



Pastor's Ponderings

"Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." James 1:17

"Nothing is constant but change" is central to the universe. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus was quoted by Plato as noting that "everything changes and nothing stands still." Heraclitus noted that one cannot step in the same river twice. The river that one steps in the second time is different than it was even a second before as the current flows."

So which is it? Is there something besides change that we can rely on?

We, as believers, know that God is there through it all. We trust in a connection to God that Jesus gave to us. A connection that reminds us we are worthy in God's eyes, we are forgiven, and we are not alone. This connection is with God in whom we have confidence and is one who keeps his promises and is described as being the embodiment of LOVE.

We experienced this LOVE at Christmas and see the greatest gift for humankind from the Father of Lights, Jesus the Christ. With this ultimate gift, we have experienced many acts of giving. The encouragement of selfless giving is how John the Baptist prepared for Jesus. When people asked John, "what then should we do?" John answered, "whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none and whoever has food must do likewise." (Luke 3) He challenged them to "bear fruits worthy of repentance." This advice, challenge, answer was a prequel to who Jesus will be, and that Jesus' mission on earth is about giving. When giving is done in the name of Jesus, we give generously.

So we have a mission to accomplish in the world; yet this mission is into the world Heraclitus declared constantly changing. As we enter the new year, we are to be aware of the opportunities out there to pursue the acts of giving John prepared the world for, and as we act in mission we may need to adjust to the detours, to closed doors, and to the many challenges set before us. In this new year the way forward is yet unwritten, and it is for us to make sure generosity abounds and that Jesus Light shines in all that we say and do.

Looking forward to serving with you amidst change in the new year, I remain...

Pastor Fred he/him/his

Wishing everyone a Blessed New Year!

NEW: Support Group for Grieving Parents

A new Grief Support group will begin at TOL on **Tuesday, January 7**. It is specifically for parents of children who have died. We will meet on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday each month from 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM. This group is also available on Zoom. Charlie and Diane and Jean will coordinate the group.

Everyone's grief is unique. Being able to talk about our children (of any age) in a safe space is a gift.

For further information please call 716-694-1335.

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.



| | |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| January 20 | Jesus and Mary Magdalene |
| January 27 | Joseph and Asenath |
| February 17 | Hannah and Elkanah |



TOL Coffee Hour – coming in January!
Watch the Sunday bulletins for the date!

Men's Gathering—Buffalo Fire Museum

The group will gather at the Buffalo Fire Museum on **Saturday, January 25 at 10:00 AM**. The museum is located at 1850 William Street (free admission). Lunch will follow at a place to be determined. More details will be in the January Sunday bulletins. Men from Augustana LC and Good Shepherd LC are also invited!



For more information, please contact Lanny.

Sermon Discussion/Input with Pastor Fred Wednesday, January 22, 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.

ELCA Prayer Ventures, January 2018*

We pray that everyone in need of warmth and shelter through the winter months has safe, dependable housing, especially elders and those who are homeless, and that we are unceasing in our work to care for and respect the dignity of people in need.

Trinity Tidings, January 2025

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



Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying,

²“Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East and have come to worship him.” Matthew 2:1-2

ELCA Prayer Ventures, January 2025*

- † Epiphany “This star, as bright as day, that will never lead astray with its message so appealing, is the word of God, revealing Christ, the way, the truth, the life” (ELW 301). Praise God for the gift of Jesus Christ, who reveals to us the way, truth and life of God’s love, forgiveness and promises.
- † Give thanks for God’s grace and the work of the Spirit, which equip us with the tools, wisdom and courage needed to face the challenges of everyday life and to bear Christ’s love and hope into the world.
- † “Who hears the song our sorrows swallow and offers hope to calm our fears? When all our words seem frail and hollow, God heeds the prayers within our tears” (All Creation Sings 1050). Give thanks that God hears and responds to our grief and suffering, even when our words fall short of expressing the depth of our sorrow.
- † “You who know our fears and sadness, grace us with your peace and gladness; Spirit of all comfort, fill our hearts” (WOV 738). Lift up your worries, troubles, insecurities and grief to God, who understands us and grants comfort, strength and endurance in every circumstance of our life.
- † Pray for an end to conflicts and violence in the world, including in our own communities. Ask the Spirit to inspire and equip us to be peacemakers and bearers of hope.

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.

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.



January Mission: ELCA Disaster Response (LDR) Hurricane Helene

Last September, Hurricane Helene devastated southeastern states from Florida to Virginia. The most severe impacts occurred in North Carolina and Tennessee. This month your donations will support LDR relief efforts in North Carolina (where help is needed most).

LDR has “strong relationships in the region and is already working on the ground. We anticipate that our greatest impact will be reaching those in underserved and rural areas.”

LDR Response

“Lutheran Disaster Response works with its partners to provide immediate relief, such as water, food, clothing, gift cards, tarps and other needs. Since many hurricanes also require a long-term response, Lutheran Disaster Response provides support on the long road to recovery with disaster case management, construction management, attention to unmet needs, and emotional and spiritual care.”

[from: www.elca.org/hurricanes. ©Copyright & Trademark, 2024 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. All rights reserved.]

Please place your donations in the marked envelopes in the narthex; mail donations to the church office (indicate on your check that it is designated for “ELCA LDR Hurricane Helene”).

December Mission: National Alliance on Mental Illness Buffalo & Erie County (NAMI)

Thank you for your support of NAMI, which has been serving Western New York families since 1984. More details can be found on the NAMI website: www.namibuffalony.org.



Support for Local Food Pantries

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

My Musings
by Diane Schmidtke

Haiku

I've been a word lover as long as I can remember. I minored in English in college and have enjoyed teaching forms of poetry to preschoolers, second graders, adults in the TOL Respite care, and my own kids and grandkids. One form of poetry that is fun to teach and easy to learn is the Haiku.

Haiku: a short, unrhymed Japanese poem that is typically made up of three lines with a 5-7-5 syllable pattern.

Although Christmas will be over before you read this, the feelings are still with us. So here are a few seasonal haikus...

Here comes Santa Claus
To children who watch and wait.
May we share their joy.

*

In a manger low
We put our hope and our trust
For eternity.

*

Sending peace to you
Extending it to the world...
Praying, yes, praying...

After you finish counting the syllables to make sure I did it right, try your hand at writing your own Haiku!
It's fun and satisfying.

Used with permission.

2025 Church Calendars and "Christ in Our Home"

Thank you to the Roberts & Wedekindt Funeral Home (Grover Cleveland Highway and Bailey Avenue) for providing the 2025 TOL church calendars. They are available on the desk in the narthex.

Copies of "Christ in Our Home" daily devotional booklets (January through March) are also there. If you would like a devotional mailed to you, please call Nancy in the church office at 716-836-4868.



Update! I received an update on our Operation Christmas Child boxes. This year they all went to South Africa, which is a country on the southernmost tip of the African continent. Thanks again to everyone who helped make our project a success! -- Debbie



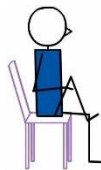
Ways to Give to TOL

Online: [Tithe.ly](https://www.tithe.ly) is available. For instructions, please visit the church website at www.trinityoldlutheran.com or download the [Tithe.ly](https://www.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.



Blessings



Never imagined that I would be doing chair yoga. But here I am. It gets me out of the house and actually doing something good for my health. It is easy and relaxing. It is good for the body and the soul. Come check it out; you might be surprised!

We meet at TOL each Tuesday at 5:45 PM, and if you'd like more info, please call Leanne at 716-864-1194.

Debbie



The World's Longest-Running Show!

The Mousetrap by Agatha Christie is the world's longest-running play, according to the Guinness World Record. It opened in November 1952 at The Ambassadors Theatre in London and moved to St. Martin's Theatre in March 1974 where it is still running to this day (sources: Google and agathachristie.com)

Please join us for a live performance of *The Mousetrap* at 3:00 PM on Sunday March 23, followed by dinner at The Family Tree Restaurant. This is a Niagara Regional Theatre Guild presentation at the Ellicott Creek Playhouse (550 Ellicott Creek Road in Tonawanda). Tickets are \$18 each. Please sign up on the main bulletin board or reach out to us. We reserved the last 19 tickets available!

Stephanie and Pete

Operation Christmas Child...Happy New Year!

Listed below are the suggested monthly donations for 2025. Feel free to adjust if sales pop up. Please place your items in the marked box located in the hallway.

Any and all donations are greatly appreciated!

Kelly and Debbie

2025 Operation Christmas Child

- Jan.: Yarn (new or used)
- Feb.: Gallon-size storage bags; reusable plastic cup/water bottle
- Mar.: Brushes, hair items, barrettes, dental floss
- Apr.: Small toys (ball, slinky, small cars/trucks, plastic animals, yo-yo, etc.)
- May: Soap, washcloths, Band-Aids
- June: Stuffed toys 10" or smaller, dolls
- July: School supplies: blue/black ink pens, pencils, pencil sharpeners, colored pencils
- Aug.: Markers, small notebooks, safety scissors
- Sept.: Coloring books, crayons, watercolor paint sets
- Oct.: Children's books, puzzles, travel-size games, flash cards



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

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

Part I: The Influence of the Essenes on Jesus

The influence of the Essenes on Jesus begins with John the Baptist. The first apostles who were called by Jesus (Simon/Peter, Andrew, maybe James and John and others) were John's followers. They turned to Jesus when John told them they should go (see John 1: 35-42). John was an Essene, a radical sect of Judaism. The Essenes lived in Qumran, a desert area northwest of the Dead Sea. They lived an ascetic life and were preparing for the End of Days. Most lived in Qumran, while others were sent to spread their message. John was one of their messengers. There were different rules for living outside the community but for the most part, messengers like John were true to the rules and beliefs of those who lived and prepared in Qumran. Whether an Essene lived in the community or was out in the world, they lived an ascetic life, which consisted in a very regimented lifestyle with strict rules and codes of behavior. We have learned a great deal about them through the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Scrolls were discovered in a cave and were stored in earthen jars. The Essenes began their activities around 200 BCE and were destroyed by the Romans during the purge of the Jews and the destruction of the Temple from 70-77 CE. The Scrolls were written by the Essenes and they contained detailed books about their beliefs, their way of living, and translations of other Jewish writings. They hid their scrolls to protect them from the Romans. Many thousands of fragments of scrolls have been found. There are about a dozen almost fully preserved manuscripts.

Some examples of the completed manuscripts are:

1. Book of Enoch. Described how to establish a 364-day solar calendar to determine the dates for celebrating Holy Days (an important calculation for Jews). Thus, they opposed the Pharisee's use of a lunar calendar. The debate between a lunar or solar calendar was intense throughout Jerusalem in Jesus' lifetime. The Book of Enoch also included the Book of Watches, which expanded on the stories of Genesis, the end days and the Last Judgment. It included a history of the Jews struggling with the Greek and Roman invasions. The book dealt with the trouble with evil in the world and who was responsible for it. They wrote of the angels who took human form and had wives. Their children brought a knowledge of working with metals, but also introduced evil. By the way, the idea of angels having human wives is also recorded in Genesis and Numbers. The Old Testament talks about the Nephilim who were giants supposedly created by fallen angels and human women.
2. Book of Dreams. It spoke of the end of days including an animal apocalypse. There was an image of a group of righteous Jews who would be instrumental in punishing the wicked (probably a "source" story for the Essenes themselves).
3. Book of Jubilees. A rewriting of Genesis and parts of Exodus and claims to be more accurate than any other translation of these books. It was written as an alternative to the Greek translations of the Torah used at that time by Jewish authorities in Jerusalem. It condemns marriage to non-Jews; is interested in the cyclic nature of history; asserts the solar calendar; is preoccupied with evil and how to overcome it; evil was introduced by demons who were the offspring of fallen

angels; condemns the current Hellenic influence of Judaism. (Note: Paul would probably have rejected the Essenes because he was a Pharisee and trained in a Hellenic school for Pharisees.) It is difficult to determine his attitude about them and John the Baptist after his conversion. Since John, Peter and maybe James, the leaders in Jerusalem, were all influenced by the Essenes and John the Baptist, it is possible that their problems with Paul had multiple sources: (1) He had persecuted Jesus' followers when he was a Pharisee named Saul; (2) He was a Pharisee and they were part of the leadership that called for Jesus' crucifixion; and (3) He would have rejected the Essenes as a radical sect of Judaism. Peter, James and John did not trust Paul in the beginning and only allowed him to preach the gospel because of Barnabas' intervention. Later on, they had a great compromise that allowed Paul to convert Gentiles without circumcising them. This was a big deal for Peter, John and James who were more traditional than Paul and who were more preoccupied with their Jewish traditions than he was. There is no evidence to prove it but I believe they, and probably other apostles, continued to hold a Seder meal during Passover while they prepared for celebrating Easter. We need to be careful about assuming that their practices are like ours. There was no Mass or Worship services originally. They met, prayed, discussed Jesus' message, maybe sang some psalms, and shared the bread and wine. Liturgies and the Creeds evolved over the centuries.

4. Temple Scroll. Describes God's covenant with the Hebrews and sees the return from Babylon as a second Exodus. It describes the building of the second temple and how God could be present to his people. This was not a description of the actual temple that was built; rather, it was one that should have been built. This temple would last until the End of Days and would be destroyed as part of the Last Judgment. The scroll details ritual purity and focuses upon Jewish law and how to apply the laws to life.
5. War scroll. Provides details for the final days. The Sons of Light (the Essenes) would descend from the tribes of Levi, Judah and Benjamin and would fight the Sons of Darkness who would be Gentiles, especially Romans and Greeks. The war would last six years and lead to a reconquest of Jerusalem and the proper worship at the temple would be restored. There would be 33 more years of conflict with foreign nations. The preparation for war required celibacy and an ascetic life, which the Essenes adopted.

**[Part I will be continued in the
February Trinity Tidings.]**

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 email at augustchurch@yahoo.com or by calling the Augustana church office at 716-832-5720.