TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2026

Dear Trinity community,

With greetings in the name of Jesus, we are writing to share an important update on our ongoing search for an associate pastor and to highlight a ministry journey for one of our members, Heidi Fischer.

Trinity has now been searching for an associate pastor for more than three years. Last year, Sue Harrington became our congregation's first **Synod-Authorized Minister (SAM)** and began fulfilling pastoral duties, such as presiding at communion, baptisms, and funerals. We are deeply grateful for Sue's service as a SAM, yet we still need a sustainable solution, as Sue intends to retire within the next few years.

Recently, Heidi Fischer—a past Trinity staff member, longtime youth leader, and recent Church Council officer—has felt a calling to deepen her commitment to God's work. As Heidi announced in a July sermon, she is pursuing the path to join Sue as a SAM. The update in this letter is that Heidi has discerned not only to serve as a SAM but also, ultimately, to become a pastor. Rather than travel the traditional route toward a master's degree leading to ordination, Heidi has chosen a newly available alternative: an expedited certificate program called **Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM)**.

TEEM would be a discernment journey, for Heidi as a candidate and, just as importantly, for our congregation as a community. A TEEM student must be uplifted by a congregation and serve that specific parish as a specialized SAM while studying and training. Entering this program would effectively end our call process, with the intention of the TEEM student becoming the next associate pastor. The local TEEM training and seminary studies would take approximately three years, after which our congregation would vote whether to call Heidi as our associate pastor. In recent months, Trinity's Mutual Ministry Committee, Council, and Call Committee have supported Heidi in this pursuit and now look to you as a congregation.

To learn more about TEEM and its implications for Trinity, we have invited Pastor Dara Clifford (associate to the bishop, director for evangelical mission) from our East Central Synod of Wisconsin to speak with us about the program on **Sunday, Nov. 15**, following the 9 a.m. worship service. We hope you can attend this informational forum, in person or online via Zoom/recording at **tiny.cc/TLCMeet**.

After three weeks of prayerful consideration, a **congregational meeting at 10:15 a.m. on Sunday, Dec. 6**, will include a vote—in person and via Zoom at the same link above—on whether to proceed as a TEEM site with Heidi as a TEEM student. (Again, a formal vote on whether to call Heidi as an associate pastor would take place several years later.) We invite you to email questions about this compelling but complex process to **community@tlcwaupaca.org** so we can properly address them before voting. We also welcome your prayers for Heidi and for the Holy Spirit's guidance as we contemplate our future in ministry.

Please mark your calendars for both Sundays, Nov. 15 and Dec. 6. We deeply value your voice at this important time—let us make this decision collectively, with confidence in Christ.

Prayerfully,

Bob Olson, congregation president

+ Pastor Andy

The Rev. Andy Behrendt, lead pastor

Together in Christ, we welcome, love, and serve all.

ELCA