



DINNER CHURCH: A LOVELY EVENING WITH FRIENDS & FAMILY BY DENISE AKOB

During the Lenten season, CTS continued the tradition of weekly dinners on Wednesday evenings but with a new format: Dinner Church.

Each Wednesday, we, along with family and friends, gathered in the sanctuary for an integrated service and dinner. The sanctuary was set up beautifully with several tables available for 6-8 people to sit at and commune together. The center of each table was set with bibles, discussion prompts (in the new branding of CTS), tableware, a basket of bread, and drinks (wine and water). As people gathered, we chatted while pouring drinks and preparing for the service. The service began in a typical way –prayers and music – but with shared communion at each table. Then the service paused for everyone to share in a communal meal. Dinner, cooked by members, was served buffet style and while around the table, we reflected on the reading of the week. After dinner, the service closed with prayer and song.

I really enjoyed Dinner Church - it was a wonderful way to connect with historic Christian traditions in a laid-back atmosphere (and the food was delicious!). My favorite part was sharing communion around the table - it reminded me of how early Christians gathered in homes to pray and honored that historic tradition. Dinner Church created an authentic, welcoming atmosphere and the informal structure made it accessible to everyone including non-Christians and newcomers. We brought a friend to CTS for the first time and they found it easy to integrate because everything was written down, e.g., the lyrics and prayers, so they knew exactly what was about to occur and how to participate. My table was often less formal and I would joke that while eating we failed to do our “homework” – we typically chatted with folks and enjoyed the time with others and a sense of community.

Dinner Church was nourishing to the soul - it was a lovely time communing with family and friends and reflecting on our Christian beliefs and society today. An integrated event is also really convenient and easy to fit into our schedule.





WHERE NEW LIFE SPROUTS BY PASTOR KENNY

The Easter season is upon us which means new life is sprouting up all around. The Cherry Blossoms are bursting, the lilies are popping up, the grass is glowing green, and the warmth of the sun is beginning to light up our faces. While every Sunday is a celebration of the resurrection, Easter provides us space to go all in on this single event that changed everything in our world 2000 years ago.

The resurrection is what makes a Christian a Christian. Without the resurrection then Jesus is just a person who lived an extraordinary life, did amazing things, challenged the powers of the world and then was murdered for it. Many other faith traditions recognize Jesus in this way. He is certainly a person to emulate, someone who truly rocked the boat in his time and proclaimed beautiful sentiments about love, peace, and grace. But there are many people in the history of the world who you could say the same about. What separates Jesus from *everyone* else is the core Christian statement that Jesus was raised from the dead. His resurrection and claim of divinity (God as one of us) tells us that God not only died on the cross but that God is more powerful than the most absolute thing we know, death. And the promise that God makes through Jesus is that we, too, will be raised up to new life like Christ. This is the Good News that we proclaim every week as Christians and hopefully every day!

Being people of the resurrection means that we are always looking for ways things in this world are being made new. Our fear of death does not have to exist because death doesn't have the last word. We seek out life because that is where we will find God. God is always making things new.

This Easter season, I ask you to prayerfully consider what new things, what life, is God creating in our Hunters Woods Plaza community? There are plenty of challenges that face our community which means there are plenty of opportunities for life to sprout up! What life might be trying to break through the cracks?

For 50 years, Christ the Servant has been a guiding presence in the plaza. Much like in this spring season, CTS has been like beautiful tulips popping up with brilliant and bright colors. A great little ministry here. A wonderful cause over there. A consistent presence that you know every season will sprout something new and impactful. Tulips are wonderful and necessary and give us energy, but what if our season of growing tulips is coming to an end? What if, instead, God has been planting seeds for an oak tree and we are beginning to see the smallest signs of it breaking through the earth? Slowly, the small trunk begins to emerge and grows into a sturdy, steady, presence with a focus and direction. With a size that might seem intimidating at times, but also provides wonderful shade and peace.

If God has planted those seeds, what might be the purpose? The question is, what is God calling us to? What might this new life be? These are exciting and scary questions to be asking. But the resurrection is an exciting and scary thing. We also must admit that there is a mysterious part to the resurrection and the same goes for any call from God. We can acknowledge these things while also continuing to discern and seek what this new life might mean for us.

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GRAB A BEER...OR WINE BY DAN SHOENFELT

Since joining CTS I have been intrigued with Theology Pub. Finally, starting this year I've been able to attend and here are my unfiltered thoughts.

Theology Pub provides a unique space for me to engage in thoughtful conversation and deepen my understanding of faith. Sharing opinions with fellow congregants fosters a sense of community, where diverse perspectives can challenge and enrich my own views. It's a way to grow spiritually together, learning from one another's experiences and interpretations. The informal setting allows for honest, open dialogue, making theology accessible and relevant to everyday life, all while strengthening our bonds as a community of faith. If you have the time, it's well worth the experience and there's beer!!

As we celebrate 50 years of ministry, let us not just look back at what was but also look forward towards that new life and the possibilities that lie ahead. I invite you to pray with me and your church leadership. If you aren't sure what to pray, here is a simple prayer you can say and then listen deeply to see how God might respond.

A Congregational Prayer

God, Creator of everything,
Today we pray for clarity for Your community of faith called Christ the Servant.
We pray for those housed and unhoused around Hunters Woods Plaza.
We pray for the addicts, those with mental health issues, and those suffering from abuse.
We pray for the homeowners and the families.
We pray for the shop owners.
We pray for the community center.
Lord, where do we go? How do we go? When do we go?
Give us strength, courage, wisdom, and grace to follow Your call.
Clear our hearts from fear and open us to the creative possibilities You are drawing us to.
We pray this in the name of the One who breaks bread with the sinner, Jesus Christ.
Amen



Dwelling with Pastor Emily

BY BARBARA FIELDING

"Dwell in me as I dwell in you. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; dwell in my love." -Matthew 15:4, 9

Growing up, my mother wanted to live her faith by following Jesus' teachings from Matthew 25:35, *"For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger, and you invited me in . . ."*

My mom was caring and generous with her time and talents, but she was concerned that she was giving from her "want" and not from her "need."

Now that I am an adult, I understand my mother's desire to really make a difference. That is why I was so inspired when I heard Pastor Emily Harkins speak about her work at The Dwelling, where she is the lead pastor. The Dwelling is an ELCA mission community in Winston Salem, N.C. From their website, "In a world that constantly tells people who are living on the margins that they don't belong, The Dwelling is a church that tells them that the world has it all wrong."

Pastor Emily described how the mission was originally set to open in 2020. Plans changed! and The Dwelling started by offering showers to unhoused people. That is still a major part of their mission, with their shower trailer available three days a week and includes all the basic shower necessities. The goal of the Shower Ministry is to offer "dignity and compassion to our neighbors, providing a clean, safe space for personal care that renews both body and spirit," and is rooted in Christ's call to serve "the least of these" from Matthew 25:40.

Eventually, The Dwelling moved into a space provided by the local Lutheran community and North Carolina Synod. Pastor Emily says the services can be chaotic and might be disorienting for Lutherans who are used to a quiet, reflective service, with a set liturgy and hymns dating from the time of Martin Luther,

but that is OK because at The Dwelling, everyone is welcome at whatever stage they are at, whatever their circumstance. The start times for the meals and the worship service are "ish" times, because "we roll with the Spirit!" Everyone is welcome to lend their voices to the service.

The Dwelling takes seriously the call to feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty. On Sunday, they serve breakfast before the service and lunch afterwards. I was amazed at how they have volunteers to do that, but Pastor Emily said it was never a problem because many in the community have talents and want to and are able to contribute. At Christ the Servant Lutheran Church, on the Hunters Woods Plaza, we know the unhoused. We have our struggles to understand their struggles, and we have our desire to connect with them, as the Gospel of Matthew reminds us to do. Pastor Emily encouraged us to look around and find the opportunities to work together in community.

I hope that we can take inspiration from Pastor Emily and the mission of The Dwelling to "proclaim boldly that there is holiness in the identity as someone experiencing homelessness, that they share a kinship with God who reminds us all that we are all wanderers in search of belonging."





Meetings of the Plaza

BY ROGER FIELDING

On March 27, I attended the Faith Council meeting held at the church, and the Hunters Woods Neighborhood Coalition meeting, held at the Reston Community Center.

The Faith Council meeting was hosted by Pastor Kenny, and Pastor Smith-Cobbs, from Trinity Presbyterian Church. Cornerstones personnel, including CEO Kerrie Wilson, presented their homeless services report for 2024. I found it truly inspirational to learn how the community has come together to support Cornerstones in serving the unhoused population in Fairfax County, which has increased 23% since 2020. During the winter, the Temporary Overflow Shelter and Hypothermia program helped people get out of the cold, and provided hot meals. Although those programs ended on April 1, Embry Rucker is adding 46 new beds for single adults while Fairfax County will soon open the Fair Ridge Family Shelter, which will offer 94 rooms for unhoused families.

Pastor Kenny presented an update on Hunters Woods Plaza and talked about the challenges we are experiencing with some of the unhoused people in the area. There have been a few disturbing incidents recently, including a shooting, that have raised concerns within the church, the community center, and among the local residents. BeBe Nguyen, Executive Director of the RCC discussed some of the changes the center is implementing, including hiring an armed security guard. While the RCC will continue to offer services to the unhoused in the plaza, she stressed the need to ensure the safety of their patrons and the greater community.

That evening I attended the Hunters Woods Neighborhood Coalition meeting at the community center. Attendees included representatives from Cornerstones, Fellowship Square, RCC, Reston Strong, Board of Supervisors, House of Delegates, Fairfax County Police, EDENS, and the Glade and Hunters Woods Village community associations.

While everyone had legitimate concerns about the challenges in the plaza, I was impressed that they were all willing to work together to address the problems. The homeowners, who are directly affected by trespassing, loitering, littering and worse, were eager to work with the other stakeholders to improve the plaza. The group discussed the possibility of engaging directly with some of the plaza denizens, and even having them speak at a future meeting. Pastor Kenny talked about “reclaiming” the plaza, and future events including the cleanup on April 12 and the Easter Egg Hunt on April 20.

At the end of the meeting, the group discussed an action plan for their vision to create “A welcoming environment that facilitates live, work, play and worship with a feeling of enjoyment, safety and security.” While the challenges are very real, it seems to me the community is willing to unite to make their vision a reality.



NEW: HOSPITALITY TEAM BY HEATHER WHITMAN

UNIVERSAL LOVE BY JOLENE MCNAMARA

I stayed after church on Sunday March 30 to listen to our guest speaker, Jamie Bruesehoff. Jamie is an author, public speaker, and adviser to numerous parents raising transgender and gender-diverse children. Her compelling story of raising a transgender child drew me in as I learned more about the challenges of transgender youth. I found myself surprised at the number of facts I was learning.

I was also surprised because, originally, I was not going to attend. I'm not raising any transgender children. I'm not raising any children at all, so I had assumed that Jamie's presentation would have little to do with me. I listened to her describe her and her daughter Rebekah's journeys, their ups and downs, and the impact of all this on their family. I found it to be a universal story of love and acceptance.



This extremely small segment of our population is being made a scapegoat. In the midst of a growing economic crisis, growing risks because of needless mismanagement of our country's national security, children dying of a preventable measles outbreak, and our nation's plummeting reputation worldwide, a Republican Senator recently appeared on TV trying to deflect from this administration's failures by ridiculously yelling about trans kids in sports. Seriously? We all need to push back on this. I am glad I stayed after church to hear Jamie speak and look forward to reading her book.

As a community of faith, we are called to be a place of welcome and hospitality to all people. One of the strategic goals adopted in 2025 was the prioritization and focus on radical hospitality at Christ the Servant. The creation of a Hospitality Team is one way we are working toward that goal.

Led by Minister for Congregational Life, Heather Whitman, the Hospitality Team works each week to ensure that all who walk through our doors are welcomed and seen as a child of God. This welcome may look different for everyone based on their own particular needs. The Hospitality Team (Maryce Ramsey, Kelly Champagne, Dan Shoenfelt, Hertha Lange, Peter Metaxotos, and Chris Whitman) may provide directions to the restrooms, help a visitor follow the service in the worship resource or show a guest to the CTS Market. Team members are on hand to open doors, engage in conversation, and nurture a sense of belonging.

As our congregation grows and new faces join the regulars in the seats, we continue to extend God's radical welcome to all. Thank you for wearing a name tag even if you think everyone knows who you are. Thank you for showing God's grace and love to the unhoused who may need a cup of coffee on a Sunday morning or a visit to the CTS Market. Thank you for trusting that the Holy Spirit is at work here on the Hunters Woods Plaza.

We strive to live out the Christ the Servant Welcome Statement every day. This work takes all of us and we are grateful to be on that journey together.



Save the Date

WINE TASTING

May 3 @ 2 PM

GUEST MUSICIAN & SPEAKER

May 18 @ 10 AM

THEOLOGY PUB

May 20, June 24, & July 22 @ 7 PM

LUNCH PACKING

May 25, June 22, & July 27 @ 11:30 AM

RIC SUNDAY & PRIDE

June 1

CONFIRMATION & PENTECOST

June 8

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

June 29 @ 11:30 AM



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[Christservices](https://www.youtube.com/Christservices)

Sunday Worship | 10:00 AM



Register
Pray
Give
And More!

Average Weekly Worship Attendance

	2025*	2024
In Person Attendance	37	43
Online Attendance	18	10
Total	55	53

Financial Summary

	Actual*	Budget*
Income	\$67,608.74	\$66,555.00
Expenses	\$72,315.84	\$74,067.51
Deficit	-\$4,707.10	-\$7,512.51

*Reports through end of March 2025



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

DISCOVER

belonging



Reconciling in Christ
Congregation