

Tidings



Trinity UMC ONWARD PLANNING DAY

May 3, 2025
9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

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

Visioning Day is Upon Us!

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

Visioning Day is upon us! On Saturday, May 3, we are setting aside a sacred day in the life of our church. I want to invite you, not out of obligation but out of the deep belief that your voice, experience, and perspective are essential to how God works among us as the Trinity Congregation.

This day is not simply about hearing a presentation or being handed a plan. It is about listening—to each other, to our community, and to the Holy Spirit. It is about discerning who we are, who we are becoming, and what it means to live out our mission in this time and place.

Christina Drouin, the founder of the Center for Strategic Planning who has been walking with us through this journey over the last several months, will join us. Her guidance has created a level playing field where every voice can be heard, and we can focus on our gifts. We are excited and honored to welcome her to Tallahassee as she leads us through this next step in the process.

God tells the prophet Habakkuk, “Write the vision; make it plain... so that a runner may read it.” A clear path forward is a gift. It brings people together and moves us forward. To discover this path, there must be listening. That is what this day is for. Whether you have been a part of Trinity for decades or joined recently, your voice carries equal weight. We need to hear from you!

Please arrive by 8:30 to sign in and pick up some food so that we can begin the meeting promptly at 9:00. A light breakfast and lunch will be provided, and childcare will be available from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. You are welcome to come the whole time or stay as long as you can.

I believe this day will help shape the next chapter of Trinity’s life—not from the top down, but from the ground up. From the chairs and the pews. From the classrooms. From children, youth, and adults. From the hands that serve, the hearts that pray, and the lives being transformed in this place.

Let us take this step forward together—with open hands, open hearts, and open ears. Join me in praying: Come, Holy Spirit, Come.

With gratitude and expectation,
Rev. Dr. Matthew M. Williams

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Scan this QR code to register for
Onward Planning Day!

Honoring Stacey Duggar

By Dr. Matthew M. Williams, Senior Pastor

In every calling, talented individuals live out their gifts in a variety of ways. At Trinity, we have been deeply blessed to witness that truth in the life and leadership of Stacey Duggar, who has faithfully served as our Preschool Director for the past twenty-one years. As the time comes to bid her farewell, I want to take a few moments to reflect on who she is, what she has meant to this community, and why she will be so greatly missed.

When I first learned of my appointment to Trinity, my family was navigating a season of great joy and change. After seventeen years of marriage, we had been blessed with a child just two years earlier. The thought of moving was already complicated, but moving with a toddler brought with it an entirely new level of stress. Like many parents in that position, one of our first questions was, "Does the church have a preschool? And if so, what is it like?"

Our nerves were quickly calmed as we read about Trinity United Methodist Preschool. It gave us a sense of peace that we didn't even realize we needed. Stacey was one of the first persons we connected with. She answered every question we had, took the time to walk us through the program, gave us a tour of the facilities, and made sure Ethan had a spot in the preschool. That spot became much more than just a place to learn and grow. It became a second home for him, a space filled with love, safety, and joy for three formative years.

What Stacey provided was not simply a well-run preschool. She built a nurturing and faith-centered environment that brought comfort to parents and delight to children. Her administrative leadership was strong, organized, and thoughtful. But even more importantly, she created a culture of care and excellence. It was clear from the very beginning that the staff she led not only respected her leadership, but also shared her deep commitment to the children. Stacey empowered her team, gave them room to grow, and modeled servant leadership through her own daily actions.

Beyond her leadership, Stacey lives out her faith in a quiet but powerful way. For our family, it was incredibly important that our son attend a Christian preschool, a place where his earliest spiritual questions would be met with care and where seeds of faith would begin to take root. Stacey made that possible. She brought the love of Christ into her work, not just in curriculum or activities, but in how she treated others, how she approached each day, and how she modeled kindness, patience, and joy.



Stacey Duggar and Rev. Dr. Matthew M. Williams

She embodies the General Rules of Methodism: Do no harm. Do good. Stay in love with God. These principles are not just ideas she believes in; they are values she lives by. And because of that, every child who walked through the doors of Trinity United Methodist Preschool experienced something more than education. They experienced Christian hospitality, intentional care, and the kind of love that reflects the heart of Christ.

As I think about Stacey's legacy, I am reminded of Jesus' words in Luke 18:16. "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." Stacey has spent more than two decades making sure that nothing hindered children from experiencing that love and care. She created a space where they could come, grow, and flourish in the knowledge that they were loved by God and by those around them.

Stacey, thank you for your years of faithful service, for the many lives you have touched, and for the grace with which you have led. We are grateful for all you have given, and we will miss you dearly.

A Pillar of Support

By Candace Duclos, Director of Christian Education

When I came as a teacher to Trinity United Methodist Preschool in the fall of 1999, I did not know how much of my life was about to change. I had heard from a friend that there was a very good downtown preschool in need of a PreK 4 teacher and that I should go interview. I was offered the job and began working with a really funny, creative, and organized teacher of three year olds, Stacey Duggar.

After a few weeks of working together, Stacey and I “clicked.” We offered each other suggestions about instructional techniques, figuring out how make a project work, classroom management, and life in general. We had the inside jokes, the serious moments, and the listening ears for each other whenever needed.

Stacey became my boss in 2004, but our dynamic stayed the same. We were colleagues, friends, confidants, cheerleaders, and each other's support system. She was the first person I called when I went into surprise labor with my fourth child! She came running to my house at 5:00 a.m. to watch the other kids so I could head to the hospital.

That's Stacey: a pillar of support, a nurturer when you need one, hard truths that only a real friend can deliver, and quick with the laughs when your spirits are down. Her dedication and attention to detail have made our TUMP one of the most outstanding preschools in Tallahassee. She holds high expectations of her teachers and herself. She never does anything halfway! She is the BEST of leaders and friends. Her lasting legacy is the relationships that she has fostered and maintained throughout the years. Her presence will always be a part of our preschool. Thank you Stacey for 25 years of love, guidance, and friendship.



Candace Duclos, former TUMP teacher Mary Forestall, and Stacey Duggar

A Letter From Stacey

Dear Church Family,

It has been an absolute joy to have worked at the preschool for the last almost 28 years. I fondly reflect on the people; the countless numbers of children, families, preschool staff, and church staff that number in the thousands. (The people is what I love most about my job!) I am grateful to the late Mary Blackburn for encouraging me to apply for a teacher job and to Nancy Duncan for hiring me.

To the children: You will always be a blessing to me. I recall so many funny stories, hugs, smiles, growth, and most importantly, helping introduce you to Jesus. Remember that Jesus loves you, and so do I!

To the parents: Thank you for your trust, support, and partnership throughout the years. It has been a privilege to work alongside you in helping your children develop not only academically but also socially and emotionally as well.

To the staff: I fully recognize that I am only a small part of the bountiful work that goes on every day at the preschool. Your dedication, care, attention to detail, and ability to see and help the children in our care is remarkable. You are the reason we are a Gold Seal school!

To the church staff: Thank you for all the years of memories! I have loved leading the preschool and working alongside all of the amazing ministry leaders at TUMC.

Know that even though this chapter is closing, the memories we have made together will always stay with me. I wish you all the best and look forward to our paths crossing again in the future. I love Trinity United Methodist Preschool, and I hope you will join me in praying for the new director and for the new students, families, and staff that make this school so special.

With love and gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SD' with a flourish.



Stacey Duggar

Rooted in Grace, Growing in Community: The Tuesday Young Adult Bible Study

By Chelsea LaFever, Trinity Member

“Christian community is the place where we keep the flame of hope alive among us and take it seriously so that it can grow and become stronger in us.” - Henri Nouwen

Tuesday evenings can fall into a weird space for our energy each week. They're too far away to start getting excited about the weekend, but they aren't quite close enough to Sunday to still be coasting on the pastor's sermon and encouragement from Christian fellowship. But something wonderful has started happening on Tuesday evenings when the new Young Adult Bible Study group gets together: authentic and encouraging community.



Clockwise from the left: Victor Cardenas, Chris LaFever, Rachael Diaz, Daniel Diaz, Rev. Anna Brook Opalinski, and Rebecca Plagens

Christ calls us to build community with each other by His example and in Scripture. 1 Peter 4:8-10 states, “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.” Our goals with this group are to deepen our understanding of God's incredible grace and love by having discussions about Scripture and to grow together by learning to use our individual gifts to lift each other up.



The group is open to anyone who feels the “young adult” label applies – whether you feel steady in your walk of faith or are stumbling toward hope. At our study you can expect a time of catching up with each other and sharing how the week is going, a time of digging into God's Word through a study led by a member of the group, and lifting expressed needs up in prayer.

There may even be a hot cup of tea and a cookie or two. We all come from different places, with different schedules and stories, but for a short time we pause the chaos and connect with each other to keep our flames of hope stoked and burning bright.

The Young Adult Bible Study meets every Tuesday evening from 7:30 to 9:00 pm. It is hosted at members of the groups' houses. For location information, or if you have any questions or want to know more, call or text Chelsea LaFever at (850) 296-8666.



Small Groups at Trinity

By Candace Duclos, Director of Christian Education

Small groups at Trinity offer opportunities for indepth study, meaningful fellowship, and the development of supportive communities. If you are not already involved in a small group, check out the schedule, location, and curriculum of each group listed below, and consider finding a home in any of the following learning communities!

Sunday

8:30 a.m.

Young Adults meet in the Library to enjoy fellowship and a discussion of scripture.

9:45 a.m.

Agape meets in room 301. This group is currently studying *Parables: Putting Jesus's Stories In Their Place* by Josh Scott.

Aldersgate meets in room 305. This month they are studying *The Message* by Adam Hamilton.

The Betty Phifer Class meets in room 307, continuing their study of *Moral Man and Immoral Society* by Reinhold Niebuhr.

Just Us Gals meets in the Groom's Room. This month they are studying *Why?* by Adam Hamilton.

Wesley Adult Studies meets in the Conference Room and will be using the Cokesbury Summer Adult Study.

11:00 a.m.

Son Servants meet in room 305. They are currently studying *Dancing in the Darkness: Spiritual Lessons for Thriving in Turbulent Times* by Otis Moss III.

Monday

9:30 a.m.

Women's Bible Study meets in Library for their study of *Determined: Living Like Jesus in Every Moment* by Heather M. Dixon.

Tuesday

7:00 a.m.

Young Adult Bible Study meets in private homes. They are currently studying *John: The Gospel of Light and Life* by Adam Hamilton.

Wednesday

4:15 p.m.

Richard Andrews' Class meets in the Library for their study of *Gospel of Matthew* by Ben Witherington III.

6:15 p.m.

Richard Andrews' Class meets in the Library for their study of *Gospel of Matthew* by Ben Witherington III. (This is the same study offered a second time for those who cannot attend at 4:15 p.m.)

Friday

10:00 a.m.

Friday Study Group meets on Zoom. They are currently studying *The Tears of Things: Prophetic Wisdom for an Age of Outrage* by Richard Rohr.

If you have questions or would like more information about these groups or any other Adult Education activities, please contact Candace Duclos at cduclos@tumct.org.

Memorials and Honorariums

April 2025

- In memory of Sandy Frazier from United Women in Faith
- In memory of Calynne Andrews Hill from Elizabeth Leggett
- In memory of Mart Hill from Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Conn

Nehemiah Action

By Rev. Anna Brook Opalinski, Associate Pastor

As part of Trinity UMC's ongoing commitment to God's justice, we are a part of Capital Area Justice Ministry (CAJM), a coalition of faith communities throughout Tallahassee that meet with elected officials and work with the local government to make systemic changes that address oppression.

Over the last three years, CAJM has focused on the issues of gun violence and housing insecurity in Tallahassee. Our research team's hard work and dedication have led to an ongoing plan to help prevent arrests for young children of color, a program that has seen promising results in its early stages.

At the Nehemiah Action (the gathering of all of the faith communities involved in CAJM and our elected officials), we asked our elected officials to dedicate themselves to helping allocate General Revenue funds to develop an Affordable Rental Housing Trust Fund to provide gap financing for developers who commit to reserve more than the minimum required units for affordable housing.

We also asked if they would support allocating sufficient funding in the 2026 General Revenue budget to substantially increase the supply of rental housing that households can afford. Finally, we asked if they would be willing to allocate annual funds to the trust fund thereafter for as long as the program is effective.

Our elected officials received these questions many weeks in advance of our Nehemiah Action, and while some of our City Commissioners had prior engagements and were unable to attend, Commissioner Bill Proctor, Commissioner Rick Minor, and Commissioner David O'Keefe were able to attend. All three commissioners verbally agreed to all three questions we asked, provided they could do so responsibly with the current changes in local government budgets.

The response from our Commissioners was a major win for CAJM! It validated that our elected officials are hearing the work we are doing, and that they are willing to work with us to help make Tallahassee look a little more like heaven!

As Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." Justice is a long process, but it is a faithful process, and we are grateful to be on this journey towards equity and peace together.



Photos taken by Kathy Drake show Trinity members among many other attendees at Nehemiah Action

CAJM Celebration on May 13

By Rev. Barbara Hynes, retired pastor

Many thanks to all those who came to the Nehemiah Action on March 31. We had a great turnout and a good reception from our County Commissioners. They are still talking about your avalanche of emails, and instead of us calling them, they are calling us. Now, for next steps. We are having a CAJM Celebration at Jacob Chapel on Tuesday, May 13, at 6:00 p.m.

This is about much more than patting ourselves on the back. This is an opportunity to get together with the many and varied faith groups and individuals who are part of CAJM and build community. We have joined with a wide group across Tallahassee not just to move justice forward but to stand together as a committed community with a connection that is being strengthened by growing personal relationships. As in any organization, it is the personal relationships that enable the impact to grow wider and stronger.

Come, help that impact grow, meet some amazing people, and see the possibilities of a community moving toward justice!



The CAJM Celebration will be held at Jacob Chapel, located at 1438 Lake Bradford Road

Service of Remembering, Honoring, and Reflecting

By Rev. Anna Brook Opalinski, Associate Pastor

On March 27, 2025, the Historical and Justice Committees offered a service of lament and hope in our chapel. The service, titled “The Service of Remembering, Honoring, and Reflecting,” confronted Trinity UMC’s history of both racism and anti-racism.

Through prayers, hymns, reflections from our Historical Committee, and the Sacrament of Holy Communion, we acknowledged the moments of Trinity UMC’s history where we may not have fully lived into God’s calling to love our brothers, sisters, and siblings of color.

While acknowledging our shortcomings as a church, we also celebrated the legacy of anti-racism that Trinity UMC has established. We were reminded that we are called to the work of love and anti-racism together. It was an enlightening service, and the work done by the volunteers who helped lead the service is crucial to understanding the complex history of race relations within our congregation.



I would like to offer gratitude to Rev. Bob Gibbs, Racahael Diaz, Daniel Diaz, Margie Clay, Lynn McLarty, Pam Crosby, Susan Stephens, Kathy Drake, Rev. Dick Woodward, and Diane Jacobs for their willingness to help lead the service, as well as to the Historical Committee and the Justice Committee for their ongoing work to help us better understand how we can live as God has called us to live.

A recording of the service is available on the Trinity UMC YouTube Channel.

Celebrating Our Trinity Staff

By Susan Koehler, Director of Communications

Trinity's staff has had a lot to celebrate lately! Blessings abound: a new baby, a marriage, and two advanced degrees have filled us with pride and given us plenty to smile about. Read about these four joyous milestones that have taken place over the past month, and be sure to express your warm wishes when you see Melanie, Britton, Yuliia, and Viktor!



Congratulations to Melanie Gonzalez!

Melanie is Trinity's Church Operations Administrator. She and her husband Kevin welcomed baby Nathan on April 3, 2025. Nathan joins big sister Zoe, a soon-to-be alumna of Trinity's weekday preschool.



Congratulations to Britton Stacey!

Britton is Trinity's Director of Youth Ministries. On April 5, 2025, Britton married Haley Wood, now Haley Stacey, in Trinity's chapel with Rev. Anna Brook Opalinski officiating.



Congratulations to Yuliia Billa!

Yuliia is Trinity's Director of Music. This spring, she has been awarded a Master's degree in Choral Conducting from Florida State University.



Congratulations to Dr. Viktor Billa!

In addition to being Trinity's Organist, Viktor has completed his doctoral work at Florida State University and is now a Doctor of Musical Arts in Organ Performance!

We sincerely appreciate, whole-heartedly celebrate, and warmly consider each of these staff members to be a blessing!

You Are Invited to Come Try a BFC (Becoming Fit at Church) Ministry

By Beth Curry, BFC Team Leader

Have you ever tried a BFC Exercise class? Come join us for FUN, FELLOWSHIP, get FIT and help raise FUNDS for community service by attending one of the seven weekly day-time exercise classes which meet all year round—including over the summer. There are options for every fitness level from beginner to advanced.

Participants in Staying Strong use a chair to hold onto or sit in during class while participants in Variety Mix stand unsupported on the floor or balance pad, and even exercise on the floor in some classes. Or perhaps you would like to improve your balance skills. Come try the NEW Balance and Fall Prevention class. Or maybe your muscles are tight, and a stretch class would feel good. Come try the NEW Flexibility on the Floor class. Digital readers, [click here for all the details.](#)

Or...if you are interested in playing Pickleball BFO (Becoming Fit Outdoors) offers open play on Thursday evenings. Come learn how to play or join us and improve your skills in a fun, non-intimidating setting.

For more information or to register in advance for any BFC Ministry program please email BFCSeries@yahoo.com or call the church office and ask for a call back if that is easier.

Here's What People Are Saying

What is your favorite things about BFC Exercise class?

It's a tossup! BFC continues to improve my overall health, from bone density to cholesterol. Balance and strengthening exercises were exactly what I needed after a brain injury as well as abdominal surgeries. However...the fellowship, laughter and fun are excellent mental health care. We could not ask for more knowledgeable instructors. The small class fee goes to local missions. That seals the deal! Trinity's blessed beyond measure to have BFC. —Lark



BFC members exercise in Moor Hall during Tuesday and Thursday classes.



BFO participants play pickleball at the Wesley Foundation on Wednesday evenings.

Athletic Shoe Collection

By Stewart Fleming, Creation Care Team

Trinity's Creation Care Team is holding an athletic shoe drive fundraiser throughout the month of May to raise money for our local Missions Team. We will earn funds based on the total quantity of gently worn, used, and new sneakers collected. GotSneakers, a social enterprise, will issue funds in compensation for the collected sneakers. Those funds will benefit our local missions. Anyone can help by simply donating gently worn, used, and new sneakers.

The sneaker recycling program helps keeps sneakers out of landfills, which has harmful effects on our environment, and helps organizations like ours raise much-needed funds.

We know that most people have extra sneakers in their closets they would like to donate rather than throw away. By doing so, we raise money for local missions and help the environment. It's a win-win for everyone!

Graduation Time!

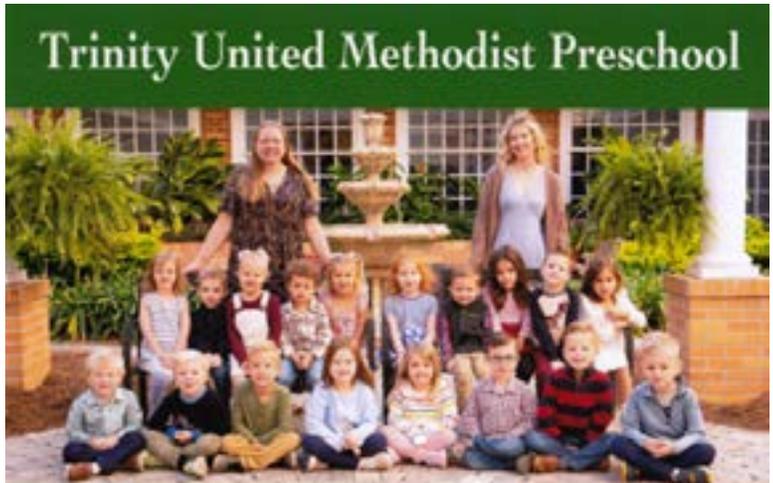
By Stacey Duggar, Preschool Director

Another year has flown by and we are ready to send a new group of students off to kindergarten! This year has been one of remarkable growth, new adventures, and fun times! These kids will be the high school class of 2038!

Downtown preschools are different from neighborhood schools. Instead of feeding into one or two elementary schools, our children are headed off to schools around the county, including Gilchrist, Kate Sullivan, School of Arts and Sciences, Maclay, Canopy Oaks, Buck Lake, North Florida Christian, and homeschool!

To this class of graduates, we say, “well done”! As you move forward to kindergarten, remember to always be kind, always try your best, and never stop exploring the world around you.

To the High School Class of 2025 (the Trinity Class of 2012), we remember you fondly! Our best wishes for you 13 years ago remain the same today, and we share in your joy as you now graduate high school! Keep shining bright!



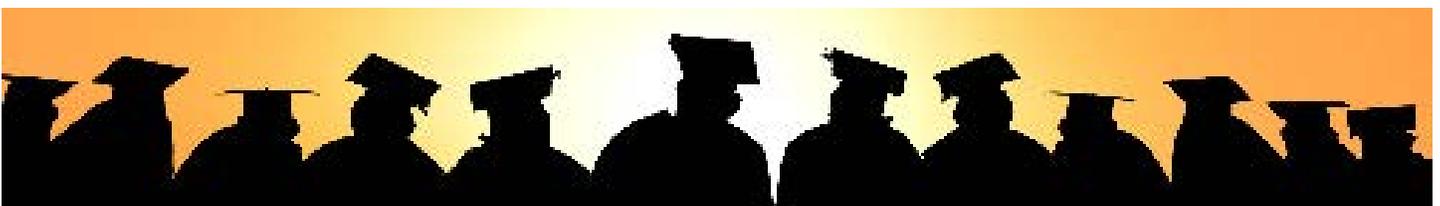
Above right, the 2025 graduating class of Trinity United Methodist Preschool (TUMP). Below right, the 2012 TUMP graduates who are graduating from high school this year. Note that the teacher of these 2012 graduates is Trinity's own Candace Duclos, who now serves as our Director of Christian Education.

Calling All Grads!

By Britton Stacey, Director of Youth Ministries

Sunday, May 18, will be Graduate Sunday at Trinity. If you are a graduating senior or the parent or family member of a graduating senior, please contact us! We want to honor you and your achievements! If you are graduating from a vocational program or college, we would like to hear from you as well. This includes those receiving advanced degrees in post-graduate studies!

Please contact Britton Stacey at bstacey@tumct.org, call the church office at 850-222-1120, or register on the Trinity app > Events > Youth Calendar > Graduation Sunday.



Children's Ministry Update

By Candace Duclos, Director of Christian Education

This has been a busy month for Trinity's children! The NETKids have made us proud by singing in church and are currently winding up their activities for the school year. NETKids will be singing at the beginning of the 11:00 a.m. service on Sunday, May 4, and they will present their annual spring performance on Wednesday, May 7, at 6:00 p.m.



We had a great time at our Easter Brunch and Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 12! Thank you to all who helped make this event so enjoyable and successful!



Children with baskets bounced about the basketball court.



Happy hunters hippity-hopped on the playground to find eggs.



Families and friends filled the Underground and feasted on a delicious brunch. Fun was had by all!

Trinity Youth Happenings

By Britton Stacey, Director of Youth Ministries

This past month, the youth got to work the Spaghetti Fundraiser for Springtime Tallahassee! In addition to having a fun time together, the youth were able to raise funds for our North Carolina mission trip this summer. We will be working to repair damage caused by Hurricane Helene last fall.



We have also been practicing a lot in praise band as we will have the opportunity for our youth to play for VBS! Coming up, we have VBS (June 2-6), Camp (June 16-21), and the Mission Trip (July 13-18), and we look forward to your youth joining us for each! Contact Britton Stacey at bstacey@tumct.org for details and sign-up information.

