



From the Pastor's Pen

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17 What of the wisdom from above? First, it is pure, and then peaceful, gentle, obedient, filled with mercy and good actions, fair, and genuine. 18 Those who make peace sow the seeds of justice by their peaceful acts.

~ James 3:17-18

In these frightening times, when the drums of war seem to beat relentlessly, it is important to remember that we have been called to be makers of peace. As Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." In other words, in bringing about peace in the world, we will be more and more like God, "chips off the ol' block" rather than "chips on the shoulder."

True, most of us are not engaged in matters of world peace, but we are all engaged in matters of personal peace. As the book of James reminds us, "those who make peace sow the seeds of justice by their peaceful acts." Matters of personal peace are seeds of world peace. Really, truly, they are. Any time you can de-escalate a shouting match, or bring two disputing parties together, you are sowing seeds of longer lasting peace. Of course, none of this is possible without God's help – but in scattering seeds of peace wherever you tread, you can look back and see the blossoming of peace along your path, where God has caused peace to flower and bloom.

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Pastor's Pen, cont.

And while we can't always affect the wider world on our own, we can certainly pray and work together for matters of global peace. Peace that isn't a peace of fear, the modern equivalent of the *Pax Romanum* (peace of Rome) – but a peace of hope, of love, of understanding and unity through diversity.

It was with that idea of peace that I was moved to write this prayer:

Beloved God, purveyor of peace, we pray for your holy peace. Help us repent, to turn from this path of destruction. Fill the world with your love, that we might speak together and resolve or appreciate our differences rather than shed precious blood in futile attempts to assert dominance. Let us follow your way, offering hospitality and eating with strangers, enemies, and friends, all at the same table. Let there be peace, a peace of mutual understanding, a peace of holy love.

~Pastor Lucus

What's Going on with Pastor Elana?

I haven't given you all a health update in a really long time. Part of that is because it's easier to say, "Oh, my back hurts today" or "I'm just tired" than it is to go into detail. It's now a little over a year from the day that my primary doctor encouraged me to stop frantically searching for an alternative diagnosis. My Dad has chronic pain, fibromyalgia, and, well, these things are passed down in families. Honestly, I've spent the last year finding out what it means to live with fibromyalgia.

The first thing I learned is that it's a lot more than just pain. For me, there is physical pain, primarily in my low back and hips. But having fibromyalgia means that all the nerve sensitivity knobs are dialed way, way up. Little things that shouldn't hurt too much can sometimes hurt incredibly much more than they should. When I do things that are painful for too long (for example, sitting upright or walking), it's like my nerves decide they're having a little party and everyone's invited. Any part of my body that might have been injured – even years ago – may start hurting a little or a lot. It's like totally unpredictable fireworks of pain (not my favorite).

On top of this, there are mental symptoms. My memory and concentration aren't as good. It's harder for me to prioritize tasks or to organize information. I forget things and mix up words. It's frustrating and embarrassing. Not too long ago, I was looking at some bell music and noticed that some measures had three beats and others had four beats. But I didn't see any notation that the music had changed the time signature. I stared at it for about a minute and a half in the exact place where that notation should be and I didn't see it at all. Eventually I did see it because, of course, it had been there all along. This sort of thing is unnerving and happens on a daily basis – much more frequently than before a few years ago.

In addition to this, there are also other sensory symptoms. My body freaks out when I touch something that's too soft or when there's a dramatic temperature shift. I can't take hot showers anymore. Sometimes when I go from the living room to the bedroom at night, I start shaking and shivering uncontrollably and the temperature difference can't be that dramatic. But the shivering creates muscle spasms, which creates more pain and more wakefulness.

Sometimes it seems like the volume has been turned up on the whole world. Everything is too loud and too bright. If I'm in a room that echoes, I start to freeze up – my brain runs slow as molasses and I have to plug my ears. At times this even happens in normal rooms for reasons I cannot fathom. A few weeks ago was the worst time – it took 10 hours and a full night's sleep to get the sounds back to normal.

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What's Happening with Pastor Elana, cont.

Because of the sensory and concentration issues, I can't drive any more. My brain won't let me filter the information properly so I get distracted by how the other cars are moving or what a billboard says or what's happening on the radio. Even walking around – if I look over at something, I often start to walk toward it instead of the direction I'm trying to go. I do okay talking to people in person, most of the time, because I can look at someone's face and concentrate on how their moving lips connect to the words that they are saying. But telephone calls are exponentially more difficult because my mind is continually focusing and un-focusing on the things around me rather than the words coming from the phone.

It is a strange condition because each of these clusters of symptoms feed into one another. Doing too many pain inducing things makes it likelier that I'll lose focus or start to tip over when I'm walking. Being in a thunderstorm can make my hips scream in pain (I'm not sure if this is from the loud thunder or the electricity in the air or the pressure or what). Concentrating for too long can make me feel suddenly super warm even if it's freezing.

Fibromyalgia is a chronic illness. It's something that you learn to cope with, but it's not usually something that gets a whole lot better. After experimenting with different medications, I've found one that seems to help a little bit. I follow up with my doctor regularly. I have physical therapy every week and I do home exercises 5x a week under my physical therapist's direction. I think for right now the level of functioning that I have is about as good as it's going to get.

At this point, I spend most of my waking hours lying flat because that position is least likely to generate new pain. My life consists of church, home, physical therapy visits, and doctor's visits. I'm trying to be very intentional about figuring out what my brain/body can tolerate and what does the most good. This means that I have to say no to a lot of things – a lot things that I'd rather say yes to. I've found that my brain can sometimes settle into rote, repetitive tasks so I started doing a lot more word studies (which led to the website). I can still write cards because I have time for my brain to blink out and come back again. So, this year, I'm going to be doing a lot more reaching out via good, old fashioned cards. I can still preach and teach (especially with a very specific structure) so I'm going to keep doing that as well as I can.

I just wanted you to know that right now I'm living my life in sprints. Any time I go to do something, I have no idea how much time, energy, or leeway my mind/body will give me. It makes it impossible to gauge what I can actually do. Trying to do things is like filling up your plate at Christmas dinner or a great church potluck. You can keep eating as much as you want – it won't be until later that you start to feel sick or have problems if you overeat. So it is when I leave home: I don't know what kind of backlash I will face until I lay down again and it all rushes on me. Usually while I'm in the middle of an activity, I can hold out and look and sound more or less normal, but as soon as it's done, I crash to the couch. My brain slows to a crawl and I have a hard time even putting a sentence together. Still, I see God's grace at work every time I'm able to preach, teach, greet you all in love, and even sound half-way sane.

So, if you see me lying down in my office, I'm not sleeping on the job. I'm conserving energy so that I can extend the alert time that my mind has. If one day I connect to you and the next I don't, it's not because I don't care – it's because my mind has gotten lost in the fog. If one moment I look like I'm walking just fine and the next I'm wincing – it's not because I'm faking, it's because my pain is erratic and unpredictable.

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What's Happening with Pastor Elana, cont.

Lucas has agreed to step up where I am faltering. In this new year, we're going to be more systematic about reaching out to you and being there for you. This past year, we've been kind of caught up in trying to figure out what's going on with me and I know that means we haven't been there for you some of the times that you have needed us. Moving forward, we want you to know that we both love you all immensely. Lucas is invested in visiting you all more at home and at hospital, calling you more often, and planning more churchwide fellowship events. We're also planning to do some more vision planning with the ministry teams – meeting in January with each team individually to see where we dream and dare to go and how we can get there. We are both so passionate about this church and its mission. If you have a dream or an idea, a concern, need, or joy – please reach out and let us know. Thank you for your understanding and patience and thank you for your prayers for us both. They have kept us going in some very difficult months. May all we say and do together be to the glory of Christ's holy name!

~Pastor Elana

Christian Education

Melinda Carver

Sunday Morning Opportunities

Pre-kindergarteners and kindergarteners can join Donna and an adult volunteer (whenever needed) after their Sunday School class and through worship. Please note: Donna can be ready at 8:15 for childcare for those parents/guardians practicing with the choir. She's also available for team meetings on the first Sunday of each month. Just let Melinda C. know if childcare is needed.

Schedule for Nursery
help, if needed.

Jan. 5
Dec. 12 Melinda Carver
Dec. 19 Millie Spencer
Dec. 26

Thank you ladies for your
time and service!



Multi-grade Sunday School (pre-k through fourth grade)

For Sunday School, young children through fourth grade can come to the classroom by the CE office each Sunday morning . A great team of teachers are taking turns presenting a variety of kid-friendly experiences created to emphasize how very much God loves each of us! Hope to see you!

January	12th	Melinda Carver
	19th	Kate Hanson
	26th	Millie Spencer

Many Thanks

A huge thank you again to Lynette, the kids/teens and all adult volunteers who helped with and presented this year's Christmas pageant, "Joy of Christmas". The children and Lynette worked many weeks on the production, it was truly a Christmas blessing!

The Tween/Youth Class (fifth through twelfth grade)

ATTENTION ALL Tween and Youth! You are needed during Sunday School time to help prepare for Youth Sunday. Our wonderful Pastors will lead your time together in worship and practice.

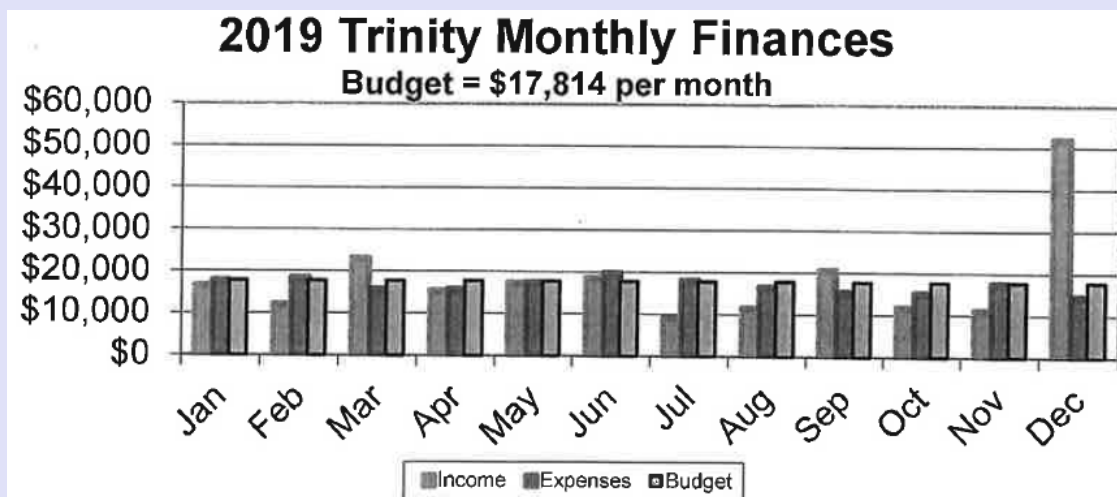
Midweek Book Study

Trinity Mid-Week Book Study meets every Wednesday morning at 11:00–12:00 in the Trinity Café! We choose inspiring books as a group, read weekly assignments, then meet the next week to discuss (sometimes in great depth!) what we’ve read! This awesome group is always welcoming of new participants, so maybe you’ll decide to join us for the New Year! Come on, you’ve got nothing to lose! We’ll be waiting for you with coffee and treats, too!



Finance/Stewardship

Craig Hanson



2019	Income	Expenses	Budget
YTD	\$ 219,838	\$ 202,305	\$ 213,768

Evangelism

Dwayne Strasheim

In this, my last newsletter article as chair of the Evangelism Team, I want to thank all of the folks who have volunteered to serve as greeters and external sign changers during 2019. Your work is sincerely appreciated, and we hope you will consider volunteering again during 2020.

I will provide a comprehensive summary of Evangelism activities in my report for our annual congregational meeting Sunday, January 26.

Respectfully submitted, ...Dwayne Strasheim

Ever Wanted to Read the Bible From Cover to Cover?

This January, our "Read the Bible" class will meet on the first and last Tuesday of every month at 6:00 PM, beginning Jan. 7th. We will meet twice a month for an hour: once to get an overview/introduction of the book and a second time to discuss a section of that book. So, even if you can't read the whole book, you'd still be welcome to join us to discuss the section. This class would be led by Pastors Lucus and Elana. Please join us!



Monthly Liturgy

Jan. 5—2nd Sunday of Christmas

Jer. 31:7-14;
Psalm 147: 12-20;
Ephesians 1:3-14;
John 1:(1-9) 10-18

Jan. 12—Baptism of the Lord

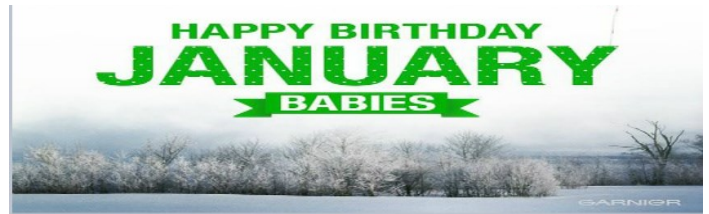
Isaiah 42:1-9;
Psalm 29;
Acts 10:34-43;
Matthew 3:13-17

Jan. 19—2nd Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 49:1-7;
Psalm 40:1-11;
1 Corinthians 1:1-9;
John 1:29-42

Jan. 26—3rd Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 9:1-4;
Psalm 27:1, 4-9;
1 Corinthians 1:10-18;
Matthew 4:12-23



John Rayment	1/4
Abby Rainwater	1/5
Pastor Lucus	1/13
Samantha Rainwater	1/14
Donald Burns	1/18
Doug Rainwater	1/19
Barbara Swayze	1/19
David Frazier	1/25



New Flower Ministry

Help beautify our sanctuary each week by giving flowers for our worship service in honor, memory or celebration of something or someone special.

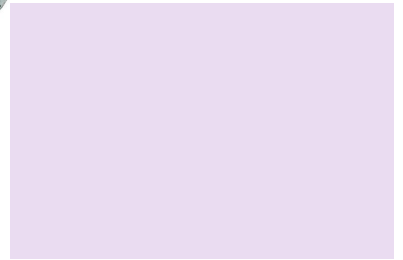
You can either bring your own flowers, or have them purchased on your behalf, for \$15.00.

Sign up on the sheet in the Trinity Café, and contact Beth Keppel if you have any questions!

248-505-4318.

Thank you in advance for helping to beautify our worship service!





SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1 10:15 Pack Backpacks 11:00 Midweek Bk. Sdy. 6:00—7:00 pm Bells Practice	2	3	4
5 COMMUNION 11:45 a.m. Team Meetings	6	7 6:00 pm “Read the Bible” Class	8 P.W. 10:15 Pack Backpacks 11:00 Midweek Bk. Sdy. 6:00—7:00 pm Bells Practice	9	10	11
12 11:45 a.m. SESSION	13	14	15 10:15 Pack Backpacks 11:00 Midweek Bk. Sdy. 6:00—7:00 pm Bells Practice	16	17	18 8:00—3:00 pm Elder Training Hope Unitarian Church Cabin
19 Theatre during worship -	20	21	22 10:15 Pack Backpacks 11:00 Midweek Bk. Sdy. 6:00—7:00 pm Bells Practice	23	24	25
26 Annual Congregational Meeting	27	28 6:00 pm “Read the Bible” Class	29 10:15 Pack Backpacks 11:00 Midweek Bk. Sdy. 6:00—7:00 pm Bells Practice	30	31	

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