

trinity lutheran church
capital campaign 2024-2027

*gathered
into one*

14 DAYS OF DEVOTIONS TO GUIDE US ON THIS JOURNEY

This devotional is intended as a tool for us to journey together in our faith through prayer, scripture, and reflection during our Capital Campaign - *Gathered Into One*. Our hope and prayer is that the process of coming together during this mission will allow us to grow not only in financial support of our church community but to also gain a deeper connection to our faith and in how God has called us to serve Trinity Long Lake, the surrounding communities, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

DAY 1 | **1 chronicles 29:14**

**“But me—who am I, and who are these my people,
that we should presume to be giving something to you?
Everything comes from you;
all we’re doing is giving back what we’ve been given
from your generous hand.”**

Towards the end of his life, King David wanted to leave a legacy by building a beautiful temple to glorify God. David used his personal wealth of gold and silver and he reached out to his leaders and asked for their help, too. They responded enthusiastically, willingly and generously. David and his people rejoiced.

Then David praised God realizing that everything he had been given came from God in the first place!

David’s story reminds me of the phrase, *“to whom much is given, much is required.”* (Luke 12:48) Our family, our home, our time, talents and treasures are gifts from a generous God. In turn, we are required to give to others what God has given us...enthusiastically, willingly and generously.

**Why is it such a challenge for us to remember
that everything we have has come from God in the first place?
How did you learn to be generous?
How can you teach others to be generous?**

prayer

Lord, help me to grow more generous in all aspects of my life.

DAY 2 | **proverbs 11:24**

**One person gives freely, yet gains even more;
another withholds unduly but comes to poverty.**

By nature, we think that the more money and possessions we have, the happier we will be—and this makes it more and more difficult for us to give it away. Because we get those feelings of “what if I don't have enough,” or “what if I run out,” by thinking this way, we aren't trusting what God has promised. In reality we are breaking what God has commanded.

I have experienced both sides of this proverb. When I didn't have a penny to spare (or so I thought), living paycheck to paycheck, I chose not to give—to anything; and my situation only got worse. That's when I joined a Bible study group in my neighborhood. Once I got it in my head that it all belongs to God—that God is the one who provides for my every need—I decided to give first, trusting that God would supply what I needed. And He sure did! From then on it was like a huge burden was lifted off my shoulders and I felt free. It was then that I came to realize that there is so much joy in giving!

God wants us to have all the blessings he has planned to give us—we just have to learn to let go of what we are holding onto. A very wise person once told me: “You can't take it with you when you die—and God will always provide for your needs.”

**What do we gain by giving and by being generous?
What does it mean to “be rich?”**

prayer

Lord, help me see more of the ways you have blessed me and my life.

DAY 3 | **mark 12:41-44**

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you; this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

In this passage from Mark’s gospel, Jesus teaches us about sacrifice. He watches the rich who bring in large sums of money out of their abundance. Then he sees the poor widow who brings two small coins. To Jesus, hers is the greatest gift because hers is the greatest sacrifice.

God is not concerned about the amount we give but about what it costs us. The cost of giving, not the amount, is the truest indicator of love. God demonstrated this to us: “For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

In my life I have known many generous people. One of the most generous people was my Grandma Krueger—whether it was adding a plate to the dinner table for an unexpected guest, giving a painting she had done to a stranger, or buying a candy bar from a neighborhood kid raising money for a band trip—she was always sharing gladly. She had very little to live on and, while I don’t know if she ever pledged to the church, I do know she always had something to put into the offering plate. Even on those Sundays when she couldn’t be there, she would find a way to give. Loving generously was her way of life. We are imitating Jesus when we give sacrificially. If we all sacrifice, the amount will take care of itself.

**St. Mark tells us that Jesus gave his all.
What would it look like for us to give our all?
How would doing so change how we live out our lives and our faith?
How would this affect the lives of others?**

prayer

Lord, teach me to love generously, and use me as a testimony to your love.

DAY 4 | 2 corinthians 8:7-9

Be the best in this work of grace in the same way that you are the best in everything, such as faith, speech, knowledge, total commitment, and the love we inspired in you. I'm not giving an order, but by mentioning the commitment of others, I'm trying to prove the authenticity of your love also. You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Although he was rich, he became poor for our sakes, so that you could become rich through his poverty.

In this, Paul's 2nd letter to the Corinthians, he appeals to them to give generously. The foundation of his appeal comes from how he sees them as a people overflowing with an abundance of spiritual gifts—and Paul is hopeful that their grace will overflow as well.

In this passage we see Paul's passion for sharing the gospel as he retells the good news through the lens of generosity: How Christ gave up the extraordinary riches of his place in heaven, to come to earth to die on the cross so that others might receive the abundant wealth of God's grace. Paul does not force or shame the Corinthians into giving, but instead shares his joyful vision of God's abundant love. He encourages them to be generous, and to trust that God has already provided abundantly for them for this very purpose. Paul invites them—and us—into our freedom to be generous!

grace

*God's freely given gift that flows within and through us,
and then on to others.*

*Grace is also found in Christ's selfless emptying [Greek: kenosis]
of himself on the cross for the sake of the world.*

How has Christ made us rich?

**Has there been a time when you gave more than you could;
if so, how did that make you feel?**

prayer

Thank you, Jesus, for giving your life for me. Help me live into your grace each day.

DAY 5 | 2 corinthians 8:13-14

For I do not mean that there should be relief for others and hardship for you, but it is a question of equality between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may also supply your need, in order that there may be equality.

Paul's church in Corinth was experiencing prosperity, which led Paul to ask the wealthier Corinthian congregations to consider giving to the churches that were struggling financially. He did not ask them to "give until it hurts," but wanted them to realize it was important to support less prosperous congregations which would greatly encourage them in their faith.

We partner with **Salem Lutheran** in North Minneapolis. Salem hosts a community meal each week. They have been running the *Salem Dining Hall* at the **Minnesota State Fair** for 70 years, and they partner and share their space with other organizations making a difference in their community. Trinity helps to support Salem's community meal, their **Christmas Store**, and volunteer at their dining hall.

This relationship is not one-sided. Salem has supported our **Summer Nights**—the highly attended **Blues & BBQ**, was their night! They serve their famous egg coffee at the **AGAPE Gift Market**. Pastor Eric has preached at Trinity and Pastor Adam has preached at **Salem**.

Perhaps Paul's ultimate message was this: If you help, you might have the opportunity to make new friends and build a bridge between both churches, ultimately bringing both churches closer. All of which will result in the kind of community and deeper relationships that come from living out the life God intends us to live...*Gathered Into One*.

Has there been a time when you relied on the abundance of others to meet your needs?

How does it feel to be able to meet the needs of others?

How has your attitude toward giving changed over the years?

prayer

Lord, use the abundance you have blessed me with to meet the needs of others.

DAY 6 | 2 corinthians 9:11-12

You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.

Paul is writing to the Christians in Corinth because he had learned that the church there was struggling. In his letter, he encourages them to persevere and continue to be generous, for their generosity will show the love of Jesus to others and thus thanksgiving to God.

Rev. Charles Stanley defines generosity as an attitude of sharing gladly whatever we have, regardless of wealth. Do generosity and gratitude go together? Yes!

Stewardship stories told during campaigns often include the sharing of how people plan to give but, more importantly, *why* they give. In most cases, they speak of their gratitude and how they are grateful to God for their church family, and for the support, care, and love shown to them not only in the good times but especially in the very difficult ones.

God's blessings are not meant to end with us! God's desire is for those blessings to flow *through* us to others, so that others—and the people *they* then share God's blessings with—will also come to know the love of God through God's son, our Savior Jesus Christ.

How blessed we are that Trinity is both a place *and* a community in which we remember and give thanks for God's blessings, and are then sent out into the world to continue sharing those blessings!

Make a list of all your blessings.

Out of gratitude and thanksgiving for all God has done, how might your blessings compel you to be more generous?

prayer

Lord, may my thanks for all you have done be always on my lips.

DAY 7 | matthew 6:19-21

Jesus said: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

I was just starting out and didn't have much. In a city with no family nearby, making a barely livable wage, I rented a cheap apartment in a converted Victorian house.

I had been out of town for an all-day event when I got word my apartment had been broken into. Once back home, I discovered the door had been kicked in and a few cheap electronics taken, along with a necklace I'd gotten as a gift from my mom. My first call was to my parents, my next call to my pastor. While he empathized with me about the burglary, his main focus was on the blessing that I had not been present when it happened. This gave me a lot to think about: I had only lost stuff—things that didn't really amount to much—but it was a painful lesson on how quickly our earthly treasures can disappear.

Trinity's building could be considered an earthly treasure but truthfully, there is much more to Trinity than simply what we see. It is the place where our mission and ministries take shape, a beacon on County Road 6 where, week after week, faithful people gather to worship and praise God, to share in the body and blood of Jesus, and to be renewed and restored in their faith before being sent back out to be Jesus to a world in need.

For years, Trinity's building has provided a safe and healthy space for children, youth, families, and adults of all ages to learn about God and grow in their faith. It is our “base of operations” where relationships deepen in fellowship over coffee or a meal, or in gathering to do works of service for others. It is the place where we both give and receive comfort, a place to hear others' stories about how God has been present for them. Perhaps most important, Trinity is the place where we can expect to find God and where God also meet us—the place where we are renewed in faith and sustained for the journey ahead.

There will always be a fragility to the things of this world because, well, *anything* can happen. But the real and lasting treasure that is ours comes through the death and resurrection of Christ, and in the God who promises to be faithful to us, always. Trinity's long history is proof that the Holy Spirit has been at work in and through the many people who have been called to be part of Trinity. How blessed we are to be here at this time in the life of Trinity—to be called as caretakers of this church that has been so important to the lives and faith of countless individuals and families. May it be so for generations to come!

What are your “treasures?”

Where do you spend your time, energy, and resources?

prayer | *Lord, reveal what earthly treasures I cling to, then help me let them go.*

DAY 8 | **deuteronomy 8:17-18a**

**Do not say to yourself,
“My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth.”
But remember the LORD your God,
for it is he who gives you the power to get wealth.**

We live in a time in which personal independence, resourcefulness, and striving are lifted up as positive attributes; we tend to admire—even desire—these strengths when we see them in others. But we easily fall into the trap of attributing our successes to the things we have done to get there: the level of education or employment we have achieved, the name we have made for ourselves, our financial blessings—we tell ourselves they have all happened because of our hard work. God is faithful and is with us in our lives and our vocations—thank God we never walk any of those roads on our own. Even so, I can quite easily talk myself into a mode of scarcity, especially when discerning what my financial stewardship to the church will be each year. But then the Holy Spirit brings this verse to mind: **“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.”** (1 Corinthians 10:26) And I remember that all of what I have has *always* belonged to God. In looking back on many years of giving to my church, when I have relaxed my closed fist and increased my giving above and beyond my yearly pledge, it has never brought on hardship.

Remembering that *everything* (home, finances, family, friends, career, etc.) belongs to God helps *me* remember that, from the get-go, *nothing* has ever really been mine. To be sure, for us 21st century consumers, there is tension in that. But stewardship and giving is a lifelong journey in which we are called to show thanks through the gifts God has first given to us. Whenever I am reminded that everything comes from God, I am humbled once again by how God has seen fit to bless me so very richly, and in so many ways.

How do you express gratitude in times of success?

prayer

*Today I will remember:
The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it.*

DAY 9 | **matthew 6:24**

Jesus said: “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

We think we are good at multitasking; it's a badge of honor to many of us. According to *whattobecome.com*, only 2.5% of people can actually multitask and multitaskers lose 5%-15% of their cognitive efficiency while switching between tasks! And a study conducted by the University of Michigan reports that 20 to 40 percent of a person's productivity is eaten up by task switching. So much for multitasking!

Jesus was not a multitasker. Every decision he made was based on what God wanted him to do. (I suppose for Jesus, it would be WWGD?) This is what Jesus has tasked us to do as well. He does not want us to make our choices based either on faith OR life. He wants us to actually *live out* a faith-life. Are you the same person at church that you are at work? Do you have “church” friends or are they just your friends? It takes a lot more energy to keep your faith and life separated.

**How do you determine how successful you are in life?
If you have ever judged your success according
to the world's standards, how did it make you feel
and what was your response?**

prayer

Lord, help me to serve you by how I live out my life.

DAY 10 | psalm 116:12-13

**What shall I return to the Lord for all his goodness to me?
I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.**

The writer of Psalm 116 is giving thanks and praise to God, for after having recovered from a grave illness, the writer cannot help but sing of God's blessings and mercy. The "cup of salvation" is a metaphor for an offering of thanks—most likely an animal the writer brought to the temple for sacrifice after having been healed.

We can take a cue from the psalmist's experience of being brought through a seemingly impossible time when we look back at the history of Trinity's 91 years and remember those times when the future of Trinity seemed impossible or bleak. For many, the pandemic was one of those times—yet, here we are! While living through the pandemic wasn't easy, we have regained our footing and then some—for it was by God's grace alone that Trinity was brought safely through those churning waters.

Through the creativity of Trinity's people, their continued trust in God's presence among us, and the relationships created and nurtured at Trinity, the Holy Spirit has led us to the here and now where, even if we don't have all the answers, we can look forward to the amazing journey ahead, giving thanks to God in all of it!

**What have you been doing to recognize
and acknowledge God's blessings?**

**What form would our cup of salvation—the sacrifice
we make to God—take?**

How would a "thank you note" from you to God look?

prayer

Lord, remind me of how you have always seen me through my trials.

DAY 11 | ephesians 3:20-21

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

The Apostle Paul is writing from prison to the church he founded in Ephesus to continue teaching them about their new identity as followers of Christ and to give instruction for living out God's salvation. He reminds them that each church community should consider itself a "body of Christ" and to live as though they are the presence of Jesus on earth.

In prison for the first time, Paul lifts God up above anything or anyone else, writing how God is able to do far more than anything we could ask or even imagine. Locked in prison, no doubt Paul was terrified at some level of his being; but at the very deepest level of his soul, God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, kept Paul firmly grounded in his faith, which comforted and sustained him during that difficult time.

Paul had been their first pastor, so you can imagine the fear and worry of the Ephesian Christians when they found out he had been thrown in prison. Yet also imagine how their faith was

strengthened as his letter was read out loud to the church. In the verses leading up to the passage for today's devotion, Paul writes a prayer for the Ephesians where he affirms that a life of faith in God is rooted in a love that surpasses all knowledge. 2000 years later, for us to even picture Paul in prison, writing these words of love, hope, and togetherness, bound by the belief that Christ is at work in our hearts, seems unbelievable! But Paul shows us we need not fear and can trust that the power of God is within each of us, sustaining and strengthening us. How inspiring!

Just as Paul wrote in his letters – *to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations to come* – we look forward to continuing the mission of building financial stability for the future of Trinity. And by the power of the Holy Spirit our faith and trust in God will also continue to grow in and through this community where in Jesus' name we are Gathered Into One!

**Do you fear you won't be able to accomplish what God has asked of you?
How do the fears we hold limit God's impact in our lives
and in the life of the church?**

prayer

Lord, remove my fears that keep me from being the person you created me to be.

DAY 12 | **hebrews 13:5**

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”

While the writer of the letter to the Hebrews remains unknown, having used so many examples from the Old Testament clues us in on the level of familiarity the writer had with those ancient scriptures. Through repeated references to the *old covenant*, the writer proves that Jesus and his work on the cross and in the resurrection are superior to what any other religion, including Judaism, can offer. Jesus is the author of the *new covenant*; the Words of Institution at Holy Communion include Jesus’ affirmation of this: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood...”

This gets me thinking about our own spiritual journey as we attempt to walk by faith in 2024. Let’s consider all of the things that distract us and challenge the messages of Jesus. The pace of current culture does not exactly

entice us to wait on God or to prioritize time to *Gather Into One*. We have too many things to do, people to serve, and places to be. As we consider our own Orono community, blessed with abundant living, how might we see this as a challenge to be content in what God has truly provided?

As the Teacher in Ecclesiastes 1:9 wrote: “There is nothing new under the sun.” How true! For today we face similar challenges in our faith that the early Christians did. Consider the culture of managing technology, raising kids with the influence of social media and youth sports, navigating our jobs and mortgages in a place where having more is glorified. I anticipate that our own Trinitarians would have the best perspective on what is truly important in our day-to-day living.

The current mission of the **Gathered Into One Capital Campaign** is not only to consider how we can support our faith community in Trinity financially, but also how, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can best nourish and cultivate a community that leads people to a place of wholeness.

Trinity is a place of connection—not only to one another but to the Triune God. Trinity is where we find our rootedness and our grounding in faith, a place we come to seek wholeness, to slow down the pace and demands of the outside world, to count our blessings, to share and to show our love and support for one another. We come to Trinity to be fed and forgiven with the new covenant in Jesus’ blood, which empowers us to go out to share this good news with all people—especially those in our small but important corner of the world.

Regarding striving to live with less rather than wanting more, and relishing the blessings we have rather than resenting what we don’t have:

How do we get to that place of contentment, and how will we know when we get there?

Can you think of examples in your own life where less is more?

prayer

Lord, help me walk in faith, that I may trust you in all circumstances.

DAY 13 | **proverbs 3:9-10**

**Honor the Lord with your wealth,
with the first fruits of all your crops;
then your barns will be filled to overflowing,
and your vats will brim over with new wine.**

Proverbs has traditionally been attributed to the writings of King Solomon who wrote to bring God's wisdom into everyday situations. Written for God's people Israel, it also included young people just starting out on life's journey. The command to give from the first fruits of one's harvest comes from Leviticus 23:10. Coming from God through Moses to the people, this law instructed them to give the first produce of each harvest to God.

How then does honoring the Lord with the first fruits of our financial resources and blessings apply in our context today? Is giving limited to money? What does "first fruits giving" mean for this journey of ours as followers of Jesus and as members of Trinity Lutheran Church?

When applying this message to our lives, it may be important for us to consider not only our financial contribution but also where we prioritize our time and energy as individuals and as families. God seems to be asking us to consider what we might get back from giving in a variety of ways. Additionally, we should stop to consider the ripple effect that our financial support of God's work in our church might have. We look forward to investing in Trinity for generations to come! Our time, talents, and treasures are part of an extended community built over the past 90 years - what a powerful collective in the name of Jesus!

What does it mean to honor someone?

How do you honor God?

prayer

*Lord, reveal to me the first fruits of my life,
that I may honor you by giving of them.*

DAY 14 | **corinthians 9:6-8**

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not regretfully or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.

As we've lived out the past two weeks through these devotions—whether to help you discern your commitment to Trinity's three-year Capital Campaign, or reflect on how God has led you in this journey—we hope they have helped remind you of your connection to this amazing faith community at Trinity.

Our goal and our prayer for these devotions is to help you see our mission at Trinity not as something that happens only in the moment, but a mission intended to thrive over the long term. Our hope is that you have a clearer vision of the critical role you have when it comes to keeping Trinity a facility that is welcoming, safe, and comfortable for all who come through the doors. Our prayer is that the Holy Spirit moves you to ensure Trinity remains a place of refuge and sanctuary from the burdens of the world, where we

can “be still” in God's presence, gather in praise and worship, come to learn, or to simply be present with one another.

We are blessed to have a strong community that welcomes everyone. We are blessed to have a faithful community of members who remain committed even when away from Minnesota. We are blessed with members who were baptized or grew up at Trinity who now, in their adulthood, are raising their own families here. We are blessed with new members seeking connection and belonging. We are blessed with a preschool connected to Trinity that fills our hallways and sanctuary with the energy and love of God's children. We are blessed with an amazing staff who continue to combine their talents and energy to help us find the places where we can use the gifts God has given us that we may answer the call to spread

the good news of Jesus Christ near and far.

People of God, we are truly blessed! We hope the past, present, and future dreams of Trinity Long Lake inspire you to give back. What kind of future does God have in mind for Trinity? We will only know once we are there—but in the meantime, continue to pray for Trinity and to praise the One who breaks the darkness with his light and love. Friends in Christ, our prayers for you continue. May this Capital Campaign be successful in not only reaching the financial goals set by our leadership with your input, but that it fosters and enlivens our connectedness as a community of God's people, Gathered Into One by Christ.

We thank you for your support in this process! Praise be to God!

Why does God want to give us everything we need?

What is God's return on God's investment?

What other things does God love about you?

prayer | *Lord Jesus, thank you for the blessings of this incredible journey we are on because of you. Help us to savor each step and to look for you in all we do.*



A PRAYER FOR COMMITMENT SUNDAY AND FOR THE JOURNEY AHEAD:

*Gracious God,
Thank you for calling me to be a part of this adventure in faith.
You gave us a true example of what sacrificial generosity looks like
when you gave your one and only Son to die for all of us.
Teach me to trust truly in you and your love.
Fill my heart with gratitude and show me
how I can give with generosity and sacrifice.
Help me make a gift that reflects all of the blessings
that you have so richly poured out on me.
In Jesus' name I pray.
Amen.*



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To God alone be the glory!