



Pastor's Ponderings

In everything do unto others as you would have them do to you." Matthew 7:12

A golden rule that Jesus Christ stated and that is a tenet in most religions.

Also, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind..."

And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22:37, 39

Jesus said these are the greatest commandment and the second commandment.

There is no mistaking this is what Jesus wants his followers to practice and act on. However, these are not tenets in many governments, and it seems that our government is disregarding these basic human principles especially regarding Refugees, Asylum seekers, and Immigrants.

From my vantage point, there is a crisis of ethical and humane behavior towards humankind, specifically in the way this administration is dealing with people who have stayed longer than their visas, or with people trying to start a better life for themselves but do not have the correct papers.

Many people are here in the United States escaping a culture where their lives are threatened. I am appalled to know that our country is treating humans in inhumane ways. People being deported are not given basic human rights; some are being sent to countries not of their origin, and in some cases, they are being shackled, treated like criminals—from the elderly to young men and women whose only issue is that they were trying to have a better life in our country. I can't imagine if this was my mother, sibling, or relative.

We are called to stand for justice and to stand against scapegoating others.

"O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you? To act/do justly/justice and to love mercy/kindness and to walk humbly with your God" Micah 6:8.

Pastor Fred he/him/his

Mid-Week Lenten Soup Suppers and Worship Services

Below is the schedule of Wednesday Lenten soup suppers (6:00 PM) and worship services (6:30 PM). The theme is "Everything in Between."

This year's Lenten Collection will be to support the newly-formed "Refugee Partnership of WNY—Crisis Response" fundraising (a collaboration between Catholic Charities of Buffalo, International Institute of Buffalo, Jericho Road Community Health Center, Jewish Family Services of WNY, and Journey's End Refugee Services).

- March 12** Good Shepherd Lutheran
(2669 Sheridan Drive, Tonawanda)
Topic: Stranger and Neighbor
- March 19** Abiding Savior Lutheran
(1534 Ruie Road, North Tonawanda)
Topic: Righteousness and Mercy
- March 26** Augustana Lutheran
(3143 Eggert Road, Tonawanda)
Topic: Rest and Growth
- April 2** Trinity Old Lutheran
Topic: Lost and Found
- April 9** St. Martin Lutheran
(322 Old Falls Blvd., North Tonawanda)
Topic: Faith and Works

Note: TOL will be hosting the Mid-Week Lenten soup supper on **Wednesday, April 2**. If you are able to help with making soups or desserts, please use the sign-up sheet on the main bulletin board. Thank you so much!



Sermon Discussion/Input with Pastor Fred Wednesday, March 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.

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

The meeting will be preceded by a Potluck Lunch in the Fellowship Hall. Please use the sign-up sheet if you plan to bring a dish or dessert. Hope all are able to join us!

Please note: 2025 Church Council

Dan is the Council Recording Secretary; Frank will fill in for Dan, if needed.

Trinity Tidings, March 2025

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

LENT
Pray + Fast + Give

Ash Wednesday Services, March 5

- TOL (in-church and Zoom), 7:00 PM
- Augustana (in church and Zoom), 11:00 AM
- Good Shepherd, Ashes to Go
- St. Martin, 7:00 PM
- Abiding Savior, 7:00 AM (Ashes to Go); 11:00 AM Worship

ELCA Prayer Ventures, March 2025*

- † Give thanks for moments of joy and celebration in your life and the lives of your neighbors and siblings in Christ.
- † Pray for lasting and resilient peace in the Holy Land and Middle East, that those who have suffered and lost much will experience justice, hope and healing as they rebuild their lives and communities.
- † Pray for the ELCA AMPARO Migrant Ministry, ELCA Witness in Society, ELCA World Hunger, Global Refuge, Lutheran Services in America and other partner ministries and organizations that uphold basic human rights, address causes of migration and help immigrants, asylum-seekers and refugees rebuild their lives in our country.
- † Who is our neighbor? Pray that we might recognize people everywhere in the world as our neighbors, created by and beloved of God and sharing with us a common lineage.



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.

Support Group for Grieving Parents

This group is specifically for parents of children and grandchildren who have died. It meets each month in the fireside Room 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.

Trinity Tidings

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March Mission: ELCA Lutheran Disaster Response—US Wildfires

This month, your support will be directed to Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) as it assists communities in Los Angeles County, CA that were impacted by catastrophic wildfires in January. Your donations to “US Wildfires” will be used 100% for the response. LDR remains involved until the response is complete.

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 “LDR: US Wildfires” on the check memo.

Thank You for Your Generous Donations!

Mission for February... Thank you to all who supported Hearts and Hands—Faith in Action (HNF). This local organization continues to serve caregivers and care receivers in Erie and Niagara Counties—with the help of many volunteers and monetary donations. HNF has been helping individuals since 2003.

TOL is a part of this community of volunteers—Neighbor Helping Neighbor Volunteer Program!

Supper Bowl of Caring... Thank you to all who brought in non-perishable food items and monetary donations on Sunday, February 9. Your continued support is greatly appreciated and donations will be shared with the pantry at Good Shepherd Lutheran and Community of Good Neighbors mobile pantry.

Your donations to assist the Community of Good Neighbors Mobile Food Pantry in Buffalo and Good Shepherd Lutheran's pantry in Tonawanda are greatly appreciated. Please place items in the narthex shopping cart or leave them in the elevator entrance during the week. Thank you!



“Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”

Desmond Tutu

October 7, 1931 - December 26, 2021

Excerpts from Pastor Fred's letter of February 9 that appeared in the Sunday Worship Bulletin.

Dear Folks,

This past week disinformation about Lutheran Social Ministries was spread accusing Lutheran aid groups of being a money-laundering scheme. Similar statements have been made about Catholic Charities and the humanitarian arm of the government, USAID. These harmful statements and actions have motivated me and many of my colleagues into clearing the air and sharing the facts. [The following are excerpts of a response from Alesia Frerichs, CEO of Lutheran Services in America. I also encourage people to listen to our Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, and her response to these damaging words. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiqzOVdZG1E>]

“As a network rooted in the long-standing Lutheran faith-based tradition of service in caring for our neighbor, Lutheran social ministries provide essential services to people in communities across the country. Lutheran social ministries have been working in partnership with their communities for decades—and in some instances, for more than a century. Lutheran social ministries are trusted, community-centered organizations that have aided in the wellbeing of all people who need assistance ...

The suspension of funding to faith-based health and human service organizations like Lutheran social ministries undermines efforts to support individuals and communities during on-going times of need. This action causes considerable harm to people who rely on critical services for shelter, food, and mental health services among other social supports. The work of social ministries and community-based organizations are lifelines to those in need and must be protected.

We will stay steadfastly committed to our work with all partners across federal, state and local efforts on behalf of Lutheran social ministries—to ensure the needs of individuals and communities who rely on our services to live full and active lives can continue to be met in the days, weeks and years ahead.”

Jesus said about serving those who are in need...“as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it unto me.” (Matthew 25) This is our calling as Christians, to serve the least of these.

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.



March 3	Hosea and Gomer
March 17	Samson and Delilah
March 31	Ester and King Xerxes
April 14	Priscilla and Aquila
April 28	Paul, Lydia, Thecla and Phoebe

My Musings
by Diane Schmidtke

CARPE March

March is upon us
Spring's on its way
We've made it through winter
A cause for "Hurray!"

And maybe some hope
For days that are warm
When crocuses pop
And bees start to swarm.

And hope too that people
Can soften their hearts
And open their minds
Cuz that's where love starts.

Perhaps now it's time
To not look ahead-
Stop! Find the joy in the moment
Instead....

Joy

Used with permission.



Happy St. Patrick's Day

ELCA Prayer Ventures, March 2025*

- † *Ash Wednesday* Pray that we will wear the mark of the cross on our foreheads with humility and repentance and will remember why we are baptized into Christ: to proclaim the gospel, bear love and mercy into the world, serve our neighbors, strive for justice, grow in faith and glorify God in all we do and say.
- † Water is a gift from God and a vital resource that sustains all living things. Pray for wisdom and discipline that we might preserve, manage and restore water resources essential to food production and life itself for people around the world.
- † *First Day of Spring* Sing praises and lift up prayers of joy and thanksgiving for the new life, light and hope that emerge with spring – awesome gifts from God, the Creator.



Friends of Night People: Thank you to our volunteer teams who continue to prepare and deliver 100 sandwiches each week! Besides donations of peanut butter and jelly, you can help the homeless by collecting winter items (such as thermal clothing, sleeping bags, blankets, boots, hand and foot warmers, gloves, hats, hygiene items, lip balm and travel mugs). Please place your donations in the blue barrel in the hallway. Thanks!

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

Part III: Essenes' Influence on Jesus

Here are Essenes' practices that may have influenced Jesus:

1. Had a daily routine of prayer and meditation
2. Jesus may have used medications attributed to the Essenes and possessed a knowledge of healing adopted by them. These medications could also be related to yoga and Hindu practices.
3. The Essenes had 12 council members and Jesus called 12 apostles.
4. Rejected animal sacrifice (like in the Temple). The Essenes made effigies of animals out of flour, water, olive oil, salt and frankincense. They molded them while praying about the traits they wished to have corrected believing that the traits would be transferred into the image. They were ceremonially burned. For Passover they made a lamb image instead of killing a real lamb. Not sure if this pertained to Jesus.
5. Refused to worship in Jerusalem and kept a tabernacle on Mount Carmel. In the Bible, Mount Carmel is best known as the site of the prophet Elijah's dramatic showdown with 850 prophets of Baal. Carmel means "vineyard," "orchard," or "garden" and reflects the fertile beauty of Mount Carmel's picturesque slopes and valley areas.
6. They interpreted the Torah and other Hebrew scriptures in a spiritual, symbolic and metaphysical manner—not literally. A clear rejection of the Sadducees.
7. Celibacy was prized, even in marriage for some. The Essenes stayed celibate in order to be ready for combat. Was Jesus celibate? Did the Essenes influence him in this regard? Did this practice eventually become the source for priestly celibacy in Catholicism? Generally, the belief is that in the 4th century the Latin/Roman church began to require that married priests refrain from sexual relations and began to prescribe that married men should not become priests and ordained men could no longer marry or have sexual relationships. The practices of celibacy have never really been universally adopted by Catholic clergy. Popes and priests down through the centuries have fathered children and others who did not have children still had sexual relations, both homosexual and heterosexual.
8. Equally of the genders; both male and female prophets and teachers; although Qumran may have been predominantly male.
9. Rejected the doctrine of a physical resurrection, which is in conflict with the Creeds. They did believe in a spiritual life after death.
10. Believed in astrology; they cast horoscopes and made magical amulets of plants and gems. This would be consistent with Hindu training but was rejected by the Roman church and the Jewish leadership.
11. They believed that the angels had taught Moses the practice of herbalism.
12. Wore only white as a sign they worshipped God who is Light. Essenes were sons of light preparing to fight the sons of darkness.
13. Absolutely truthful.

Some practices of the Essenes were compatible with Hindu practices, leading to the possibility that Jesus did go to India. The characteristics of the Essenes noted below are consistent with Hindu practices.

1. Followed the rules of purity of the Brahmins in India of that time.
2. Miracle cures were natural extensions of authentic spiritual life; yogi practice of curing becomes miracles for the Jews.
3. They believed in mantras and esoteric rituals (even magic). These are forms of prayer for both Hindus and Essenes.
4. The sun was a divine manifestation imparting spiritual powers to both the body and the mind. Early Christmas celebrations were linked to Saturnalia, the Roman festival of the Sun god.
5. Believed in reincarnation, the law of karma and the ultimate reunion of the soul with God.
6. Practiced non-violence: a hallmark for Jesus as noted in the Garden when Jesus rebuked Peter for drawing a sword.

In addition to those characteristics that seem compatible with Jesus' beliefs and practices, we know that Jesus was baptized by John. When he heard about John's beheading he went into the desert to fast and pray for 40 days (a common practice for the Essenes). He also waited until he was 30 before starting his public ministry, just like John seemed to do. I also believe that John and Jesus had many talks as they grew up. There is no real evidence of this but it only makes sense from what we know of their relationship. Their personalities were quite different. I see John as behaving a lot like Paul: loud, argumentative, self-assured and driven by a deep-seated conviction of his beliefs. Jesus seems to me to be calmer, more peaceful, and uses parables rather than proclamations of what to do or believe, and is gentle in his treatment of others. What drove him to lash out at the money changers? Their corrupt practices would have been a problem for him, but why did he react so "violently" during Holy Week. Was he feeling the pressure of impending death? Was he feeling isolated because his followers/apostles didn't seem to understand what was going on? Was he trying to set an example? This interpretation allows for righteous violence. Did Jesus intend for this? Was this "too" Old Testament for him?

Jesus' relationship with the Essenes is not completely clear and leads to speculation. However, to ignore the influence of the Essenes upon Jesus and his followers is a real mistake. It would be like ignoring the influence upon Jesus of his Galilean upbringing and background.

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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.