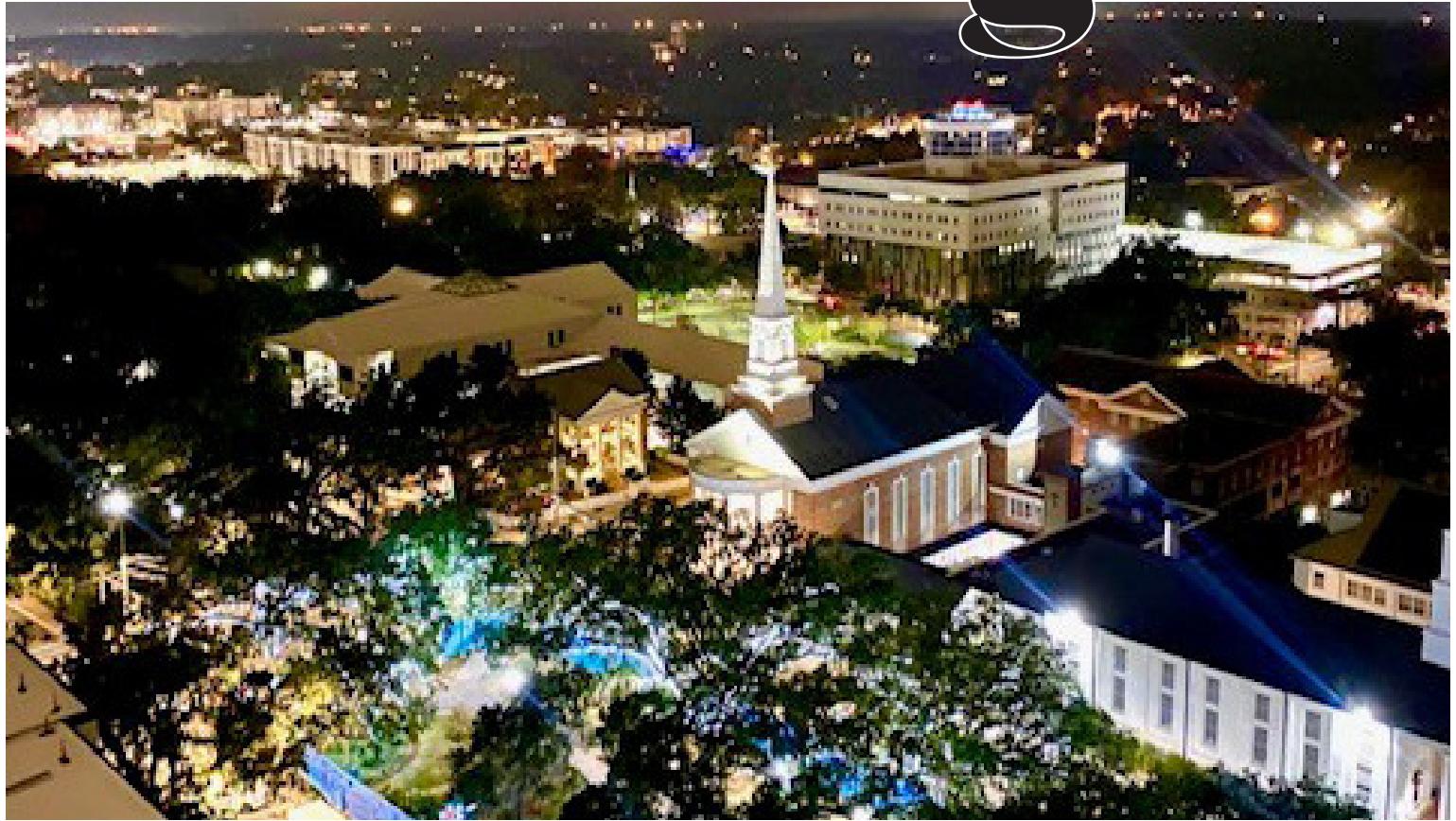


Tidings



A Monthly Publication from Trinity United Methodist Church, Tallahassee, FL

A New Year in Covenant With God

By Rev. Dr. Matthew M. Williams, Senior Pastor

**Trinity Combined Service – January 4 at 11:00 a.m.
The Wesley Covenant Service**

As a new year approaches, many people make resolutions, hoping to refocus their priorities, grow in discipline, and renew what matters most. For Christians, the beginning of a new year offers an opportunity even more profound: to reaffirm our covenant with God intentionally.

On Sunday, January 4, at 11:00 a.m., Trinity will gather as one body for a combined service centered on the historic Wesley Covenant Service. This tradition has shaped Methodist spirituality for generations.

Continued...

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Wesleyan Covenant, continued

A Service Rooted in Renewal

The story of the Covenant Service begins long before Methodism itself. In 1663, Puritan writer Richard Alleine published a devotional work titled *Vindiciae Pietatis: A Vindication of Godliness in the Greater Strictness and Spirituality of It*. This text aimed to guide believers toward more profound holiness and heartfelt devotion. Nearly a century later, John Wesley, always searching for resources to strengthen the life of the Methodist societies, included Alleine's work in his Christian Library (1753). One particular chapter, "The Application of the Whole," struck Wesley with a deep sense of longing.

On Monday, August 11, 1755, Wesley used this chapter as the framework for what became the very first Covenant Service in the Methodist movement. It was not simply a new liturgical practice but a spiritual milestone. It was a moment for believers to offer themselves fully, without reservation, to the will and work of God.

Wesley's Own Witness to Its Power

The impact of those early Covenant Services is seen directly in Wesley's Journal. He describes them as occasions filled with spiritual depth and personal transformation:

- "Many mourned before God, and many were comforted." (April 1756)
- "It was, as usual, a time of remarkable blessing." (October 1765)
- "It was an occasion for a variety of spiritual experiences. ...I do not know that ever we had a greater blessing. Afterwards, many desired to return thanks, either for a sense of pardon, for full salvation, or for a fresh manifestation of His graces, healing all their backslidings." (January 1, 1775)

In London, the services became an established New Year's Day tradition. Methodists were invited to begin each year with repentance, renewal, and recommitment. Elsewhere, Wesley conducted them whenever he traveled to visit the societies under his care. The Covenant Service became a spiritual anchor of early Methodism, shaping its emphasis on wholehearted discipleship.

The Service Through the Generations

After Wesley's death, various versions of the Covenant Service developed, sometimes expanding or adapting the original wording. Over time, Wesley's phrases were used less frequently, though the spirit of the service remained. In modern worship resources, the United Methodist Church has sought to preserve Wesley's intent while offering language and structure suitable for today's congregations.

The service now...

- follows the United Methodist Basic Pattern of Worship;
- invites the whole congregation to participate actively;
- uses contemporary language while maintaining historic substance; and
- incorporates, beginning with the Invitation, wording taken directly from Wesley's 1780 service.

The centerpiece remains the Covenant Prayer, a bold and vulnerable surrender of ourselves to God's purposes. It invites us to place our whole lives — our successes and failures, joys and burdens, gifts and limitations — into God's hands.

This covenant is not a quick moment of worship or a simple reading of words. It is a serious, lifelong commitment. Wesley himself insisted that those entering the covenant do so thoughtfully and prayerfully. This is why churches often encourage times of preparation before the service through Scripture, reflection, self-examination, and intentional prayer. Such spiritual readiness helps us respond to God with honesty, humility, and hope.

This year, Trinity will enter this sacred tradition together. A combined service allows us to stand side by side as one church family offering ourselves anew to Christ. As we pray the Covenant Prayer, we join with Christians across centuries who have said, "Yes, Lord — use me as you will."

Trinity Ministry Dogs

By Rev. John Willis, Retired Clergy

*"Behold, I am about to do a new thing!
Now it springs up. Do you not see it?"
Isaiah 43:19*

You may have first heard about the Trinity Ministry Dogs (TMD) when visiting a booth at the Ministry Fair last August. Or perhaps you've noticed some curious blurbs about an exciting new ministry in *News & Notes*. What is this new thing we are about?

It involves one of God's best creations — dogs.

Why dogs? Maybe the best answer to that question can be found in "So God Made a Dog," a widely-shared poem that's adapted from a Paul Harvey speech:

"God said I need somebody strong enough to pull sleds and sniff out bombs.
Yet somebody gentle enough to love babies and lead the blind.
Somebody who will spend all day on the couch with the head resting
and supportive eyes to lift the spirits of the brokenhearted."

TMD is a new ministry that will bring good medicine through sharing God's love with the help of their companions. How will they do that?

First, members of Trinity and their canine companions will go through training. When they successfully complete the training, they will visit members of Trinity who have requested a visit from the TMD teams.

All training sessions will be held at the Pool House at Westminster Oaks, from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. on each of the following Saturdays:



January 17 – introduction and evaluation

January 24 – training

January 31 – training

February 7 – final examination and certifications

February 15 – commissioning at 11:00 a.m. service

If you are interested or would like more information, contact Reverend John Willis at 850-510-5773.

Do you have a canine companion who would make a good ministry dog? [Applications for the program](#) can be found on the "[Serving at Trinity](#)" page of our website or can be picked up in the church office.



Memorials and Honorariums

December 2025

In memory of Natalie Reed for Friends of Music from Mr. and Mrs. Armando Garcia
In honor of Beth Curry for BFC from Nancy Waugh

No Home to Go to: Seeing the Unhoused Through the Eyes of Christ

By Pam Crosby, Betty Phifer Class Co-Leader



Donald Crosby (and Pam Crosby, behind camera), co-leaders of the Betty Phifer Sunday School Class, pull strings of "care bags" before their contents are distributed to the unhoused of the downtown community.

What is it like to have no home to go to?

Distinctively Different

It's impossible to know comprehensively how another person feels. Each one is different and has different backgrounds, family experiences, struggles, etc., that influence how they see the world around them and their place in it. We admit our ignorance, but most importantly, we can endeavor to listen to their unique stories and offer our help.

Basic Needs

What we do know with certainty is that the unhoused in our community have the same basic needs as we do. They must locate a suitable place to sleep, find a means to clean themselves, search for food, protect themselves from changes in the weather, and seek safety, for example.

A Small Gift

Like many downtown churches and other houses of worship in our Tallahassee community, Trinity offers ways to help satisfy these needs. One small way that the Betty Phifer Sunday School Class helps is to purchase and assemble personal hygiene products each quarter. We place these items in what we call care bags — with the name symbolizing that we offer this humble gift because of our care for our fellow human beings while hoping to assist in their care for themselves.

The Process

Each member of the class is responsible for one or more items. These may include soap, wash cloths, shampoo, toothpaste, wet wipes, nail clippers, deodorant, socks, sweet snack, Bible verse card, emergency contact card, etc. One loved one in our group bought waterproof, reusable bags (to hold the items) that have zippers and draw strings for easy carrying.

The process for packing is a simple assembly procedure. We stand together in our sacred circle around our classroom table to pack the items in the bags. Each class member drops an item, symbolizing that the giver's circumstances are in stark contrast to those of the recipient: We gather in a safe room, with an adjustable thermostat to keep us warm or cool, after having slept in the safe comfort of our homes, with a private place to clean ourselves, and with enough — or more than enough — to eat. The bags are placed in boxes and stored in a corner of our room. After the class is over, class leaders pull the strings of each bag, symbolizing the coming together of both giver and recipient as fellow human beings. Cindy and Glen McDuffie (our Snack Pack Ministry heroine/hero) transport the bags (as needed) and distribute them.

Christ's Eyes

Jesus who had "no place to lay his head" knew what it was like to have "no home to go to." As Christians in the truest sense, we strive to see the unhoused through the eyes of Christ in order to serve them as He would serve them. To help with the care bag project or to get more information, contact Pam Crosby, class administrator and co-leader, at pcrosby@tumct.org.

Lay Academy Class to Explore AI

By Gloria Colvin, Lay Academy Committee Chair

While trying to predict the future is always tricky, one thing seems certain — that Artificial Intelligence, or AI, will increasingly become embedded in our lives. It's already evident in the use of virtual assistants such as Siri and Alexa, chatbots that attempt to answer questions or provide information online, facial and voice recognition, content creators like ChatGPT, targeted marketing, self-driving cars, smart thermostats, and in many other formats. Almost daily the media reports on some new aspect of AI and that promises to continue as its use grows.



Promoters of AI see many ways in which it can make life easier, more efficient, and perhaps better. Studies report that AI can help detect certain types of cancer that other technologies may miss. Companion robots are being used to reduce loneliness and to interact with people experiencing dementia. Products are being developed that can cook a meal, identify new uses for prescription drugs, and provide feedback to students on their academic assignments.

But concerns about the use of AI have also been raised. Who ultimately controls and profits from AI? Are restrictions needed, and if so, what should they be? Will machines take over society? AI-created images and videos can make it difficult to determine what is authentic and what is fabricated. Not all AI-generated information is accurate, raising questions about what to trust. Because AI stores huge amounts of data requiring lots of electricity, the impact on the environment is unknown. As AI takes over jobs that people have done, that will result in jobs lost. There are situations in which human insights seem necessary. For example, the use of ChatGPT as a personal therapist has reportedly resulted in several suicides.

To help us better understand AI, including both its potential and concerns, the Lay Academy Planning Committee has assembled a group of experts to engage us in learning about AI and to answer our questions. This class will begin on January 14 and continue through February 11. Classes begin at 6:15 and last for an hour.

January 14 | Interactive Introduction to AI

Dr. Paul Marty, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Innovation and Professor, FSU School of Information

January 21 | How AI Is Transforming Health Care

Dr. Delaney La Rosa, Teaching Professor, FSU College of Nursing

January 28 | AI for Teaching, Learning, and Student Success in Higher Education

Dr. Holly Hunt, Director of the Academic Success Team, FSU Academic Center for Excellence

February 4 | Human-Centered Concerns About AI

Dr. Dina Vyortkina, Assistant Dean for Innovation and Instructional Technology Enhancement, FSU's Anne Spencer Daves College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences

February 11 | AI Applications for Everyday Use

Dr. James Hunt, Associate Vice Provost and Chief Data and Analytics Officer, FSU Department of Institutional Research

AI is here and it will be increasingly a part of our lives. We hope that you'll take advantage of this opportunity to become better informed about it.

Two other groups meet regularly as part of Lay Academy:

- Richard Andrews leads a Bible study on Wednesday afternoons in the Trinity Library at 4:15 p.m. Beginning January 7, the class will embark upon a 12-week study called *Epic of Eden* by Dr. Sandra Richter. Through text and video teaching, Dr. Richter brings a new dimension to the history of the ancient Near East, orienting any study group in time, geography, culture, redemption, and relevance to today. New members are welcome!
- Parenting Village meets weekly at 6:15 p.m. in the Conference Room. This group provides a space for parents with children of all ages to share their experiences and support one another. Elementary-age children are invited to join NETKids After Dark while parents meet. Contact cduclos@tumct.org for more details.

If you plan to join us for Wednesday Night Dinner at 5:30 p.m., please be sure to RSVP by phone, app, or [the Events page of our website](#).

Preserving Our History: A Vision for Trinity's Membership Records

By E. Lynn McLarty, Church Historian

In the early 1990s — amid my genealogical travels to many libraries throughout Florida, Georgia, and Alabama (much, much before the availability of information on family history websites) and finding indexed books on a community church's history — the thought occurred to me to pursue the possibility of organizing Trinity's old records in a format readily accessible to other family history enthusiasts.

A long-time member of Trinity, a founding member of the Tallahassee Genealogical Society, and a resource person in my early years of genealogical research, Nellie Bird Mims supported me wholeheartedly on my idea for Trinity's records. With Nellie's encouragement I made mention of my broad plan to the co-chairpersons of Trinity's Church History Committee, Vernon and Jamie Parramore.



Vernon and Jamie Parramore

On a Friday morning within the next few weeks, I experienced an "awakening" when Vernon and Jamie Parramore introduced me to the membership books. From the very small room in the hallway adjacent to the church parlor, they brought me a special treasure. I was holding in my lap for the first time one of our very old church membership records. I sat in awe as they explained what profound meaning these records held for Trinity history. It did not take long until I could readily see that the varied information on each Trinity individual would be a treasure to any genealogist. There were names, baptism dates, marriage dates, and death dates. In some later books, the place of residence of the family was included. Some membership books named an individual's former church before coming to Trinity as well as the name of the new church and city when the congregant member moved their membership from Trinity.

After this Friday morning experience, my mind began to visualize the creation of a digital replication of this most-important resource of Trinity's past. I was impressed that all the entries in the membership books followed the same general format: rows and columns. These membership books were stock items purchased with the sole intent for churches to record their membership rolls.

My immediate endeavor was to search for available computer software that would allow a spreadsheet design, a single entry of data, and easy manipulation of this data to accommodate future changes in formatting. After consultation with many individuals who used spreadsheets for their business, the preponderance of recommendations directed me to the Microsoft product Excel. I had found my program for the project. During this time of logistical decisions, the Parramore's were gaining the support for my work from the Preservation of Church History Committee and from then Senior Minister, Rev. Dr. David Hortin. The year was about 1993.

Once given the approval to proceed, the first item to undertake was to photocopy the contents of Book 1. I spent many Friday mornings in the Church office (under the tutelage of the administrative staff, who showed me the intricacies of their sophisticated photocopier) meticulously copying the pages from Book 1. One must remember the delicacy of handling this book and the care that had to be taken to ensure the book's integrity while turning it upside down for the photocopying process. All the pages were tattered, some to the point of being brittle. The pages of photocopied material were then hole-punched and bound.

Photocopying Book 1 afforded three benefits:

1. It gave me a copy of the book to use at home making entries onto the computer, on my time without having to be at the Church.
2. It allowed for minimum handling of the original book during the time of data entry.
3. It gave the Church another copy of this most important treasure in case the original is misplaced or destroyed.



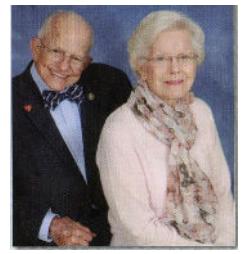
Book 1 photocopy, for home use in transcribing



Book 1, bound

During the next year of entering data into the self-generated template, the Excel file slowly paralleled Book 1's format. What pride to see the progress! Once the contents of Book 1 had been entered into the realm of the "digital age", Book 2 was approached in the same manner as described. Book 3, Book 4, Book 5, and the Book of the Boulevard Church Mission were methodically photocopied for my use at home at the appropriate time. All the Books were different, and this required the creation of a new Excel template for each one. All the work at home remained on my computer, being backed up to diskettes.

In about 2003 Linda and Bob Yates became co-chairs of the Preservation of Church History Committee. Linda and Bob were constant motivators for me to continue this project. From Linda's gentle and soft voice would frequently come the query, "Lynn, how are the membership books coming?" Not knowing the vastness of the capabilities of the internet, it was my intention to have the books put into print for dissemination to libraries, to state archives, and to private homes. At that time, I envisioned that each book, or a compilation of the entire array of books, was to be a purchasable item, maybe a money-making project for the youth or some other Trinity-related group. Linda and I discussed many times how the membership books should be available to others outside our own Trinity.



Bob and Linda Yates

Only with the proliferation of the World Wide Web and its ability to distribute information exponentially beyond the walls of a public library did I start thinking of preparing my work for a Trinity website or for a website under the auspices of the Tallahassee Genealogical Society. The search for a person with computer software knowledge of how to take my project and adapt it to the internet was a slow process. Internet protocol constantly changed and expanded in dynamics and use. It seemed the internet was too new for most individuals to offer help. There was hope that this unique individual would be imminently forthcoming. Comparing the transcribed pages to the original book, I began looking at my work with intense scrutiny. I found the transcribed pages were less than perfect — so many questions regarding my deciphering ability.



Lynn McLarty and Judy Levy

What I needed was a partner who could be generous with her time, to work closely with me to edit my work regarding spelling, formatting, and deciphering handwritten entries. In 2010 Judy Tait Levy offered to sit with me one afternoon and let me show her my work in transcribing Trinity's membership records, particularly Book 1. As a long-standing Tallahassee resident, she immediately became interested in the names, the dates, and the association of Trinity's history with present-day Tallahassee. From that moment on, her unwavering commitment was so valuable. She not only was being the chairside auditor of the prevailing book, but she constantly offered suggestions to enhance the membership book project.

The auditing process was a protocol I established to compare the original source of the material (the Membership Book itself) to transcribed data on the laptop computer's Excel template. The work was tedious, but I knew with confidence the entries had been under a second scrutiny. When we had three membership books audited, we became more interested in finding someone with the unique computer skills to put our databases into a printable format. Having our work placed online was so removed from our thinking. It was in the summer of 2014 that Judy and I were introduced to the third member of our team — that long-sought person with the knowledge and the dedication to working alongside us to possibly make these books an internet reality.

Colleen McConnell was, without question, the answer to my prayer for this project to go from a static computer database to our dream of Trinity's membership records available to the world. With Colleen's computer abilities, the databases were transformed in the fall of 2014 into an easy-to-use searchable format for online use. Having the membership books online and "searchable" were the paramount factors in dismissing the idea of the project's being published as printed books.



Colleen McConnell



Lynn McLarty and Pam Crosby

As Colleen found she could no longer give the time she had once dedicated, Pam Crosby arrived in her stead. Pam's unique abilities to manipulate the Excel data and transform the raw material into the format for the online presentation brought a seamless continuity to the project. Trinity's first five Membership Books and the Boulevard Church Membership Book became available to the public by way of the church's website. There were five more books to be transcribed and audited. Up to this stage, all the transcribing had been done on my computer at home with Judy and me having done all the auditing. After much discussion, and with Pam's support, there was a change of direction in putting the membership books online. Pam encouraged me to revise my protocol and to complete sections of Books. She would then place each completed section online, knowing when the entire Book was completed, she could reformat the databases and replace the earlier material with the Book in its entirety. This would give immediate online access of selected sections of these last Books.

By 2020, completed sections for Books 7, 8, and 9 were intermittently given to Pam, and they were entered online. With this new direction, I began to search for others who could contribute to the project by transcribing from my photocopies of the remaining books.

Continued...

Preserving Our History, continued

The expansion of contributors to the Membership Book project produced profound results. It was in 2016 that Amy Henderson's immediate positive response to my talking to her in our Sunday School class opened the door for her involvement. Beyond several initial meetings to explain the transcription process and to give her the photocopied material, her computer work did not require meetings at the church. She worked at her own pace and in her own environment. Once her completed entries into Excel reached my computer, the database was organized, and the auditing process began. There was never a request to Amy for her to transcribe another section to which she gave a negative response.



Amy Henderson



Lynn McLarty and Earline Adkison

Judy moved from Tallahassee in 2021, and after a relatively short time, I found another Tallahassee-born Trinity member — Earline Welch Adkison — to take over her position. The auditing of Books 8 and 9 lay before us. As Earlene took Judy's chair at our round table in the Yates Center, she quickly discovered she was finding so many familiar names from her past. As Earline and I struggled to make modest progress in auditing the very comprehensive Chronology by Alphabet section of Book 8, it came to me that, if I had more chairside auditors, I could have several auditing sections taking place during the week. The end of the project was in sight, but more intense work would be required.

Cecile Williamson Baker, who worked alongside me in the last few years in other projects for Trinity's archives, could sense my desire to put more time and energy into the completion of the Membership Book project. There were six or seven sections of the final two Books (8 and 9) that needed auditing. She knew that Book 10 had a unique set of circumstances for transcribing and auditing (See Book 10 Explanation) since it had been generated from computer sources rather than from a written membership book. Her offer to help with auditing several sections of Books 8 and 9 and then immersing herself completely by helping put Book 10 into electronic format was very fortuitous for the project.



Lynn McLarty and Cecile Baker



Lynn McLarty and Cindy McDuffie

In May and June of 2025, Cindy McDuffie shared her talent as a chairside auditor, giving the verification to the final two sections of the Membership Books project. Finally! Now came my preparation of the remaining three books in their entirety into PDF format to be given to Pam for placing online. However, before this could be finalized, we received unexpected news!

In June 2025 the church staff informed the Committee for the Preservation of Church History and the Trinity Historical Society that the church was in the process of upgrading the software for all their computers. Concomitant with the church's expansion of its programs and the need for a newly-designed website, the church procured a separate website for Trinity's online historical records. In July, all the present historical records were removed from the tumct.org domain and placed on the new website dedicated solely to the preservation of church history: tumcthistory.org. From the very beginning, Pam Crosby took the position as webmaster for the new historical site and represented the interests of disseminating Trinity's history via this medium.

When it came to my knowledge of our church historians' having our own site to stage Trinity's history, I immediately had an idea to improve the presentation of the Membership Books section. Adding documents through the years had followed the same format since the beginning in 2014. I wanted to give the congregation and the public a more thorough assessment of each membership book. One will now find more information in the Explanation segment for each Book. Adding this Vision to the new website also has given me the opportunity to share with the congregation how this long, drawn-out project has become such a vital addition to Trinity's records, reaching far beyond the walls of the church. It is with sincere appreciation that I laud those now-deceased individuals who introduced me to the membership records and who encouraged me to accomplish transcribing the registers.

To my wife Miriam and our three daughters, Emily, Rebecca, and Margaret, thank you for supporting me during these thirty years of the project! To Judy, Colleen, Pam, Amy, Earline, Cecile, and Cindy, you individuals who have worked with me so intently, and for the many, many hours you have given to have these special records online in this remarkable format, I thank you so very much. To readers, I invite you to explore the Membership Books and other facets of Trinity's history on our website, tumcthistory.org. If you have questions or items of interest to share, our church historians would love to hear from you at preservation@tumct.org.

Let BFC (Becoming Fit at Church) Ministry Help You Reach Your 2026 Fitness Goals

By Beth Curry, BFC Director

Happy New Year! For many people the New Year means making health and fitness related resolutions. Do you know what the ACSM guidelines for physical activity for healthy adults are? The BFC Exercise and Pickleball programs can help you reach your goals. There is something for everyone! BFC exercise offers classes for beginners who have never exercised or those just getting back to exercise after a break, to seasoned exercise participants who have been at it for years. And our Trinity Pickleball group is open to both new and experienced players who want to enjoy open play in a non-competitive environment. Come have FUN, FELLOWSHIP, get FIT and raise FUNDS by trying a BFC Ministry program. Let us help you meet your 2026 fitness goals!

Exercise Classes

- **Staying Strong** - for those who wish to maintain or build their strength while seated or standing using a chair for support. This class includes short balance and flexibility components. It's a good class for those new to or returning to exercise, or those looking for a basic exercise class.
- **Variety Mix** - for those who wish to have a full upper and lower body workout which includes squats and lunges, with core and balance exercises which may also involve mat/floor work. This class uses a variety of equipment including things like BOSUs, body bars, medicine balls and more. It's a good class for seasoned exercisers who are comfortable standing throughout class or lying on the floor.
- **Flex on the Floor** - for those who wish to improve flexibility, especially in the lower body, and release stress throughout the body. This class uses a small ball, a strap and a mat on the floor. All levels are welcome.
- **Better Balance** - for those who wish to improve balance. This 6-week class begins Thursday, January 8. Participants must attend the first class and will learn about the components of balance and focus on improving balance through seated, standing and walking exercise. Space is limited to 10 participants and requires pre-registration.

Pickleball

Trinity Pickleball! - for those players who wish to join friends on the court for open play at FSU Wesley on Thursday evenings. A Pickleball clinic will be offered on Thursday, January 15, for those who have never played but wish to learn. Pre-registration is required for the clinic.

2026 Schedule

BFC Exercise Classes resume on Tuesday, January 6, 2026, and Pickleball resumes January 15. See our [2026 program flyer](#) on the [Adult Ministries](#) page of the church website for details. Email [BFCseries@yahoo.com](mailto:BFCSeries@yahoo.com) for questions or to register. You may also call the church office to ask for a call back.

ACSM Physical Activity Guidance

Aerobic exercise: \geq 3-5 days per week, depending on intensity, for a total of 150 minutes of moderate exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise, or a combination of both.

Strength training: \geq 2-3 days per week for all major muscle groups

Flexibility training: \geq 2-3 days per week

Balance/Neuromuscular training: \geq 2-3 days per week for older adults or those at risk of falling.

Staff Spotlight: Ben Armstead

By Kathy Drake, Lay Leader

If you've spent any time at Trinity during the week, then you've seen one of our amazing sextons, Ben Armstead. When he's not cleaning up our sanctuary, chapel, Moor Hall, or the front office, you surely see him on Wednesday night helping Betsy and Charlotte serve up dinner. Can you believe that Ben has been at Trinity for 20 years?!

I asked what keeps him here, and his answer was not surprising. Without hesitating, he said, "The people. God, of course. The fellowship — I love Trinity. I don't know what I'd be doing if I wasn't here. ...I'd drive myself crazy trying to think about that." For many years, Ben was not only working here at Trinity, but was also cleaning at the state capitol building!

Ben is a lifelong Tallahassee resident and is the favorite uncle of many nieces and nephews. He's also highly respected by the women in his family. He keeps a garden (which he enjoys!) and is presently growing mustard and collard greens. He tends his garden barefooted because he likes to feel the earth. What does he do in his spare time besides gardening? He loves to shop at Ross and ride ATVS. Who knew? Although he doesn't carry a weapon, he enjoys shooting at the gun range.



Ben Armstead

One more thing you might find surprising about Ben is that he loves heavy metal music! Favorite movie? Slingblade (sad drama). When given the choice between Superman and Batman, he definitely chooses Batman. Favorite holiday? Christmas, because it's fun to watch the kids. It makes him happy when others are happy (especially kids, women, and older people).

Our Operations Administrator, Melanie Gonzalez, says, "Ben is calm, cool, and collected. You always know what you're going to get when you encounter him. He's gentle and kind, and even though you can tell he wants to be in the shadows, he's such a light."

Keep shining, Ben!

Preschool News

By Erin Casey, Director of Preschool

On Friday, December 19, our PK3 and VPK classes presented the story of the Nativity and shared Christmas carols to brighten the season! They performed in the Trinity Sanctuary with proud parents and friends in attendance. This is a Trinity Preschool tradition that helps our students learn about the Christmas story while giving them an opportunity to build confidence and perform for an audience. The preschool is closed until January 7. We look forward to welcoming our students back in the new year.

In January, we will begin the process of registration for the 2026-2027 school year. Registration for currently enrolled families begins January 26. In February, registration will open for church families, followed by a registration period for community members. If you are interested in enrolling a student in our Gold Seal Preschool, please be sure to add your child to our [wait list](#), which is currently available on the church website: tumct.org > Preschool > About Our Preschool.



Children's Ministry Update

By Candace Duclos, Director of Christian Education

NETKids have had a busy Advent season! After weeks of preparation and practice, they proudly presented "One Bright and Shining Star." On Wednesday, December 17, they led visitors through ancient Bethlehem. Guests were treated to a hands-on experience of the world into which Jesus was born, including pottery-making, sheep-herding, king-toss, and pin the halo on the angel. Of course, the crowning event was the birth of the Christ child, as foretold by prophets long ago. Many of our children also participated in the 5:30 p.m. Christmas Eve service, reading, singing, and portraying characters from the Nativity story.

Our 2025 NETKids season has come to a close, but we will be back in action on Wednesday, January 14. We hope our families enjoyed a joyous Christmas together, and we look forward with you to the many wonderful things the new year will bring!



Trinity Youth Happenings

By Britton Stacey, Director of Youth Ministries

Trinity youth closed out the year with a lot of activity! On the first Sunday of Advent, youth helped lead the Hanging of the Greens. Even though our December 6 chili event was canceled due to severe weather, we still managed to sell our chili on Sunday, December 7. Thank you for your support! Our UMYF group helped our Local Missions team organize the Angel Tree gifts so they could be delivered to children in our community. On December 14, we celebrated, ate, exchanged White Elephant gifts, and made s'mores around a bonfire at the Coughlins' home. It was great fun for all! Finally, on Christmas Eve, many of our youth read scriptures and/or participated in musical performances during Christmas Eve services. We are learning to be leaders as well as participants in worship.

Looking ahead, we have great plans for 2026! Our first BIG event will be Rock the Universe, January 22-25, in Orlando. Thirty of us will be traveling to this Christian music festival, and we appreciate your prayers for safe travels and a meaningful time for all. We'll be starting our Confirmation Curriculum soon. Confirmation is open to youth who are not yet members of the church but would like to be. If you are interested in more details about Confirmation, contact me at bstacey@tumct.org.





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WORSHIP SERVICES

Early Service: 8:30 a.m. in the Chapel
Contemporary Service: 9:45 a.m. in Moor Hall
Liturgical Service: 11 a.m. in the Sanctuary

9:45 Contemporary Service and 11:00 Liturgical Service are livestreamed
on [YouTube@TrinityUMCTallahassee](https://www.youtube.com/TrinityUMCTallahassee)

PASTORAL STAFF

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Rev. Anna Brook Opalinski, *Associate Pastor*
Rev. E. Wayne Curry, *Minister of Pastoral Care*

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