

# Trinity DOVE

DECEMBER 2025



**Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
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# O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree

THE REV. TANYA VARNER, PASTOR

“O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, how lovely are your branches.” Ever wonder why trees were introduced into the season of Christmas. Every December, our homes, streets, and sanctuaries come alive with greens and lights—trees dressed in lights, stars, and ornaments, standing tall as symbols of the season. The Christmas tree is so familiar to us now that it feels timeless, as though it has always been part of Christian celebration. But its journey into our homes—and eventually into our worship spaces—is a rich and surprising one.

Long before the Christmas tree became a cherished part of Christian tradition, evergreen trees held deep symbolic meaning in cultures across Europe. In the darkest season of the year, when the land lay inactive and the days grew short, evergreen branches served as reminders of life that could not be extinguished. Our ancestors decorated their homes with boughs of spruce, pine, and fir as symbols of endurance, hope, and the promise of renewal.

But the Christmas tree, as we know it, began to take shape in Germany in the late Middle Ages. By the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, Christians in towns like Strasbourg and Riga displayed decorated evergreen trees in their homes to mark the celebration of Christmas. The decorations, however, were much simpler. Trees were often adorned with apples, nuts, and handmade paper flowers. The apples symbolized the fruit of the Garden of Eden (making the evergreen a quiet nod to the “paradise tree” in medieval mystery plays), while the greenery itself symbolized eternal life.

Legend—and some historians—credit Martin Luther with adding candles to the Christmas tree. The story goes that Luther was walking home one winter evening, struck by the beauty of starlight glimmering through the branches of the trees. Wanting to share the moment with his children, he wired candleholders onto a small fir tree and brought it into the house. Whether or not the story is true, it captures something essential: the Christmas tree has always been a

symbol that helps us see God’s light shining through the ordinary.

By the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the tradition of Christmas trees began to spread beyond Germany. Immigrants carried it with them to North America, where it was sometimes met

with curiosity, sometimes suspicion, and sometimes delight. In early colonial America, particularly in Puritan New England, Christmas celebrations were discouraged, and Christmas trees were seen as unnecessary or even frivolous. But over time, families from Lutheran, Moravian, and German Reformed backgrounds kept the practice alive.

It took a little longer for Christmas trees to make their way into our worship spaces. Some churches resisted the idea of bringing a domestic symbol into the sanctuary.

Others worried that a decorated tree might distract from the true focus of the season. And in some regions, especially those with deep Reformation roots, anything that smelled of “excess” or “decoration” was approached cautiously.

But gradually, congregations saw the value of the Christmas tree as a teaching symbol and a sign of the season’s hope. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, many Lutheran, Anglican, and Reformed churches were displaying Christmas trees during Advent and Christmas—often unlit until Christmas Eve to emphasize the transition from darkness into light.

## Two Fun Facts about Christmas Trees

1. Did you know that Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia, is known as the Christmas Tree Capital of the World? The area’s climate, soil, and generations of skilled growers have made it one of the globe’s largest exporters of Christmas trees and greenery. Each year, tens of thousands of homes across North America celebrate Christmas with a tree grown in Lunenburg County.
2. And, the Christmas tree for Boston’s official tree lighting ceremony comes from Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia,



*The 2025 Boston Christmas Tree  
from Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia*

*continued on next page...*



## Christmas Tree... continued

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as a thank you for the aid given by Boston during the 1917 Halifax Explosion. The 2025 tree, a 45-foot white spruce from Ronald and Claire Feener, arrived at Boston Common on November 18<sup>th</sup> and is scheduled to be lit on December 4<sup>th</sup>.

As we decorate our trees this year—at home or in the sanctuary—may they remind us of the God who brings life where we least expect it, and who roots us in hope that does not fade.

## Church Council News

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PAT SCHMETZER, COUNCIL SECRETARY

Trinity's Church Council met in person on Wednesday November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

Council approved a motion to install hand rails in the sanctuary to reduce the risk of falls. Two handrails will be installed for the lower chancel step – one by the pulpit and one on the other near the piano. Two additional handrails will follow on each side of the altar for the top step. Other changes are being considered but this is a good first step in making our sanctuary safer and more accessible.

Council also approved a motion to renew our contract with Heidi Faul as the property manager for our two rental properties.

Three of our council members will complete their terms on council this year. Might you be interested in joining council? It's a very rewarding experience and we also have a great time! Talk to Pastor Tanya or a member of council for more information.

## 2026 Offering Envelopes

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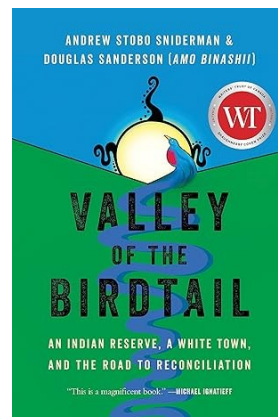
Boxed sets of weekly offering envelopes for 2026 will be available in early December. If you have not received boxed offering envelopes before and would like some, please contact the church office. (Givers on pre-authorized remittance, PAR, do not receive envelopes.)

## New in Trinity Library

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DEE RADKE, AVID READER

Be sure and check out the latest addition to Trinity Library, **Valley of the Birdtail: An Indian Reserve, A White Town, and the Road to Reconciliation**. It's authors are Andrew Stobo Sniderman, a non-Indigenous law student, and Douglas Sanderson (Amo Binashii), an Indigenous law professor.



Divided by a beautiful valley and 150 years of racism, the Manitoba town of Rosburn and the Waywayseecappo Indian reserve have been neighbours nearly as long as Canada has been a country. This true story of these communities reflects much of what has gone wrong in relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. It also offers, in the end, an uncommon measure of hope. It follows generations of two families, one Indigenous and one white, weaving their lives into the larger story of Canada.

Again, this is a true story. It is meticulously referenced — what else would you expect from two lawyers? It is not a terribly difficult read and explains relatively simply difficult concepts like Treaties, "The Indian Act", the Louis Riel Rebellion, etc. Actually, this is one of the best books that I've ever read. We went to an online meeting with the authors in October at Knox Presbyterian Church in Waterloo. That experience made me appreciate the book even more. There are a few copies available for you to borrow in Trinity's Library. Please enjoy while learning.

## Trinity Blood Donor Clinic

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Trinity hosts its annual blood donor clinic on Monday, December 8<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 to 8:00 pm at Steinmann Mennonite Church, 1316 Snyder's Rd. W, Baden. One in two people in Canada are eligible to donate blood, plasma, and platelets but only 1 in 81 does. To book an appointment, visit [blood.ca](http://blood.ca) or call 1-888-236-6283. We look forward to seeing you there!

# Visioning Dispatch: November Edition

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LOIS SMITH, ON BEHALF OF VISIONING TASK TEAM

In late October, members of the team attended a special event, “Sacred Spaces to Community Places; Unlocking Faith Properties for Housing”. Interesting perspectives were shared by various panel speakers from Releven, Indwell, Habitat for Humanity, and Build Canada (new federal government agency being established). Most of the discussion covered areas we have already completed at Trinity in Phases 1 and 2 of our visioning process, and the concerns and risks discussed were in line with our situation as well. Following that session, we have recently connected with Trillium Lutheran Church in Waterloo for information sharing and learning from each team’s experiences thus far.

Last month, the Visioning Task Team reviewed three alternative drawings based on our initial discussions with our consultants: Nith Valley Construction (NVC), SRM Architects & Urban Design, and Tim Welch Consulting (TWC). We talked through things like parking and traffic flow, green spaces and internal layouts of the different floors. Parking is a key factor for determination of the number of housing units, along with municipal bylaws about setbacks, number of floors, etc. The designs currently use 1:1 ratio of one unit to one parking spot. This will preserve the existing church and partner parking spots plus add new spots for residents. Traffic flow also affects the layout of structures on the lots and does vary depending on which alternative is shown.

Most recently we reviewed potential structural approaches and in December we expect to be looking at mechanical systems. All of these discussions are directly impactful to total project costs and feasibility. As you can imagine, some of these meetings require a bit of education for those of us unfamiliar with construction and engineering design.

At the November 9<sup>th</sup> Trinity Adult Education session, the team shared initial visual drafts of the alternatives, providing simple outlines of the building structures on the property. More detail inside the structures is being prepared by the consultants and will be shared with Trinity members and friends at future sessions. Excellent questions were raised about whether the new construction would be a “green” building, and whether underground parking has been considered, among others. To both of the aforementioned questions, we explained that cost is a key consideration. That

said, we expect that greening (using Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standards, i.e. LEED-certified standards) will be incorporated wherever possible and cost-effective. Underground parking is a different conversation, and we have asked the consultants to look at it. Underground construction does present different challenges, costs and risks so we are uncertain where that might take us.

The three alternatives are currently drafted as follows:

1. Retain all existing church and office structures and a separate new building for community space and housing.
2. Retain only the Sanctuary and Katie Luther room and connect to new building with offices, community space and housing.
3. Retain none of the existing structures or sanctuary and build all new.

Once complete, each alternative will include risk, opportunities, a Class-C construction estimate and the consultants’ recommendations.

The team is forging on through the upcoming holiday season so that we can keep momentum and ensure our timeline is not compromised. As previously reported, our ability to remain on this timeline is somewhat dependent on the Task Team ability to provide answers and information quickly when inquiries are received from the design team of NVC, SRM, and TWC.

Please visit the Vision Corner in December to peruse the draft drawings. We need input, feedback and questions from the congregation to ensure appropriate representation to our consultants. We do sincerely appreciate all of your support and assistance.

In the new year we anticipate scheduling an in-person presentation and discussion with Council regarding the team’s recommendations. Following that, we’ll be scheduling a specific congregational meeting. The purpose of that session will be to present the team’s recommendations, to share Council’s feedback, and ultimately for the congregation to determine next steps for Trinity with respect to redevelopment.

# Trinity's Annual Season of Giving

## Gifts for Holiday Hampers

Due December 7<sup>th</sup>

*in support of Wilmot Family Resource Centre*

Help us prepare gifts for families in need. All items need to be brand new and unwrapped. Here are a few ideas for all ages:

**Children and Youth:** books, craft kits, colouring books, small toys, stuffed animals, bubble bath, puzzles, candy, board games

**Adults:** bath or lotion gift sets, adult colouring books, card games, puzzles, hard candy, chocolates, nuts, coffee or tea gift sets

## Warm Woollies

Due December 7<sup>th</sup>

*in support of Wilmot Family Resource Centre*

Keep folks warm in our community. We're accepting new or homemade hats, mitts, gloves, and scarves. Children, youth, and adult sizes welcomed.

## Men's Socks

Due December 14<sup>th</sup>

*in support of House of Friendship*

Keep feet dry and warm this winter! We're accepting new men's socks... consider purchasing bulk packages for maximum impact.

All items can be dropped off at Trinity  
in the bins in the stairwell at the main entrance  
on Church Street starting November 16<sup>th</sup>



**TRINITY**  
Lutheran Church  
New Hamburg

## Finance Committee

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Trinity's Church Council is looking for people who are willing to join our Finance Committee and potentially let their name stand for Church Council to be the finance liaison in the future.

The Finance Committee reviews monthly statements in preparation for presentation to Church Council, makes financial recommendations to Council, and prepares the operating budget ahead of the Annual Meeting of the congregation in February each year.

An interest in financial matters is the primary requirement. A formal accounting designation is not necessary. If you have an interest and aptitude for working with budgets and financial information, please speak to Pastor Tanya or Rick Ritz. We'd love to have you join us in this important work.

## Sacraments and Seasons

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We offer congratulations to Sheila Zoeller, celebrating her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday in December. Happy birthday, Sheila!

We grieve with those who have recently lost loved ones: the Petersen family on the death of Ebba Petersen (November 8<sup>th</sup>); and the Danner family on the death of Arthur Danner (November 16<sup>th</sup>.) Blessed are they who mourn.

Stephen and Susan Gross send thanks to Trinity members and friends for the well wishes received as they relocate to Goderich. We are grateful for their gifts shared with our Trinity community. Their new address is 47 Suncoast Dr. W., Goderich, ON, N7A 4H1.

## Gifts from the Heart

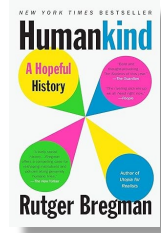
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Canadian Lutheran World Relief's *Gifts from the Heart* catalogue is full of thoughtful and creative gifts that will make a meaningful difference in the lives of those who need it most. Bring joy to your loved ones and change the lives of people around the world this Christmas! Check out the catalogue online at <https://www.clwr.org/gfth>, or find printed copies at Trinity in the narthex.

## Trinity Book Club

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The November selection for the Trinity Book Club is *Humankind: A Hopeful History* by Rutger Bregman. The group meets next at 7:00 pm on December 9<sup>th</sup> (a week earlier than usual) in the Martin Luther Room at Trinity. Simply come to the meeting having read the book in advance.



If you have any questions regarding the book club, please contact Dee Radke. New members always welcome!

## Memorial Poinsettias

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You are invited to help us add some colour to our worship space over the Christmas season with a donation of \$10 to cover the cost of a poinsettia in memory of a loved one. Simply mark an offering envelope or e-transfer with "poinsettia" and the name of the person you'd like us to remember. Donations due by December 14<sup>th</sup>.

## Soup Supper + Evening Prayer

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Trinity hosts midweek Holden Evening Prayer during the season of Advent. Join us on Thursday evenings at 6:30 pm (December 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>) for a half-hour of contemplative worship with readings, music, and candlelight.

We offer a simple soup supper in advance of the Evening Prayer services. Come for fellowship and a bowl of soup at 5:30 pm in Trinity Hall — consider bringing a friend! If you'd care to contribute soup or bread, use the sign-up sheet in the narthex.

## Winter Publishing Break

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The Dove takes a publishing break for the month of January, and returns in 2026 with a February issue. Content for the February issue is due by January 22<sup>nd</sup>.

# Financial Update

RICK RITZ, CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL

2025 General Fund			
	Actual YTD	Budget YTD	Variance
Income	276,123	267,588	8,535
Expenses	283,044	288,578	(5,534)
Total	(\$6,921)	(\$20,990)	\$14,069

2025 Capital Fund			
	Actual YTD	Budget YTD	Variance
Income	14,470	20,833	(6,363)
Expenses	22,656	26,583	(3,927)
Total	(\$8,186)	(\$5,750)	(\$2,436)

Receipts and expenses for General and Capital Funds through October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025.  
Capital Fund carry-over from 2024, not included above, is \$59,040.

Major Capital Expenditures	
Total Investment Approved: \$272,000	
2022 to 2024 Income	148,386
2025 Income	5,749
2022 to 2024 Expenses	274,962
2025 Expenses	0
Total	(\$120,827)

Receipts and expenses for Major Capital Expenditures through October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025.

As we head into the Advent Season and the anticipation of the birth we celebrate so dearly, we are especially thankful for the generosity of the many Trinity stakeholders who have chosen to support the ministry and mission at Trinity, New Hamburg.

Just a few months ago we were in a significant deficit position in our **General Fund**. Throughout the fall, we have experienced the financial generosity of the community we call Trinity. As of the end of October our deficit has shrunk to only \$6,921. It is still a deficit, but offerings tend to increase toward the end of the year and we are confident we can continue to work toward our financial goals for 2025.

General Fund Expenses continue to be under budget. Your Council and staff are working to keep expenses in line even though prices continue to increase. Savings due to not fully staffing the youth and visitation ministries, and added efficiency of our new heating systems are significant contributors to keeping expenses under budget.

As mentioned last month, all of this is within a backdrop of significant generosity toward the ministries of the church beyond our own congregation (Food Bank, oneRoof, CLWR and others).

The **Capital Fund** is still slightly behind budget. The most expensive Capital expenditures are behind us and we have a carryover from previous years as a cushion.


As you count your blessings this Christmas season, please reflect on your financial stewardship goal for 2025. If you have the capacity to make up a shortfall, give an extra-mile gift, or to consider an increase in your goal for 2026, we would be honoured to receive your gift and use it to continue the legacy of those who went before us, and to extend Trinity’s mission and ministry into the future.



Al Junker, president ▪ Tanya Varner, pastor  
Richard Schwass, interim visitation pastor  
Jamie Courtney, parish administrator & minister of music  
Brian Racho, sexton ▪ Gywin Murray, emerita director of music



# December 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>1</b> 9:00 am Christmas Cheer Cookies 5:00 pm Karate 6:30 pm Handbells	<b>2</b> 9:30 am Prayer Circle 10:30 am Bible Study 3:30 pm Visioning Task Team 4:15 pm Karate	<b>3</b> 7:00 pm Confirmation Class	<b>4</b> 5:30 pm Soup Supper 6:30 pm Evening Prayer 7:00 pm Advent Choir	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> 7:30 pm AA
	<b>7</b> <b>2nd Sunday of Advent</b> 9:30 am Hybrid Worship 10:30 am Fellowship 10:45 am Adult Learning <i>Waiting in the Dark</i>	<b>8</b> 1:00 pm Trinity Blood Donor Clinic at Steinmann Mennonite 5:00 pm Karate 6:30 pm Handbells	<b>9</b> 10:30 am Bible Study 4:15 pm Karate 7:00 pm Trinity Book Club	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> 5:30 pm Soup Supper 6:30 pm Evening Prayer 7:00 pm Advent Choir	<b>12</b> 7:00 pm Local Vocals' DIY Christmas Concert (sold out)
<b>14</b> <b>3rd Sunday of Advent</b> 9:30 am Hybrid Worship 10:30 am Fellowship 10:45 am Adult Learning <i>Light That Cannot Be Quenched</i>	<b>15</b> 5:00 pm Karate 6:30 pm Handbells	<b>16</b> 10:30 am Bible Study 4:15 pm Karate	<b>17</b> 7:00 pm Church Council	<b>18</b> 5:30 pm Soup Supper 6:30 pm Evening Prayer 7:00 pm Advent Choir	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> 7:30 pm AA
<b>21</b> <b>4th Sunday of Advent</b> 9:30 am Hybrid Worship 10:30 am Fellowship 2:00 pm Nithview Worship	<b>22</b> 6:30 pm Handbells	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> <b>Christmas Eve</b> 5:00 pm In-Person Worship 7:00 pm Hybrid Worship	<b>25</b> <b>Christmas Day</b> (no worship)  <i>Church Office Closed</i>	<b>26</b> <b>Boxing Day</b>  <i>Church Office Closed</i>	<b>27</b> 7:30 pm AA
<b>28</b> <b>Lessons &amp; Carols</b> 9:30 am Hybrid Worship 10:30 am Fellowship  <b>LAST DAY FOR 2025 DONATIONS</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>  <i>Church Office Closed</i>	