



Pastor's Ponderings

March Madness has come to Buffalo again, and I am attending the games! There will be upsets and Cinderella teams winning as well as some of the favorites playing great basketball!

March Madness is also being played on the weekend that we welcome in the first day of Spring and the weather has been cold/warm/rain/snow and barely sunny.

March Madness happens during Lent, too.

All of these things are swirling in my mind as I try to focus on this article. What is there to gather from these seemingly random occurrences?

Time marches on, and there are many things we cannot control; however, there is much we can rely on. James writes, "Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above coming down from the Father of Lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." *James 1:17*

Jesus has brought into the world a life choice from the Father of Lights. That life choice is the act of giving generously. So in the midst of confusion, chaos, upsets, and time marching on, there is one thing that is to be kept in the forefront, GIVING GENEROUSLY. Looking outside ourselves and seeing needs and fulfilling them. Helping to make this world God created better and more livable for all people and creatures.

Disciplines of Lent are meant to help us focus on what is needed. And the prophet Micah puts it plainly to God's people... "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."

Maybe March isn't so confusing when Jesus shows us the way.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Fred he/him/his

ELCA Prayer Ventures, April 2026*

- † **Good Friday** Pray that we deepen our understanding of the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the ultimate demonstration of God's boundless love for all humanity. Ask God to forgive us when we seek or justify vengeance, isolation and dominance over people whom we see as adversaries, who unsettle us or whose beliefs differ from our own.
- † **Easter Sunday** Shout together with siblings in Christ throughout the world, "Hallelujah! Christ is risen!" Give thanks to God for showing humanity that God's promise of love, forgiveness and new life embodied in Jesus Christ is real, given to all people and to be trusted. Hallelujah!

Annual Congregational Meeting / Potluck Lunch Sunday, April 26, following worship

For the Potluck Lunch, please use the sign-up sheet on the main bulletin board to let us know what dish you'll bring and how many will be attending. Copies of the Annual Report will be available on Sunday, April 19. If you would like an email copy, please contact Nancy in the office (716-836-4868).

Chicken Chowder in May? You heard that right!

TOL's annual chicken chowder sale is now bi-annual! This Spring's sale will take place on **Saturday, May 16**, with chowder available at Noon for \$8 per quart.

A portion of the proceeds will be used to purchase two new 80-quart stainless steel chowder kettles and heating elements. Approximately \$750 is needed to purchase the kettles and two outdoor burners. Having our own equipment at TOL will allow us to hold many more chowder sales in the future. The remaining proceeds will support TOL and its ministries.

If you would like to donate soup ingredients—such as canned vegetables or fresh produce—please sign up on the board in the narthex. Thank you to everyone who has already signed up!



Volunteers are also needed to help with chowder preparation and the day of the sale. A sign-up sheet is available on the main bulletin board. The primary chowder prep day will be **Friday, May 15 at 9:00 AM**.

For more information, please contact Matt.

Dirty Rotten Scoundrels – Sign Up for Tickets!

Please join us for a live performance of *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* at **7:30 PM on Saturday, May 2**. This is a Niagara Regional Theatre Guild presentation at the Ellicott Creek Playhouse (550 Ellicott Creek Road, Tonawanda). Tickets are \$18 each. Please sign up on the main bulletin board or reach out to us. We have reserved 30 tickets!



Stephanie & Pete

Thank You...

...to all who have donated healthy cereals during Lent. Your donations are welcomed and appreciated at the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Pantry!

Sermon Discussion/Input with Pastor Fred Wednesday, April 22 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.

Trinity Tidings, April 2026

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



Holy Week Worship Schedule

Good Friday, April 3

(Tenebrae Service, Augustana LC, 11:00 AM)
(Tenebrae Service, TOL, 7:00 PM)



Easter Sunday, April 5

TOL at 11:00 AM
Augustana LC at 9:30 AM

ELCA Prayer Ventures, April 2026*

- † Pray for those who long for good news, hope, relief and liberation, including people of all ages who live in the midst of conflict and war, experience poverty and hunger, are imprisoned, suffer despair, and seek meaning and purpose.
- † Pray for peace where there is conflict, war and instability in the world, including Iran, the Middle East, Venezuela, Ukraine, Mexico, Mali, Nigeria, Pakistan and Myanmar. Pray for people who are impacted and displaced by conflict, that they remain hopeful, find safe sanctuary in welcoming communities, have resources to meet daily needs, and know that they are not forgotten.
- † Remember and pray for the growing number of individuals and families who experience homelessness, that they will have consistent, safe shelter and receive care and assistance that is respectful and attentive to their physical, emotional, spiritual and social needs.
- † “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4). Praise God for being present in our lives to guide and sustain us, especially when we feel alone, overwhelmed, frightened and adrift. Give thanks that the Spirit helps us respond with care and concern for our neighbors and siblings in Christ who are going through difficult times.

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.

Trinity Tidings

Published monthly by

Trinity Old Lutheran Church

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April Mission: Augustana LC DRIVE Program

Our focus this month is on the DRIVE Program at Augustana that assists immigrants and refugees with obtaining learners' permits and drivers' licenses through instruction and training. The program began in 2007 and receives grant funding from Lutheran Charities of WNY. Your monetary donations will help offset increased program costs.

Participants are very thankful for this program that gives them easier access to employment, healthcare, schools, neighborhoods and community activities.

For your donations, please use the marked envelopes found on the table in the narthex or use [Tithe.ly](https://tithely.com) through the TOL website. If using the mail, please enter "RIDE" on the check memo. Thank you!

March Mission Thank You

“Thank you for your prayers, support and encouragement for the South Asian Ministry.” *Pastor Sohail*

This is a “mission start” of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) that began in February 2024 and serves people whose languages of origin are Urdu and Hindi. Your monetary donations will help this ministry evangelize and grow.

What is ELCA “Mission Start”?

“In the ELCA, “mission start” refers to beginning new ministries or congregations that share God’s love and serve their communities, rooted in Christ’s call to go and make disciples (Matthew 28:19). This work is guided by grace, inclusivity, and partnership, often supported by Mission Builders, Global Mission, and local synods to nurture faith and build connections. Mission starts are a way the ELCA lives out its mission to welcome all and respond to God’s reconciling work in the world.”

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Support for 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 (Tues./Thurs./Fri., 9:00 AM to Noon). Thank you!



The Support Group for Grieving 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 and Diane and Jean.

My Musings by Diane Schmidtke

With Pen in Hand (written mid-February)

Letter writing began as a child when I exchanged news back and forth with my grandma and aunts in Minnesota. The cost of a first-class stamp then was 3 cents! During my teenage years, I corresponded with a pen pal in England and one on a farm in MN. The girl “across the pond” was a relative stranger; the farm girl became a lifelong friend.

The next pen-on-paper surge came after marriage when Charlie and I lived in New Orleans where he attended Tulane U. I wrote home to my parents, sister, aunt and friends in Buffalo: 6 cents/letter! (Long distance phone calls in the ‘50s and ‘60s were a luxury.)

After 4 years, we moved back home and settled at first in Kenmore and then, the Town of Tonawanda. A letter exchange began with my sister-in-law in New Orleans and a teacher co-worker as well as Dutch friends who were our next door neighbors for 3 years. At this point, stamps for US cards and letters were 15 cents and overseas airmail cost 21 cents. In all cases we wrote in cursive.

And so it went as time rolled on and new technology introduced us to laptops, cell phones, emails, texting and the like. The need to use pen and paper became less and less; computers allowed us to type and print. Many schools stopped teaching cursive; many people today have trouble deciphering it.

During Covid one of my many indoor projects was to hand-write a letter in cursive to each of my 8 grandkids. They all were teenagers and lived out of town. They were excited to receive something in the mail other than a birthday card. They had fun and some frustration trying to read the unfamiliar squiggles. In fact, one granddaughter asked her mom to decipher, and another brushed up on the letters and wrote back in cursive. Cost per letter: 55 cents.

Fast forward to today when I finished reading an amazing, beautifully written novel by Virginia Evans entitled, ironically, The Correspondent. It is written in epistolary form. Sybil, a retired lawyer, explores her life with its longings, problems, loves, pain, grief, frustrations, mysteries and reflections through letters and emails. Reading this book brought me full circle. The winter weather has been challenging with much indoor time. I’m again motivated to write letters in cursive to my now-adult grandkids. This time I’ll include a long list of things they don’t know about me, from the mundane to the mysterious to the eye-rolling. I hope they are amused, informed and gain some insight into my world as they march forward on paths of their own design and creation.

I take a moment to consider whether to address the envelopes using cursive as I place the 78 cent stamp with a smile and a sigh.

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**Wishing you a
Blessed Easter!**



**Earth Day, April 22
Arbor Day, April 24**



“Christ in Our Home”

The devotional booklets for April through June are now available in the narthex. If you would like a copy mailed to you, please call Nancy in the church office at 716-836-4868.

Hope & Healing: Christian Cancer Support

For anyone on a cancer journey, Linda (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.



ELCA Prayer Ventures, January 2017*

- † 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.

Operation Christmas Child

The suggested donations for April are small toys—including but not limited to a slinky, small ball, small cars/trucks, plastic animals, yo-yo, play dough, etc. Many of these items come in multi packs, which we can break apart to cover more boxes. When packing the boxes, these are the items that we always seem to run short of. Any and all donations are greatly appreciated! Please place your donations in the box marked Operation Christmas Child located in the hallway. Thank you!

Kelly and Debbie

ELCA Prayer Ventures, April 2026*

- † In Christ we are new people – new creations – and freed from our old self. Give thanks and pray for the Spirit to renew us daily and reveal how we are to live as people of faith set free to follow Christ, share the gospel, love our neighbor and spread hope.
- † Gather with siblings in Christ and lift up prayers of gratitude and joy to our God who is loving, merciful and employs the diverse gifts of communities of faith to accomplish great things in the world for the well-being, restoration and wholeness of humanity.



Adult Ed. Classes with Charlie Schmidtke
Study Notes: "Bible Canon"

Part III: Letters in the Bible and the Book of Revelation

Now we turn to letters by others that were often called the Catholic Letters because they were the last of the literature included in the NT canon established by the early Roman Catholic Church.

Letters

James. This was a general letter of instruction. There is a debate about the authorship. First, it was written around the turn of the 1st century, so whoever James is supposed to be, he was already martyred. For many Catholics James, is John's brother and the son of Salome and Zebedee. Most others believe it was Jesus' brother. The reason why the second one makes the most sense is that the letter seems to be a Jewish moralistic sermon, which was consistent with James, Jesus' brother's, theology. This letter also emphasizes the need to perform good works to be saved. During the Reformation, endless debates arose whether or not salvation comes from faith alone (Luther, Wesley, Zwingli, Calvin, and Knox) or necessitates good works (Catholic Church).

Peter 1 and 2. These letters were written in the 2nd century and attributed to Peter. The first letter is addressed to the Christians being persecuted in Asia Minor. The second letter talks about the second coming and reassures followers that 1,000 years are like one day to God. The contents of this letter make it unlikely that Peter himself would have written either one, especially the second one.

John 1, 2 and 3. These letters may have been written by the apostle John because their language is consistent with the gospel and seem to have been written at the end of the first century when John was supposedly writing his gospel. We'll discuss this authorship later.

Jude. It is attributed to the apostle Jude, or Thaddeus, the apostle who ended up in Armenia. The authorship is uncertain and was very unlikely to be the apostle's letter because it was probably written in the 2nd century. The letter is a call to fight against heresy, wickedness and disorder—themes that were appealing to the Council of Nicaea.

Book of Revelation

What to say about this one? The belief of the early church leaders was that this book was written by the apostle, John. Modern scholars disagree and think it was written by a man named John of Patmos, because the letter identifies itself as being written by John and evidence leads scholars to place the writing on Patmos. But wasn't John the apostle exiled to the island of Patmos? He was. That's what's so confusing about who the author may have been. This book was in competition with the Apocalypse of Peter for inclusion in the canon. Since Peter wasn't written by Peter, it was overlooked and John's book was selected. There was a second book of revelation supposedly written by Peter also, but it claimed that Jesus wasn't really crucified, so it was easily eliminated. By the

way, the first book of revelation by Peter describes different classes of sinners and gives descriptions of their punishment in hell; for example, being hung by tongues or penises. In the book, Peter asks Jesus why so many people are being punished. Jesus says the real secret is that there is no hell and everyone gets to heaven, but don't tell anyone because people may not behave if they knew.

John's Revelation may be the most confusing and most debated of any book in the bible. The imagery, visions, symbols and language allow for all types of interpretation and belief. The first part of the book has moral admonitions to the seven churches of Asia Minor. The second part uses visions, allegories and symbols (often unexplained) to deal with the contemporary crises of faith caused by the Roman persecutions.

By the way, Luther had doubts about the letter to the Hebrews, letters of James and Jude and the book of Revelation. He grudgingly included them but put them in his bible at the end.

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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.

April 13
April 27
May 11

Galatia and Thessalonica - Paul
Gospel of Judas
Spain and France - James (Major) and Mary Magdalene

Thank You Letter Received from Veterans One-stop Center of WNY [excerpts; full letter posted on main bulletin board]

To Our Friends at Trinity Old Lutheran Church,

Thank you for your generous contribution of \$270.00 to the Veterans One-stop Center. Your support helps us continue providing life-changing programs and services for Veterans and their families.

Your donation directly supports initiatives such as the Staff Sergeant Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program, rapid re-housing and homeless prevention assistance, outdoor recreation, peer-to-peer support events and activities, and physical and mental well-being initiatives. Through these efforts, we ensure Veterans receive the care, stability, and opportunities they have earned. Every day, our team helps Veterans overcome challenges, regain confidence, and build the foundation for a successful future after service.

We are deeply grateful for your partnership and belief in our work. I encourage you to visit us at www.vocwny.org or follow us on social media to stay updated on how your support is helping Veterans and their families.

With gratitude,
Heidi Phillips
Vice President