

The Messenger

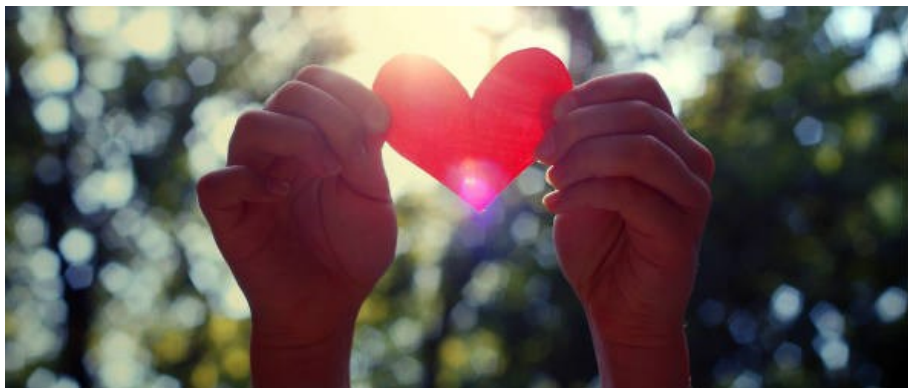
JANUARY 2024

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FROM THE PASTOR

Unwavering Mission



I have recently come to the realization that I get distracted easily.

I didn't used to.

And I'm wondering if perhaps it's an over-50 thing?

Here is a good example. I was sitting down to get some work done on the computer. I opened my laptop, logged in, and brought up the work that needed attention.

All good so far.

Except that...it was snowing.

Now I already knew how much snow we were supposed to get. I have The Weather App on my phone (I love my weather app) and I had just checked it before bed. I was pretty sure not much changed in those 8

hours...but... it could have...

And so inquiring minds needed to know. Because my phone was in the other room, I decided to log in to NJ.com. There I could get the weather AND a quick look at the schools that were open. (Did I need to see what schools were open- No I did not) But it's what I'm used to doing in these wintry conditions and so my 'muscle memory' kicked in and off I went.

(work, what work?)

As I logged on to NJ.com there was a banner at the top of the page that read:

New Year- unwavering mission.

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And that caught my attention. New Year. Unwavering Mission.

The ad was for an online subscription to their publication.

But the message rang true.

And it seems NJ.com isn't the first to use this tagline. There is an organization—Prison Fellowship Ministries—that has also used this same sentiment to head up their new year of ministry.

Which is why that caught my attention on the news page.

Now I suppose their mission is to share NJ news with their communities and to do so unwaveringly. Steadfast in their commitment to keep NJ informed. That would make sense and sounds like a noble (and appreciated) effort.

But when I read it, my first thought wasn't their news publication, it was of the church.

As a church, we too, are faced with ever-changing times. And, yet, the foundational mission of the church doesn't change. It's unwavering.

The gospel of Matthew ends with Jesus telling the disciples to go out:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven

and on earth has been given to me.¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

We call this 'The Great Commission'.

And that is the mission of the church. The unwavering mission of the church, given to us by Jesus, and unchanging from year to year.

But what does it mean?

It means that Jesus, who is claiming authority over all the universe (including us), is sending us out (as the apostles were also sent out). And we are being sent out to tell others about Christ—to baptize, to teach all that Jesus commanded—and to remember in all of this that we are not alone.

But what exactly did Jesus command?

Ah! For that we have a story.

Which is good because we tend to remember things better with a good story.

And it's a story we tell over

(Continued on page 4)

and over again. Each year of the church calendar (throughout the changing times) tells this story.

The story of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus gave us this mission. This mission to do as he did, to follow his example. And so, we need to become ever increasingly familiar with what Jesus said and did.

We do this by going back to scripture—going back to the gospel accounts of Jesus—over and over again.

We can do this on our own, but faith was never meant to be only an individual endeavor.

It's the work of the church to tell the story over and over.

We end each church calendar year with a holiday called 'Christ the King Sunday' where we acknowledge that Christ is indeed the true King of the world. The One who was, who is, and who always will be.

But then the next Sunday we start again with the baby in the manger.

The clock resets- it's a new year.

But it's the same unwavering mission to do as Jesus did.

To do this though, we need to

go back again, and again, year after year, to hear what Jesus said.

Because we get distracted.

We either forget what Jesus said or create our own agendas about what we think Jesus said (or meant by what he said...)

Here's one timely example:

It's football season. This means we will once again see John 3:16 held up at games (although this is done at other venues and times as well).

Now, that's not necessarily a bad thing.

But I worry. I am concerned about the motivation for that (and therefore how it's interpreted by those reading it).

If the motivation is to tell people they are loved—that God SO LOVED the world (the WHOLE world and EVERYONE in it)—great! That is truth. People desperately need to know there is a God who loves them and is with them. That humanity was given Jesus—God with us—physically (a wild and wonderful truth)—and that Jesus showed us what God is like. That God is love and taught us how to be truly human leading to life abundant then great! We need

to shout that from the mountaintops! John 3:16 is shorthand for all of that.

If, however, it is to focus on the ‘will not perish’ as in—I am holding up this sign to save you from a God who is out to get you if you don’t believe the right thing, or love the right way, or say the right words—then I have a big problem with that (and unfortunately, this is usually what others think now when that is held up).

This verse had become sadly linked with a whole package of thinking that draws lines and holds boundaries creating division. That makes my heart hurt and should grieve the heart of the church.

Scripture is not a weapon to be wielded against one another.

And when it is, it’s a clear sign that we’ve become distracted from the mission at hand and gone running after other things. A sign that humanity is running after its own agendas again instead of the loving mission of being the hands and feet of Christ.

And, truly, we all get distracted.

We know this. It’s not just an over-50 thing (although I do think someone should give a class on what to expect in this second half of life :-))

We are human. And so we turn back to the One who understands our humanness better than we understand ourselves—and we look and we follow. Because we are on a mission.

Happy and Blessed 2024 to all! May we become ever increasingly aware of Christ’s presence and leading in our lives.

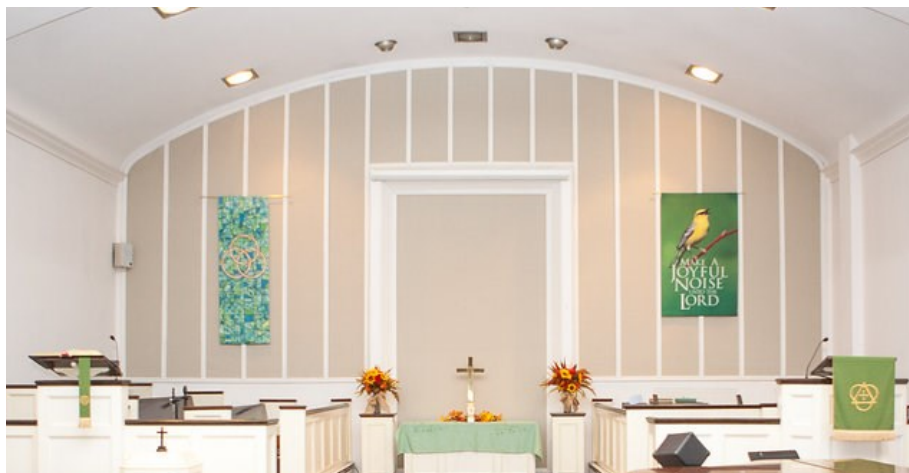
Amen

Pastor Anne



CHILDRENS & FAMILY MINISTRY

The Church Calendar



Dear Trinity Kids,
Hello!

I have a question- What is your favorite color? Do you have a favorite color?

I do! I used to think it was blue, but my friend pointed out that the backpack I used to carry everything was green, my lunch box was green, and several rooms in my home were painted a shade of green. So, I guess I would now say my favorite color is green!

Which is fun because that is the color we are using right now at church!

Did you know that we use specific colors in the sanctuary to decorate? We do! Because they are more than decorations. They are a way we keep track of time on the church calendar.

Did that last sentence make no sense to you?

Let me explain:

It's 2024 now and some of you may have a new calendar somewhere in your home. (If you don't, know what I am talking about, this is something people used to do before all of

(Continued on page 7)

the technology we have now. They would keep a paper calendar hanging somewhere.) Calendars help us keep track of days (both special days and ordinary days) as well as seasons (winter, spring, summer, and fall.)

The church has a calendar as well! Each year at church we tell the story of Jesus. We talk about when Jesus was born, the things he did and said, the way Jesus died, and the fact that Jesus was resurrected. Some of these days are ‘holidays’ on the church calendar (like Christmas for when Jesus was born, and Easter for when he was resurrected). And some of these days aren’t holidays (or they are less known holidays).

All of these special days (holidays) and ordinary days are organized into ‘church seasons’ and you can tell what season the church is in (or the holiday being celebrated) by the colors that we use in the sanctuary.

Very often there is a piece of cloth hanging from the

‘pulpit’ (where the person preaching for that day is speaking) and another smaller piece of fabric (like a bookmark) hanging from the ‘lectern’ (the place where the big Bible is placed and where the person reading the Bible passages for the day stands). These special pieces of colored cloth are called

‘paraments’. The colors

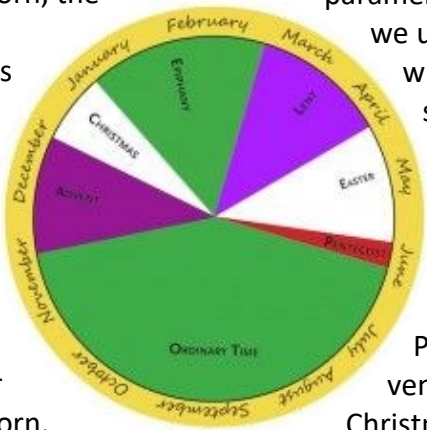
we use help tell us what church season (or special holiday) we are currently in.

Here are the ones we use at our church:

Purple- for Advent (leading up to Christmas) and Lent

(leading up to Easter). For Advent purple reminds us that Jesus is our king (the color of purple was an expensive color and was used for royalty). In Lent, we use purple to remind us that sometimes we don’t act like our king (Jesus) who loves us and loves the whole world and wants us to be loving to the world as well.

White- for special days- like Easter, Christmas (and a few



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others). White is there to remind us of something beautiful and perfect (like fresh snow) and reminds us that Jesus- too- was human (like us) and yet loved others perfectly showing God's love to all (which we sometimes have a hard time doing).

Red- for Pentecost- is used to help us think about the flame of the Holy Spirit that the disciples saw over each other's heads! It reminds us that the Holy Spirit came and is still with us (and will forever be with us)!

... And finally..

Green- because it's Pastor Anne's favorite color...

Right?

No- no- that's silly- of course not...

Green is the most used color- it's up right now in the sanctuary for the season of Epiphany, but it's also used beginning the Sunday after Pentecost all the way up until (almost) the start of Advent (again) (that's a long time). Green is the color for much of the months of spring throughout the summer and into the fall. Green helps us to think about growing. We are growing during this time in the

knowledge and love of Jesus. Now- of course, that is what we are doing all year, but during this time on the church calendar, we've already talked all about Jesus' life on Earth and are now looking at what Jesus taught even more closely.

And that's it! It's like seasonal clothing for the sanctuary!

If any of that was confusing, please let me know! We can go on a tour of the sanctuary and maybe even take a peak in the worship closet where we keep all of this!

Also- I really do want to know...

What is your favorite color?
Pastor Anne

Pastor Anne



YOUTH MINISTRIES

A Year of Growth



Youth retreat 2023

As we start the New Year I would like to take this chance to thank everyone who has supported us throughout 2023. It has been a wonderful year of growth for our Youth Group, and it is because of our church body that we are able to provide a safe place for teens.

You never know who might need what you have to give and I am here to tell you all that the place we provide has become an important part of many young people's lives.

I am also grateful for the gift from the church to my family. It's such a blessing to receive

your financial gift each year. I am humbled by this tangible token of your faith in the work that we do.

Please continue to lift us up in prayer as we continue to serve the teens in our community on your behalf and in the name of the One that has given the most precious gift to us all!

Happy 2024!

Mike





Dear Trinity,

Thank you so very much for the very generous Christmas gift. That was so very sweet and so appreciated. It is truly such a blessing to serve all of you and work alongside you for the furthering of God's kingdom.

Blessings upon our new year of life and ministry together!

Thank you again!

Anne

Dear Trinity,

I am grateful for the gift from the church to my family. It's such a blessing to receive your financial gift each year. I am humbled by this tangible token of your faith in the work that we do.

Mike

Trinity Members & Friends,

Thank you so much for your generous gift and your love and support for me and my family throughout the year. I feel very blessed to be able to serve Trinity as the office manager. I look forward to another great year walking with Jesus and pray He will continue to grow our congregation and mission work!

Peace & Love,

Yvette

Dear Trinity Family,

Thank you so much for such a generous Christmas bonus! I'm so grateful for each of you and for the privilege of leading worship each week. Looking forward to sharing more music with you all this coming year!

Love,

Calvin

FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIR



Greetings from the Trinity Council. We can't believe that we are in 2024. Happy New Year to all our members and friends. If you can't attend in person we hope that you'll remember to join us through Zoom. You can attend services, Bible studies and prayer calls using Zoom.

Our December was busy with mission projects. Thank you to all of you who donated your time, items and money to the missions.

Our Christmas services were well-attended and we thank Pastor Anne for planning and implementing the Sunday morning bagel & worship service and the Christmas Eve candlelight service. It was a pleasure to be joined by our broth-

ers and sister from the Taiwanese Church for the services.

We are busy planning for the 2023 Annual Meeting on 2/11, at 1:00 pm. The 2023 Annual Report will be available on Sunday, 1/28, 2024. Our next Council meeting will be on 2/25 at 1:00 pm. Please let the Council know if there are any issues that we should be addressing.

May you feel the presence of God's love and share it with everyone you meet.

Yours in Christ,

Chrystal

*Trinity Church
Council Chair*



JANUARY 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	
	1 <i>CHURCH OFFICES CLOSED</i>	2 Prayer Meeting 2:30 pm Teen Night 7 pm Al-Anon 1 pm , AA 1 pm	
7 Intergenerational Sunday School 10 am Worship 11 am Hwa Yin Choir 4:30 – 7:30 pm	8	9 Prayer Meeting 2:30 pm Teen Night 7 pm Al-Anon 1 pm , AA 1 pm	Confir AA 7 p
14 Sunday School 10 am Worship 11 am Council Meeting 1 pm Hwa Yin Choir 4:30 – 7:30 pm	15 Martin Luther King Jr. Day	16 Prayer Meeting 2:30 pm Al-Anon 1 pm , AA 1 pm	AA 7 p
21 Sunday School 10 am Worship 11 am Hwa Yin Choir 4:30 – 7:30 pm	22	23 Prayer Meeting 2:30 pm Teen Night 7 pm Al-Anon 1 pm , AA 1 pm	Confir AA 7 p
28 Sunday School 10 am Worship 11 am Hwa Yin Choir 4:30 – 7:30 pm	29	30 Prayer Meeting 2:30 pm Teen Night 7 pm Al-Anon 1 pm , AA 1 pm	AA 7 p

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3	4	5	6
	TPC Senior Lunch 11 am – 2 pm Prayer Meeting 8 pm AA 1 pm , Al-Anon 1 pm	AA Bagel Group 10 am Teen Night 6:30 pm NA 7:30 pm	
10	11	12	13
Information Class	TPC Senior Lunch 11 am – 2 pm Bible Study 7 pm (Zoom only) Prayer Meeting 8 pm AA 1 pm , Al-Anon 1 pm	AA Bagel Group 10 am Teen Night 6:30 pm NA 7:30 pm	
17	18	19	20
	TPC Senior Lunch 11 am – 2 pm Bible Study 7 pm (Zoom only) Prayer Meeting 8 pm AA 1 pm , Al-Anon 1 pm	AA Bagel Group 10 am Teen Night 6:30 pm NA 7:30 pm	
24	25	26	27
Information Class	TPC Senior Lunch 11 am – 2 pm Bible Study 7 pm (Zoom only) Prayer Meeting 8 pm AA 1 pm , Al-Anon 1 pm	AA Bagel Group 10 am Teen Night 6:30 pm NA 7:30 pm	
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Trinity Reporter

Advent and Christmas always seem to fly by. December began with a celebration of Advent. This year Pastor Anne took us through an Advent series called “How Does a Weary World Rejoice?” If you didn’t get a chance to read through the devotional for Advent, there are extra copies outside fellowship hall.

December 9 was the annual women’s Christmas Party (photo below) where Trinity women celebrated with a pot-luck dinner and white elephant gift exchange. There was some “stealing” and Nancy O once

again dazzled us with her knit sweaters, shawls and gnomes! This year there was a gift party for the girls in our congregation also. The “squishys” were very popular. After their gift exchange, the girls were ushered to the Sunday school room where they made Christmas cards and watched a movie. Thank you to Marianna F who stayed with the girls during the women’s party.

Our big mission project for the day laborers was in full swing with organizing, counting and packaging done by Karen R, Yvette H, Pastor Anne, Nany O,



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Cyndy T, and Eilleen F.

Nancy knitted lovely scarves for the mission. Karen R and Eileen F shopped for bargains, posted many times on Buy Nothing, and packaged small items and gifts into bags...and much, much more. Cyndy T, Fred, Nancy O and Pastor Anne helped Karen organize in the sharing room. Rich and Yvette H helped set up the tables and organize the items. The teens along with Mike, Pastor Anne and Karen R packed 100 backpacks!

Delivery day was warm and bright this year. 100 men were gathered and greeted Karen R with smiles as we arrived. Thank you to Karen R, Mike M, Pastor Anne, Jen Y, Fred P, Rich and Yvette H for making the trip this year and helping to distribute the items. Jen was able to spend a long time talking with the men in Spanish. So many men badly need new boots and warm coats (photos this page).



Of course it wouldn't be Christmas time at Trinity without the kid's Christmas Pageant and this year the cast did an amazing job and there was cuteness overload! Eve and Abe bravely played Mary and Joseph. A magi and two angels narrated — Amelia, Hannah and Elise. They did an amazing job! The other magi included Ruth and Liam and the shepherds were expertly played by Elijah, Henry and Fred. Our heavenly host of angels included Amy, Chloe and Lily.

As Gwen walked the star behind the manger scene, the congregation gathered in front and sang out Silent Night. Thank you to Calvin for leading us in worship (photos pages 17-18).

The teens, Mike M and Pastor Anne did some caroling around the fire pit on Tuesday, 12/19. Gingerbread houses were created and everyone had a sweet time.

We celebrated the last Sunday of Advent with our brothers and sisters from the Taiwanese Presbyterian Church

on Christmas Eve morning with "Worship & Bagels." It was a lovely time of fellowship (photo this page).

The Christmas Eve candle-light service began with quiet contemplation and ended with a fun version of *Go Tell it on The Mountain* complete with drums! Everyone was happy to see Jamie T and Luke T, Peter and Susan G and Alice D at the service. Alice said she really enjoyed singing along to Go Tell it!

January is proving to be a busy month as well with Pastor Anne running the Clergy Association table at the MLK event at the Livingston Community Center. A new Thursday night Bible study, teen nights kicking off again and much more.

Trinity members plan to attend the Trinity Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday,

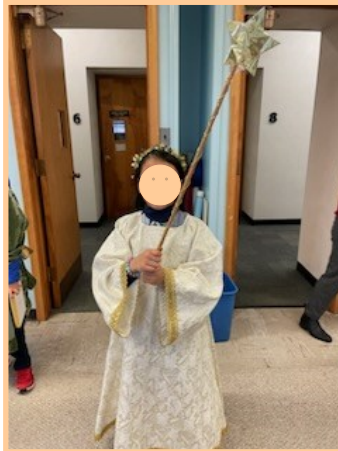


2/11 after fellowship. It should be a quick meeting and we promise you'll be home in time for the Superbowl.

Can you believe it?! Ash Wednesday is 2/14. Watch the Trinity online calendar, Facebook and Instagram for updates about Ash Wednesday and other Lenten events.

The Christmas Pageant





MISSIONS & MORE



The Day Laborers Mission is now the Good Neighbors Mission. A HUGE THANK YOU to everyone who donated this last year to our missions. We helped over 100 of our neighbors with warm clothing, blankets, shoes, socks, gloves, hats, scarves and more!



FOR OUR MENS MISSION

We collect ALL YEAR LONG for missions so please donate if you can. Monetary donations are also accepted. Please be sure the write “MISSIONS—MENS” on the memo line of checks, on envelopes for cash and in the memo section is donating via PayPal on our website at ***TrinityChurchLivingston.org***.

MEN’S HIKING OR WORK BOOTS—MEN’S SIZES 7—10

MEN’S CLOTHING S-M-L

Coats

Heavy zipper hoodies

Gloves

Shoes, boots & sneakers sizes 7-8-9

Thermal underwear

T-shirts: Long sleeve & short sleeve

Windbreakers

Warm hats & scarves

Sweatshirts & Hoodies

Socks

Jeans, slacks & sweatpants

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MEN'S ACCESSORIES & TOILETRIES

Backpacks

Toothbrushes & toothpaste*

Hand lotion*

Greeting cards*

Notepads*

Drawstring packs

Lip balm*

Hotel size toiletry samples*

Calendars*

Hand warmers*

HOUSEHOLD NEEDS

Mugs

Throws

Kitchen towels

Leak-proof reusable water bottles

Blankets: twin-full-queen

Towels: beach-bath-hand

Washcloths

SEWING KITS

Buttons, Sewing needles, Safety pins



FOR NEW PARENT MISSION

Baby clothing, shoes and coats. New, unwrapped toys. This mission is in partnership with St. Matthews Lilian's Closet in East Orange, a mission to provide new parents in need with baby supplies. For check or PayPal donations, please include "MISSIONS—BABY" in the memo.



FOR RENEW CENTER MISSION

Laundry detergent/pods, toilet paper, toothpaste, and shampoo. These items are not covered under SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and are greatly needed. For check or PayPal donations, please include "MISSIONS—RENEW" in the memo.



LIVINGSTON FOOD PANTRY

Cooking oil for our local food pantry. The local food pantries always run low on cooking oil.

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Care and Share Fund

Our congregation maintains a fund to provide emergency help to one another and neighbors in need. Recently, we have helped with rent, gas and food. **You can donate with cash or check in a Care & Share envelope and place in the offering basket or via PayPal on our website.** Please include “Care & Share” on the memo line or as a comment in PayPal or on your check. We can’t “split” checks, so any money donated to Care & Share must be on a separate check with “Care & Share” on the memo line. (keep track of these donations; they are not reported on your year-end letter from the financial secretary).



FELLOWSHIP & DISCIPLESHIP

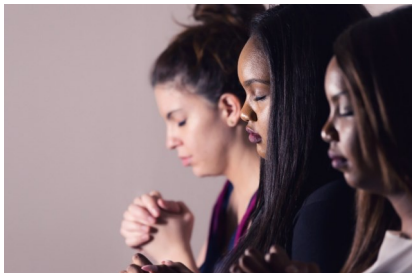
Thursday Night Bible Study (Zoom only) at 7 pm. 1/11, 1/18, 1/25, 2/8

We'll be talking about the Psalms over the next 4 weeks. We'll be looking at an overview of the book- as well as individual Psalms. What are the Psalms about? How do we read them? Why are some of them so 'weird'?



Weekday Prayer Meetings: Tuesdays 2:30 pm & Thursdays 8 pm (Zoom)

All are welcome! Join in on Zoom Tuesdays 2:30 pm & Thursdays at 8:00 pm. Look for a link in your email. Send your prayer request to Pastor Anne at TrinityLivingstonPastor@gmail.com or give us a call and leave a message.



Youth Nights: Tuesdays 7 pm & Fridays at 6:30 pm

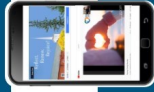
All teens are welcomed to join the fun and fellowship at Youth Night, every Friday from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm. Youth Director Mike leads the group and Pastor Anne provides assistance. Please RSVP to Mike at TrinityLivingstonYouth@gmail.com or leave a message for Mike at 973-992-4044 #5.



Confirmation Classes (Zoom)

Confirmation classes continue Wednesdays, 4:30 pm on Zoom. Pastor Anne leads this class. If you have questions, please reach out to Pastor Anne at 973-992-4044 #1 or TrinityLivPastor@gmail.com.





WE ARE IN-PERSON AND ONLINE AND YOU ARE WELCOME!
Join us at 11 AM at 343 E. Cedar St., Livingston or on Zoom
or join the live stream on YouTube @Trinity Livingston Music

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