

The Trinity Trumpet

February 2026

www.tlcavoca.com

Pastor:

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“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.” Eph 4:31

“...we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” Eph 6:12

“MINE!” – God

This is a challenging newsletter to write because it has some form of politicism in it; I am seeking to make no judgments or final statements but seeking to make God the focus of our attention and lives amid a continually darkening age, and to ask the people of God to look at all things from God’s eye. As we should.

No doubt everyone “knows” what is happening in Minnesota, and across the US. Minnesota has become a microcosm of the condition through which we are living. I highlight the word “know” because it has grown increasingly impossible to say we know the whole story as people have chosen sides, abandoned the ability to talk and disagree faithfully, and it all is compounded and certainly worsened with the increasing use and effects of AI and social media. The saddest and most troubling thing affecting this time is the politicalization of faith on either side of the issues of our day. God cannot be, and in fact isn’t, on everyone’s side in the way people are wanting. He will not be used but calls us to join Him.

I speak out constantly about the crosses on faces and pointing sky word in sporting events, seeking to announce I am a Christian, but to those who are not it signals much more and when you lose, your God’s a looser. When you wear a cross on your face, and lip reading is easy in football with camera close ups as you mouth words that stand outside God’s way, those who are not see a hypocritical display and ask, “why would I want to be a part of that?” I am very frank with youth – God does not care about sports or whether you win or lose. That would be a tasteless and lopsided God, misused by us to promote our own good. What God cares about is You.

So too with politics and the things of this world as people are raising the flag and the cross as if to defend our actions as people carry out actions and use language to do unspeakable things in the name of their cause or ideals to the detriment of us all. Whether it is the evangelical political church of today – being fed by a message of power and authority from God, or the social justice gospel propitiated by many bodies, include the predecessor body prior to the NALC; the church is being politicized and taken from the Gospel of Jesus Christ and His one message for all people.

As a student of history, I am keenly aware how this has played out in time. After a bloody civil war setting brother’s and families against each other, Lincoln closed his second inaugural with these words,

“With malice toward none with charity for all with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right let us strive on to finish the work we are in to bind up the nation’s wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan ~ to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.”

I can also show you pictures where the Lutheran Church in Germany, during the Nazi rule, draped the Swastika over the altars as paraments to proclaim their loyalty to a political ideal that drove people increasingly to see that the destruction of another “people” was just fine and desired because God has made “us” superior.

Lincoln’s words draw to a firmness as God gives us to see the right, as he continues to speak of healing, caring, and cherishing peace among God’s people here and abroad. Lincoln is seeking God’s discernment that comes from study of scripture to see the whole picture of God, which is for His fallen creation, not against any of it. Hitler’s statement in defense of his actions, which can be seen at the Holocaust Museum, quotes a statement from Martin Luther with antisemitic wording, as Hitler states, “I am doing what the church has done for centuries, I am just finishing the job.”

“That the dream of a Perfect State or No State at all, to which we fly for refuge, is a part of our punishment” W.H. Auden stated reminds us that, just like the Temple in Jerusalem in His day, “there will not be one stone left upon another.” In other words, politics, government, football championships and trophies are all going away. That doesn’t mean that they are not part of today and have a value, but they are not the source of our strength or the hope by which we live. To make them so becomes our punishment when the truth is revealed.

Micah writes in a time when God’s people have abandoned Him for their own gain, their own desires; they have turned from God, saying that they are doing God’s will as they sacrifice children while worshiping other Gods. If you read the preceding ...

Church Council

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Secretary: Amber Scott
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Christian Education: Megan Hansen
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Worship: Eric Sieh
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Outreach: Christina Berndt
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Stewardship: Beth Nielsen
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Treasurer: Shela Jacobsen
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Trinity Lutheran Church



Focusing on the **CROSS**.
Following Christ's **LOVE**.

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...verses, God put His people on trial asking, "What have I done" to make you be doing this? What I have done He continues is to take you from bondage and slavery and bring

you freedom and promise. His "requirement" then is to do what He has commanded, to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with Him. (Humbly – teachable, learning, transforming).

St. Paul reminds us that there is a much greater battle going on then what we see as we willingly jump to join sides; this battle is for your soul. Our battle is against the principality and power of this world: Satan and sin. Since Satan cannot make us do anything, only tempt us as *James 1: 14-15 states*, "each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death;" our battle is to be led faithfully by Christ and no other; against the real evil that turns all of God's creation against itself and each other, and no other. Our battle isn't with a president, or a person

who is different from us, a political party, or the person who has sinned against me. Our battle is to not allow the Old Adam and Eve to call us into the darkness of the world at Satan's stirring of the pot, and to stand with God as we speak, and act, and think, because He has called us into His light.

I fully support faithfully and caringly seeking to be just with immigration laws for our nation, just as I fully faithfully support the need to stand up for any people who are being unjustly treated; this is the justice we are called to do. Seeking always to be kind (merciful) in the how we do the speaking and doing and thinking. But are we humbly walking with our God? I am deeply saddened that Pastors and parishioners I have served, on both sides of the arguments of the day, through social media and in their speech, are using God as their backing to press lies and untruths which are countermanded by the other side as false as they claim to be right. This is called Propaganda; it is a marketing tool used well when people do not have their own mind fixed on God's word so they will not be tossed to and fro by every wind. Is that child being horribly treated by those officers as a political tool or are those on that side using it to make others look to be the aggressor and lying about the events surrounding a picture. I have seen the same picture different angle used by both sides of the argument. Where is the truth? How does one know the truth in a world where social media grinds and screams right and wrong, and AI feeds false information and can be used to create what you want to do, to do what you want to do, to who you want?

Above all this God cries out MINE! over all the world. All the people of this world are His creation: loved, longed for, and desired to be walking with Him, amid a corrupted and corroding world of sin and death. God calls MINE over all the storms and struggles in this world to remind us that He is the sovereign of this world and is in and over the storm. He calls MINE over every failing and faltering act of the people of this world because He allows things to happen according to His will and He brings everything to right. He calls MINE over all the creation because He has bled and died for its sin and destruction that we might come to see differently in the world and then speak as His people differently into the world than many Christians speak today. God calls MINE over you, and every single you in the world and desires us to see what has done and struggle and battle even to not join the world's cry but speak a new (old) word into the world – The GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST; and in this word to seek to lovingly faithful care for everyone, near or far, because it all is God's. There is the rub, how does one speak to the word if people misuse the word for themselves verses hearing Gods will and way for all people. "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Perhaps we should take out our catechisms, dust them off and read Luther's petition explanations for the prayer?

In the end, the God I trust will wipe away this broken world of death and sadness, wiping away all tears, death and struggle, but for now He has died and given us the gift of freedom and salvation that calls us to stand apart from the world in the midst of days such as these, bear witness to that difference in our life, and seek not to join the fray in a way that adds to the din of the drums of disaster, but speaks peace and a seeking of truth because there is always a middle ground in any argument or difference.

I leave you with the words of Martin Niemöller, Lutheran theologian in the 1940's in Germany, to ponder and ask what he is really saying.

First, they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

May God bless you and keep you, and us all in His Peace during the storms of life. Pastor Matt



February 01	Julianne	Thompson
February 01	Jeremy	Holst
February 01	Loleta	Hansen
February 01	Dorothy	Nelsen
February 01	Carol	Sampson
February 01	Kaleigh	Lane
February 04	Gailen	Sidebottom
February 04	Jerry	Stamp
February 04	Diane	Stamp
February 05	Gavin	Winter
February 05	Ellynn	Griffen
February 06	Lauren	Yates
February 06	Roy	Guyer
February 07	Barbara	Piittmann
February 08	Henry	Paulsen
February 10	Darlene	Eggerss
February 11	Evelyn	Scott
February 12	Lynn	Gronborg
February 12	Lorie	Espeseth
February 12	Camden	Soukup
February 12	Eli	Graham
February 13	Samantha	Andersen
February 15	Denise	Hargens
February 15	Lezli	Griffen
February 16	Joan	Frum
February 17	Guy	Scheffler
February 17	James	Berry
February 18	LaDonna	Conroy
February 19	Evelyn	Clayton
February 19	Lance	Scott
February 19	Reini	Engel
February 21	Gregery	Fritz
February 21	Ann	Carroll
February 22	Paul	Harder
February 22	Mary	Lechtenberger
February 23	Gary	Krummel
February 24	Jo Ann	Krummel
February 24	Larry	Feekes
February 25	Joel	Andersen
February 25	Dale	Krohn
February 26	Amber	Johnson
February 26	Patricia	Jorgensen
February 27	Jessica	Rold

 Weekend of	Total Attendance	Total Gifts Received
12/21	61/85	28,123.32
12/24	192/91/32	—
12/28	34	841.00
01/04	32/61	8,673.00
01/11	50/53	340.00
01/18	39/66	10,761.75
01/25	49/36	4,430.00

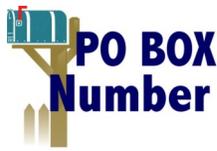


Mid Term Hugs

The month of February will be time to send a "midterm Hug" to our young adults from our church family. This year, participants can choose to remain with the same young adult from last year, or to choose a different young adult. Like last year, there will be a sign up on the table in the narthex of the church. Sign up will be available on Sunday, February 1st. Boxes will be provided as well as postage. Instructions for the care packages will be provided in the boxes. Boxes will need to be returned by Sunday, February 22nd. Any questions contact Amber Johnson at 402-681-6847.



The clothing pantry is in need of winter clothes for kids. If you have any you'd be willing to donate, it would be greatly appreciated. Donations can be left downstairs in the hallway here or at the food and clothing pantry on Thursdays from 4-6 p.m. in Walnut.



If you have a PO Box number, please let Sue know in the office. Mailings with only street addresses, when the recipient has a box number, are being returned. Thank you!



The TLC monthly newsletter is available online at our website! www.tlcavoca.com
An emailed version will no longer be available. Please check each month to stay up to date on our latest happenings! Mailed newsletters will continue to those previously receiving paper copies.



Wednesday, Feb. 4th, Bible Study, 6:30 p.m.—7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Feb. 18th, Dinner & Ash Wed Service, 6:30 p.m.—8 p.m.
Wednesday, March 4th, Bible Study, 5:30 p.m.—6:30 p.m.

February/March Volunteer Schedule

	Sunday, February 1st 8:15 a.m.	Sunday, February 1st 10:15 a.m.
Communion Support	Marlene Nelsen	Greg & Marge Petersen
Communion/Offering	Wendy Dierking	Becky Bahnfleth, Lacey & Shane Brockhoff
Scriptures & Prayers Readers	Ava Paulsen	Becky Bahnfleth
Greeters	Chris & Wendy Dierking	Dan & Megan Hansen Family
Acolytes	Blair Krohn	Rylinn Madden
Worship Steward	Morgan Sieh	Adam Harder
	Sunday, February 8th 8:15 a.m.	Sunday, February 8th 10:15 a.m.
Communion Support	Marlene Nelsen	Greg & Marge Petersen
Communion/Offering	Rhonda Holst	Jacob Collins, Jerry Conroy, Holly Hansen
Scriptures & Prayers Readers	Jennifer Plumb	Christina Berndt
Greeters	Darrian & Lisa Irlbeck Family	Amber & Jerod Johnson Family
Acolytes	Brynnleigh Lane	Trevor Madden
Worship Steward	Darrian Irlbeck	Dale Krohn
	Sunday, February 15th 8:15 a.m.	Sunday, February 15th 10:15 a.m.
Communion Support	Marlene Nelsen	Greg & Marge Petersen
Communion/Offering	Dean Krohn	Jim & Karen Hansen, Dale Krohn
Scriptures & Prayers Readers	Maeleigh Rold	Suzette Blakestad
Greeters	Pr Matt & Becky Bahnfleth	Rose Krohn
Acolytes	Tyler Pieken	Lucas Plumb
Worship Steward	Shela Jacobsen	Mike Krummel
	Sunday, February 22nd 8:15 a.m.	Sunday, February 22nd 10:15 a.m.
Communion Support	Marlene Nelsen	Greg & Marge Petersen
Communion/Offering	Joy Krohn	Kendra & Taylen Hansen, Evan Harder
Scriptures & Prayers Readers	Morgan Sieh	Jerry Conroy
Greeters	Mike & Wendy Jorgensen	Heath & Nicole Lamp Family
Acolytes	Stella Rold	Guy Scheffler
Worship Steward	Pr. Matt Bahnfleth	Sue Paulsen
	Sunday, March 1st 8:15 a.m.	Sunday, March 1st 10:15 a.m.
Communion Support	Becky Bahnfleth & Angela Sieh	Emery Brockhoff & Collin Harder
Communion/Offering	Roger Nelsen	Jeff Harder, Steph Harder, Kiptyn Lamp
Scriptures & Prayers Readers	Lucas Plumb	Karen Hansen
Greeters	Darren & Nicole Krohn Family	Chuck & Chelsie Madden Family
Acolytes	Morgan Sieh	Claira Yates
Worship Steward	Mike Jorgensen	Greg Petersen

Fellowship

If anyone would like to help with fellowship, please contact Kathy Soetmelk at 712-249-9027.

February Communion Bread

Kadence Coolidge &
Ethan Hansen

Worship Volunteers

If you are unable to volunteer during your scheduled time at worship, please help by finding a replacement. Switching available dates with others on the schedule is a great place to start. Thank you, everyone!

Council Meeting Minutes

Date of Meeting: December 18, 2025

Members Present:

Shela Jacobsen, Pastor Matt, Nicole Krohn, Amber Scott, Megan Hansen, Sue Paulsen, Eric Sieh.

Call to Order/Devotion: Meeting is called to order by Nicole Krohn. Devotion given by Eric Sieh

Recognizing Guests: None

Thank You Cards: None

Approval of Agenda: A motion was made by Eric Sieh, seconded by Megan Hanse. Motion passed.

Approval of Last Meeting Minutes: Minutes were in order and no corrections made and a motion was made to approve the minutes with corrections noted by Megan Hansen, seconded by Amber Scott. Motion passed.

Treasurer's Report: Report and bills were submitted. A motion was made to approve the report by Amber Scott, seconded by Eric Sieh. Motion passed.

Pastor's Report: Well, here we are at the end of all things, at least for this year. But, as the popular song reminds us "Closing time, every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end." And I know who I want to take us home.

As the Council that has gathered this year, I want to thank each of you for your work and participation. For those who are leaving the council, first thank you for your years of dedication and service to the building up of the kingdom of God. I pray that you will work all the more diligently to grow your life of faith through the working of the Marks of Discipleship and continued attention to your faith. Additionally, I pray you will continue to offer your services to the work of the church to witness and model that the whole church is needed to participate from worship, service and giving so that the Church will continue to work to grow and thrive.

With the new year and coming council I want to remind those who are continuing that the retreat we have planned since last year is a mandatory part because you are needed in this visioning and direction process. It is a one-day retreat beginning at 8:30 with light breakfast prior. And having run it with the 4 who will be leading it, it was found to be hugely beneficial.

Seedling and Sprouts has continued though I am saddened that we have not been able to add more to our numbers and find additional adult assistance to make it all I would hope it could be. The families who are being served seem to believe that it is of benefit to them. Earlier today we had a Christmas Party and worked on being part of a Nativity Escape room. The greater bonus is that I was able to secure 3 older youth to help, engage across the ages, and to hopefully get excited enough to get the older youth to want to join in and also do a room.

I am taking my annual Christmas vacation beginning on December 25th. I will return January 2nd. I have scheduled time off also in January from the 25th through the 31st. I will not miss a Sunday, but will be tired.

In this coming year as we progress in the Renew and Equipping phases of seeking to recall the congregation to be a Missional Church and to balance our ministry in the four quadrants of Invite/Retain/Disciple/ and Send.

Thank you again for your faithfulness and growth in the faith that will grow outside to bring other to Christ as our mission and calling seeks for us to be doing "as we go."

President's Report/Comments:

Director of Ministry in Daily Life Report: Reports for the upcoming annual meeting are needed on or before January 6th. Please take time in December to clean out your church office mailboxes, especially if you are going off council next month. It's appreciated!

Youth group met twice in December. We met for bible study and again to serve during Fellowship. The second semester schedule is being planned and will be out in January.

Please have any information submitted for the newsletter by the 20th of each month. Thank you!

Council Reports

Property Report:

Service:

Outreach: The Family Fellowship Ministry hosted a Cocoa and Caroling event on Saturday, December 14th. There were 15 attendees who brought cheer to the residents at the Avoca Nursing home. After singing Christmas songs the group went back to the church for fellowship and hot cocoa. The Family Fellowship Ministry has planned four events for the upcoming new year.

Preparations for Midterm Hugs will begin soon. Midterm Hugs are care packages sent out to our young adults who are continuing their education post high school.

I spoke to Samantha Scheffler about the two bulletin boards up in the narthex. She and her family have been decorating them for several years. She and I discussed ways to utilize the boards to share events that have been happening in the church. One idea was brought up was using a flat screen TV or monitor on the wall as another way to share events/activities that are happening within our church family. I have been trying to use the little bulletin board up against the wall and table in the narthex for community events. Using this bulletin board rather than looking down at the table. Thanks Nicole for helping me with this bulletin board idea.

Stewardship:

Finance:

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Education: Sunday School will be starting January 11th. We will be looking for host home for our VBS counselors. Information will be put in the bulletin.

Additional Council Report Notes:

Old Business: Sue will follow up with the City of Avoca in regards to the letter sent for galvanized pipe needing checked. She has spoken to them but they have not come up yet. Update given by Nicole Krohn on remodel. We are still awaiting bids from 2 companies.

New Business: Pastor Matt reviewed the proposed amendments to the NALC Constitution. Which will be voted on at the annual meeting. The church's annual meeting will be January 25th at 9:30 am. The 2026 proposed budget was reviewed and amended. A motion was made by Eric Sieh for the purchase of gift cards for Christmas gifts, seconded by Megan Hansen. Motion passed. Meeting dates and times were discussed for the annual Renewal meeting for council members. The date is set for February 7th.

Visioning:

Adjournment: Amber Scott made a motion to adjourn the meeting, 2nd by Eric Sieh.

Next meeting will be held on January 8th, 2026 at 7pm.

Respectfully submitted by Amber Scott, Secretary



YG traveled to the Harlan Youth Gathering.



Angel Tree Wrapping



Christmas Caroling at the Avoca Nursing Home hosted Outreach.



Christmas fellowship hosted by the YG.





Lenten Flowers



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 8:15 a.m. Worship 9:30 a.m. Fellowship/ Sunday School 10:15 a.m. Worship 3 p.m.-4:30 p.m. Bible Study	2 1:30 p.m. Peace Haven Worship 4:15 p.m.—5p.m. Youth Hand Chimes 5:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m.— Bell Choir Practice	3 9 a.m. Women's Bible Study 4 p.m.-5:30 p.m. Seedlings	4 5:30 p.m.—7:15 p.m. Confirmation Class 6:30 p.m.— 7:30 p.m. Youth Group	5 2 p.m. TLCW Meeting 4 p.m.—6 p.m. Food & Clothing Pantry	6 Pastors Day Off	7 Renew Retreat 8 a.m.— 3 p.m.
8 8:15 a.m. Worship 9:30 a.m. Fellowship/ Sunday School 10:15 a.m. Worship 3-4:30 p.m. Bible Study	9 4:15 p.m.—5p.m. Youth Hand Chimes 5:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m.— Bell Choir Practice	10 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Christian Service 9 a.m. Women's Bible Study	11 5:30 p.m.—7:15 p.m. Confirmation Class	12 4 p.m.—6 p.m. Food & Clothing Pantry 4-5:30 p.m. Sprouts 7 p.m. Council Meeting	13 Pastors Day Off	14
15 8:15 a.m. Worship 9:30 a.m. Fellowship/ Sunday School 10:15 a.m. Worship 3 p.m.-4:30 p.m. Bible Study	16 9:30 a.m. Salem Lutheran Nursing Home Worship 1:30 p.m. Peace Haven Worship 4:15 p.m.—5p.m. Youth Hand Chimes 5:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m.— Bell Choir Practice Office Closed	17 9 a.m. Women's Bible Study 4 p.m.-5:30 p.m. Seedlings	18 6:30 p.m.—8p.m. Youth Group 7 p.m.-Ash Wednesday Service	19 4 p.m.—6 p.m. Food & Clothing Pantry	20 Pastors Day Off	21
22 8:15 a.m. Worship 9:30 a.m. Fellowship/ Sunday School 10:15 a.m. Worship 3 p.m.-4:30 p.m. Bible Study	23 9:30 a.m. Salem Lutheran Nursing Home Worship 4:15 p.m.—5p.m. Youth Hand Chimes 5:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m.— Bell Choir Practice	24 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Christian Service 9 a.m. Women's Bible Study 9 a.m. Allen Place Worship	25 5:30 p.m.—7:15 p.m. Confirmation Class 7 p.m. Lenten Service	26 4 p.m.—6 p.m. Food & Clothing Pantry 4-5:30 p.m. Sprouts	27 Pastors Day Off	28

**TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH
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AVOCA, IA 51521-0456**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Trinity Lutheran Church

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(712) 343-2518

For assistance or to leave information,
contact the church office at the number shown above.
In an emergency, contact Pastor Matt Bahnfleth at (cell) 402-750-8327.

Sunday Worship Services Schedule
Traditional Worship at 8:15 a.m.
Sunday School/Fellowship/Bible Study 9:30 a.m.
Contemporary Worship at 10:15 a.m.
Holy Communion celebrated during each worship service.