



Pastor's Ponderings

"Jesus called a child, whom he put among them, and said,
"Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like
children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in
the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:2-4

"Dear GOD, I Hope you have the best day. Love Mia"

This little note is thumbtacked to my bulletin board and it is from a young person. It says so much. As an adult, I mostly ask God for favors, wonder where God is, feel hurt that God isn't doing what I think God should do, struggle when God isn't being how God needs to be for me and so on. I rarely ask God how God is, and I definitely don't usually wish God a good day?!?! Because, isn't it God's job to make my day better?

NOT

This note reminds me who's in charge. It reminds me that I am blessed because of God and therefore called to be a blessing to others. Our calling as followers and believers is to worship and praise God, which is a churchy way of saying I hope you have the best day, GOD. By worshiping and praising God we are acknowledging God's position in our life and our call to be there to follow in words and deeds where God leads.

What is so great about this note, is, it is other-centered. In this month, on Ash Wednesday, when we acknowledge we are dust without God, we are also stating that as followers of Jesus, our actions and words can make God's day a best day.

Dear God, I hope that I help you have the best Day!
Love Me.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Fred he/him/his

*Hope anchors
the soul*
Hebrews 6:19

New Bible Study! Discover the Book of Hebrews

Pastor Fred will lead this six-week
Bible study **beginning Friday,**

February 3. We will meet at Augustana Lutheran Church on Friday mornings from **10:00 AM to 11:30 AM.** You can attend either on Zoom or in person. Please join us!

Pizza & Valentine's Day Lunch...Come join us for lunch in the Fellowship Hall on **Sunday, February 19,** following our worship service. All are welcome!! Please use the sign-up sheet on the main bulletin board.



Outreach Team



At TOL, we reach out to support our community through our Sandwich Ministry, Operation Christmas Child, by collecting pop can tabs for the Ronald McDonald House, by donating and delivering food, clothes, and hygiene products, and by appealing to the congregation to support other external ministries. Please reach out to me to learn more about any of our existing ministries, make suggestions for improvements or new ministries, or offer to lend a hand. We meet on the 4th Tuesday of each month via Zoom; email me for a link to join us. We'd love to have you help extend our Outreach!

Peter

Happy Anniversary, Sandwich Team Ministry

A message from Sharon

It has been one year since the start-up of the Sandwich Team Ministry at TOL and the "team" is still going strong. It is really pleasing to know that over 5,000 sandwiches have been made and delivered so far. Thanks be to God that we can do this!

Five teams, and six teams in the summer, have been meeting weekly in the TOL kitchen on either Monday evenings or Tuesday mornings. The sandwich-making takes only 1½ hours weekly. The recipients are thankful and enjoy the sandwiches we're told. Friends of Night People (FNP), which distributes the sandwiches, is thankful for our help, and the volunteers enjoy getting together for a good cause and have a few laughs while doing it. So this is a WIN – WIN – WIN situation.

We are thankful for so many willing sandwich-making volunteers who work in teams of two or three. They are: Velma, Sandy, Earlene, Barb, Susan, Anne, Frank and Karen, Diane, Stephanie, the Peter & Family, Linda, Sue and me. Thanks to Nancy, TOL Secretary, for organizing the schedule and to Dick and Lanny for deliveries to FNP, and to all those who help with the shopping for supplies. Hats off to all the volunteers!

Please note that there is a bin in the church narthex for the collection of personal care items, and a barrel in the main hallway for the collection of clothes. These donated items are delivered along with the sandwiches.

If anyone is interested in volunteering for this ministry, please contact Nancy or Lanny or me. If anyone is willing to help with shopping, that would be appreciated. Your contributions toward this endeavor are always welcome as well.



**We invite you to join us for worship
Sundays at 11:00 AM!
(in-church or on Zoom)**



Ash Wednesday Services at TOL and Augustana LC
Wednesday, February 22 (in-church and on Zoom)
Distribution of Ashes
Augustana LC, 11:00 AM and TOL, 7:00 PM

**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.



ELCA Prayer Ventures, February 2023

Remember in prayer those who have suffered tragedy, trauma or loss from recent winter storms, flooding and earthquakes. Pray that God will bring them hope and encouragement throughout their grieving, recovery and adjustment to the changes in their communities.

Pray for people who suffer chronic illness and pain that impacts their daily lives, activities and employment; pray that they might receive affordable health care and effective treatment; and ask the Spirit to stir our empathy and help us provide appropriate, respectful support.

Ask God to help us understand, respect and set aside our differences so that we might be empowered by our unity in Christ and embrace our complementary gifts and passions to do God's work in the world, "for we are God's servants, working together" (1 Corinthians 3:9).

World Day of Social Justice (February 20) Pray that our concern for social justice in the world will be grounded in our faith, Jesus' example and the ways and wisdom of God, emboldening us to serve our neighbor, respect one another and risk changing unjust laws, traditions, institutions and behaviors.

©Copyright & Trademark 2023 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. All Rights Reserved.



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

Trinity Tidings

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



January Mission

Thank you for your donations in support of ELCA Lutheran Disaster Relief (LDR). There have been a number of disasters over the last six months and LDR will be there to assist all who are recovering or rebuilding after these events.

**February Mission of the Month:
Hearts & Hands—Faith in Action (H&H)**



TOL is a part of the community of 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. Please visit the website at www.hnhcares.org for more detailed information or contact the agency at (716-406-8311).

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

"Souper Bowl of Caring"



On **Sunday, February 12**, we have an opportunity to help fight hunger in our community by making a monetary donation to our soup pot in the narthex or by bringing in pantry staples and canned goods for the shopping cart (see the list below). All food and monetary donations will be donated to Community of Good Neighbors and/or Good Shepherd's food pantry.

Always welcome are grocery donations of non-perishable items (and gift cards to grocery stores), including:

- Soups/canned goods (vegetables, tuna, beans, etc.)
- Peanut butter, jelly, pasta sauce, applesauce
- Breakfast items: cereal, oatmeal, grits, granola bars
- Boxes of pantry staples: instant potatoes, rice, mac and cheese, pasta, ramen noodles
(Please check food expiration dates before donating.)
- Paper goods (toilet paper, paper towels, etc.)
- Personal care (feminine hygiene products, bar soap, shampoo, toothpaste, diapers, etc.)

Food items can be dropped off at TOL on Tuesdays through Fridays from 9:00 AM to Noon—just ring the doorbell to let the office know that you're here. Thank you for your generosity!

Women's Luncheon Group



We will meet at TOL on **Thursday, February 9, at 12:00 Noon** and go to lunch at the Olympia Family Restaurant (3312 Niagara Falls Blvd. in North Tonawanda). We plan on car-pooling—so please be at the church by Noon! If you have any questions, please contact me or Barb. All women are invited to join us!

Judy

Annual Congregational Meeting...Our annual meeting, following the worship service, is scheduled for **Sunday, March 5**. Copies of the printed Annual Report will be available by Sunday, February 26, or we can email one to you on that date, if requested.

Table Talk!

Wednesday, February 8, 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM
(in-church and on Zoom)

We continue to meet in the Fireside Room on the second Wednesday of each month, focusing on Oprah Winfrey's "Belief" series. Each meeting will give us the opportunity to view and discuss spiritual beliefs and practices found throughout the world

Please contact the church office if you'd like to Zoom. Each session stands alone so feel free to join in at any time.

Adult Ed. Classes led by Charlie Schmidtko Monday Afternoons at 1:00 PM

We will meet on **February 13 and 27** to continue our review of some biblical passages and sources not included in the bible as we look at who the "Real Jesus" was. All are welcome to join us in the TOL Fireside Room and also on Zoom. (Please contact Charlie for a Zoom link.) The updated schedule is listed below.



Feb. 13	The Essenes' influence on Jesus
Feb. 27	Jesus according to Thomas and Judas
Mar. 20	The Armenian Jesus
Mar. 27	Jesus and Mary Magdalene
Apr. 10	What the Q documents tell us
Apr. 24	How the Gospels were selected and what was lost
May 8	The Council of Nicea and how Jesus was defined

Seasons' Readings!

The TOL book sale is located in the Resource Library and it's open year round. There are many items available for all ages and new books and puzzles are continually being added. Stop by after worship or during regular office hours!



A big **Thank You** to Barb for being our honorary librarian. Barb comes in regularly to help organize our library shelves by category and/or author, and this makes it easier for all of us to find the books we're interested in!

"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.

If you would like to reach out to her, she can be contacted through Augustana LC's office (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 if you have any questions (716-836-4868).



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

Operation Christmas Child

In the January Tidings there was a complete list of suggested donations to help support this very important ministry in 2023. Highlighting items each month helps take the guesswork out of what can be packed in the boxes, and it helps us in collecting even more items and putting together more boxes. We are very thankful for every single donation!!



For the month of February the suggested donations are hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, and socks. Whether it is homemade or store bought every item is greatly appreciated. A box labeled Operation Christmas Child is in the narthex for your donations.

Thank you so much!
Kelly and Debbie

On-going Collections!

Can Tabs...your donations of aluminum tabs will be donated to the Ronald McDonald House Charities of WNY (RMHC). Your can tab donations 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 on the table 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: Islam

Part 5 – Islamic Doctrines and Beliefs

- Faith is an absolute unity with God. There is only one God; the idea of a trinity of gods is offensive.
- Angels are important messengers from God while Satan is an evil angel. Angels are made from light.
- Prophets and Scripture are essential. There are 25 total prophets; but six are the most important: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammad. Mohammad is not divine.
- Final Judgment. This belief comes from Zoroaster of Persia and Judaism. It includes The Last Days and Allah's Day of Judgment.

There is a problematic doctrine about Predestination and Divine Decrees. There is a continuing debate over whether we are predestined or whether we have free will. This debate is comparable to Luther/Calvin believing in predestination and the Catholic church believing in free will. Predestination was often presented as God having a plan for everyone and what happens to us is because of God's decree.

Purification is both spiritual and physical. Spiritually a pure life is dedicated to kindness, concern for others, gratitude, openness to God and sensitivity to moral issues. Physically it calls for specific ritualized acts.

Purifying requires washing, bathing, brushing of teeth, removing sand or dust, even if there is no water. Always purify before praying or worshiping.

Prayers and worship services are essential. The prayers include cycles of body postures which end in a complete prostration to Allah.

Almsgiving is not seen as charity. It should be done often and arise from a genuine concern for others. It is expected of everyone over the age of 16 and who is not living their own substandard existence.

Marriage. Everyone is encouraged to marry and renunciation of sex is forbidden. But there are strict sexual laws—only allowed in marriage. Marriages are solemn (often parentally arranged, even today). Marriages unite families and are not just for the individuals involved. Marriages often have contracts including a bridal gift from the groom.

Jihad is mentioned 35 times in the Quran. It usually means striving to improve oneself or being strong to overcome evil. It also means to struggle or resist and is not necessarily tied to war. Mohammad's battles with the Meccans occurred within a cultural and political context. He never said one should ever attack civilians. His view was parallel with St. Augustine's view of a Just War (defensively based warfare was morally justified). He established rules

for engagement in conflicts that should only be between opposing fighters. Extremists have ignored this idea of Jihad. There is NEVER a justification for killing innocent people. Collateral damage is unacceptable. There is a controversy over whether Jihad is an inner spiritual struggle (called the greater jihad) or an outer struggle with one's enemies (lesser jihad). The Classical belief is that to have a lesser Jihad, the head of state must declare the Jihad and this is the only permissible form of war. Traditionally it was used to expand the Islamic State and proclaim Allah's will and the Quran's message to non-believers. Even they were supposed to accept Mohammad's demand that all faith must be freely chosen, never demanded. For the first 150 years, Jihad was intended to allow leaders to accept conversions that were freely made throughout the Arab world. In the 9th century the Mongols captured Baghdad, the center of Islam at the time. The leaders redefined the meaning of Jihad and adopted a spiritual version of Jihad and no longer accepted a militaristic view of Jihad. A problem today is the use of Jihad by fundamentalist groups who may claim to be Muslim, but do not seem to conform to the general beliefs and norms of Islam.

Sharia Law is a Moral Code that is considered to be the way to God. The Quran is accepted by all Muslims. However, after Mohammad died people needed to have a practical guide for living a good life. The community developed an oral tradition which is called hadith. Sharia Law emerged from the hadith. One debate within Islam is whether the code is based on principles of Justice, Freedom and Equity or is it a practical guide to determine what is just. The laws were developed 200 years after Mohammad died in order to provide for a practical guide for an expanding the Islamic empire morally. The writers of Sharia Law believed they were basing the code on the Quran and on Mohammad's life. Believers fall along a continuum of literal interpretation of Allah's principles to contextually relevant moral codes. For example, on the issue of polygamy, it was an acceptable cultural practice in Mohammad's day but is no longer culturally acceptable. This debate is parallel to the Jewish and Christian conflict over literal vs. interpretative approaches to scriptures and the laws/commandments that are written in the "Sacred Books". The principles for Sharia can be found in the Quran, but Sharia is man-made and not set down by Mohammad or Allah. The complexity of interpreting Sharia Law is challenging. For example, there are five different legal schools of thought that interpret Sharia Law in Sunni thinking ranging from literal adherence to the words of the Quran to a more contextually based interpretation of the Quran and of Mohammad's life.

Used with permission.

