



Pastor's Ponderings

"Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. ¹⁵Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. ¹⁶For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. ¹⁸And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace." *James 3:13-18*

Wisdom from above is pure, peaceable, gentle, merciful and bears good fruits. This Biblical nugget comes right after the passage in James that makes sure we know to be careful that out of the mouth can come both blessings and curses.

I have been disturbed by comments from leaders, from social media posts, and the vitriol exchanges that have been happening in our country. I am also finding that I voice comments that fall into earthly wisdom that is not uplifting and loving toward my neighbors. James puts out a challenge for me, for us and all whose wisdom may be questionable. He encourages us to use wisdom from above. I would say we need to be mindful of what wisdom we use when we think and talk about immigrants, those with different political views, our LGBTQAI siblings, and people who are different in gender and race. The wisdom from above reflects Jesus' and will be that which delivers good fruits, and peace.

At Christmas we celebrate our Lord's birth to a teenager. He then became a refugee because his government wanted him dead. Decades later after he grew up he taught love, which the people in power could not handle. Love and mercy were foreign and opposed to their actions of power. So, he was killed. But our Lord in his wisdom made this cruel act into an invitation to be merciful and gentle, and into a promise that death is swallowed up in victory.

As followers of Jesus, I pray that my year, our year, be full of gentle wisdom more than boastful wisdom, and that the change from earthly wisdom to heavenly wisdom would start with us, so that it can blossom into the world around us.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Fred he/him/his



Sermon Discussion/Input with Pastor Fred
Wednesday, January 28 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.

January: Special Winter Collection for Friends of Night People (FoNP)



During the month of January, you are invited to bring in winter-weather items for clients at FoNP. Your donations of warm gloves, hats, scarves and wool socks are most appreciated! Please place your items in the basket in the donation area.

Support Group for Grieving Parents... This group, for parents of children and grandchildren who have died, meets on the **1st Tuesday** each month in the Fireside Room (**10:00 AM to 11:30 AM**) and also on Zoom. Coordinators are: Charlie, Diane and Jean.



Annual Congregational Budget Meeting Notes

The 2026 Budget was passed on Sunday, December 14. Nancy and Sharon were elected to Church Council. Thank you to all who serve.

2025 Financial Statements & 2026 Offering Envelopes

Your statements and envelopes are available in the narthex. Please stop by and pick up yours whenever you are in the church building (Sunday, or Tues./Thurs./Fri., 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).

Women's Luncheon Group—Breakfast!



Good Morning

The group will meet for breakfast and a 2026 planning meeting on **Thursday, January 8**, at Bob Evans Restaurant (1925 Niagara Falls Blvd. in Amherst) at **9:30 AM**. All women are invited to join them! Please bring your suggestions and also restaurant names/addresses of those you would like to visit. If you need a ride from TOL, please contact Judy or Barb.

Warm Up! Please join us on **Sunday, January 11** following the Worship service, for a coffee hour in the Fireside Room. Hope to see you there!



New Carpet, Thanks! -- Barb

I want to thank everyone who has donated to—or bought items from — the Book Room (located near the main bulletin board). From the proceeds, we have purchased a new carpet for the front door entrance! We then took the old one, cut it down and placed it at the Larch Road entrance doors. We have had many compliments on how they look. Many books and puzzles are still available, as well as greeting cards — please stop by!!

Wishing everyone a Blessed New Year!

Trinity Tidings, January 2026

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 2017*

- † *Epiphany of Our Lord* We give thanks and praise to God for revealing to the world Jesus Christ, Son of God—our true salvation, hope and light.
- † We pray for God’s blessings on food and clothing pantries, community meals and emergency assistance programs provided by congregations and communities for people living with poverty and hunger or seeking temporary assistance in difficult times.
- † Uncertain of what awaits us each day and what the year ahead holds for us, we ask God to grant us courage, hope and wisdom for facing the challenges and tasks that take us by surprise.
- † *Martin Luther King Jr. Day* We remember in our prayers people, past and present, who stand and advocate with humility and courage for the rights, well-being and value of all people—God’s people—who suffer injustice, mistreatment, neglect or oppression.
- † Elders sometimes feel more isolated during the winter months. We pray for insight for creating meaningful ways to help our elders stay connected with family, friends and community, as well experience the joy of new relationships.
- † Just as the fishermen Peter, Andrew, James and John dropped what they were doing in response to Jesus’ invitation to follow and serve, we pray that we too are quick to follow, ready to learn and eager to serve as disciples of Christ.
- † We offer thanks and praise to God for being our salvation, light, strength and shelter throughout life and in every circumstance.

Prayer for Trinity Old Lutheran, Augustana and Good Shepherd 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.



“Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.”

Martin Luther King Jr.

Trinity Tidings

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Mission for January: Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR)

With so many areas in need of LDR’s assistance, it was decided to collect donations that will be designated for “Where it is Needed Most.” The ELCA may also choose to direct our donations to recovery efforts in Jamaica and the Caribbean islands after Hurricane Melissa.

LDR Response: “Lutheran Disaster Response works with its partners to provide immediate relief, such as water, food, clothing, gift cards, tarps and other needs.”

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- † Praise God for helping us respond with love and generosity to people whose lives have been disrupted by disasters in the United States and around the world. Give thanks for the work of Lutheran Disaster Response, a ministry of our church that manages our generosity, resources and partnerships with other organizations for maximum immediate and long-term impacts. *[from: ELCA Prayer Ventures, November 2025*]*

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”).

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

Thank you for your donations and continued support of NAMI, which has been serving Western New York families since 1984. More information about NAMI can be found on the organization’s website at www.namibuffalony.org.

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.



Altar Flower Chart for 2026...the sign-up chart is posted on the main bulletin board. Purchasing a bouquet (or two) is a beautiful way to honor or remember a loved one or friend, or to give thanks to God for blessings received! If you have any questions, please contact Barb.



My Musings by Diane Schmidtke

Kindness

(First written September, 2022)

We just returned from a wonderful trip to visit dear friends in the Netherlands. While there we were blessed to sit in their garden on the warm sunny days and have many conversations covering many topics. As is often the custom abroad, an afternoon break for coffee and something sweet is a given. This is one of the things we love about traveling in Europe.

During this time we met with several of their neighbors. One man was a doctor formerly from Afghanistan; several others were Indonesian. They all were multi-lingual, gracious, kind and interested in hearing about our lives and our country. They each brought treats to enjoy while we shared our stories.

Different face; different race; same heart.

Upon returning home we were surprised and happy to see that our peach tree still had many peaches on the branches. There also were pits and rotted peaches on the ground. The squirrels and wasps have had a feast. I got busy picking up the debris so that I'd be able to mow the lawn the next day. Peaches in the hundreds on the ground and a load still on the tree.

Soon I was approached by a young African American man who was on a work crew at a neighbor's home: "Do you sell your peaches?" "No, but you're welcome to pick some."

He couldn't believe his ears and kept offering to pay me. We struck up a conversation. I gave him a bag and told him to pick away. He took about 6. I urged him to take more. He planned to make peach jam. We talked about other peach goodies, about wasps and squirrels and about the work he was doing nearby.

Different face; different race; same heart.

Later in the afternoon, as Charlie and I played Rummikub, we could hear someone next door mowing their lawn. It was quite loud and reminded me that I'd be doing the same chore tomorrow. Since we had been gone two weeks, the grass was really overgrown. Add to that the peach residue, and it was going to be a messy job. Charlie is still dealing with one broken hand, one sprained hand and a knee in a brace so the honors would be all mine!

The neighbor's noise continued and then got even louder; I began to roll my eyes at the disruption when I realized that the young man from Bhutan was mowing our lawn in addition to his! I couldn't believe my good fortune! I plan to make some peach muffins for his family.

Different race; different face; same heart.

There is no doubt in my mind that the good in this world far outweighs the bad.

Perhaps I should say: Same race: **Human race**

"Kindness is the golden chain by which society is bound together." Goethe

Kindness is the light that dissolves all walls between souls, families and nations." Yogananda



ELCA Prayer Ventures, January 2017*

- † We pray we are not hesitant to live as active, concerned members of society, that our actions, words and influence reflect God's word and will for the world.



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 and Friday, 9:00 AM to Noon).

Thank You Received from Wally Swanson

Dear Members of Trinity Old Lutheran Church,
The Good Shepherd Pantry thanks you for your outpouring of help. Thru donations like this, we were able to provide complete Thanksgiving meals for 54 client families in need. We really appreciate your support as more families come to the pantry for help to feed their families.

Thanks for your continued support!



"Christ in Our Home" devotional booklets for January through March are now available in the narthex. Please take a copy! If you would like one mailed to you, please call Nancy in the church office at 716-836-4868.

Do you have extra 2026 calendars? If so, please bring them in—Tony (Cheryl's) will deliver them to Veterans Hospital in Buffalo! [*Thank you, Tony!*]

2026 Adult Ed. Classes with Charlie Schmidtke

You are 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 19	Gospel of James (Infancy Stories and Mary's Perpetual Virginity)
February 2	Rome - Peter and Paul
February 16	Corinth - Letters

* Niagara Frontier Chord Authority, Thank You Received

Dear Trinity Old Lutheran Church
Congregation, Pastor and Anne,
Thank you for allowing our chorus, Niagara Frontier Chord Authority (NFCA), to come to your beautiful church!



God bless and Merry Christmas!
NFCA

- * **A big Thank You** to all who helped decorate the church for the seasons of Advent and Christmas, and to those who donated poinsettia plants for the altar area. Beautiful!

Part II: Mary Magdalene and Jesus

3. Easter (Continued)

Mark 16:1-8 - Mary, Salome (mother of James and John, wife of Zebedee) and Mary (mother of James and Joseph/Joses, Alphaeus' wife) brought spices. On the way they asked each other who would roll the stone. A young man in a white robe was sitting at the tomb and they were alarmed. The young man told them not to be alarmed. God has raised Jesus. Go and tell the disciples, especially Peter. The women ran and were confused and shaking. They were too afraid to tell anyone.

Mark 16: 9-11 - Mark continues his passage and says that Jesus appeared to Mary alone (a separate story line from first going to the tomb). Mark refers to Jesus having forced seven demons out of her earlier. After seeing him, she went and told Jesus' friends who were crying and mourning. They didn't believe her.

Luke 24:1-11 - "Women" found the tomb empty and didn't know what to think. Two men appear beside them. The women were afraid. The men asked "why are you looking in the place of the dead. Jesus has been raised." Luke now identifies the women as: Mary, Joanna (manager of Herod Antipas' household who helped provide food to the disciples), Mary (mother of James and Joses or James and John) and some other women. They returned and told the apostles and others. They all thought it was nonsense. Peter ran to the tomb and saw it empty. He didn't know what to think.

John 20:1-10 - Mary goes to Peter and John and tells them that the stone had been rolled away. Peter and John run to the tomb and see it is empty. Of course, John arrives first and sees the linen outside the tomb and doesn't go in at first. Peter then arrives and goes into the tomb. They are not sure what to believe, although John indicated he believed. They return to the other apostles.

John 20:11-18 Mary was weeping and stooped when two angels appear. Why are you crying? They have taken my Lord's body. She turned and saw Jesus (whom she didn't recognize, thinking he was the gardener). Jesus says, "Mary." She turns and says "Rabboni." Don't hold onto me. Go tell my disciples I'm going to my God. Mary goes and tells disciples what she has seen and what he said to her. There is no indication of the apostles' response.

Note the incredulity of the apostles. They don't believe Mary or the other women. Why is Thomas called the doubter and not all of them? Why didn't any of the apostles ask Mary any questions: what did he look like; what did he say, etc. Does this indicate not only doubt but a dismissal of a woman? Why didn't Jesus ask the apostles why they didn't believe Mary when he does see them? Maybe he did and John leaves that out? When we get to Mary's gospel, we'll see that the first part hasn't been found. Could there be answers in those missing pages?

4. Pentecost

Mary is not specifically named but was assuredly there. "All of the Lord's followers were gathered in one place." At least 120 of them. (By the way, Pentecost is a Jewish holiday celebrated 50 days after Passover. Originally it was celebrating the wheat harvest but later became a

celebration of Moses receiving the Laws. Christians celebrate Pentecost 50 days after Jesus rose.) When Luke is referring to Pentecost, he probably means the Jewish festival. The apostles including Mary would have begun preaching the good news on that day and certainly continued until the day they died. After Pentecost, Christ's message gets delivered in many different ways. There was diversity among the apostles and the women who spread his message. Unfortunately, we do not have a clear history of the women and their message.

Simon (Peter) and Mary Magdalene

Peter has been influential for Christianity yet the Gospel according to Peter and the Acts of Peter were not included in the bible, just two of his letters. Peter probably did not write these books but probably did write some memoirs based on his sermons. Many scholars believe that they were used by Mark when he wrote his gospel. The other gospels were probably based on Mark and thus were dependent upon Peter's memoirs. John's gospel has its own history. One of the real conflicts in the early church involved the role of women and specifically Mary Magdalene. She and Peter were clearly at odds. Evidence for this is seen in the gospels and some letters that have not been included in the bible. What is included in the bible is what happened after the Resurrection, which we've discussed. The Gospel according to Thomas claims that Peter was a difficult man and he was resentful of Mary's status among the early followers and of her close relationship with Jesus. The Gospel of Mary claims that she was the primary disciple and leader of the early church and tells of the resentment Peter had toward her. Mary is clearly a close friend and confidante of Jesus. The Gospel of Philip alludes to the possibility of Mary and Jesus being married. Jewish men of Jesus' age would be married because being single would have been very rare and would raise suspicions about what type of man he would have been. Philip speaks of them kissing and the passage that is included in this story is missing. The conflict between Peter and Mary was probably not resolved and she, like many others, followed a different path than what we have been taught. Since the basis for understanding these conflicts and different ways of following Jesus were based on different gospels, letters and Acts that were burned after the Council of Nicaea, it is difficult to have a clear and comprehensive history of the early church and all of the followers of Jesus. Jewish culture and customs of the time were very male dominant but Jesus preached a new way that changed the way we were to live and follow Him. This included replacing all of the laws of Leviticus with the command of love. Was this a new Judaism or a new way to relate to God? This issue remained a predominant theme for at least a century until the destruction of the temple and the Jewish diaspora. For Jesus, all were equal to the Lord—all were welcome to the table—all were children of God. That message is still difficult to practice in today's world.

What should we conclude about Mary's role/relationship with Jesus? The Gospel of Mary was found in the 1880s and was part of the Berlin Gnostic Codex. Only fragments of the original remain. The Gospel starts after the resurrection and tells that Mary, not Peter, is the real leader of the church. It was written in the 2nd century about her. It was a key document raising questions about the role of women in the early church. It tells of the jealousy of the males, especially Peter and James. The gospel urges us to look beyond our own ego by looking inward, through meditation, to what is real, lasting, infinite and already within us. Knowledge takes us to understanding, which then leads us to salvation. It is a Gnostic gospel.