



December 22, 2024

Christmas is not tame. It is wild with the unthinkable...

Some stories are so full of wonder that we tell them again and again, hoping to catch just a sliver of the mystery they contain. The Christmas story is one of those. Every year, we gather in sanctuaries, family rooms, and quiet corners of the heart to hear it again: the journey to Bethlehem, the birth in the stable, angels singing to shepherds. We know it by heart, but if we're not careful, it can become tame and predictable.

Christmas is not tame. It is wild with the unthinkable: God taking on skin and bone, vulnerability and hunger, laughter and tears. What sort of God comes as a baby, crying in the night?

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The Greek word John uses for dwell, "skenoō", literally means "to pitch a tent." God has moved into the neighborhood—to see what we see, to feel what we feel, to love what we love.

We do not serve a God who watches from afar. We serve a God who gets desert dust under divine fingernails, who knows the weariness of long journeys, and who understands the ache of being human.

Wednesday, we celebrate that we are not the ones holding everything together. God has come to dwell among us, in every sanctuary and living room, in every hospital and prison, in every board meeting and budget discussion. Emmanuel—God with us—is the promise that sustains us every day.

It is a day for wonder. Wonder that the Creator of the cosmos chose a manger. Wonder that the Word made flesh still speaks through you and me, through sermons and shared meals, through silence and song. Wonder that the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it.

On Christmas, let the light shine in you. Set down the to-do list. Let go of the laments. Pause long enough to feel the weight of God's glory in the fragile form of a newborn child. The gift is already here, wrapped not in pretty paper but in the endless mercy of God's love.

May you find joy in the wild mystery of Christmas day, and may it sustain you as you carry its light into the new year ahead. Merry Christmas!

Pastor Bill (Rev. William P. Worley, PSE Conference Minister)

PSEC Anniversary Churches... Trinity UCC, Shenandoah —150 Years

The congregation was formally organized on October 25, 1874. At that time, a constitution was adopted and a name given to the new entity, Trinity Reformed Church. There were 70 members in the congregation.

In February of 1875, at a meeting of the Consistory, it was proposed to erect a church building. August, 1875, with the cornerstone being laid on Sunday, September 12, 1875. But due to the expected financial difficulties resulting from a coal miners strike in 1875, the Trinity Reformed congregation was forced to liquidate its holdings and disposed of all its land except for the 40 x 60 ft. lot on which the Chapel was standing. It was only through the generosity of other Reformed Congregations in Lebanon, Berks, and Schuylkill Counties that the Shenandoah congregation continued to exist. However, exist it did. The first church building was formally dedicated on Sunday, October 22, 1876, almost two (2) years to the day that the congregation was formally organized. Services that day were delivered in both English and German languages.



At a meeting on March 12, 1931, plans were submitted for the erection of a new church. The new building was dedicated on January 17, 1932. By this time, the Reformed Church had been merged with the Evangelical Synod of North America. Because of this the church's name was changed to Trinity Evangelical and Reformed Church. In June 1959, the Evangelical and Reformed Church merged with the Congregational Christian Church. As a result of this merger, Trinity acquired a new name, Trinity United Church of Christ, by which it is known today.

Over the last 20 years, the membership of Trinity Church has leveled off and remains today at approximately 100 persons. We as a congregation have worked hard to keep our doors open and continue to worship together. We will do everything we can to keep Trinity UCC a staple in the Shenandoah Area and remain a viable entity into the 23rd century.