



## Pastor's Ponderings

"So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation:  
everything old has passed away;  
see everything has become new."  
2 Corinthians 5:17

We are entering 2024 and with it we bring our baggage from 2023—good and bad, heavy and light. Entering a new year, I remember being excited to change the date on the top of my assignments at school to the next year, and later, I was proud when I remembered to change the year on the checks that I wrote. I am writing fewer checks, and I no longer have class assignments, so I must find something that reminds me of the impact of a new year.

Maybe the above quote can help.

Starting in the new year, being a new creation means that I will look differently at the baggage I brought with me from last year. The baggage that I brought to this new year carried the struggles, hurts, mistakes, relationship issues, and more, which I couldn't help but bring with me. As a new creation, I can now look at them with an eye of Christ. In my bags, I am encouraged to remember I am forgiven and to forgive others. From some of the other baggage that I am unpacking this year, I definitely see that I learned something that will make next year's luggage less heavy. Using the quote above, I am also reminded that as a new creation we are declaring that we are not alone. Therefore we do not carry any of our baggage alone. Phew!

As for the good and light baggage I bring, I celebrate with the Lord the blessings I have and can share.

This new year I wish for you the experience of being a new creation with Jesus, and remember, with Christ your "baggage" is lighter.

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Fred he/him/his



## Sermon Discussion/Input with Pastor Fred

Wednesday, January 3 at Noon

### TOL Fireside Room

Pastor Fred invites everyone to join him in a bag lunch discussion of the texts for the next month of sermons. It is known as a "Pericope Study." Please let Pastor Fred know if you plan to attend so he can prepare materials.

## Annual Congregational Meeting Sunday, March 3, following worship

### Annual Report Submissions

Please submit reports to the church office by **Sunday, January 28** (email: [trinityoldlutheran@gmail.com](mailto:trinityoldlutheran@gmail.com)).

## Congregational Budget Meeting

The 2024 Budget was passed on Sunday, December 10. Also, we welcomed Frank and Dan to the Church Council and thanked Stephanie, Scott and Matt their service.

## 2023 Financial Statements & 2024 Offering Envelopes

Your 2023 statements and 2024 envelopes are available in the narthex. Please stop by and pick up yours whenever you are in the church building (Sunday, or Tuesday to Friday, 9:00 AM to Noon). If you would like your financial statement mailed to you, please call Nancy in the church office (716-836-4868).



## You're Invited to a Pizza Party!

The WWI Women's group is hosting a Pizza Party in the Fellowship Hall following worship on **Sunday, January 21**.

Please use the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board. Beverages and desserts are needed. If you have any questions, please speak to Kelly. All are welcome!

Charlie Schmidtke's Tai Chi classes will resume on **Monday, March 4**. The Spring Session schedule will appear in the February issue of *Trinity Tidings*.



## New! Egg Carton Collection



During December and January, St. Paul Lutheran Church in Williamsville has asked us to help them collect egg cartons to support Response to Love Center in Buffalo.

The organization knows of a farm that has chicken eggs to donate, but they need cartons to fill. Please leave them in the marked box in the narthex. Thank you!

## ELCA Prayer Ventures, January 2017

In this new year, we ask God to open our hearts and minds to newness and change, knowing that whether we succeed, struggle or fail in our endeavors, the love and forgiveness we have in Jesus Christ never waivers.

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## Trinity Tidings, January 2024

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, <sup>2</sup>“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 2024

- † Pray without ceasing for an end to the conflicts and humanitarian crises in the Middle East, Ukraine, South Sudan and other countries. Ask God to make us instruments of peace, reconciliation and justice in the world wherever there is turmoil and suffering. Pray for the vital work we do together through Lutheran Disaster Response, ELCA World Hunger, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Lutheran World Federation, Church World Service and other partners.
- † Last year there were over 40,000 gun deaths in our country, including suicides (gunviolencearchive.org). Pray for an end to these senseless deaths and the resulting trauma, grief and anguish that spread through our communities and nation. Ask God to lead us out of hopelessness and inaction and to renew our commitment to end gun violence.
- † *Baptism of Our Lord* Let us give thanks for our baptisms, which marked us as loved and forgiven children of God and welcomed us to a life revitalized and guided by the Spirit. That same Spirit descended upon Jesus during his baptism and accompanied him throughout his life on earth.
- † *Lydia, Dorcas and Phoebe*, witnesses to the faith Pray that when we share the story of God’s love and activity in the world, we will remember women in the Bible who professed their faith in God, served as leaders in the church, shared the good news of Jesus Christ and cared for neighbors in need.
- † Remember in prayer those who serve in law enforcement in our communities and nation. Give thanks for the many ways they care for our well-being. Pray for their safety and ask the Spirit to nurture their wisdom, compassion and impartial judgment in the exercise of their responsibilities.

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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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### Mission for January: ELCA World Hunger

**ELCA’s Approach:** “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. – *Matthew 25:35* God richly provides for daily bread – the earth can produce enough food for everyone. Yet, many of our sisters and brothers still go hungry.”

“Your gifts to ELCA World Hunger are making a difference. As a partner of churches, social ministry organizations and development and advocacy organizations, ELCA World Hunger helps reach communities most in need throughout the world. Our relationships in the U.S. and around the world create an infrastructure that allows us to be very cost efficient and effective – less than 15 cents of every dollar is used for program administration and fundraising.”

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Please place your donations in the marked envelopes located on the table in the narthex, online through Tithe.ly, or donate by mail (enter ELCA World Hunger on the check memo).

### December Mission: Thank You!

Thank you to all who supported the Lutheran World Relief (LWR) Crisis Alert for Israel and Gaza. “Your caring gift will deliver critically needed resources like medical care, food, water and essential supplies where they are needed most.”  
[from: [lwr.org/israel-gaza](http://lwr.org/israel-gaza)]

### Support for Local Food Pantries

Your donations of non-perishable goods to 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 them 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!



### ELCA Prayer Ventures, January 2019

Pray for those who are cold and homeless this winter that they find warm, safe shelter and for the work of congregations and community programs that offer temporary shelter, meals and assistance for individuals and families in need of long-term, affordable, safe housing.

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# Thank You

Pastor Fred recently received a letter that was sent to the congregations that participated in the September Community Collection for Harvest House Buffalo.

Hello,

Merry Christmas to you and your wonderful congregations. I hope 2024 brings joy and peace to all.

I want to thank you and your congregations for helping with the diaper drive. Their help allowed us to provide over 8,000 diapers, 85,000 wipes and innumerable bottles, socks and clothes.

Harvest House has been confronted by an enormous increase in demand. In 2022 they were assisting 300 children per month. When we worked together, Harvest House was assisting over 625 children each month. Our congregations, working together helped them. I hope we can reprise our effort.

Christmas blessings to you and your congregation.

*Joe Somma*

## Monday Afternoon Adult Ed. Classes, led by Charlie Schmittke

Classes will resume on **Monday, January 22**, in the Fireside Room and on Zoom (1:00 PM to 2:30 PM). Please contact Charlie for a Zoom link.



Classes for January through May are listed below.

### 2024

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

## Chili Cook-off – Thank You!

Thank you to all who joined us for this friendly competition after worship on Sunday, December 3. We enjoyed sampling six different (all award-winning) recipes! The top winner was Velma with her White Chili! Runners-up were Nancy and Diane! Thank you to everyone who helped in any way—to the chili makers and to those who brought in chili toppings and desserts—and to Matt for his delicious mulled cider!



*Communications/Evangelism/Outreach Team*

## 2024 Calendars and “Christ in Our Home”

Calendars are now available in the narthex and they are courtesy of Emily at Roberts & Wedekind Funeral Home (Grover Cleveland Highway and Bailey Avenue).

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

## “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](mailto:augustchurch@yahoo.com).



## ELCA Prayer Ventures, January 2024

*Martin Luther King Jr. Day* Give thanks and praise for siblings in Christ, such as Martin Luther King Jr., who risk everything to proclaim God’s love and concern for all, stress the inherent value of our neighbors as children of God and awaken us from indifference, inactivity and hesitation to do God’s difficult work in the world.

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## Ways to Give to TOL

Online: Tithe.ly is available. For instructions, please visit the church website at [www.trinityoldlutheran.com](http://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.



## Operation Christmas Child (OCC)

As we begin the New Year, we are also beginning our collection for Operation Christmas Child. Below you will find the suggested donations for the upcoming months. Please place your donations in the marked box located in the narthex. Any and all donations are greatly appreciated!

*Kelly and Debbie*

### 2024 Operation Christmas Child

- Jan.: Toothbrushes, toothbrush covers, dental floss
- Feb.: Hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, socks
- Mar.: Combs, brushes, hair items, barrettes, small bag or drawstring backpack
- Apr.: Small toys (ball, slinky, jump rope, small cars/trucks, plastic animals, yo-yo, etc.)
- May: Soap, washcloths, Band-Aids
- June: Stuffed toys 10” or smaller, dolls, reusable plastic cups/water bottles
- July: School supplies: blue/black ink pens, pencils, pencil sharpeners, colored pencils, pencil case
- Aug.: Markers, small notebooks, safety scissors, glue sticks
- Sept.: Coloring books, crayons, watercolor paint sets
- Oct.: Children’s books, puzzles, travel size games, flash cards

## Unused Yarn? Donate It for a Good Cause!

Do you have any yarn you are not planning to use? I have a friend who knits hats for our Operation Christmas Child (OCC) shoeboxes, and we’d love to be able to supply her with more yarn. It doesn’t have to be a full skein; she pieces hats together with whatever she has.



Please place your yarn in the OCC marked box in the narthex. Thank you so much for your support!

*Kelly*

**Adult Ed. Classes with Charlie Schmidtke**  
**Study Notes: Jesus' Family**

**Part III: Jesus' Father and Siblings**

His father, Joseph, was from Galilee and Mary from Judea. (We'll talk about what this may mean later in the class.) In Matthew's Gospel, he begins by giving Jesus' male family lineage by naming 42 generations of males between Abraham and Jesus. He cites Jacob as the father of Joseph. In the Gospel of Luke, Heli was the father of Joseph. Luke provides 55 generations of males between Abraham and Jesus as Jesus' family lineage. There are three common explanations for these discrepancies: (1) Matthew and Luke have gaps and mistakes in identifying the lineage. Either or both are unreliable; (2) Luke gives Mary's family lineage and Matthew gives Joseph's and (3) Joseph had a biological father and a legal father. It was customary in Jewish and Middle Eastern cultures for a brother to marry his brother's widow. This was especially true if the man died before the couple had children. When the brother fathered the child, the dead brother was considered to be the legal father of the child even though he is dead and his brother is the biological father. Some scholars believe this is why Matthew cites Jacob as the legal father and Luke cites Heli as Joseph's biological father. The belief is that Jacob and Heli were brothers and one died before Joseph was conceived. There is only speculation and myths about who these men were.

There is no reliable information about who Joseph's mother may have been. Joseph was a carpenter and mason. He would have needed a mule to carry wood, tools, etc. It is likely that he would go into the forests to chop trees and use the wood and bark to make furniture, vessels (cups, platters and bowls), doors, chests, beams, feeding troughs, windows, etc. (The forests in the area are now all gone—urbanization and chopping of trees for building and furniture caused the loss of the forests that used to exist around Nazareth.)

At age 12 one is no longer a minor and usually people become betrothed by age 14 and married by 15 for girls. Boys are usually a little older. An angel in a dream changes his life when Joseph is told Mary is a virgin and he should marry her. He does so and they go to Bethlehem because of the census. This was part of the Nativity Gospels. In Luke, Joseph circumcised Jesus eight days after his birth, according to Jewish law. They also went to the temple after 40 days in order for them to be purified, especially Mary because she had given birth, which includes impure blood. Matthew talks of the house the Magi visited. If this story line is true, then Joseph would have found a small home for them to live in. They may have decided to stay in Bethlehem because they felt welcomed; they didn't have to worry about gossips in Nazareth; Joseph would be close to work in the temple; and they would be living near Elizabeth and Zechariah. When the Magi visited, Joseph's life was turned upside down. They warned Joseph about Herod and dreams convinced him to flee to Egypt to get away from Herod. Later, other dreams guided them back to Nazareth, rather than Bethlehem. Did Joseph have children with another woman? There is no evidence to support this Catholic claim, yet in the Catholic Church it remains a dogma that Mary was a perpetual virgin and Joseph never had sex with her.

There are no reliable stories about when or how Joseph died. The usual consensus was he died before Jesus began his ministry. Protestant belief has Joseph as the father and Mary as the mother of five boys and at least two girls. Joseph would have taught his boys carpentry. Sepphoris was a large Roman-based city that was only about five miles from Nazareth. A Jewish revolt had caused a great deal of damage

in the city and the Romans decided to rebuild it because it was strategically located. It is highly likely that Joseph would have taken his sons to work with him in Sepphoris. Nazareth wasn't large enough for a carpenter to make a living by just working there. In fact, it's highly likely that Joseph, before marrying, would have spent time in Jerusalem to get work. He would have always owned a donkey in order to carry his tools and wood. There was a lot of rebuilding during the time of Jesus' childhood and youth. I believe that Jesus would have been exposed to power, corruption, greed and discrimination in Sepphoris. The Sermon on the Mount may have been the culmination of his exposure to the injustices of Rome seen in this city. My bet is that Joseph would have been a guide for Jesus in formulating some of these ideas.

We're told the names of Jesus' brothers in Mark 6:3 and Matthew 113:55-56. They are James, Joses (Joseph), Judas (Jude), Simon and sisters. John also refers to Jesus' brothers in generic terms (John 2:11). In Galatians, Paul refers to James as Jesus' brother. In 405 CE Jerome (an influential theologian) convinces the Pope to refute the claim Jesus had any blood siblings and that they were only cousins. Joseph was married before and the siblings were his children from a former marriage. There is no evidence to support this belief, which rejects the biblical passages and may be based on the Gospel of James, which was rejected. We have no idea how many sisters he may have had and what their names were. We only really know about James; the other brothers only have myths connected to their lives.

James, Jesus' younger brother, is not an apostle and should not be confused with James the major, who went to Spain and was the inspiration for the pilgrimage of Santiago de Compostella. Another apostle is also called James, who is referred to as the minor. He was the son of Alphaeus and possibly Mary, another sister of Mary's. Jesus' brother, James, was a devout Jew and maintained that all of Jesus' followers should follow Jewish law and all men must be circumcised. Thus, he opposed Paul's practice of baptizing Gentiles without requiring circumcision. This was a huge, complicated rift in the early church. James was not a follower of Jesus during his ministry, but Luke tells of a meeting with him after Jesus' resurrection. They share the eucharist and James becomes a follower after the meeting. He is also present at Pentecost. This James led the church in Jerusalem along with John and Peter. The central beliefs of this Jerusalem church were:

- a) Jesus was the Jewish Messiah who fulfilled all of the Jewish laws.
- b) the Ten Commandments were the guide for righteous living.
- c) prayer was central (a core Jewish belief) and the Lord's prayer was the primary one.
- d) baptism brought the faithful into communion and fellowship.
- e) sharing the Eucharist (breaking bread and sharing wine) was essential.
- f) all wealth should be shared and the poor are to be taken care of.

He may have written the Epistle of James that clearly shows his devotion to the poor and oppressed. He too may have been influenced when he worked with his father in Sepphoris. James seems committed to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

Biblical reality is that there are inconsistencies and complex relationships in Jesus' family line. Trying to get to the real context of Jesus' life and understanding him as human is complex and sometimes just confusing.

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