



Pastor's Ponderings

When the carols have been stilled.
When the star topped tree is taken down.
When family and friends are gone home.
When we are back to our schedules...

THE WORK OF CHRISTMAS BEGINS

To welcome the refugee,
To heal a broken planet,
To feed the hungry,
To build bridges of trust, not walls of fear,
To share our gifts,
To seek justice and peace for all people,
To bring Christ's light to the world.



By Michael Dougherty

As we plan for Christmas,

- by going all out in our decorating,
- buying/making cards to send,
- spending hours on-line, in stores buying gifts,
- wrapping and sending presents to loved ones,
- listening, singing carols every hour of the day...

I encourage us to also plan for the work of Christmas beyond the holidays.

Every day celebrate our Lord among us when we show and do love. God is with us, Immanuel, when we take seriously our calling of being stewards of the earth. Jesus was born as a gift to humanity, therefore, this gift we receive impels us to be a gift to humanity as well.

Let us enter 2022 with humble and generous hearts ready to bring the light of Christ into the world.

May all have a blessed and full Advent season as we prepare for Christmas. May Jesus' birth keep our motivation alive throughout the whole year.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Fred he/him/his



**Come, share the Christmas spirit
with others—
invite a friend or relative to
in-church or Zoom worship!**

TOL Candlelight Service, 7:00 PM

Augustana Candlelight Communion Service, 4:30 PM



We will be holding a New Members Class at TOL on **Sunday, December 5**, following worship. We invite all who would like to join! At this class, we will be sharing information about the ELCA, the Conference, our Church and its ministries, as well as meeting some of the leaders. Please let Pastor Fred or the office know that you would like to attend (716-836-4868).

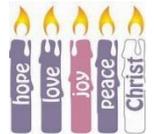
We will receive new members on **Sunday, December 19**—and we look forward to sharing our mission together!

New! Advent Bible Study

Pastor Fred will lead this three-week Bible Study on Friday mornings, **10:00 AM to 11:30 AM, at Augustana Lutheran Church.**

The classes will meet on **December 3, 10 and 17.**

A Zoom invitation will be offered for those who can't make it in person. Hope to see you there!



Congregational Meeting, Sunday, December 12

Following worship, we will have our congregational meeting to vote on the 2022 church budget as well as electing 2022 church council nominees. The meeting will be in a hybrid format—you can attend in-person (with masks and distancing), on Zoom, or by phoning into the meeting (Zoom and phone instructions will be provided beforehand).

We hope you will be able to join us!



Christmas Poinsettias...If you wish to purchase a plant for the sanctuary, please use the sign-up sheet on the main bulletin board. Plants are \$8 each and the deadline for sign-up is Sunday, December 12. Please speak to Barb if you have any questions.

TOL Church Office News!

Items for the Worship Bulletins



All items for the Sunday bulletins should be submitted to the church office by **9:00 AM on Wednesdays.** Thank you!

New Email Address for TOL!

The change became effective on November 15. The new address is as follows:

trinityoldlutheranchurch@gmail.com

In-church Worship Guidelines (December)

Based on the recommendations of Erie County and with the increasing number of Covid infections, we ask that people wear masks at all times when in Trinity Old Lutheran, keep in known “bubbles,” and maintain a six foot distance when relating to others. Thank you for your cooperation and support of our ministry. God bless your Thanksgiving and Advent season.

Pastor Fred and the TOL Opening Committee

Glory to God in the
highest, and on
earth peace, good will
toward men.

Luke 2:14

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: December 2021

Advent, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

- † Give thanks for Advent wreaths and other faith traditions that remember and celebrate God’s dwelling among us in Jesus, God’s gift of eternal life, and Jesus’ enduring presence and light in the world and within us.
- † Pray for our global companions and our companion synods as we journey together during Advent, drawing on our diverse traditions and practices to focus on the coming of Jesus, the gift of salvation and our unity in the body of Christ.
- † *Christmas Eve* What an awesome gift has been given to us in the birth of a tiny, unassuming baby — the son of God, our true Savior and the redeemer of the world. “Glory to God in the highest!” (Luke 2:14)
- † *Christmas Day* Sing and shout prayers of thanksgiving and praise to God for living among us in the person of Jesus to help us experience and understand the good news of God’s saving grace, truth and amazing love for humankind and all creation. Again, we say, “Glory to God in the highest!”

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Trinity Tidings

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December Mission

This month’s mission will support Channel 5 Cable televised worship that is presented by Parkside Lutheran Church in Buffalo (Sundays at 10:00 AM, MeTV). This one-half hour service provides a connection to Lutheran worship for those unable to attend TOL in-church or on Zoom. Members have given us positive feedback about this worship format. Please make your donations through [Tithe.ly](https://www.tithe.ly) (on the TOL website at trinityoldlutheran.com), by using the marked envelopes found in the narthex, or by mailing your checks to the church office (made payable to Trinity Old Lutheran and with “Channel 5 Worship” entered on the memo line).

November Mission

Thank you for your donations to Veterans One-stop Center of WNY in Buffalo. Your support enables the organization to serve local veterans and their families as they transition to civilian life. Please visit the website at www.vocwny.org for more details on the services provided.

Food Pantry Collection—Thank You!

During the week of November 8, 25 boxes and bags of food were delivered to City of Good Neighbors (CGN) in Buffalo. The generosity during a recent food drive at Augustana LC, along with TOL donations, will help fill up the CGN Mobile Food Pantry Truck, which is located on Doat Street. Thank you to everyone for your support!

Operation Christmas Child

A big thank you to all who helped us put together 38 boxes—surpassing last year's total of 33!! Whether you made a box, contributed items, or helped with shipping—thank you! As we did in 2021, we will collect items throughout the year to give us a jump start on 2022. A complete list of suggested monthly items will appear in the January *Trinity Tidings*. You can place your donations in the marked box in the Narthex.

God Bless,

Debbie and Kelly

Sunday School will meet on December 19—
hope you can join us!



**Adult Ed., 2022
Charlie Schmidtke**

We will resume classes in the new year beginning **Monday, January 17 (1:00 PM to 2:30 PM)**. We meet in the Fireside Room with a Zoom option for those who do not want to attend in person. Please let me know if you would like a Zoom invitation. Classes for 2022 are listed below. Hope to see you at any or all!

Charlie

- Judaism: January 17 and 31
- Islam: February 14, 28 and March 14
- Native American: March 28 and April 11
- African Tribal: April 25
- Aboriginal: May 9

**Table Talk, Wednesday Evening
December 1 (6:30 PM)**



This will be the last discussion group for the year. Starting in January, Table Talk will be held on the **second** Wednesday evening of each month (6:30 PM). The group will meet at the church and there will also be a Zoom option. Pastor Fred and Charlie will co-host the sessions. The first three sessions will use Charlie's book to provide topics for discussion (reading the book is not necessary). Hope you can join the group!

- January 12: Finding respect for places and the world
- February 9: Respecting others
- March 9: Respecting family
- April 13: Holy week: What does the Last Supper and Resurrection mean to you?
- May 11: Why do bad things happen to good people?



Good Shepherd Lutheran Food Pantry

Thank you for your continued support of the local pantry at Good Shepherd LC in Tonawanda, which will be receiving your upcoming donations.

Suggested items are listed below. Please place your non-perishable donations in the shopping cart in the narthex or in the marked boxes at the elevator entrance during the week (Tuesdays-Fridays, 9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon).

- Canned goods (vegetables, soups, tuna, etc.)
- Jar items (spaghetti sauce, peanut butter)
- Boxes of pantry staples (cereal, pasta)
- Paper goods (toilet paper, paper towels, etc.)
- Feminine hygiene products
- Gift cards (Tops or Wegmans stores) can be taken to the church office.

Remember in prayer seafarers and fishermen

of all nations whose work separates them from family, friends and community for long periods of time. Pray that they will be uplifted and sustained by the assurance that they are remembered, valued, loved and always connected with their siblings in Christ, everywhere.



Hope and Healing: A Christian Cancer Support Group

**4th Tuesday of each month from 3:00 to 4:00 PM
Augustana Lutheran Church and on Zoom**



I invite you, your family and friends for hope and healing to those who are in a cancer journey now. I invite those of you who have beat cancer for your help to give hope and healing to others.

Please call me at 716-694-2451 or email me at lsokoley@hotmail.com that you will be attending. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

Linda Sokoley



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.

TOL Book Sale

Looking for something new to read as winter approaches...or for different puzzles or CDs? Maybe find a last-minute Christmas gift?

TOL's ongoing book sale has something for everyone! New items have been added (feel free to bring in your items to add to our inventory). Stop by Room 103 after worship—or anytime you visit TOL!



Hearts and Hands: Faith in Action

Hearts and Hands (HNN) continues to serve Amherst, Clarence, North Tonawanda, and the Southern Tier and welcomes all residents of Erie County and Eastern Niagara County. In-Home Support includes: Food Preparation, Laundry, Coffee and Conversation, Housekeeping, Minor Home Repairs.

Caregiver Respite Services include: Canine Caregivers, Coffee and Conversation, Friendly visits at Home, Sharing a Meal.

For more program details and information, please visit the HNN website at www.hnhcares.org/services or call 716-406-8311.



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

Adult Ed. with Charlie Schmidtke: Study Notes on Hinduism (Part II)

[[Hinduism Part III](#) study notes will appear in the January *Trinity Tidings*.] Adult Ed. will resume on Monday, January 17 and begin with the discussion of Judaism. The 2022 schedule appears elsewhere in this issue. All are invited to attend in church or on Zoom.

Hinduism—Part II

After Pentecost, those whom the Holy Spirit had inspired began to preach the good news. Some stayed in the Jerusalem area and began to live a communal type of life style: sharing all their worldly goods and working and caring for one another and the marginalized of the area. Others began to spread out from Jerusalem. Thomas was the Apostle of Christ who went to India. The Christians of India blended their culture and the gospel message found in the Gospel of Thomas and the oral and written traditions of Jesus' followers in India. The story of "The Christ of India" is not often discussed in our churches.

The Christians of India have the "true story" of Jesus and his life, which is not described in our four gospels. When he was 12, Jesus really went to Mount Carmel not to the temple in Jerusalem (one of the reasons why it took his family three days to find him). The "real" story about what happened to Jesus when he was 12 is that Jesus was close with his cousin John (an Essene from childhood) and wanted to petition the Essenes for membership. He was being examined by elders on Mt. Carmel since only adults were admitted. After answering the elders' questions, he began questioning them and proved that they had nothing to teach him so no initiation was necessary and entering their fellowship would not help him grow spiritually. He returned with his family to Nazareth and prepared to leave for India and become a disciple of the Magi who had visited him when he was young. He ended up in the Himalayas with three masters who transformed Jesus of Nazareth into Isha the Lord, the Teacher of Dharma (for Hindus this means the "Ultimate/Eternal Way") and the Messiah of Israel. The masters taught him yoga and the highest spiritual life. Isha is a spiritual name that means Lord, Master, Ruler and is often a descriptive title applied to God. The masters decided that Jesus should go back to Israel to teach the Dharma, the Way, and he should send one of his apostles to India for the same spiritual instruction and empowerment.

Before going to Israel, Jesus went to Benares, the sacred city of Shiva where he studied the Upanishads and the Gita (sacred texts for Hindus). Then he went to Puri a great center of worship of Shiva where he perfected the synthesis of yoga, philosophy and renunciation of worldly desires and began publicly teaching the Eternal Dharma. He was becoming popular and those who made profits out of religion began to plot his death. He left Puri and returned to the Himalayas and received his final instructions before heading west. He was told that a close disciple would pour oil upon his head to signal his imminent death (it was Mary Magdalene in Bethany).

Jesus went to John first (as noted in our gospels). John (a Master of the Essenes) and his followers who could see and hear the truth were shown Jesus' Christhood (being a Messiah). Our gospels clearly show that the disciples didn't understand Jesus' message while he was alive. They didn't grasp his deeply spiritual and yoga side.

Jesus did not ascend into heaven after his resurrection. He returned to India. Even apostles and theologians in the West accept that Jesus stayed longer than 40 days. Saint Irenaeus (the primary reason why we have the four gospels that we

have) claims Jesus lived 20 years longer. This is the identical timeline for Hindu Christians. After spending 40 days in Israel after his resurrection, Jesus returned to India. He did so because the people understood his teachings better than those in Israel; besides Abraham was originally a Hindu follower of Krishna. Jesus had spent more time in India (ages 13-31) than in Israel, so he returned to his spiritual home and became the Christ of India. This is the "Original Christianity."

Indian Christians believe that Jesus' ideas meshed with Hinduism, especially yoga. He lived in a center which worshipped Shiva. There are a number of writings and "proofs" that Jesus lived there. There are Hindu texts that talk of Jesus in India and his becoming an Isha. Jesus was not an orthodox Jew; rather he was an Essene who had studied some of the wisdom of India while he lived there. He returned to the West where his ideas were misunderstood except by Thomas. He specifically spoke of the Dharma—the Eternal Way. Jesus was not a god but was divine as we all are. Jesus was not the Creator God and he was not a blood sacrifice to satisfy an angry God. He was a great siddha—a liberated being who for all practical purposes can be called an avatara—an incarnation of God. The authentic teachings of Jesus can be found in the Upanishads, Ghagavad Gita and the Yoga Sutras. Thomas is the only apostle who presents Jesus' authentic teachings. Thomas' gospel is not a narrative story of Jesus' life; rather it is a compilation of Jesus' sayings, especially those shared just with Thomas.

I have found it fascinating that there is no way to disprove the Indian Christian story line any more than we can prove or disprove the Western story line without resorting to the beliefs we've been taught.

Prayer Ventures, December 2021



- † Pray that, through the work of the Spirit in us, every aspect of our life will manifest the good fruits of love, generosity, justice, peace, service and faithfulness to the word of God.
- † Pray that we will be filled with "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7) and that our most burdensome worries, concerns and anxieties will be calmed and diminished.
- † Rejoice in God our Savior, who shows us love and mercy and attends to the needs of people who are poor, hungry, ill, neglected or excluded by society. Pray that God will work through us, using our unique gifts and passions to respond to, serve and embrace our neighbors in need while respecting their dignity.
- † *Winter solstice* As the days get shorter in our hemisphere, pray for people of all ages who suffer depression and loneliness, especially during the holiday season; pray that they will be comforted and uplifted by their faith and the knowledge that God is ever-present and sees our suffering, loneliness and despair; and ask the Spirit to help us be attentive, caring and empathetic friends and siblings in Christ for one another.
- † *New Year's Eve* Give thanks that we are new creations in Jesus Christ and that we can begin each day of every year with hope, renewed faith and restored vision for the work that God calls us to do in the world.
- † *Kwanzaa* Give thanks to God for the richness and significance of the traditions, cultures, values, stories, faith and leadership of our siblings of African descent.