

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

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March 15, 2005
Tuesday of Lent 5

Grace be yours and peace.

Dear friends,

A few minutes ago, I came from the funeral home where we began to make plans to mark the death and celebrate the life of Jeremy Burchatzki. I confirmed Jeremy in June of '87 and married him in September of '95. Jeremy and Alison's kids were baptized here. And in a couple of days' time, it is from Trinity that Jeremy will be buried.

Earlier today, as I was getting back into the parish, I stopped in at the post office to pick up the mail. The news had gotten 'round. "Is he part of the Trinity family?" asked a local Mennonite friend. "The Trinity *family*," I thought to myself. "Yes," I said. "He's part of the family."

Over the last couple of years, we've been paying special attention, in the parish, to how we welcome people; how we invite people into the family. And it's not just about welcoming people into the Trinity community; not simply the Trinity *freundschaft*. We're thinking, here, of the whole people of God.

My friend's use of the word "family" is characteristic of the way he talks. I'm sure, too, that it reflects the way he thinks of his own congregation and of the church, broadly speaking. It's quite lovely, really.

What struck me, when he used that word, was that I'd heard a similar turn of phrase from one of our own people just the other day. Janice Ritz had approached me after worship and mentioned that she and some others wanted to hold a parish lunch, a few weeks from now, as a "celebration of family" in the parish. She'd conferred with Don Jardin, our congregational president, and Lyla Wettlaufer, who holds the Congregational Life portfolio on Council. Everyone thought it was a great idea. Anyway, I took it that she meant that we'd get together and celebrate our kinship within *God's family*; the *people of God* at Trinity. We're "knit together in one communion" as the funeral liturgy reminds us.

Trinity Church has much to offer both the people within our family and people out in the wider community. Today, we began to pull together the *Guides to Worship* for the services of Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter. There's a lot of preparation that goes into making worship happen at Trinity Church; and a lot of people: choir members, presiders and preachers; assisting ministers, acolytes and greeters; ushers, sextons and cleaning staff; musicians, altar guild people, our parish secretary and more!

This evening, our *Getting On With Life* adult learning series will come to a close even as our *Celebrated Lives: the Death of a Christian* series ended on Sunday morning. After Easter, on Sunday mornings, we'll turn our attention to what it means to be a *Lutheran* and what kind of *witness* Lutherans can make in our community. (You may pick up a copy of our study book for the series at the church.)

I suppose that one of my hopes is that our witness might help *us* to see *ourselves* and the people "*out there*" to see *us* as a family, if they don't already—a *welcoming* kind of family; an *affirming* kind of family; an *everyone-has-a-job-to-do-around-here* sort of family; an *always-room-at-the-table-for-one-more* kind of family. And I would hope that would be true whether people already belong here or are simply looking in, testing the waters and, perhaps, casting about for a place to call home.

This morning, it was nice to be able to say, as a member of one part of God's family to another, "Yeah, he's one of ours. We're taking care..."

This issue of TRINITY DOVE will be collated on Thursday, March 17. It'll be available on Palm Sunday, March 20 (the cover date) and throughout the parish, within a day or two, thanks to our shepherds. Read through your copy of TRINITY DOVE when you get it. Afterward, you might share it with a neighbour together with an invitation to join us for some of our "family times" in the days to come. We have a terrific ministry in this community—compassionate, concerned, loving—and one that seeks to embrace any who care to participate in the life and work of God's people at Trinity.

I look forward to greeting you in the days to come: at the Great Confession of Maundy Thursday; through the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday; in the course of the prayer vigil into Holy Saturday; as we celebrate the Resurrection of Our Lord at Easter. A hard trek is in the offing at many levels. Yet, for all of that, this is a great place to call "home."

Pastor Syd tells me he's begun making his Easter visits. Pastor Nadine has got a sermon to get ready for Sunday and she, too, is making some rounds. Tomorrow I meet with Alison, Carol, Jim and the rest as we pick up life's long, hard journey between death and resurrection. Indeed, in the valley of the shadow, it's good to be part of God's family.

All blessings .

André Lavergne,
with Nadine Nicholds and Syd Hills,
pastors in God's family at Trinity Church.

PS A few family celebrations...

- Maundy Thursday (March 24): Great Confession at 7:30 pm
- Good Friday (March 25): Stations of the Cross at 10 am
- Good Friday - Holy Saturday: Prayer vigil in the worship space
- Easter (March 27): Festival worship at 9 and 11:15 am; breakfast at 10 am
- Easter 3 (April 10): Sisombath Celebration (see TRINITY DOVE, page 3)
- Easter 6 (May 1): A Celebration of Family (see TRINITY DOVE, page 3)