

Pastor's Ponderings

“Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

Proverbs 31:8-9

This Old Testament quote from Proverbs is a prequel for Jesus' ministry and His calling for his followers. The church and its people cannot be silent when people do not have a voice, or when people's voices have been taken away. This quote is written by King Lemuel, who is reporting what his mother taught him. (Mom's are smart!)

People who are destitute are those without necessities of life. People who do not have a voice are people dismissed or not recognized in society. The poor and needy represent the majority in the world. Thus, we include in our ministry people who are struggling in our local community and throughout the world. Our support for World Hunger and local food pantries are just a small example. It can be overwhelming, but it is our calling to continue to care for others: the refugee and immigrant, the children who are on the streets, the hungry in different countries, LGBTQIA+ people in this country and around the world who are being hurt and mistreated, the addicts, the widows, the people without health care, the mentally ill, the incarcerated, the elderly, the ill and suffering and so many more. Our job doesn't end with Jesus' salvation for us. It begins with that and continues all our lives as we are called to be the body of Christ in the World. Christianity to me has always been an outward looking, selfless calling. In 2025 together we can continue to impact the people Jesus calls us to impact.

A fellow servant for Christ, I remain
Pastor Fred he/him/his



NEW: Support Group for Grieving Parents

This group is specifically for parents of children and grandchildren who have died. We meet each month on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday (10:00 AM to 11:30 AM) and also on Zoom. Charlie and Diane and Jean coordinate the group.

Everyone's grief is unique. Being able to talk about our children or grandchildren (of any age) in a safe space is a gift. For more information please call 716-694-1335.

Annual Congregational Meeting/Potluck Lunch Sunday, March 30, following worship

Annual Report Submissions

Please submit reports to the church office by
Sunday, February 23
(email: trinityoldlutheran@gmail.com).

Sunday, February 9: TOL's Souper Bowl of Sharing!

We have an opportunity to share with the hungry in our community by supporting the Good Shepherd Lutheran Food Pantry and the Community of Good Neighbors Pantry in Buffalo.

Non-perishable food and pantry items can be placed in the narthex shopping cart. A soup pot will be available for monetary donations. Thank you for your continued support of this annual collection!



Calling All Chili Lovers!

Whether you love to eat chili or you have your own favorite chili recipe that you'd like to enter, come join us on **Sunday, February 16**, for our Chili Cook-off! It will follow the 11:00 AM worship service downstairs in the Fellowship Hall.

Please sign up on the main bulletin board if you plan to attend and also indicate if you will be submitting your chili.

Please come~~be a judge~~and let the best chili win!!

2025 TOL Theater/Dinner Event – Tickets Still Available!

The Mousetrap by Agatha Christie is the world's longest-running play, according to the Guinness World Record ... *to be performed on this day* (sources: Google and [agat](#))

Please join us for the Theatre Guild live performance at 3:00 PM on Sunday at Ellicott Creek Playhouse (550 Ellicott). Dinner at The Family Tree Restaurant will follow.



Tickets are \$18 each. We reserved the last 19 tickets available! Please sign up on the main bulletin board or reach out to us. **Deadline for tickets: Sunday, March 2!**

Stephanie and Pete

Trinity Tidings, February 2025

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



ELCA Prayer Ventures, February 2025*

- † The word of God brings joy and comfort to us yet is sometimes difficult to hear. Pray that we will reflect on how God's word strikes us, especially when it challenges what is safe, familiar and comfortable in our lives.
- † Lift up prayers and songs of praise to God for being the bright light in the world that illuminates the one true and enduring source of hope, guidance and eternal life – Jesus Christ.
- † Use the words of Psalm 71:3 in your prayer to God today: "Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress."
- † What tasks feel overwhelming to you right now? Ask God to renew your spirit for undertaking those things that are difficult to work through and accomplish.
- † Pray for peace, healing and justice, especially in the critical contexts of Ukraine, Russia, Haiti, the Middle East, troubled regions of Africa and wherever conflict and war exist in the world.



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 Trinity Old Lutheran, Augustana and Good Shepherd. Strengthen our relationships in this community as we serve our neighbors in love.



The Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Trinity Tidings

Published monthly by
Trinity Old Lutheran Church
3445 Sheridan Drive, Amherst, NY 14226
Church Office: 716-836-4868 or 716-836-4990
Church email: trinityoldlutheranchurch@gmail.com
Karen Mulartrick and Jan Sherman, Co-Editors

*ELCA Prayer Ventures, from www.elca.org. @Copyright & Trademark, 2024 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. All rights reserved.



Mission for February: Hearts and Hands—Faith in Action

TOL is a part of the community of Hearts and Hands (H&H) volunteers. This Neighbor-Helping-Neighbor program has been serving caregivers and care receivers in Erie and Niagara Counties since 2003. In addition to needing volunteers, your monetary donations are most welcome and will help with expenses incurred by volunteers who transport care receivers to medical appointments, routine errands, etc., as well as caregiver support services.

For more detailed information, please visit the website at www.hnhcares.org or contact the agency at (716-406-8311).

Please use the marked envelopes found on the table in the narthex or use Tithe.ly through the TOL website. If using the mail, please enter "Hearts & Hands" on the check memo.

Mission for January: Thank you to everyone for your donations to support ELCA Lutheran Disaster Relief (LDR). They will be directed to recovery and relief efforts resulting from Hurricane Helene impacts in North Carolina. LDR will be there to assist all who are recovering or rebuilding.



Support for Local Food Pantries...Your donations in support of Good Shepherd Lutheran's pantry in Tonawanda and the Community of Good Neighbors Mobile Food Pantry in Buffalo are greatly appreciated.

Please place them in the narthex shopping cart or leave them in the elevator entrance during the week (Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 9:00 AM to Noon). Gift card donations should be mailed to the church. Thank you!

ELCA Prayer Ventures, February 2025*

- † Remember in prayer those impacted by the wildfires in Southern California and by severe winter weather, and those involved in long-term recovery from disasters. Give thanks for Lutheran Disaster Response and for synods and congregations that provide financial support, resources, volunteers and encouragement.
- † "I have called you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you" (Isaiah 43:1-2). Give thanks and praise to God for being our ever present help in every circumstance of life.

My Musings
by Diane Schmidtke

Grace in the Moment

Moments of grace can appear without prelude.

Carol showed up at our front door. She was confused, distraught and cold. She lives across the street with her son, and we've been neighbors for 50 years. Until recently Carol was a physically healthy 87 year old widow who cares for her rose bushes, rakes leaves, and walks around the neighborhood at a brisk pace. She is a devout Christian who loves to praise the Lord.

Sadly, Carol's memory is failing her. Yesterday she knew enough to come to our door when she felt afraid, but she didn't know how to tell us what was bothering her. Of course, I invited her in to warm up. She sat on the couch, and I wrapped her in a soft blanket. Then we had a tea party and a long chat. She relaxed and enjoyed feeling safe and cozy. She admired my blooming Christmas cacti over and over. Every now and then she asked for prayer for her memory.

Charlie and I were grateful that we were home and wondered what she would have done if we hadn't been. She had remembered to take her house key so hopefully she would have headed home. Her son works full time; her married daughter stops by each day. Otherwise, she spends much time alone.



From the outside it may look like Carol was the lucky one, but in reality, it was I who was graced this day...

How often do I sit and appreciate my houseplants or the mug I drink my tea from or the cookies I made last week for my grandkids or the guy who shares my life or the ability to retain thoughts and express them?

Seen through Carol's eyes these things were treasures: fleeting flashes of joy, which she repeated over and over. I was blessed to listen and respond with love and kindness.

The day before, at 9:30 AM, our grief support group met for a bi-monthly Zoom session. There were 10 of us, wanderers and seekers; we all had an interesting discussion for two hours—parents sharing their hearts, their children, their concerns, their lives. It was an especially meaningful time together. We hoped that everyone left feeling a bit better for having come. Despite the venue, there was much care in the air(waves).

The morning event was a planned session; the afternoon visit was unexpected. Both were gifts to the heart in this season of love...

Used with permission.

Adult Ed. Classes with Charlie Schmidtke...You're invited to join the class on Monday afternoons in the Fireside Room (or on Zoom) from 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM. Please contact Charlie for a Zoom link.



February 17	Hannah and Elkanah
March 3	Hosea and Gomer
March 17	Samson and Delilah
March 31	Ester and King Xerxes

**Sermon Discussion/Input with Pastor Fred
Wednesday, February 26, at Noon in the
Fireside Room**



Pastor Fred invites you to join him in a bag-lunch discussion of the texts for the next month of sermons. Please let him know if you plan to attend so he can prepare materials.

Operation Christmas Child

This month's suggested donations are: gallon size storage bags and reusable plastic cup/water bottles. Please place your donations in the bin located in the main hallway.

Thank you so much!
Kelly and Debbie



On-going Collections!

Look for the marked containers in the donations area in the main hallway.

Thank you!

Aluminum Can Tabs for Ronald McDonald House in Buffalo.

Recycle Cans and Bottles...Your donations can be placed in the marked container or 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.
- Peanut butter and jelly for the Sandwich Ministry.

Thank you to the volunteer teams who continue to prepare and deliver
100 sandwiches each week!

Miles of Pennies...Look for the yellow piggy bank.

Dash's Register Tapes for Niagara Health System.

Friends of Night People (FNP): Winter

FNP is also in need of winter items to help the homeless: thermal clothing; sleeping bags; blankets; boots; hand/foot warmers; gloves; hats; hygiene items; lip balm and travel mugs. Please place your donations in the blue barrel located in the hallway. Thank you for your donations!



*Happy Valentine's Day!
Friday, February 14*

Adult Ed. Classes with Charlie Schmidtke
Study Notes: Jesus and the Essenes

Part I: Influence of the Essenes on Jesus (Continued)

The Essenes called themselves the Sons of Light and were preparing for a battle with the Sons of Darkness (which inevitably included the Romans and the Jewish leaders in the Sanhedrin). There was a strict process to follow before being accepted into their life. No one who was deaf would be admitted because the deaf cannot hear the Torah (the basis for Jewish belief which contains the first five books of our Old Testament). The blind and the lame were also prevented from joining, the former because they might touch something that was unclean as prescribed by Jewish laws and the latter because they may stumble and frighten angels. Angels were very influential for the Essenes (and for “common Jews”). This influence probably resulted from Persian beliefs that became a part of Jewish ideas after the Babylonian captivity. The Essenes built water aqueducts so they could wash themselves every day before they ate their one and only meal. Purification was not just a spiritual symbol of washing away the evils of the world, it was also a physical ritual to cleanse the body. Thus, John’s baptism was a ritual of purification: it was a physical act that was related to the symbolic acts of repentance and redemption. It washed away the evil of the physical world and allowed the baptized to become clean in soul and body. There was no idea of “original sin.” That concept was developed centuries later and became part of Catholic belief when St. Augustine in the 5th century used the concept to explain the sin of Adam and Eve. He connected this sin to the reason for Jesus’ crucifixion. Jesus came to save us from this original sin. During the first century the belief was that Jesus died for our sins, which were the result of living in a world of sin and corruption, not because we were born with original sin.

Part II: Jesus and the Essenes

The Essenes were not just opposed to the decadence of Roman rule but they also were opposed to the rule of Jewish authorities in Jerusalem. They opposed the two groups who formed the leadership for the Jews in Jerusalem and the Temple: the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They also saw the priests who performed the ritual sacrifices at the temple as actors. The Pharisees were mostly priests and businessmen who were educated to interpret the Torah. There were two schools for training Pharisees: one based on Greek philosophy (the school Paul attended to become a Pharisee before his conversion), and the other a more traditional Jewish, orthodox school. Although the students and rabbis of each school argued with the other school constantly, there were some common beliefs they shared. The Pharisees were a minority in the Sanhedrin (the Jewish governing body). They believed that the Torah and the oral laws given by Moses should govern all of one’s life. A Messiah would come to herald an era of world peace. God controls everything, although an individual’s decisions would determine a person’s fate. They believed in individual resurrection (an afterlife), angels and demons and used a lunar calendar to determine holy days.

The Sadducees, on the other hand, were wealthy and powerful people in the Jewish community. They held a majority in the Sanhedrin and were more political in belief and action than they were religious. They supported Rome since it kept them in power and enhanced their wealth.

They were religiously conservative, especially regarding a literal translation of the Torah. They did not believe God was involved in daily life, rejected the ideas of an afterlife or spiritual world and used the solar calendar to determine holy days. The Pharisees and Sadducees were in constant conflict with one another, even regarding how to treat Roman oppression and rule. The idea that Jews do not believe in an afterlife comes from the Sadducees and is not a universally accepted belief in Judaism.

The Essenes opposed both the Pharisees and Sadducees believing that those two groups had corrupted the Temple, were dysfunctional leaders and were misleading the Jews. For the first apostles, then, they would have adopted a set of ideas that rejected the legitimacy of Roman rule and beliefs, been opposed to the Jewish leaders, and were ready to be led by a Messiah who would be preparing them for the end of days. It is easy to see that this background would have been both consistent with and contrary to Jesus’ teachings. He did not reject his Jewish upbringing and basic beliefs, but he did come with a message that would change the way Jews were to live and the laws and rules they should follow. (Could this have been the result of his training in India?) His message was not one of opposing the Romans and Jewish leaders with swords but with love, mercy and forgiveness. (Non-violence is a hallmark of yoga practices.) These lessons would be hard for the Apostles to learn; many of whom probably did not understand Jesus’ teachings until after Pentecost.

The Essenes did not believe in free will: everything was predetermined by God, including moral behavior and who would be saved. The righteous would enjoy eternal bliss and the wicked eternal torment. Knowing the names of angels gave one power over that angel.

Used with permission.

Hope & Healing: Christian Cancer Support

For anyone on a cancer journey, Linda Sokoly (Ministry Leader) from Augustana LC is available to give support through emails, phone calls, texts or one-to-one in-person conversations or prayer.



Linda can be reached through the Augustana church email at augustchurch@yahoo.com or by calling the Augustana church office at 716-832-5720.



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.



“No act of kindness, no matter how small,
is ever wasted.”
Aesop