

Pastor's Ponderings

Picture a giant dump truck full of LOVE.
There you are behind it.
God lifts the bed until the love starts to slide.
Slowly, at first, then down, down, down
until you are hidden, buried, covered in God's LOVE.

Max Lucado

This was written on one of the birthday cards I received this year. At first, I felt how dangerous that would be, and then how overwhelmed and out of control I would feel; until I realized that God's love is not meant to scare me, but to surround me, protect me, and strengthen me. The pile that was dumped on top of me turned from something weighty into something soft, almost like a feather pillow, yet strong and resilient, not easily discarded.

For God so loved the World (you and me), that God gave God's only son, Jesus!

When the challenges of this world become overwhelming and it seems that there can be no calmness or peace, remember who came for whom, and that we begin in a better place with God than without; surrounded, engulfed in God's love, forgiveness, hope, and promises.

Buried in love I remain,
Pastor Fred he/him/his

GOD = LOVE

ELCA Prayer Ventures, September 2023

Give thanks to God for the love and forgiveness we have in Jesus Christ; unshakeable, it endures amid all that seems unstable, temporary and conditional in our world.

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New Bible Study! The Book of Revelation

Pastor Fred will begin an eight-week study of the Book of Revelation **beginning Friday, September 8**, from 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM in Augustana's Luther Hall. It will be on Zoom and in person.

All are welcome to one or all of the study dates. We look forward to seeing you!

Monday Evening Tai Chi at TOL! 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM

Instructor - Charlie Schmidtke
\$20 per 10-week session



If you are looking for a form of exercise that consists of slow gentle movements, meditation and breathing, consider learning Tai Chi. Two sessions will be offered, **beginning on Monday, September 18**. If you aren't familiar with Tai Chi—please speak to Charlie!

Session 1:

September 18, 25
October 2, 9, 16, 23
November 6, 20, 27
December 4

Session 2:

January 22, 29
February 5, 19, 26
March 4, 11, 18, 25
April 8

Sermon Discussion/Input with Pastor Fred Wednesday, September 27 at Noon TOL Fireside Room

In seminary, Pastor Fred was told that an aspect of the Sermon is that it's a dialog. To help, Pastor Fred is asking for participants to join him in a bag lunch discussion of the texts for the next month of sermons. It is known as a "Pericope Study." They will meet for two hours on the fourth Wednesday of each month at Noon.

Please let Pastor Fred know if you are interested in attending. There will be some preparation in order to have a discussion about the text/world events/church challenges.

BW's BBQ Chicken Dinner & Basket Raffle Sunday, September 10 (Noon to 3:30 PM) Dine In or Take Out!



Dinners: \$15 (includes two salads, roll & butter, dessert)

Volunteers: Help is needed with setting up tables on Saturday, September 9 (10:30 AM), as well as serving, and cleaning up on Sunday.

Desserts are needed to accompany the dinners.

Please, no cakes for this event—they are difficult to portion out and plate.

Contact Scott or Earlene if you have any questions or if you can help. Thank you!

Basket Raffle: Donations needed—completed baskets, gift cards, and other items are appreciated. Please bring your donations to church on or by Sunday, September 3. If you have any questions, please speak to Debbie or Kelly.



Trinity Tidings, September 2023

We invite you to join us for worship
with Holy Communion.
Sundays at 11:00 AM in-church or on Zoom

Labor Day On this day we pray for the work people do to sustain themselves and their families and benefit their communities and society. Pray that all will receive fair wages and benefits, work in safe environments, receive respect and gratitude, experience joy and fulfillment in their labor and be renewed through times of sabbath. Remember in prayer also those seeking employment or unable to work.

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ELCA Prayer Ventures, September 2023

“God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday [September 10] On the 10th anniversary of our annual day of service, give thanks for the chance to draw closer to our neighbors and embrace them as children of God, listening with respect and empathy and responding to their needs.

Ask God to help us understand more fully how our lives and faith express God’s love, compassion and respect for the neighbor. “To be your presence is our mission bold, to feed the poor and shelter homeless cold, to be your hands of justice, right uphold, alleluia!” (ELW 546).

Reflect on what hinders us from exercising forgiveness and patience with others, including those we see as adversaries. Ask the Spirit to recenter our lives and interactions with people in the boundless and undeserved mercy that God demonstrates with us.

What an amazing and reassuring gift it is to know that God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love for all people, everywhere. Give praise and thanks to God!

Pray that students and teachers in our schools will be safe and that students who suffer trauma, anxiety, depression and other mental health concerns will have ready access to counselors, social workers and psychologists.

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Prayer for Trinity Old Lutheran and Augustana Lutheran Churches

Inspire us to be good stewards of the resources you have entrusted to us. Teach us to give freely of ourselves and to offer our lives in service. Show us your will for the ministries at Augustana and Trinity Old Lutheran. Strengthen our relationships in this community as we serve our neighbors in love.

Trinity Tidings

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August Mission

Thank you for your donations in support of Family Promise of WNY in its mission to serve homeless families. It is also an emergency shelter that enables families to stay together while in their care.

September Mission: Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service (LIRS)

Mission

As a witness to God’s love for all people, we stand with and advocate for migrants and refugees, transforming communities through ministries of service and justice.

Diversity and Inclusion

Grounded in our faith, we believe that everyone should be celebrated, and valued for their unique life experiences. We believe that diverse opinions, ideas, and beliefs are the foundation of a healthy organization and a flourishing society. Our history of welcome is the inspiration for our creation of a workplace that honors and supports everyone.

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Please use the marked envelopes located in the narthex, or mail your donations to the church office (please indicate on your check that it is designated for LIRS). Thank you for your support.

Food Pantries Serving Buffalo and Tonawanda



Your generous donations support of the Community of Good Neighbors Mobile Food Pantry in Buffalo and Good Shepherd Lutheran’s Food Pantry in Tonawanda. Please place donations in the narthex shopping cart or leave them in the elevator entrance during the week (Tuesday to Friday, 9:00 AM to Noon). Thank you!

Community Baby Shower—Donate in September!

We are joining local churches in collecting donations that will benefit Harvest House (a local agency that has a Babies and Children’s Ministry that provides clothing, baby furniture and other necessities) and Response to Love (an agency that also provides assistance to individuals, children and families in need). Both of these agencies are located on Buffalo’s East Side. Please place your donations in the laundry basket in the narthex. The items most needed are listed below.

- New or lightly used baby clothes (newborn to toddler)
- Baby diapers (all sizes, but especially sizes 2, 3, 4 and 5)
- Baby bottles
- Towels and washcloths
- Baby lotions

For more information, please contact Sue (St. Paul Lutheran Church, Williamsville, Social Ministry Committee) in the church office (716-634-2330)

Monday Afternoon Adult Ed. Classes, led by Charlie Schmidtke

Classes resume on Monday afternoons from 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM. We will meet in person in the Fireside Room or via Zoom. The class schedule for 2023-24 is listed below.

2023

September 11:	Creation According to the Book of Jubilees
September 25:	The Flood
October 9:	Sodom and Gomorrah
October 23:	Abraham's Sacrifice
November 6:	Exodus – Deliverance
November 20:	Exodus – Mount Sinai
December 4:	Deborah's Victory

2024

January 22:	Elijah and the Prophets
February 5:	Babylonian Captivity
February 19:	Last Supper
March 4:	Between Easter and Pentecost
March 18:	Pentecost
April 8:	The Great Compromise
April 22:	Gamiliel's Intervention
May 6:	Destruction of the Second Temple

The Adult Retreat September 29, 30 and October 1

Lake Chautauqua Lutheran Center
Retreat Coordinator: Charlie Schmidtke



This will be a time for us to gather once again in fellowship, laughter and prayer. The retreat is open to all who are 18+ years of age. Complete retreat information is posted on the main bulletin board, as well as the sign-up sheet. If you worship with us on Zoom, please call or email the church office and we can add your name to the list.

Deadlines: September 17 for reservations; September 29 for payment. If you have any questions, please contact Trinity Old Lutheran at 716-836-4868, Charlie at 716-694-1335 or through his email at schmidtkecharles@gmail.com. Information packets will be sent to everyone who registers.

“Christian Cancer Support”

If you are on a cancer journey and are in need of support, please contact Linda Sokoley. She is on a journey as well and she can offer you support, hope and healing. Please contact Linda through Augustana LC's office at 716-832-5720 or by email at augustchurch@yahoo.com.



Ways to Give to TOL

Online: Tithe.ly is available. For instructions, please visit the church website at www.trinityoldlutheran.com or download the Tithe.ly app to your smartphone. Please call the church office at (716) 836-4868 if you have any questions.



Giving by mail: Please send your checks to the church and to the attention of the Financial Secretary.

Have you ever tried...to put together a 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle? If you are up to the challenge and have the room, stop by the TOL Book/Puzzle Sale in the Resource Room. You might just find one! If you have items to donate, please leave them in the box located in front of the desk.



Thank You from The Rev. Miranda Hammer (July 25, 2023, excerpts) Good Shepherd LC (2669 Sheridan Drive, Tonawanda)

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

It is with **extreme gratitude** that we at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church THANK YOU for your generous support of our recent spaghetti dinner and basket raffle fundraiser in support of Arlen Jenkins and her family. Arlen has spent ALL six years of her young life fighting various medical issues that stem from a rare genetic disease. Her best course of treatment is to receive a bone marrow transplant; the process of which began last week.

Because of your participation and donations, **we raised over \$7,000 for the family!** These funds will be used to pay for out of town costs during treatment, child care support for the other children at home, securing a safe post-transplant environment for Arlen upon her return, and so much more.

Blessings,
Pastor Miranda Hammer

International Day of Peace [September 21]

With our global neighbors and siblings in Christ, pray for peace, reconciliation and unity wherever conflict divides our communities and the world.



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Operation Christmas Child

This month's suggested donations are coloring books, crayons, and watercolor paint sets. I've found with my own grandkids how much they really enjoy a coloring book. Depending on their age determines how “colorful” their pictures end up being—each one refrigerator and/or gift worthy. Your donation of these items will surely bring a smile (and enjoyment) to the face of the recipient!~--Kelly



Please place your donations in the box marked “Operation Christmas Child” located in the narthex.

Thank you so much for your continued support!
Kelly and Debbie

On-going Collections!

Can Tabs...Your can tabs can be placed in the marked container in the narthex. Thank you!

Recycle Cans and Bottles...Your donations can be placed in the marked container in the hallway off the narthex. You may also redeem them at Bottle and Can Redemption Center (2790 Sheridan Drive in Tonawanda). TOL has an account there.

Friends of Night People

- Collection of new men's socks, and small-size hygiene products (soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste) or create care packages. See the marked container in the narthex.
- Men's seasonal clothing collection—look for the Big Blue Barrel near the main bulletin board.

Adult Ed. Classes with Charlie Schmidtke
Study Notes: Mary/Elizabeth and Jesus/John

Part II: The Angel Gabriel with Zechariah and Mary

Read Luke 1:5-25

An Angel, Gabriel, appears to Zechariah next to the incense altar. (By the way, Gabriel is the same angel that appears to Mohammad and helps him write the Qu'ran.) Gabriel tells Zechariah about his future son, John, becoming a prophet like Elijah and identifies four characteristics for John:

1. He will be great in the sight of God.
2. He must drink no wine. This is an Essene rule and becomes John's way of life when he joins them (probably as a teen).
3. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit. This connects with the story of Jesus' baptism.
4. He will prepare the way for the Lord: meaning he will tell people it is time to turn to the Lord. People will become concerned for their children and will turn to God. In other words, he will get people to think correctly and begin obeying God.

Zechariah becomes mute because he questions the angel's claims. The crowd believes he's seen a vision but he goes home and we read that Elizabeth becomes pregnant after this experience. There is no mention of a virgin birth for Elizabeth. When she becomes pregnant, she goes into seclusion for five months, probably concerned about what would happen if she miscarried. We'll continue their story after we look at the Annunciation.

Read Luke 1:26-38

Luke now turns to Mary: Gabriel goes to a virgin in Nazareth of Galilee. He tells Mary she will have a child and she questions how this can be since she isn't married/known a man. Again, it's the Holy Spirit who will intervene. This conception has been debated endlessly. The Gospel of James proclaims the birth to be virgin (in fact Mary remains a virgin her entire life according to James). We will talk about the Gospel of James in some detail when we look at Jesus' extended family. How can there be a virgin birth usually ends up with the theological proclamation that it is all a Mystery. We'll hear about the nature of Jesus being both Divine and Human, being cast in very different ways and among different branches of early Christianity over the centuries.

Gabriel tells Mary about Elizabeth. This link is an important one, I think, in understanding Jesus' life growing up. We'll see how later. So, Mary decides to go visit Elizabeth. There is no attention given to Joseph even though Luke says they were engaged at this time. Instead, we jump right to the visitation between Mary and Elizabeth.

Read Luke 1:39-56

Elizabeth lives either in Hebron of Judea or between Hebron and Jerusalem in the desert area. There is a question about how did Mary get to Elizabeth? If Mary was living in Nazareth, the distance to where Elizabeth was living was about 110-120 miles. How could Mary make this trip? She couldn't have done it alone and we have no information about how she would have traveled this distance and with whom she would have done so. Was Mary really living in Nazareth at the time as Luke says? Why wouldn't Joseph have gone along? Or did Elizabeth and Zechariah secure a betrothal with Joseph while she was still living in the temple? Maybe she was accompanied by friends from Hebron to Nazareth after her visit with Elizabeth. If she already was in Nazareth, then it probably means that she moved there as

part of an earlier betrothal contract. There is also the possibility that she really was living in Bethlehem or one of the other towns near Jerusalem and was betrothed to Joseph there. After going to help Elizabeth, she then may have moved up to Nazareth and had to face Joseph telling him she's pregnant. It is a real possibility that Mary was not living in Nazareth when the angel appeared to her and Luke's passage needs to be read that she moves to Nazareth after the angel appears to her and she visits Elizabeth.

So, we need to be careful about reading the passages as an historical account that is consistent and giving correct details. Here is a likely scenario if we believe that Elizabeth and Zechariah served as guardians while Mary was raised in the temple.

Mary visits Elizabeth for about three months. The biblical phrase is that Mary hurried to Elizabeth after she heard she was pregnant. How could she hurry if she was in Nazareth? If she were still living near Jerusalem, this would make sense. To get to Jerusalem from Nazareth is at least a four or five day journey. Traveling from Jerusalem to Elizabeth's would have been 10-15 miles. This passage about Gabriel's visit and her visit to Elizabeth and, then, Jesus' birth are the primary times we meet Mary and hear anything about her. She is probably 14—a common age to be married. She very likely was a ward of the temple (and Zechariah may have been appointed her guardian—although there is no evidence to confirm this story line). By the time she was 13 and started menstruating, the men in the temple would want her gone. Jewish law considered menstruation as impure; with laws, for example, forbidding women sitting on benches with others while menstruating. Women also were forbidden to prepare food during their periods. So, Zechariah would have been in charge of forming a marriage contract for her and he would have interviewed many men. How Joseph became one of those interviewed and the one selected will forever be a secret or mystery. Although, there is a legend based on the gospel of Jesus' childhood that a dove landed on Joseph's staff and Zechariah took that as a sign. My hunch is that Zechariah saw him working and was impressed with his skill and maybe also the type of man he was. Since he was older and more mature, these attributes would be seen as assets, since he didn't seem to have much money. Thus, the betrothal probably occurred in Jerusalem. So, would Mary have gone to Nazareth with Joseph before being married and only betrothed? That is a real possibility. Mary being raised in the temple has no biblical confirmation but was a common belief in the early oral traditions of the church. It is also possible that Mary was living in Nazareth with her parents, although there is no evidence to support this claim either. These stories are conflicting, which can be expected of oral traditions.

Returning to Mary's visit, we hear Elizabeth greeting Mary. Her words bless Mary and her child. She proclaims that Mary is faithful and both she and her child will be blessed by God. The Magnificat is Mary's response. Much of the meaning and many of the phrases and words of her response can be found in a hymn sung in early liturgies of Jesus' followers. People attributed the hymn to Mary, and Luke includes what he has heard about Mary's response to Elizabeth. Is this historically accurate language? Was it a hymn based on Hannah's song in the Old Testament (Read: 1st Samuel 2:1-10)? Or was Mary inspired by the Holy Spirit and just used those words?

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