

Second Sunday after the Epiphany

January 18, 2026

Gathering
Welcome
Announcements and Prayer

Prelude Laurie Knapp
(Prayerfully prepare your hearts and minds for worship.)

*Call to Worship
God is at work
Light pierces the darkness
Love calms fear
Joy conquers anxiety
Hope lifts our spirits
Peace disarms anger
Music sings away sorrow
Rejoice! God is at work

*Opening Hymn “Morning Has Broken” 145

*Opening Prayer
God of love,
Teach us the ways of peace and reconciliation. Give us the courage to face our fears and repent our sins. Lead us to renewal and purpose. Lift our hearts in hope and expectation that we might be your people, whole and true, for we pray in the name of the One who came to heal the world, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

*Psalter Psalm 40:1-11 with Response 774-775

*Affirmation of Faith “The World Methodist Social Affirmation” 886

*Gloria Patri 70
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

Passing of the Peace: Let us greet one another with love and peace.

“Let the Children Come!” Patsy Boggs
(Those 3 years of age through 8 years of age may go to Children’s Church.)

Anthem Choir

*Scripture Lessons Amos 5:21-24 Page 809 (O.T.)
1 Corinthians 13:1-13 Page 165 (N.T.)

Gospel Lesson Matthew 22:34-40 Pages 28-29 (N.T.)

A Testimony Rev. Darlene L. Kelley

*Hymn of Invitation “They’ll Know We Are Christians by Our Love” TFWS 2223

Pastoral Prayer
The Lord’s Prayer
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Presentation of Tithes & Offerings
Offertory Laurie Knapp
*Doxology 95
Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him all creatures here below; praise him above ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen

*Closing Hymn “Christ for the World We Sing” 568

*Benediction
*Benediction Response “May the Lord, Mighty God, Bless and Keep You” Choir & Congregation

*Please Stand As You Are Able

Leading in Worship Today

Pastor: Rev. Darlene L. Kelley AV Director: Marie Stiles
Pianist: Laurie Knapp AV Assistants: Chris Derrick; Erin Derrick
Time Together: Joyce Robinson; Slone Taylor

VISITORS ARE WELCOME in the service of worship! Please make use of the visitor’s tags (located in the pew backs) to help us better welcome you as a visitor to Trinity this morning.

TODAY’S LOVELY FLOWERS are given to the Glory of God.

“AS MEMBERS OF THIS CONGREGATION, WE WILL FAITHFULLY PARTICIPATE IN ITS MINISTRIES BY OUR PRAYERS ...

Marie Stiles	Marilyn Lloyd	Ruth Frady	Rhett Hook	Libby Strickland	Christopher McCroskey
John Ballentine	Diane Muszynski	Ray Frady	Latson Lewis	English Percy	Jeanette Hornsby
Hannah Glanz	Hilda Edwards	Fran Laska	Kaye Floyd	Jan Stamps	

Shut-Ins: Gillett Hipp; Linda Maloch

Family and Friends: **Donna Eidson** (former Trinity pastor); **Ghent Brewer** (brother-in-law of Jeanette Hornsby); **Kim & Sandra Meetze** (friends of Martha Cooke); **Dave Griffin** (husband of Chantel Griffen); **Matt Imel** (husband of Holley Gleaton Imel); **Cayla Watters** (friend of Karen Carter); **Tommy Stokes** (nephew of Joyce Robinson); **Kati Flowers** (mother of friend of Blake Kamoroff); **Berry Cochran** (son-in-law of Charlyn McNeill); **Jim Lewis** (father of Mark Lewis); **Christina Lindemuth** (daughter of Karen Carter); **James Leonard** (previous coworker of Mark Lewis); **Kathleen Varnadore** (Ted & Ruth Frady's neighbor); **Paul Frenzel** (friend of Chris Derrick); **Sissy Henry** (former member of Trinity); **Keith James, Jay Clark** (friends of Darlene Kelley); **Sean & Tucker Smith** (cousins of Darlene Kelley); **Sonny Hardee** (brother of Lynn Martin); **Colby Martin** (son of Donna Muszynski); **Lynne Powell** (friend of the Ballentines and Branhams); **Bryan Collard** (brother-in-law of Mary Sue Lewis); **Michael McNeill** (brother of Mary Sue Lewis); **Mary Davis** (daughter of Bob & Libby Strickland); **Chuck Hardee** (cousin of Lynn Martin); **Bruce Beatty, Sandra Hornsby, Gloria Erd, Gwen Scott, Dana Ammer** (friends of Lynn Martin); **Nancy Wilson** (friend of Jeanette Hornsby); **David & Kristen Turner** (brother and sister-in-law of Pam Turner); **Chip Mixon** (friend of Tommy Gleaton); **James Boggs** (father of Claire Boggs); **Robert Bradley** (Business Associate of Simon Ross); **Monnie Tiller** (friend of Chris Derrick); **Adrin & Linda Hargett** (stepfather and stepmom of Christopher McCroskey); **Haidee Baehr** (friends of Ruth Frady); **Denise Paul, Scott & Karen Nelson** (cousins of Gale Frady); **Dan Conner, Max Johnson** (friends of Gale Frady); **Janet Beck** (friend of Jo Ann Heiting); **Adam Lavender** (son of Phil Lavender)

If you have a friend or family member on the Prayer List, we ask you to please keep us updated. If no word is received, we will trust that our prayers have been answered and remove the name. To update us, please call the office or e-mail us at trinityumcwc@sc.rr.com.

OUR PRESENCE ...

Attendance 01/11 SS: 11 Worship: 32

OUR GIFTS ...

General Fund 01/11 \$ 5,371.00

OUR SERVICE...

OUR WITNESS."

Upcoming Events

TODAY Methodist Student Network @ USC, 5:45 p.m.

01/19 Exercise Will Not Meet

Service for Jean Raynor, 11 a.m. at Caughman Harman Lexington
Visitation 10 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

01/21 T.a.G., 7 p.m.

01/22 Exercise, 10:30 a.m.

GLIA Articles Due

01/23 Office Closed

Blook Club, 6 p.m.

01/24 Ladies Breakfast, 9:30 a.m. @ Lizard's Thicket Hwy 1

Book Swap @ Trinity, 12 p.m. – 3 p.m. in Fellowship Hall



Ministers
Pastor
Resident Bishop
District Superintendent

The Congregation
Darlene L. Kelley
Leonard Fairley
Rev. Fran M. Elrod

Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Our vision is to Connect, Nurture, Inspire and Transform



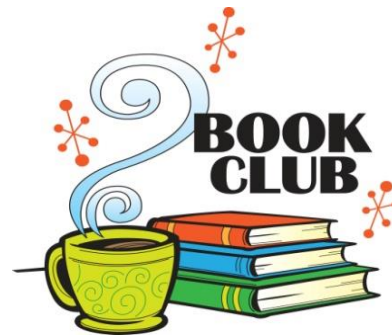
“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Matthew 22:39, NRSV

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Methodist Student Network @ USC
Sunday, January 18
5:45 p.m.

From the Pastor: On Sunday night, we have been asked to visit the students at the Methodist Student Network at USC. There was an empty spot on the Meal Train, and our friend Rev. Jad Taylor hoped he could count on us to fill it, and I knew we couldn't let them down. I will use the pastor's fund to order food from Publix so that will be easy, but I am hoping some folks will go with me. We will be there at 5:45; worship is at 6. The time with the students is important and always fun, so please consider joining us. I can provide a ride too.



Book Club Dinner
Friday, January 23
6:00 p.m.

Join us for an opportunity to share a meal and time together as we discuss Rabbi Harold Kushner's inspirational book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. This book will give us a great opportunity to explore some of the questions that plague believers and keep us awake at night: If God is good, and God is omnipotent why does evil exist? Where is God when we feel pain and suffering? Are the bad things that happen to us our fault because of sin? How do we help one another during the difficult and tragic times we all face?

We may not have all the answers, but our Book Club gatherings have been a great opportunity to grow personally and as a community. A meal will be provided, and we will gather in the Fellowship Hall at 6:00 p.m. All you have to bring is an open mind and an open heart. Bring a friend and join us—even if all you've read is the title. What happens at Book Club stays at Book Club, and we hope to see you there!



Saturday, January 24
9:30 a.m.

The Ladies Group will resume Saturday morning breakfasts on the fourth Saturday of January through May. We will again meet at the Lizard's Thicket on Highway #1 in Lexington, at 9:30 a.m. on January 24. If you are not on the Marie's group email and wish to be added, contact her at 803.463.9706 or mariebstyles@gmail.com.



January 24
12 p.m. – 3 p.m.
For children and adults!

Bring your used books to swap! Join us in the Fellowship Hall. Snacks will be provided. If you bring books ahead of time, please leave them on the stage. Contact Kelsey Jones with any questions 803 460 6670.



Taste of Trinity
Sunday, January 25

Taste of Trinity, our church-wide covered dish luncheon, will be held on **Sunday, January 25**. Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to share great food and fellowship!

Please Note: The Ministry Team will meet following Taste of Trinity.

Trinity UMC
January 18, 2026
Rev. Darlene L. Kelley

A Testimony

My father taught me how to catch fish, how to bait a hook and cast a rod, wait for that nibble to turn into a bite and slowly but surely bring that catch into the boat. He taught me how to navigate that boat, how to read the buoys and the channel markers—red on right returning. He taught me how to drive a 67' Chevy pickup with the gears on the steering column. I can still see him out of the corner of my eye: “Let the clutch out!” My father taught me a lot of good things.

My father also taught me to hate. He taught me at a very young age to peer through the blinds with suspicion and enmity at the two women who lived together across the street. They wore pants and did their own yard work; they were an abomination to the Lord. The truth is—we didn't know those women. They could have been sisters or saints, but my father wasn't interested in the truth.

My father taught me that black and brown people—though that is not what he called them—were not the same as us. They weren't the same kind of human beings we were. They weren't as smart. They weren't as ambitious. They couldn't be trusted. They were inferior, and if they were inferior it only stood to reason that we were superior, and superiority is an intoxicating elixir for the ego.

And not only did my father think those people of color weren't the same as us, he claimed God thought so too, and on one of the very few occasions I saw my father open a Bible, he turned to the ninth chapter of Genesis and read the verses about drunken Noah and his son Ham who saw his father naked. Ham, father of Canaan, was cursed and so were all his ancestors: “Cursed be Canaan, lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers” (Genesis 9:25). And in my childhood mind, I reasoned God's curse made Ham's skin dark, so he and his descendants could be readily recognized and cursed and hated all the more easily. My father used the Bible as a weapon to judge others and reinforce his own worldview. Interpretation is everything.

On April 4th in 1968, the evening Martin Luther King was assassinated, my father took me to the highest point in our neighborhood, and I stood with him on the edge of that hill, overlooking the city of Baltimore, waiting with anticipation for the race war my father predicted and some still long for.

And I loved my father. I thought he was the sun, the moon and the stars, and so in Mrs. Webber's fourth grade class, I argued passionately against Brotherhood Week. But I loved my teachers too, and though it was nearly 60 years ago now, I can still close my eyes and see the look of horror on my beloved teacher's face, listening to the ignorance and hatred my young soul was spewing. Perhaps that was the first chink in the armor of bigotry I wore, the beginning of awareness and the start of work that is never quite done.

Many of us have been taught similar lessons of bigotry and judgment, taught by well-intentioned people who loved us, passing down the lessons they were taught by the well-intentioned people who loved them. And those lessons can be hard to unlearn. It took years of therapy and grace to realize that my father, a man born in 1917 and never more than functionally literate, may be heavily invested in the search for folks he could look down on—that elixir of superiority so intoxicating to the ego, often so hard to recognize and confess.

Indeed, all over the world and throughout history, people have clung to that elixir of superiority and used it to their own advantage. In 1691 in the colony of Virginia, the wealthy, white, plantation owners looked out at the poor and realized those poor folk, black and white and every shade in between, were leaning on one another, helping one another, loving one another and forming community, and those wealthy, land owners knew that if the poor were united, they may start asking for better conditions, better wages, perhaps equality itself. So they enacted the first laws against mixed race marriage and started their subtle and not so subtle campaigns of lies and disinformation to divide and conquer, elevating the poor whites, luring them with that elixir of superiority so the poor would be divided, distracted, fighting one another instead of the real enemies of greed, power, and cruelty. ¹ Oh, that we *let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream* (Amos 5:24).

In the very denomination I love, I have watched with horror and sadness as a group of people have taken a page from that playbook, once again using disinformation and fear, turning their Bibles into weapons to try to convince folks that those two woman living together across the street are a bigger threat to marriage than the adultery in their own homes—something Jesus actually did talk about. Yet the thing that Jesus talked about most was love. He called it the “greatest commandment”.

One of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets’ (Matthew 22:35-38).

The neighbors I have now are very easy to love, but that hasn’t always been the case. Indeed, I stand here today guilty of my own sins and frailties, a woman struggling to face and dismantle her own bias and racism, a woman who knows from experience that it is a lot more fun to point out *the speck in my neighbor’s eye and ignore the log in my own* (Luke 6:42). That elixir of superiority is so enticing to the soul.

I am also a woman who has walked through these doors every Sunday morning trying to pretend that the division and violence of the outside world doesn’t exist. But as the saying goes: *evil thrives where good people do nothing*. Craig and I have been so blessed to be here that I have twisted myself in knots, trying my best not to irritate or offend.

But this is the 2nd Sunday after the Epiphany, which is also Human Relations Sunday, described by the United Methodist Church as a day that *invites congregations to strengthen communities, especially those facing poverty, injustice, or lack of opportunity. Inspired by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s vision of the “beloved community”. Human Relations Day calls us to build relationships rooted in dignity, equity, and love. “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*

On this 2nd Sunday after the Epiphany, I long for my own epiphany, struggling with the controversy of our times and recall another time of controversy long past that inspired a poem I will close with. Written in 1946 by Martin Niemoller, a church leader facing his own sin and fear, it goes like this:

First they came for the Communists
And I did not speak out because I was not a Communist

¹ Thandeka, “Learning to Be White: Money, Race and God in America”, Continuum Publishing Group, 2000, pg.47.

Then they came for the Socialists
And I did not speak out because I was not a Socialist
Then they came for the trade unionists
And I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist
Then they came for the Jews
And I did not speak out because I was not a Jew
Then they came for me
And there was no one left
To speak out for me.

Dear God, help us love you with all our hearts, and help us to love our neighbors as ourselves.
Amen.