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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Have you ever been browsing the periodicals and stumbled across a scientific journal or academic magazine that really smart people get published in, and can often sound like technical nonsense. But here's the funny thing: Sometimes those articles actually are pure, nonsensical gibberish, the product of automated word generators. The computer programs that craft the phony articles simply throw fancy words together in quasi-coherent sentences, producing full-length articles. No one is clear as to why someone would submit a gibberish article for publication. And it's not clear how such an article passed peer review.

But let's be honest. For many people, the Bible can sound as though it were thrown together by an automated word generator. Even for one who's grown up going to Sunday school, it's easy to flip through the Scripture and find chapters so dense that one's eyes glaze over. It's okay to admit that sometimes the Bible sounds like gibberish. Likewise, what about some of the jargon we throw around in our Christian communities? If you approach someone at work and ask them how his "walk" has been lately, he'll look at you sideways and tell you that he carools into the office. A lot of the language we throw around in Christian circles can sound like total nonsense. That's why it's so refreshing to the "person in the pew" when we stumble upon a section of Scripture that clearly and simply lays out God's

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truth for our hearts and God's directive for our lives.

Take Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 5. This is a gibberish-free zone where Paul explains how believers should behave. He puts a simple and powerful phrase at the center of it all: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." It's so simple it's disarming. Have you ever wanted to know what God's will was for your life? Have you ever wondered what God wants you to be doing with your time? These are big questions, and yet here God is, through the words of Paul, giving us a very simple answer: rejoice, pray and give thanks. No gibberish there. Even with such a clear directive in the Scripture, we still tend to muddy things up. Perhaps we can avoid that when looking at this reading as opportunity to share some basic, yet powerful, truths.

Start with the call to "rejoice always". Although this is clear and simple, the word "rejoice" is not one we hear outside of a Christian or religious context. Perhaps another way to say "rejoice always" is to say "choose joy" whenever possible. Every day, we have opportunities before us to choose the posture of our heart, in

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response to the actions of others and the events in the world. Will we choose bitterness, jealousy, greed, worry? As followers of Jesus Christ one can acknowledge this menu of à la carte choices in front of him or her. That's what Paul is saying.

And what makes choosing joy easier amid the myriad of other options is choosing first to surround oneself with other people who have the same aim. The power of community is too strong for your willpower to overcome. The same is true with our attitudes. If you want to choose joy, choose first to surround yourself with joyful people.

What about prayer? Is it even possible to pray continually as Paul urges? Paul's words here speak more to our attitude as Christians than anything else. Let's recognize that we're in the presence of God each moment of every day. God is beside us, at all times, and can be called upon at any given moment. That's what Paul's talking about.

The last imperative from Paul might be the most difficult of all. It's one thing to give thanks; it's another to give thanks no matter the circumstance. Paul is saying: Even when it's time to complain or to weep, there's still some reason to give thanks. Paul's not saying that the job of the Christian is to ignore pain and sorrow, but to give thanks to God even within the pain and sorrow. We tend to focus only on "big" reasons to be thankful: when the baby is born, when the promotion comes or when we're healed of a disease. However, Scripture encourages us to start small with our gratitude because there's always a small blessing to lay hold of. What if you list your blessings, starting small with the most mundane of life's gifts? Have you ever given thanks for eyelashes? Think about what they do. What about that first sip of coffee in the morning? Isn't that the best? What about the smell of bacon or the feeling of a fresh haircut? Do you give thanks when you get to open the windows in the house after a long, cold winter?

The key to a life of gratitude is not that you always have some big thing for which to praise God; sometimes you don't. The key to a life of gratitude is giving thanks for the small things that you never run out of and then working your way up the list as far as you can. That's what Paul is talking about.

Joy. Prayer. Gratitude. The life, death and resurrection of Christ has defeated the powers of darkness and set us free to pursue some very simple things. Why is it that we make the Christian life so complicated? How is it that we can take some of the simplest ideas of Scripture and muddy them up, making them sound like gibberish? No gibberish here. It's quite simple. Choose joy, talk to God and give thanks for eyelashes.

Yours in the Light of Christ,  
Father Bill +

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## Vestry Report

The Vestry discussed the 2015 Budget and voted to accept as written by our Treasurer, Dori Riggs. The budget is consistent with our 2014 actuals and will be presented to the parish at the Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 25<sup>th</sup>.

A review of the plans for the Christmas service was held. Because the United Baptist Church is meeting in the Parish Hall on December 28<sup>th</sup>, there won't be any chairs available in the Chapel, so we will continue to meet in the Church through the end of December. Our first service in the Chapel will be Sunday, January 4<sup>th</sup>.

There are two wardens, two vestry and a clerk position open for 2015. If you feel that you would like to be more involved in the business of the church, we would love to have new faces around the vestry table. Please contact Sue Draht, Senior Warden, or Father Bill to volunteer.

A donation from the Panosian Family Foundation was received, for which we are very grateful. Pledges have been coming in slowly; it's important for our budget process to have a final pledge tally.

Our next vestry meeting is Wednesday, January 14<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm in the Trinity Room.

Financial Report		
	<b>YTD November 2014</b>	<b>Month of November 2014</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Actual</b>
Pledges	\$47,013.00	\$4,583.33
Plate Offering	\$985.00	\$208.33
Facility Use Income	\$25,730.00	\$2,000.00
Pastoral Sub ELCA	\$42,354.60	\$3,850.43
Thrift Shop Operations	\$3,648.06	\$476.95
Other Income	\$389.63	
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$120,120.29</b>	<b>\$11,119.04</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Buildings & Grounds	\$34,791.58	\$3,749.21
Christian Ed & Spiritual Growth	\$1,621.19	\$243.34
Diocese	\$13,967.30	\$1,418.20
Governance	\$86,392.31	\$6,230.08
Lay Staff	\$16,602.43	\$1,879.05
Lay Staff Fringes	\$3,041.99	\$154.31
Miscellaneous	\$327.66	\$0.00
Office Expenses	\$4,373.91	\$417.49
Pastoral Care	\$1,112.62	\$133.33
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$162,230.99</b>	<b>\$14,225.01</b>
<b>Pos/(neg) results</b>	<b>\$(42,110.70)</b>	<b>\$(3,582.92)</b>

### January Birthdays

1: Nancy Isaacs	19: Michael Rusinko and Kendra Macomber
3: Steve Scofield	20: Chester Thomas
4: Erin Van Deusen and Benjamin Buchholz	21: Daniel McGovern and Jeff Scofield
7: Jennifer Nugent	23: Carol Van Deusen
9: Katie Van Deusen	25: Kathleen McGuire
12: Susan Nagle	26: Emily Meyn
13: Michael Butts	27: Mary Stickler and Cathy Callas
14: Lorraine Banfield	29: Jaime Burless
15: David Melens	31: Steven Snyder

## Trinity History Corner

### **The Rev. Mary Frances Curns Celebrates the Tenth Anniversary of her Ordination**

This Epiphany 2015 marks the tenth anniversary of the ordination to the priesthood of The Reverend Mary Frances Curns at Christ's Episcopal Church in New Bern, NC. Mary Frances was born and raised in Elmira and in Trinity Episcopal Church. A graduate of Southside High School and Mansfield University, she earned a Master of Science in Education degree from Elmira College and enjoyed a successful career as a music teacher in the Elmira City School District. Called to the priesthood, she entered into study for the Masters of Divinity degree at General Seminary and upon graduation was ordained to the diaconate at Trinity Episcopal Church. She is currently rector of St. Anne's Episcopal Church in Jacksonville, NC.

Congratulations to our own Mary Frances on the anniversary of her ordination!

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### **Third Friday Labyrinth Walk Friday, January 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm**

Third Friday walks continue at Trinity beginning on January 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm. In addition, there will be special walks throughout the year both at Trinity and First Presbyterian Church's indoor labyrinths and on the outdoor labyrinths at Christ the Redeemer Parish's Labyrinth at Lourdes and Chickadee Circle Labyrinth. Watch *The Record* for announcements of 2015 ecumenical walks as well as open walks-all are invited. Schedules will be available in early January.

Trinity will host monthly Third Friday walks throughout the year, except in June, July and August. This year the Worldwide Labyrinth Day will be observed on Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> on the Labyrinth at Lourdes. There will be the Blessing of the Animals on Sunday afternoon, October 4<sup>th</sup> at Chickadee Circle.

In 2015 water your spirit with the peace and tranquility that a labyrinth walk can provide.



## Thrift Shop Report

The Thrift Shop has concluded operations for 2014 and we are looking forward to a prosperous 2015. On December 6 and 13 we were open for extended hours to take advantage of extra traffic downtown, which also proved to be profitable for us. On December 20<sup>th</sup> we held a half-price sale to clear some inventory, which also proved successful. While we didn't make as much money as we normally would, we did clear out some inventory that had been with us since we opened.

Between December 22<sup>nd</sup> and January 2<sup>nd</sup> we will be re-doing the shop to pack up some of the old inventory and setting up some of the newer donations. We get a lot of repeat customers and we would like to feature some of the newer stuff and change our displays. On January 3<sup>rd</sup> we will reopen with new merchandise. We have found that doing a cross promotion with Grace Church's monthly rummage sale on the first Saturday of every month has been helpful for both churches. We see traffic that heard about our sale from Grace and vice versa.

As always, donations are appreciated and gratefully accepted. If you wish to donate goods, they can be brought to the shop during Saturday hours (9:00 am to 12:00 pm) or call the church to make arrangements for drop off. We need new things!

Thank you to everyone who has helped over the past seven months. Our team concept for Saturday hours seems to be working, but as always, if you would like to volunteer and haven't worked with us yet, we would love to have you join us. Contact Sue Draht for more information.



### January Anniversaries

30: Mary and Michael Butts

## TRINITY RECORD

### Fellowship/Hospitality Team

The Fellowship/Hospitality team worked extremely hard throughout the month of December. We decorated the Parish Hall just after finishing the last of the turkey leftovers from Thanksgiving. The Parish Hall looked spectacular with the new paint job and the garland and wreaths. It served as the holiday backdrop for our Advent Brunch with our Baptist neighbors, the Near Westside Holiday Home Tour cookie and punch reception that saw hundreds coming to Trinity, a Holiday Happening Luncheon that was very well attended and such a pleasant afternoon for all, a continental breakfast for Bishop Adams' visit, and finally, the delicious potluck dinner following the Lessons and Carols service. We have decorated, set up (and taken down!) tables, baked, shared special recipes, and cleaned up for each of these events. Those who attended any one of these events would agree that the Hospitality Team is made up of superstars! Kudos to Georgia, Joy, Jackie, Carol, Nancy, Judy, Jeanne, Tari and Mike for their commitment and hard work. They are all vital members of this team.

If you have ideas for fellowship activities or would like to join us in our hospitality activities, please let us know. We have just welcomed B.J. McDonald to our team and look forward to having her help, ideas and enthusiasm!

Submitted by Lisa Kelly



Date	Lector	EM	Intercessor	Acolyte	Ushers	Altar Guild	Offering Counter
Jan -4 Second Sunday after Christmas	Sue Nagle Jeremiah 31:7-14 Ephesians 1:3- 6, 15-19a	Joe Perry Psalm 84 <b>OR</b> Psalm 84:1-8	Sue Collins	Nick Potter	Al Draht and Mike Buchholz	Nancy Isaacs and Tari Buchholz	Judy Sheasley
Jan-11 First Sunday after Epiphany	David Jordan Genesis 1:1-5 Acts 19:1-7	Dan Brayer Psalm 29	Emily Meyn	Steve Buchholz	Joe Battisti and Carol Van Deusen	Jackie Draht and Jeanne Battisti	Judy Sheasley
Jan-18 Second Sunday after Epiphany	Mark Lewis 1 Samuel 3:1- 10 (11-20) 1 Corinthians 6:12-20	Sue Draht Psalm 139:1- 5, 12-17	Lisa Kelly	Kendra Mace	Dan Brayer and Scott Mace	Judy Sheasley and Emily Meyn	Judy Sheasley
Jan-25 Third Sunday after Epiphany	Dan Brayer Jonah 3:1-5, 10 1 Corinthians 7:29-31	Shelly Bacmanski Psalm 62:6-14	Haleigh Carlson	Nick Potter	Steve Snyder and Judy Sheasley	Nancy Isaacs and Judy Sheasley	Judy Sheasley

## Trinity Staff

Rector—Rev. Dr. William C. Lutz. Father Bill is at Trinity Church on Mondays and Wednesdays and at Emauel on Tuesdays and Thursdays. He can always be reached by calling his cell at 607-725-1090.

Office Staff— Kelly Comfort ([info@trinitychurchelmira.org](mailto:info@trinitychurchelmira.org)). The office number is 607-732-3241.

Sexton—Coley Perry

Organist—Sharon Reynolds

Wardens— Susan Draht and Tom Padgett

Office Hours: Monday 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 9:00 am to 1:00 pm

Closed Friday