

Tidings



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

Getting to Know Trinity's Preschool

By Emily Snowden, Ph.D., Trinity UMC Preschool Advisory Board Member

For over fifty years, Trinity United Methodist Preschool has gone above and beyond in providing high-quality early care and education to young children and their families. With a mission to “nurture and enrich the lives of children during the critical years of early learning,” Trinity’s preschool goes one step further as they also “create the Christian and educational foundation for [the] students to flourish throughout their lives.” This ministry in action is an important service to our broader Tallahassee community, and our support is vital to its ability to continue to grow.

Let’s explore why and how this ministry in action takes place in the preschool, and how we can continue to support the preschool faculty and staff as they serve as the “heart, hands, and feet of Christ” in young children’s lives each day.

Trinity's inaugural 1973-1974 class is pictured above. Preschool founders Claire Nash, left, and Mary Blackburn, right; Front Row: Michael Dalton, Eric Levington, Brian Webbs, Julie Smith; Middle row: Jason Cole, Cindy Levy, Courtney Brown, Brad Lewis, Sally Nash; Third Row: Carla Dalton, Katrina Webb, Laura Cowens; Top row: Kevin McClellan, Travis West



In This Issue

Getting to Know Trinity's Preschool ..	1-3
A Season of Gratitude for Our Pastors	4-5
Memorials and Honorariums	5
Lay Academy Continues With New Classes	6
Celebration Sunday	6
Big Changes in Children's Sunday School.....	7
All Saints' Day.....	7
Trinity's BFC (Becoming Fit at Church) Ministry Celebrates Eighteen Years	8-9
Staff Spotlight.....	10
Preschool Update.....	10
Children's Ministry Update	11
Trinity Youth Happenings.....	11

Trinity's Preschool, *continued*

Why are the early years so important?

In the first five years of a human's life, the brain lays a foundation that will stay with the individual forever (ZEROtoTHREE.org). In this “critical window,” young children take in information at a more rapid pace as they get to know the world that surrounds them. Some of the information they learn is more obvious, like a child saying their first words or taking their first steps. However, young children are also learning vital skills that are less obvious — how to pause and consider the perspective of others, how to recover after making a mistake, how to resist the urge to strike back when someone hits them, and how to love and trust the members of their community, to name a few.



Preschool students learning to interact as a community of learners

However, if a child is not supported and nurtured meaningfully in these early experiences and interactions with the world, that poor foundation stays with them as they continue to grow. Think of it just like the foundation of a home — if it is laid improperly, this can skew the frame, crack the walls, create space where pests can enter, and more. Down the line, this will make it harder and more expensive to maintain the structure.

This is why high-quality early care and education shows high return on public investment. In the words of the First Five Years Fund (2022), research shows “at least a 4x-9x return on investment per dollar and not only benefits the health, education, and development of young children and supports parents currently, but also leads to increased earnings, employment, and safety in the future.”

What is high-quality early care and education?

Whenever we hear “high-quality education,” it may be tempting to think of children sitting quietly in perfect little rows of desks, acing whatever test we put in front of them. While it's true that young children should learn some traditional “school behaviors,” many of the skills they gain as they lay this important foundation are deeply personal and/or social-emotional in nature.

For example, it is of great benefit for a child to start kindergarten knowing that we expect them to raise their hand to speak in a school setting. However, to put that into action, that child also needs to know how to patiently wait to be called on while raising their hand — better yet, how to handle the disappointment if they don't get called on to share this time around.

This is why the quality of early care and education is less about following a strict academic curriculum and more about how we warmly bring children into a community of non-family members, show them God's unconditional love, and set them up to confidently explore our beautiful world in an enriching environment. This is what lays a strong foundation in each child's brain, setting them up for success in their personal, academic, and professional lives.

So, in addition to the more obvious “school behaviors” like raising their hands to speak, recognizing the letters of the alphabet, spelling their names, and walking in a line, in a high-quality preschool the amazing staff members also do the incredibly hard work of helping children learn to share, engage in back-and-forth conversations, regulate their emotions and bodies, make decisions, communicate their thinking, solve problems independently, cheer each other on, and more.



Children in our two-year-old classes participate in an interactive music performance with Alex Taylor, Trinity's Contemporary Music Worship Leader



Preschoolers practice taking turns while experiencing the wonder and fun of bubbles on Trinity's playground

How does Trinity's preschool bring high-quality Christian care and education to families in our community?

Since its founding in 1973, the preschool has been a pillar of high-quality early care and education in Tallahassee and throughout the state. Conceptualized and created by Mary Blackburn and Claire Nash (see cover image), two church members who were also trained as educators, the preschool was designed to be a service to the community as it provided unconditional love, nurturance, and enriching care to the young children in attendance. With continued support from the church, this ministry in action grew into a full-day program that serves children beginning as young as three months until the time they start kindergarten. As generations of young children are cared for in the preschool each day, it has continued to be a safe and enriching place where they are able to learn foundational skills by playing, singing, reading, creating, interacting, and cheering each other on.



VPK students with teacher Kelly Forsmans (right)

In addition to maintaining basic state licensing requirements (through the Florida Department of Children and Families) and accreditation (through the Christian Preschool Association), the preschool went “above and beyond” these standards in 2005 when it became Gold Seal certified by the Florida Division of Early Learning (DEL). This certification communicates to the community the consistent high-quality care that is provided to the children who are enrolled. Most recently, the preschool’s 2025-2026 Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) program also just received an “Excellent” performance designation from DEL.

These accomplishments are the direct result of the hard work that our amazing preschool staff does each day. As we look toward where to grow next, the preschool is beginning the intensive but rewarding process of supplementing their state accreditation with a national accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). This would make them one of only four preschools in our community to obtain this advanced credential.

Our dedicated and outstanding preschool staff members also continue to develop professionally beyond their annual requirements, with Director Erin Casey and PK3 Lead Teacher Erin Ruch both currently pursuing their Master’s Degrees. VPK Lead Teacher Kelly Forsmans recently completed her Master’s Degree in Curriculum and Instruction as well.

How can we continue to support the preschool?

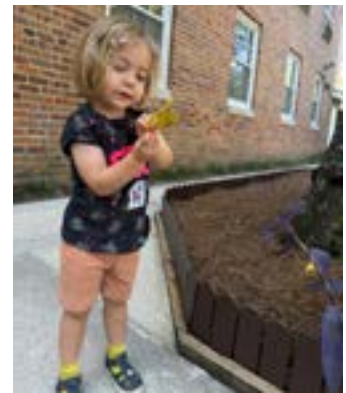
Support from the church and the individuals who make up the congregation has been vital in getting the preschool where it is today. Erin Casey and her incredible team are enormously grateful for the many ways the ministries of the church currently provide them with this support, like weekly chapel with the wonderful Candace Duclos, the enormously successful August Local Missions collection, special presentations by church staff members, and an upcoming partnership with the Trinity Ministry Dogs. The preschool reciprocates by participating in opportunities for giving, like the Local Missions Monthly Collections.

As we turn and envision how we will accomplish our newest goals, here are some meaningful ways you can continue to help support this amazing ministry:



Preschool students participate in chapel with Candace Duclos, Trinity’s Senior Director of Christian Education

- **Make a year end tax deductible financial gift.** The most recent fundraising efforts were incredibly successful and have made a huge impact on the daily operations of the preschool. By making a tax deductible financial gift, these funds not only contribute to the preschool’s operational expenses, but also in connecting our preschool staff with opportunities to continue their learning and professional growth. Click the hyperlink above or scan the QR code to donate.
- **Watch for preschool fundraisers throughout the year.** You can also support the preschool as they continue to engage in small- and large-scale fundraising efforts throughout the year. This is particularly important in helping our preschool staff attend the yearly Christian Preschool Association (CPA) conference in March. Keep an eye out for communications about when these opportunities are happening, like the preschool’s annual Lucky Goat fundraiser.
- **Pray for the teachers, staff, and families.** The work they do is extraordinary, but in our modern society, it can be quite thankless. It might mean everything to an early childhood professional (or any caregiver of a young child!) just to know you see and realize they are tirelessly helping to lay this foundation in each child’s life. It means even more when you include our teachers, staff, and families in your prayers.



Dr. Emily Snowden is a former preschool employee and current preschool parent who proudly serves on the Preschool Advisory Board. Dr. Snowden credits her upbringing in Trinity United Methodist Church with the foundation that she built her ECE career on — starting with the care she received from Mrs. Victoria as a toddler, into volunteering at VBS, running the BFC nursery, and eventually teaching PK3 while she completed her graduate studies. These experiences instilled in her a love of early learning and first-hand knowledge of what ECE can be at its best. She currently works as an early care and education consultant and publishes free evidence-based resources for young children’s caregivers on www.connectandgrowece.org

A Season of Gratitude for Our Pastors

By Pam Epting, Staff-Parish Relations Committee Chair

October is Pastor Appreciation Month — a dedicated time for our congregation to express gratitude for our pastors and their devoted service, faith leadership, and personal care for the members of this church. While appreciation for our spiritual leaders should be shown throughout the year, this month gives us an opportunity to offer something special in recognition of their ministry.



Rev. Dr. Matthew M. Williams
Senior Pastor



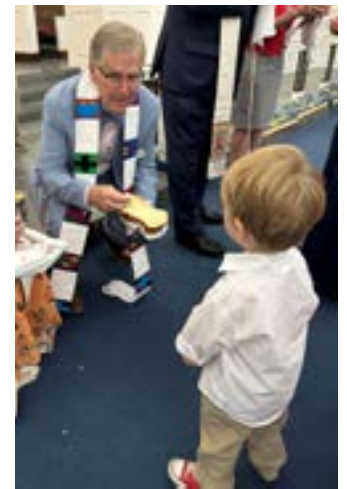
Rev. Dr. Ivy Smith
Associate Pastor



Rev. E. Wayne Curry
Minister of Pastoral Care

Being a pastor is truly a 24/7 calling. Pastors serve not only as the spiritual guide of our congregation, but also as counselors, teachers, administrators, financial stewards, and caregivers. They carry a remarkable range of responsibilities, wearing many hats in faithful service to their vocation. And it's not only pastors who sacrifice — their families make sacrifices as well. With every late-night call, every interrupted dinner, and every weekend spent serving instead of resting, their loved ones quietly give up time and shared moments so that pastors can care for the congregation.

We should take time to acknowledge the challenges of their work and the stress they often bear in silence — especially when some still joke that pastors only work one day a week. Their sacrifices, offered to help our congregation grow spiritually, are both generous and impactful.



Rev. Curry serving communion
to one of Trinity's children



Rev. Curry hands out water
with Trinity's youth at
Springtime Tallahassee



Rev. Williams enjoys our
summer luau with Cynthia
Smith, Linda Bianco, Julie
Parraro, and Mason Harris



Sheryl Hamm, Rev. Smith, Gail and Tony
Quickle, Jim and Nancy Mitchell, Linda
Stamatoff, Beverly Burleson, and Becky
Lachance meet for breakfast at Village Inn

Pastor Appreciation Sunday October 11

Sunday, October 11, is Pastor Appreciation Sunday, a day set aside to celebrate the pastors who guide us, pray for us, and walk beside us in faith. The Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) will place baskets in both the narthex and the Welcome Center to collect cards for our pastors. We encourage you to uplift our pastors with a note of appreciation or a small token of gratitude.



Rev. Williams and Rev. Smith
leading chapel worship

Honoring Our Pastors

When we honor our pastors, we also honor God's call for spiritual leadership. The Bible reminds us in 1 Timothy 5:17, "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching" (NIV). By recognizing their service and dedicating a month to appreciation, we demonstrate our willingness to learn and grow under their guidance. It is also a chance for each of us to reflect on our own faith journey and the ways our pastors have shaped and supported us. As we acknowledge their influence, we deepen our relationship with God and with our pastors, strengthening our church community.

I encourage you to cultivate a heart of gratitude and warmly express appreciation for our pastors during this time of recognition. While Sundays may seem like the best opportunity to connect, they are often the busiest for pastors. Instead, consider reaching out during the week — send an encouraging email about how much a sermon meant to you, or make it more personal by sending a handwritten note or card.



Rev. Curry dines and studies with members of the Tuesday morning Men's Daybreak



Rev. Smith meets with members of Trinity's Circle One



Rev. Williams and Rev. Smith enjoy lunch with Trinity members and their AI server at Westminster Oaks

Expressing Our Gratitude

No Christian is immune to hardship or the need for encouragement, and this includes pastors. During October, think about the ways you appreciate being supported and look for opportunities to extend that same kindness to your pastor. A small act of thoughtfulness can make a meaningful difference in the life of a church leader. This might include lifting them in prayer, offering a word of encouragement, or giving a small token of appreciation in recognition of their faithful service.

Trinity is blessed with an extraordinary team of clergy, past and present. They share their time, wisdom, and gifts with remarkable generosity to all they encounter. In this season of gratitude, let us give back to those who so faithfully give their time and talents to us.



Memorials and Honorariums

September 2026

In memory of Rhonda Work for Friends of Ministry from Ann D. Martin Jenkins

In memory of Patti Oakley for Children's Ministry from Ann D. Martin Jenkins

Lay Academy Continues With New Classes

By Stewart Fleming, Creation Care Chair

Mark your calendars and plan to attend one or more Lay Academy sessions sponsored by Creation Care starting Wednesday, October 14! Rev. Bob Gibbs will lead us in exploring "God's Renewed Creation: A Call to Hope and Action." This curriculum was designed by a task force of the Council of Bishops led by former Florida Bishop Timothy Whitaker and connects environmental stewardship with spiritual renewal.



The theme for the Season of Creation 2026, which runs from September 1 through October 4, is "Living Water." The Biblical text for this year is drawn from Ezekiel 47:9-12, which portrays God's life-giving water flowing from the temple of God. The river grows deeper and deeper, restoring barren land, reviving waters, and sustaining flourishing ecosystems.

The vision invites human responsibility: recognizing ecological damage, embracing interconnectedness, we are called to immerse ourselves in the water, and actively safeguarding and working for the renewal of creation so that environmental healing and human well-being may flourish together.

We hope you are finding "Living Water" in this Season of Creation, and we hope that you'll join us for Lay Academy classes on October 14 - November 18, at 6:15 p.m. in room 305.



Join us for a discussion of
Proposed Constitutional Amendments

**Wednesday,
October 7**

6:15 p.m.

Room 305

Be informed about the amendments that will be voted on in November as they have significant implications for Leon County and for the state.

Trish Neely, past president of the League of Women Voters, will lead us in understanding the purposes and implications of the proposed Constitutional amendments.

**Bring your pledge card and join us for
CELEBRATION SUNDAY on October 4!**



Pledge cards were mailed out in September and are also available at the church.
[For your convenience, we offer the option of a digital pledge card that can be completed online.](#)

You can scan the QR code to access our online pledge card now, or use the links that can be found in our weekly *News & Notes* emails and on our website.



Big Changes in Children's Sunday School

By Candace Duclos, Senior Director of Christian Education



Big changes have occurred in children's Sunday school! We've established a designated drop-off and pick-up location for all children, and after some whole-group time together, children experience a rotation of hands-on learning activities. Our Trinity kids are loving it!

Our curriculum has been revived and reimagined to adapt to the needs of our youngest learners. Each Sunday morning, students in preschool through fifth grade are now dropped off in room 205 at 9:30 a.m. Here, all ages enjoy fellowship and play, making transitions easier for kids and parents. Students are then invited to join their age group to rotate through three different learning stations, spending 10 minutes at each of the following stations:

- **Bible Adventure:** Children experience the weekly Bible story through either puppets, drama, or reading from the Bible.
- **Imagination Station:** Through games or science experiments, students learn more about the Bible story message.
- **Creation Station:** Students explore the Bible story through art projects or crafty creations.

Sunday school ends back in room 205, where we enjoy praise and worship time as well as a review of all we learned and encountered. Infant and toddler care are available beginning at 9:30 a.m. in room 204. If you have not yet brought your child to Sunday school, we invite you to join us this Sunday!



Adult volunteers like Will Hall and Bob and Sheryl Hamm lead students in their new Sunday school adventures

Join us for
All Saints' Day
Sunday, November 1, 2026

We will honor those who have passed away since last All Saints' Day
by reading their names at all services.

Trinity's BFC (Becoming Fit at Church)

By Beth Curry, BFC Director

September 2, 2026 marked the eighteenth anniversary of the first BFC exercise class at Trinity! What started as one fitness class with eight people has continued to grow non-stop with over 500 Trinity members and friends attending throughout the years. Exercise attendance is now between twenty-five and thirty-five per day! Currently the BFC Ministry offers not only five weekly exercise classes, but our two-year-old Pickleball group meets weekly on Thursdays all year, too.



Missions and Ministries That Grew From BFC

Did you know that Hats and Mats for Friends, as well as the mission trip to Guatemala, grew out of this ministry? Over the years the BFC Ministry also held six Health Fairs, multiple blood mobile visits, multiple CPR classes, a Trinity Runners Club, and a Walk to Bethlehem group that walked the distance to Bethlehem and back three years in a row! In 2024, our Walk to Bethlehem was even featured in the *Tallahassee Democrat*.

BFC is All About Giving

But the most special thing about the BFC Team members is that they have always volunteered their time so that classes remain free. BFC participants have collectively raised more than \$100,000 through their suggested class donations since that first class in 2008! These funds have gone to support many worthwhile missions and charities locally and globally, including a portion going to the Give Back to Trinity effort, which supports various ministries and needs around our church.

Many thanks and Happy Anniversary to the wonderful BFC Team members who have graciously given of their time and talents, and to ALL the participants, both past and present, who have faithfully attended and consistently made financial contributions. The BFC mission statement has been reached many times over — Together We Can Make a Difference!

Come join us as we continue to carry out our vision in every exercise class or Pickleball game: To gather with Friends, for Fun, Fellowship, Fitness and to raise Funds for community service!

Enjoy this visual walk down memory lane with pictures through the 18 years of BFC Ministry!



2009 Jingle Bell Run



2009 Variety Mix



2010 Hats



2010 Hats



2010 Jingle Bell Run



2011 Community Garden



2011 Hats for Christmas



2011 First Mats



2011 Shamrock Scurry

Ministry Celebrates Eighteen Years!



2011 Staying Strong



2011 Variety Mix



2012 BFC Health Fair



2012 Shamrock Scurry



2013 Staying Strong Sock Tradition Begins



2014 Community Garden



2014 Flu Shots



2014 Shamrock Scurry



2014 Jingle Bell Run



2014 Health Fair With Smokey the Bear



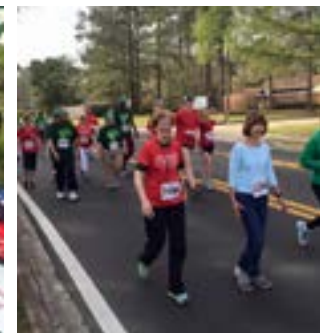
2015 Guatemala Medical Mission



2015 Variety Mix Outdoors



2015 TUFF - Trinity United in Fitness and Fellowship



2016 TUFF

Interested in joining BFC?

BFC is still going strong! Visit the [Adult Ministries](#) page of Trinity's website for all the latest details and [class schedule](#). Email BFCSeries@yahoo.com for more information, or call the church office and ask for a call back.

Staff Spotlight: Ciara Morgan

By Kathy Drake, Lay Leader

You may have seen this young lady around Trinity with a few of our youngest members trailing behind or chatting with her on a Wednesday evening, so let me introduce you. Ciara Morgan is a Child Behavior Specialist who has worked with Candace Duclos for the last three years helping our Trinity kids to “become the best version of themselves.”

You might see Ciara providing support, being a comfort spot for all our Trinity kids, or just holding babies! Growing up in Fort Lauderdale and then moving to Orlando in sixth grade, Ciara attended FAMU, receiving a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology. She is currently attending FSU, pursuing a Master's Degree in Social Work. Ciara has always been interested in behavior, as all her younger brothers were diagnosed with ADHD. Recently, she also received an ADHD diagnosis, so it has become her “thing” to be able to see her siblings, self, friends, and family beyond what is merely presented to the eyes.



Ciara Morgan
Child Behavior Specialist

Ciara became a Registered Behavioral Technician first in 2025 and believes that “to understand children, you must understand behavior.” In addition to her work at Trinity, she provides behavior support to children on the autism spectrum primarily in both Tallahassee and Crawfordville.

Luckily for us, Ciara found out about Trinity through her close friend and roommate who loved attending and working here! Besides her time here and doing her coursework at FSU, she is usually reading or spending time with loved ones. Her mother came to the United States from Jamaica when she was 11 years old and earned her B.S. in Healthcare Administration after serving in the army for seven years, so helping others runs in the family. Last but not least, let's find out something fun: Board games or video games, Ciara? “I definitely would choose video games; and it can only be Mario Kart!”

Preschool News

By Erin Casey, Director of Preschool

In September, our preschoolers were treated to a visit from Joe Budd Conservation Center. The children were able to get a close-up look at some animals who live in our area while enjoying some multi-sensory learning. The Joe Budd representatives provided a great hands-on experience that was fun and memorable for all of us!



During our study of dinosaurs last month, our PreK students worked to develop a concept of just how big some dinosaurs were! Using an actual-size model of a Tyrannosaurus Rex footprint, students (and teachers!) made a comparison to their own feet. As you can see, we were able to fit an entire classroom collection of our shoes into one T-Rex footprint! It was a great way develop some perspective about size, and it was a “fitting” end for our dinosaur unit.



Children's Ministry Update

By Candace Duclos, Director of Christian Education

October is a month that brings us many changes: shorter days, colorful leaves, and (hopefully) cooler temperatures! For Trinity kids, October also brings us Celebrate Kids Sunday! This special Sunday highlights our Children's Ministries and allows our youngest members to become leaders in worship. Our NETKids will be singing during the 11:00 a.m. service that day. We hope you will join us for **Celebrate Kids Sunday on October 25**.

Also on October 25, our kindergarten and third grade students will be presented with their very own Bibles. This is a longstanding tradition at Trinity UMC, fondly remembered by many of our youth and adults. **If you have a child in either kindergarten or third grade**, please let me know if they would like to receive a Bible. I will need your child's name written as it should appear on the presentation page.

In other news, our Wednesday afternoon NETKids program is thriving. We invite all children in grades K-5 to join us for fun, fellowship, and learning. See us in action in the pictures below! If you would like to register a child for NETKids, please visit the [Children's Ministries page of our website](#) to find the registration link.



Trinity Youth Happenings

A special message from Britton Stacey

When I started my tenure as Youth Director at Trinity, I had no idea what the next two years would present. I never could have imagined the growth our youth group would accomplish over that span of time. We've had a faithful group of young people participating in Praise Band, UMYF, Rock the Universe, Camp, VBS, Fall Retreats, meet-ups, and more. None of this would have been possible without the work of our amazing volunteers, who give their time weekly to come and support this ministry.

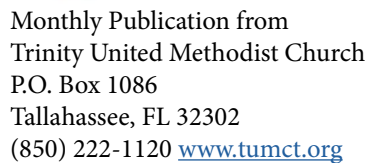
For me personally, this has been one of the greatest times of my life, and I couldn't be more thankful for the support Trinity has given me and my family. During my time here, my wife Haley and I were blessed with our first child, Laney Jean. We have relied upon the gracious assistance of our church and youth group as we've navigated this world as parents. In November, we will welcome our baby boy. While we did not foresee two years ago that we would be leaving Trinity and Tallahassee, we have made the difficult decision to move so that we can be closer to family. We want our children to grow up near their grandparents, and we will appreciate the comfort and support of living close to family. Therefore, September 30 will be my last day at Trinity.

In October, I will begin a new position as Youth Director at First United Methodist Church of Cocoa Beach. While nothing could ever replace the experience I've had here, I look forward to this new chapter of my life and will always treasure the foundation I built at Trinity.

To all of the Trinity youth, please remember that you are always loved and supported, no matter what. Even though I am leaving, I encourage you to keep up with the momentum we've built, and continue to love and support all those who become a part of this program. Keep an open mind, and give your next Youth Director as much love and support as you can. As I always say, it's never goodbye; it's see you later. And I look forward to seeing where life takes you.



Britton and youth at a summer meet-up



Early Service: 8:30 a.m. in the Chapel
Contemporary Service: 9:45 a.m. in Moor Hall
Liturgical Service: 11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary

Rev. Dr. Matthew M. Williams, *Senior Pastor*
 Rev. Dr. Ivy Smith, *Associate Pastor*
 Rev. E. Wayne Curry, *Minister of Pastoral Care*

Ben Armstead, *Facility Steward*
Laurie Atteberry, *Business Administrator*
Dori Barton, *Financial Assistant*
Erin Casey, *Director of Preschool*
Douglas Chaplow, *Organist*
Candace Duclos, *Senior Director of Christian Education*
Betsy Gingery, *Culinary Director*
Melanie Gonzalez, *Director of Operations*

Gregory Hilliard, *Director of Traditional Music*
Corey McHugh, *Production Assistant*
Chip Huggins, *Maintenance Technician*
Susan Koehler, *Director of Communications*
Anne Plagens, *Christian Education Assistant*
Alex Taylor, *Contemporary Music Worship Leader*
Heather Watson, *Administrative Assistant*
Matt Wright, *Facility Steward*

- Sign up for our News & Notes weekly email newsletter on our website www.tumct.org
- Like us on [Facebook](#) @TrinityUMCTallahassee
- Follow us on [Instagram](#) @umctrinity
- Find our livestream on [YouTube@TrinityUMCTallahassee](#)