliest school jazz ensembles in Ohio, establishing a tradition of excellence that has continued unbroken for over sixty years.



Concert is held at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church at 50 N. Prospect Street, Akron.
Doors open 30 minutes prior. For details, visit artsholytrinity.org.



**HOLY TRINITY
LUTHERAN CHURCH**

artsholytrinity.org



Pictured at top: Director of Music Ministry David Lines directs the Bell Choir. **Pictured bottom right:** The Chancel Choir sings during the service. **Pictured below:** The Christ candle is lit.

It Was a 'Holy Night' Christmas Eve

Christmas Eve at Holy Trinity is a beautiful worship experience that brings feelings of joy and glad tidings to all who attend. And this year was no different! The Christ candle was lit, the sermon focused on the true Christmas story, the Chancel Choir and Bell Choir performed, and while the Sanctuary lights were dimmed, everyone lit candles and sang Silent Night (*see cover photo*).

Families large and small filled the beautifully decorated Sanctuary of red and gold with twinkling lights to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. †





A Christmas Message from Hearts for Music



Back in late March 2024, when I received the startling invitation from the Commission overseeing the Vatican Jubilee 2025 festivities to come and represent all those around the world with disabilities and special needs with a special performance at St. Peter's Square on Tuesday, April 29, 2025, I was thrilled to say the least! So it was with a mix of **joy**, **fear**, and **faith** that I responded back to the Holy See with "Yes! We will come!"

- **Joy**—How could we possibly turn down the opportunity for our Hearts for Musicians to represent what is often an under-served, under-represented population, especially in the music world? What elevation of self-esteem my beloved Orchestra kiddos and adults would stand to gain! What joy for these Hearts for Music musicians to know that they are a "light on a hill" for all those with similar disabilities and dreams of performance on a big world stage!
- **Fear**—We are a small, poor non-profit, and the expenses of transporting Hearts for Music musicians, ALL of whom are medically fragile were astronomical to say the least. Among the many fears were things like: How were we going to raise at least \$120,000 with less than a year to prepare? Where was I going to find people and volunteers to help not just raise the money and awareness of our Rome performance, but assist with logistics of getting disabled children and adults safely in a flying metal tube halfway across the world and then back again?
- **Faith**—Every challenge and pursuit of any dream must start with a single step of faith and trust. The fear did kick in, but then I remember the three Magi. These three holy wise men received the interior call from God to travel from three different lands to bring treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh for a little baby in a smelly far-away cave. There was no social media warning that might be fake news. There was no GPS, no cell phone, no map other than the stars. They did not question how they would make the great distance, what dangers they might encounter or if they have enough water or food. They just went. They simply obeyed that gentle call from God and headed out with child-like faith and trust. Inspired by these three Magi, I too decided to ask

Continued on page 18 ...

The Love Offering for January will support Hearts for Music and their trip to Rome. Help us help them make this once-in-a-lifetime dream a reality! Scan the QR Code to give online. Thank you for your generous support!





November Family Event a Huge Success

DLM hosted a Harvest-themed Family Event in November that was full of happiness and fun. There were approximately 70 children and their families in attendance. Everyone enjoyed a Thanksgiving style meal, crafts, face painting and free books courtesy of the Akron-Summit County Public Library. †



Pictured at top, left, right and bottom right: Families enjoy themselves at the DLM Family Event. Pictured at bottom left: Members of Faith Lutheran Church prepare the Thanksgiving style meal.





DLM Hosts Breakfast with Santa



DLM Food & Resources hosts monthly Family Events that are a burst of joy, laughter, and connection! Family Events are a time for families to put aside the daily grind and simply enjoy each other's company. Whether it's playing board games, watching a favorite movie, cooking a delicious meal together, or just hanging out and chatting, Family Events create lasting memories and strengthen the bonds between loved ones.

One such event was DLM's annual Breakfast with Santa held December 14. This year, a total of 196 children and their families attended! To help make this event happen there were more than 50 volunteers! A full breakfast buffet was prepared and served to everyone. There were seven craft stations for children to enjoy, face painting and a beautifully decorated photo stations where families could take selfies. And, of course, there was Santa Claus! Santa brought special gifts for all the children. It was nice watching families having a great time together in a safe and peaceful atmosphere. Thank you to everyone who helped make this a magical event! †



Pictured at top and above: A total of 196 children and their families attended DLM's annual Breakfast with Santa which was held Saturday, December 14 in the Fellowship Hall at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church.



Pictured clockwise: Jacquie Wert and LJ Kimble helped with a craft activity. Santa (aka Jacinto Nunez) visited with children. A mom with her daughter at the Breakfast with Santa event. A child has her face painted by a volunteer. Children enjoyed the cookie decorating station.





How would it make you feel for someone to call simply to let you know you were loved?

Article from The Welcome Table Blog, 12/30/2024

Not long ago, I received a phone call from a dear friend. It was unusual because I normally don't get phone calls from them. Every now and then I'll get a text or Facebook message of season's greetings, or a more general message of love and support. But this morning they called, all the way from Arizona, just to say hello and send some love. I was so surprised and caught off guard that my instinct was to worry – I almost asked if everything was okay – I kept waiting for the reason they had called. The reason was simply me; they called just to let me know that they were thinking of me – that they loved me. It really meant a lot to get that phone call that day.

In the midst of this busy season, when folks have all the reasons in the world to savor their spare time for themselves, those closest to them, and their most pressing needs, here were a few minutes offered for me. That simple, short, phone call served as a reminder that I am loved, that my presence matters to someone in this world beyond the usual suspects of immediate family and neighbors and colleagues I see week-to-week.

I was reminded in that moment that even when I am not thinking about it or focused on it, even when I don't expect it – it's there – the kind of love that catches you off guard, that shows up when you least expect it, that doesn't expect anything in return, that offers reassurance and goodness for the journey that is life. That kind of love, offered that day, gave me hope and renewed my spirit.

Years ago, God showed up unexpectedly as a babe in a manger to offer a little reminder of hope and love for our world. And the equivalents of heavenly phone calls were sent – messengers brought startling, but good, news of great joy to an unwed, Palestinian soon-to-be-mother, to her unsuspecting soon-to-be-father, to shepherds abiding in fields, as well as wandering seekers of wisdom and light.

The message came: unto you is born...Christ, the Lord, Emmanuel – “God With Us”. Unto YOU. The message was simply you. You matter. You are beloved. God loves you. God loves you enough to enter into this world – to come to you with a love that is startling and surprising, that is there for you whether you are looking for it or not, that holds you in all that you are, forever and ever and ever, offering reassurance and goodness towards your renewal. How great a love is that!

The message from God is YOU. And the message of Christmas is LOVE. †

Take some time out of your day to give someone a call simply to let them know you love them and are thinking about them.



... continued from page 14

“how,” “what,” “but,” etc. Instead, I pushed that email “send” icon and said “yes” on behalf of my beloved HFM kiddos and adults, and trusted with child-like faith that God would provide.

There isn't enough space in this letter to regale you with the subsequent outpouring of love, miracles, and graces from God that have left me, my Board of Directors, and my HFM musicians speechless, humbled and thankful. We have raised well over half of our initial goal and the help both material and spiritual continue to fly into our mailboxes and our hearts. We have amazing volunteers and a medical team accompanying us, including a doctor. Our flights, accommodations and transportation have been taken care of by Aida's Adventures in Canton.

You, as one of our donors and supporters, are one of those miracles, graces and effusions of love that have helped my little special needs orchestra prepare to do something that has never in history been done before. And it is with the greatest sincerity that I say to you ... THANK YOU! From the child who donated \$2, to the corporations and businesses who donated generously to an unknown tiny charity organization ... THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!

May you and your family have a blessed, grace-filled, fantastic, fun and amazing Christmas! And, may you be especially blessed for helping a wee special needs orchestra charity from the tiny town of Mantua be a beacon of love in Rome on Tuesday, April 29, 2025 for the Feast of St. Catherine of Sienna. †

- Kitrael Chin and the entire Hearts for Music Board of Directors and HFM Families



What New Year Resolutions Should We Make?

Article from <https://www.gotquestions.org/new-years-resolution.html>

The practice of making New Year's resolutions goes back over 3,000 years to the ancient Babylonians. There is just something about the start of a new year that gives us the feeling of a fresh start and a new beginning. In reality, there is no difference between December 31 and January 1. Nothing mystical occurs at midnight. The Bible does not speak for or against the concept of New Year's resolutions. However, if a Christian determines to make a New Year's resolution, what kind of resolution should he or she make?

Common New Year's resolutions are commitments to quit smoking, to stop drinking, to manage money more wisely, and to spend more time with family. By far, the most common New Year's resolution is to lose weight, in conjunction with exercising more and eating more healthily. These are all good goals to set. However, 1 Timothy 4:8 instructs us to keep exercise in perspective: "For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." The vast majority of New Year's resolutions, even among Christians, are in relation to physical things. This should not be.

Many Christians make New Year's resolutions to pray more, to read the Bible every day, and to attend church more regularly. These are fantastic goals! However, these New Year's resolutions fail just as often as the non-spiritual resolutions, because there is no power in a New Year's resolution. Resolving to start or stop doing a certain activity has no value unless you have the proper motivation for stopping or starting that activity. For example, why do you want to read the Bible every day? Is it to honor God and grow spiritually, or is it because you have just heard that it is a good thing to do? Why do you want to lose weight? Is it to honor God with your body, or is it for vanity, to honor yourself?

Philippians 4:13 tells us, "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength." John 15:5 declares, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." If God is the center of your New Year's resolution, it has chance for success, depending on your commitment to it. If it is God's will for something to be fulfilled, He will enable you to fulfill it. If a resolution is not God-honoring and/or is not in agreement with God's Word, we will not receive God's help in fulfilling the resolution.

So, what sort of New Year's resolution should we make? Here are some suggestions:

- Pray to the Lord for wisdom (James 1:5) regarding what resolutions, if any, He would have you make.
- Pray for wisdom as to how to fulfill the goals God gives you.
- Rely on God's strength to help you.
- Find an accountability partner who will help you and encourage you.
- Don't become discouraged with occasional failures; instead, allow them to motivate you further.
- Don't become proud or vain, but give God the glory.

Psalms 37:5-6 says, "Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun." †

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HOLY TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

Praising. Loving. Serving in Jesus' name.

Mission Statement:

The mission of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church is connecting people to Jesus through love and the word of God.

Address & Phone:

50 N. Prospect Street
Akron, Ohio 44304-1273
(330) 376-5154 holytrinityakron.org

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E-mail: highlights@holytrinityakron.org
Editors: Annmarie Demko and Sandy DeLuca.
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Church Groups

Altar Guild - Deborah Ickes
Archives - VACANT
Assisting Ministers—Rachel Núñez
Book Club - Diane Chambers
& Amy Indorf
Communion Assistants - Deborah Ickes
Memorial Garden - Sonya Nagle
Men's Bible Study - Tom Baumgardner
& Jack Harig
Prayer Chain - Sally Richenbacher
Readers - Nan Riemenschneider
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Women's Bible Study - Rachel Núñez

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Outreach & Social Concerns - Gregg Loesch
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