

OUR STORIES

Reaching Beyond Our Walls from Chuck and Cathy Hays

*An inspiring story from our parish to fill
your day with joy.*



We moved to Smith Mountain Lake in May 2004 after retiring from our careers in Norman, Oklahoma. Even before our move, we often attended Trinity Ecumenical Parish on weekends while overseeing the construction of our home. We quickly realized that TEP was what we were looking for in a church.

We had been members of Lutheran congregations since 1974, but discovering an ecumenical church with three equal traditions was refreshing. We were drawn to the friendliness of the congregation, the good sermons, the beauty of worship, and the strength of the music ministry. What stood out most was the spirit of generosity shown through ministries like Lake Christian Ministries and SML Good Neighbors. It wasn't long before Trinity began to feel like home.

One area of generosity that we especially hoped to see at TEP was global outreach. In previous congregations, we had been involved in ministries beyond our national borders, and we felt this was important for Trinity as well. During our membership sessions with Pastor Scheidt, he encouraged us to share our concerns. Not long after, a group came together and the Global Partners Team was established, and it has been demonstrating Trinity's generosity beyond our borders, particularly in Tanzania, ever since. Cathy, too, was soon invited to lead a new adult education team—another example of how members are called into meaningful ministry here. She also became involved in Stephen Ministry, both in ministering to others and in the continuing education and mutual support shared among team members.

We learned about generosity from our parents, who modeled it in different ways in the church and communities where we grew up. At first, giving felt like an obligation, but over time we came to see it as a joyful response to God's love. Supporting TEP with our financial gifts allows us to be part of ministries that touch lives both in our local community and around the world.

Our hope is that Trinity will continue to seek new ways of being generous—especially with an expanded emphasis on reaching out to the poorest people in the world. We believe God has blessed us so that we may bless others, and we are grateful to be part of a congregation that continues to grow in its generosity.

—Chuck and Cathy Hays

