

VISION STATEMENT

Spring 2019 –

Trinity Lutheran Church (TLC) is treasured in the Ann Arbor area, known for our outreach in the community and excellence in worship and the arts. Our purpose is to serve God by loving the world as God loves us. We are a healthy, thriving congregation of 1,200 members. We grow our faith through committed worship attendance, support for one another in the body of Christ, and active service to the wider community and world. TLC is a diverse congregation in race, ethnicity, economic status, age, gender, sexual orientation and learning styles, reflecting the population of the surrounding community. TLC is a community within a community where differences are valued and each individual is truly affirmed and welcomed.

People are attracted to TLC as they drive down Stadium Boulevard by the brilliantly colored, artistic outdoor banners raised each Sunday. Trinity is also noticed for its phenomenal grounds. The heavily forested lot fosters a calmer, more peaceful sense of worship and renewal. The gardens provide a sanctuary for reflection, feeling closer to God, and refreshing our spirits for our ministry in the world. A pathway through our garden leads to our outdoor worship space, used for summer services.

Each week, 500 people worship at TLC. We have three services on Sunday morning, one on Saturday evening, one on Wednesday night and a youth service on Sunday evening. This change is not simply a result of an increase in membership; TLC's vibrancy and lay participation create an energy that naturally energizes our worship schedule. We have several clearly defined styles of worship – traditional, contemporary, family-friendly, and outdoor - that benefit from the talents of lay people of all ages. Our praise/contemporary worship uses fresh, vibrant music led by our praise band and other music groups, and often has alternative ways of presenting the sermon message, such as plays, puppet theatre, and liturgical dance. Our traditional liturgical worship relies on organ

music with an emphasis on the more traditional hymns, and uses the Lutheran liturgy. Our family-friendly worship is designed to meet the needs of those with younger children. The youth-led service is planned and conducted by the youth, with guidance only as needed from the active team of youth leaders. We also have a virtual service – made possible by our multi-media team, recording equipment, and enhanced Web site – to encourage “attendance” for those who are traveling, home-bound, or unable to make it physically to the building. Our virtual service also allows our members to share important events, such as baptisms, with distant family and friends. Our members worship faithfully. Making it a priority in their busy lives, most attend at least 80% of the time to honor God, reflect and be inspired by the music. The thought-provoking sermons equip them for their daily ministry as disciples of Jesus.

Other TLC activities energize and enhance our invitation to worship. A dedicated small team of trained caregivers staff the nursery regularly during services. Because, of this, our youngest members see a familiar face each week. Service times are scheduled to allow ample time for the parking lot to empty and refill between services and allow members a time to socialize with friends. Additionally many members park across the street or on side streets, using the lighted crosswalk to enter through the front entrance (which leaves room for visitors in the parking lot).

TLC is well-known for its strong music program. We have a variety of choirs promoting the enthusiastic involvement of all ages and skill levels. We have several musical groups, some permanent and others formed for special occasions, comprised of a variety of instruments including strings, woodwinds, brass, recorders, percussion, and electrics. We also have a sacred dance group, drama teams, and multimedia teams. Members and non-members look forward to and, therefore, make time for our quality worship services that are well planned and conducted.

TLC stages performances for the community throughout the year. In addition to our own music programs and groups, we are well-known as a coveted venue for recitals, concerts and even informal jam sessions. We welcome groups to come in and practice or play. In addition, TLC hosts exhibits by local artists. People

cite the ease of parking and pleasant facilities as a draw. Musicians and artists, as well as those who come to see their programs, find a warm invitation to worship. These events are often used to raise funds for local humanitarian causes.

Like our surrounding community, TLC is concerned about the environment and we have chosen to provide a choice to our worshippers of a brief worship folder or a more detailed one that is primarily focused on the needs of visitors. Our video display equipment used during our services has allowed us to replace much of the bulletin content. We have continued our practice of providing large-print bulletins for those who prefer them. Some copies of the Monthly and Weekly Tidings are available in the Gathering Space for those who prefer paper. Most members receive them electronically. Bulletins often include a special insert with the description of a new musical or small group that is forming, as well as ‘get to know a member’ profiles.

TLC is a welcoming place. We make a conscious effort to welcome visitors, realizing that we are God’s church and not our own. We have special parking reserved for visitors. Greeters are able to easily see the visitor parking from the renovated, well-marked rear entrance and, after welcoming our visitors, pair them up with a “visitor guide” who briefly shows them around the building and helps them get settled in for service. Clear signage helps everyone find the restrooms, coat racks, nursery, meeting rooms, youth programs and so on. Our bulletin boards – both electronic and static – display the week’s events as well as the schedule for this Sunday. TLC continues its tradition of offering a loaf of bread and a warm greeting during the service to first-time visitors. After worship, their “visitor guide” invites them to coffee fellowship and points out the centrally located rack of informational materials for visitors. There are general information packets about Trinity as well as information about specific issues and concerns that may have brought the visitor to Trinity, such as a family crisis, interest in an upcoming program or the desire to schedule a wedding. Visitors are urged to take any information they want, and their guide answers any question they might have. We strive to actively welcome our guests without pressuring them. When a visitor indicates they would like to be contacted by TLC, we follow up within the week. Once visitors have attended several times or expressed an interest in

joining TLC, we assign people with the gift of hospitality to shepherd them and to informally help them find ways to assimilate into the congregation. Similarly, new members are personally welcomed and guided as they find their niche in our congregation.

One way TLC actively reaches out is to find out which houses in our area have sold recently and bring them packets of helpful community information designed for newcomers, as well as an invitation to worship and other church activities. Another outreach tool is our Web site, with menus and screens specific to different audiences, such as non-members, congregants, and staff/leadership.

TLC is served by a dedicated staff. We provide ongoing leadership development training and mentoring that enable our lay leaders to head up the task forces and small groups which deliver the ministry of the church. Lay volunteers regularly take communion to our homebound and hospitalized members. Stephen Ministers serve as chaplains to both members and non-members in need. Dedicated lay people also volunteer to assist the staff with the many tasks of the church in areas such as music, grounds upkeep, worship servants, decision-making and administrative duties. To foster dialogue between the council and the congregation, the council actively seeks input on challenging issues, publishes minutes on a timely basis, and ensures that members feel welcome to attend council meetings.

We have between 40 and 50 small groups in the church that form and re-form to meet the evolving needs and interests of the community. Lay people facilitate the majority of these groups with support from the pastors. We offer opportunities for fellowship, education, support, community outreach, and Bible study. We have intergenerational as well as age-specific activities so that all members are growing in faith.

Families are attracted to TLC because we have an excellent education program for all ages, preschool through adult. Our programs, offered on Sundays, as well as throughout the week, are engaging and meet a diversity of learning styles. We have vacation bible school in the summer and programs offered during the week-long school breaks.

There are 100 members in the various youth groups and small groups specific to youth interests. TLC offers an energizing worship service that meets the needs of our youth. Our youth often invite their friends to activities and programs because they are excited to share the experiences with those close to them. We hold educational, support and social activities for parents and guardians during the youth events.

Trinity is also intentional about reaching out to adults in their 20's and 30's. We are aware that this is typically an underserved population in the church, as people often drop out after confirmation and do not return until they have children. Given the fact that young adults are postponing marriage and family later in life, we do not want to neglect this group who are often seeking what the church has to offer: a sense of belonging and a spiritual connection. Our young adults participate and support one another in activities geared especially for them, and they also take part in inter-generational events throughout TLC. In addition to these activities, new small groups and events have formed around the specific needs and interests of singles and those of young married couples.

An interesting seniors' ministry has evolved that serves a wide range of needs. From artistic and cultural outings to twice weekly yoga classes to tutoring in the public schools, seniors gather in ways that enrich and expand their appreciation for the gift of life. A group of young to middle-age adults, paired with teens, participate in a weekly "thank a senior" ministry in which work teams visit seniors in their homes, helping with much-needed household and yard tasks. A welcome outgrowth of this "task-focused" ministry has been caring relationships formed that find expression on other days of week when workers share a meal or visit with a senior in their home or in the community.

A more recent mission for TLC is the Trinity Learning Center (TLC@TLC) outreach. This program determines the educational and informational needs and interests of the community and strives to find ways to meet those needs. TLC@TLC brings in speakers and advertises these sessions to the community. Issues of the day are approached through panel discussions. Tutoring is offered to local students to supplement the efforts of public schools and home-schools

alike. Parenting seminars are offered for targeted stages of development from preschool through college. TLC's preschool has a waiting list and continues to serve as a strong entry point for young families into TLC's membership. TLC members are proud of the preschool and actively seek ways to improve and enhance the program and to welcome its participants into our community.

A regular offering of mission projects, both local and abroad, serves as catalysts for people of all ages to put into practice the love ethic of Jesus. We engage with our local community through our active participation in Habitat for Humanity, Alpha House, CROP Walk (Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty), LSSM (Lutheran Social Services of Michigan), ICPJ (Interfaith Council for Peace & Justice), caring for God's creation, blood drives, neighborhood food drives and other health and wellness activities. One of our particular ministries is to reach out to the neighborhoods by targeting a different area each month and requesting contributions to our food drive. Outside groups use our facilities regularly, including AA and other recovery groups, Children of Hoarders, Westside Artists, Therapaws, Choral Connection. Outloud Chorus and Thrivent, just to name a few.

Understanding the core of the Christian experience to be communal, TLC members joyfully and actively invite friends, neighbors, family, and colleagues to join us for worship and other programs offered through our ministry. The purpose of all activities from worship to service to learning to fellowship is to serve God by loving the world as God loves us.