

## Pastor's Ponderings

*"...for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. Jesus sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Mark 9:34-35*

When I was in fifth grade, I rode my bike a mile to school through our village. I was proud to be a fifth grader. In our elementary school fifth grade was the highest grade. I was so proud to be a fifth grader that one day, I remember this vividly, I was riding my bike past younger children in lower grades on my way home from school. I was riding my bike without my hands on the handle bars. They were probably either straight up in the air or laid smugly across my stomach. Passing all the younger children from the middle of the road, I yelled, "I'm a big fifth grader!" (or something of the sort). I was showing off and claiming my greatness. As I was proclaiming my superiority, I hit a bump in the road and fell off my bike scraping my skin, tearing my clothes, causing bruising on my body—but mostly I experienced embarrassment. (How the mighty have fallen—lol!)

I thought about this incident from my past when I read the above quote from Mark. It reminded me of Jesus' other quote in Matthew that the 'last shall be first and the first shall be last.' I displayed hubris, and claimed to be number one, whereas the truth with Jesus is that those who are first or number one are not the greatest but are the oppressed, the widow, the child, the stranger, and the poor. The Last are first. The Least of these are priority.

*"Then he took a little child and put it among them, and taking it in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes on such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me." Mark 9:36-37*

So what is the big fifth grader's calling? What is the well off, healthy, cisgender male, employed, and nonimmigrant's calling?

To be the servant. To recognize our privilege and support others in becoming safe, whole, employed, protected, fed, housed and strengthened in our society.

Falling on the ground helped me realize that I am called to help lift people up off the ground to a better place.

Maybe this holiday season we can be a lifter of our fellow siblings.

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Fred he/him/his



## New! Pastor's November/December Bible Study

Pastor Fred began a four-week Bible Study on the Book of Jonah at Augustana LC on November 21. The remaining three classes will be held on **Fridays, December 5, 12 and 19** (10:00 AM to 11:30 AM). Hope to see you there!

## Annual Congregational Budget Meeting! Sunday, December 14, following worship

Please plan on attending either in person or on Zoom.

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

## Sermon Discussion/Input with Pastor Fred Wednesday, December 17 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.

## Singing and More at TOL!

On **Thursday, December 11 at 7:30 PM**, Barb chorus—the Niagara Frontier Chord Authority (NFCA)—will present "Singing in the Season." It will be an evening of a *cappella* harmony along with gift baskets raffle, mystery gift card tree, 50/50 raffle. The concert will feature the NFCA chorus and quartets. Free refreshments will be served while we mingle and the raffle winners are drawn. Admission: \$10; children 10 and under are free. See Barb for tickets ahead of time. They will also be sold at the door.



## A Successful Chicken Chowder Fundraiser! -- Matt

TOL's annual chicken chowder fundraiser on Saturday, October 25, was a success! After selling 30 gallons of chowder, we raised approximately \$1,100! Proceeds from the sale will support TOL and TOL's missions. A giant "Thank You" to all who supported the fundraiser by purchasing chowder, to all those who donated ingredients, and to the many volunteers who helped with chowder prep and with the chowder sale! A special thank you to Velma and Linda and Paul for lending their equipment—as well as hauling their two giant kettles to TOL!



You are invited to join us on Christmas Eve!  
(in-church and on Zoom)

Augustana LC  
Candlelight &  
Communion Service,  
4:30 PM



TOL Candlelight  
Service of Lessons &  
Carols,  
7:00 PM

## Trinity Tidings, December 2025

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



### Seasons of Advent and Christmas

Second Sunday of Advent, December 7

Third Sunday of Advent, December 14

Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 21

[Note: December 7, worship and Christmas Program will be  
at Good Shepherd LC at 10:00 AM. No worship at TOL.]

### Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at TOL

December 24 at 7:00 PM

(in church and on Zoom)

*Come, share the Christmas spirit with others – invite a  
friend or relative!*

### ELCA Prayer Ventures, December 2025\*

- † Pray for people and whole communities in the Caribbean that have suffered devastation and loss from Hurricane Melissa, especially across Jamaica, Haiti, Cuba and the Bahamas.
- † LWF (Lutheran World Federation) World Service is composed of 154 churches, in 25 countries, that embrace the Lutheran tradition, including the ELCA. Pray for the LWF's humanitarian and development work, which promotes peace, justice, reconciliation and dignity for individuals and communities.
- † Remember in prayer those who serve our communities, often working hours that prevent them from participating in worship and holiday activities. Pray for those working in health care, law enforcement, retail sales, emergency response, the military, social services, the hospitality industry and other vocations that we have come to rely upon.
- † Remember in prayer local, state and national leaders, that they will exercise their responsibilities with compassion, justice, fairness and commitment. Ask God to help them as they address intractable problems in our communities and nation, including poverty, racism and limited access to health care.
- † Lift up prayers of thanksgiving and praise that God illuminates our dark times, gives us strength to endure and surrounds us with love and mercy when we need it most.
- † Pray that we might express the life-giving joy of Christmas and that Jesus Christ will continue to bring light, hope and salvation into the world for all people.

### 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

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

NAMI is a non-profit organization that has been serving Western New York families since 1984. "Our signature programs are taught and led by trained, certified volunteer leaders who have lived family experience of the challenges of a loved one living with mental illness." "

More information and program details can be found on the organization's website at [www.namibuffalony.org](http://www.namibuffalony.org).

**Mission:** "We foster hope through compassionate support, advocacy, education, and awareness so that all impacted by mental illness are empowered to live their most fulfilling lives."

**Vision:** "NAMI Buffalo & Western New York envisions a world where all people affected by mental illness live their authentic lives fully informed, supported, and empowered by communities and families that care."

**Core Values:** Hope – Compassion Inclusivity

[from: [www.namibuffalony.org](http://www.namibuffalony.org). Copyright©2022 NAMI  
Buffalo & Erie County.]

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 NAMI Buffalo & WNY).

### Mission for November: Veterans One-stop Center

Thank you for your continued support of Veterans One-stop Center in Buffalo. Your donations will help the organization in providing a wide variety of much-needed services for all local veterans.

### Support for Local Food Pantries

Thank you for your continuing donations in support of the Community of Good Neighbors Mobile Food Pantry in Buffalo and Good Shepherd Lutheran's pantry in Tonawanda. Currently, the need for help is increasing, and your donations are greatly appreciated.

Please place your items 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!



## My Musings by Diane Schmidtke

### My "Errata"....

As everyone knows, it is no fun to make a mistake. We are programmed from birth to try to do things "right" so we don't look stupid or "less than"...

It is one thing when the mistake is private, and you can roll your eyes at yourself and vow to do better next time. It's another thing when it's in public for all to see...

So, here is my red-faced apology for quoting the wrong poet in the November Tidings. "Nothing Gold Can Stay" was written by Robert Frost and not by Robert Burns!

This mistake did lead me to check out "Rabbie" Burns who is considered the National Poet of Scotland. One interesting fact among many: he was instrumental in us being able to ring in the New Year by singing "Auld Lang Syne"! And if you're familiar with ..."My luv is like a red, red rose...", then you also know something of Burns. Although he lived only 37 years he managed to sire 12 children, 7 of them illegitimate. "Burns Night" (or "Burns Supper") is celebrated by Scots worldwide on his birthday each January 25. Participants enjoy Scottish food, (traditionally haggis, tatties, neeps and cranachan) while drinking whiskey and reciting his poetry. So, in the process of being wrong, I was able to educate myself in the life and times of 18th century Scotland where Burns was vocal against the organized religion of the Calvinists.

It's often said that "we learn from our mistakes" or at least we should. I now know that tatties are mashed potatoes, neeps are turnips and cranachan is a tasty dessert. I love it when I'm led in a new direction by chance, when I'm able to travel on a new path...

Oh, wait a moment!

Didn't Robert FROST also write  
"The Path Not Taken"?!

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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.

<b>December 8</b>	Infancy Gospels (Thomas and Syriac)
<b>January 19, 2026</b>	Gospel of James (Infancy Stories and Mary's Perpetual Virginity)
<b>February 2</b>	Rome - Peter and Paul
<b>February 16</b>	Corinth - Letters

### A big "Thank You" to ...

- \* ...all who donated items for the Good Shepherd LC Pantry Thanksgiving Dinner collection. Thank you to Karen and Frank for delivering 15 bags of non-perishable "sides" for the recipients!!
- \* ...to all who donated delicious baked goods and more for the coffee hour that followed the worship and Veterans recognition services on Sunday, November 9. Thank you to WWI for hosting!
- \* ...to all brought in delicious food and desserts for the Potluck Dinner portion of the Dinner Theater on Friday, October 17!



### Dinner Theater with Charlie -- Nancy

On Friday, October 17, we got to meet one of Charlie Schmidtke's many alter egos: Sancho Panza, the sidekick of Don Quixote from Man of La Mancha. It was fun and enlightening to listen to Sancho's perspective, and we discovered that Don Quixote was more than just a foolish idealist who saw visions.

Thank you, Charlie, for an enjoyable evening--a wonderful performance, complete with familiar music from the musical!

### ELCA Prayer Ventures, December 2025\*

- † *International Migrants Day* Pray for immigrants and refugees around the world who seek safety, a welcoming community and a place to rebuild their lives. Give thanks for the ministries of our church and other organizations that enable us to respond with compassion, support and resources, including Global Refuge, Lutheran Services in America, LWF (Lutheran World Federation) World Service, and the ELCA's AMMPARO strategy (Accompanying Migrants with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities).
- † Pray for those who are often forgotten, including neighbors who are incarcerated, are held in immigration detention centers, live in institutions, move from shelter to shelter or are unable to leave their homes.



**Special Thanks** to Karen and Frank for delivering TOL food donations to the Good Shepherd LC Food Pantry throughout the year!

### Operation Christmas Child

On Sunday, November 16, **49** boxes were blessed before being sent on their way to make Christmas brighter for many children! A big "Thank You" to those who also donated help with the postage.

### ELCA Prayer Ventures, December 2025\*

Pray that the light of God's love and forgiveness will shine brightly, renewing your faith and guiding you every day.

### 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](mailto:augustchurch@yahoo.com) or by calling the Augustana church office at 716-832-5720.

### Part I: Who was Mary Magdalene?

Magdala is a city on the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee, near Capernaum. Jesus spent a lot of time in this area during his early ministry. Mary probably was a wealthy woman involved in managing or owning a fishing business. The best guess is that she was between 30-50 years old when she met Jesus. She may have provided financial support to Jesus and his early followers. She probably funded her own ministry after Pentecost. The French believe that she and some of the other women in the New Testament took boats from Judaea and landed in southern France. They spread the Word and brought Christ to the people of France. We need to be careful about not trying to interpret her as a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman. She was a 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish woman. Let's look at her from the eyes of the Gospels. Next month we will finish looking at her in our gospels and then turn to her gospel. Before turning to the gospels, I want to point out the confusions with the name of Mary and of Mary Magdalen specifically.

### Confusions

- A. There is an adultery story in Luke 7:36-50. This story is about an unnamed woman. Unfortunately for history, Pope Gregory Great (591 CE) mistakenly, or willfully, identified this woman as Mary Magdalen leading to her characterization as a prostitute. Many people still believe his mistake. This is clearly not Mary because in the next passage (8:1-3), Luke identifies Mary as one of the women following Jesus who once had seven demons. The passage Gregory used is the story of Simon the Pharisee and a sinful woman washing Jesus' feet. Did the Pope give this sermon out of ignorance or out of malice? Since the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, the male clergy was trying to get rid of the female clergy, including female bishops. There are paintings and records of the female clergy and bishops up through the 4<sup>th</sup> century. There are also letters from male bishops asking the pope to get rid of the females.
- B. Mary of Bethany in Matthew anointed Jesus with oil. Not Mary M.
- C. Mark has a story at Simon the Leper's with a woman pouring oil on Jesus' feet and angering guests. This was not Mary M.
- D. Here are some of the Mary's we find in the gospels.
  1. Mary, Jesus' mother
  2. Mary Magdalene
  3. Mary and Martha, Lazarus' sisters
  4. Mary, wife of Zebedee and mother of James and John (apostles); maybe called Salome
  5. Mary, wife of Alphaeus, mother of James (a second apostle named James) and Joseph/Joses
  6. Mary Salome who may be #4 or Jesus' maternal aunt who helped at his birth and travelled to Egypt
  7. Mary, wife of Clopas (who was either Joseph's brother or the disciple on the road to Emmaus).
  8. Mary, mother of John Mark (probable gospel writer who accompanied Paul and Barnabas). She gives Peter refuge in Jerusalem. Barnabas and Peter were probably friends.
  9. Mary, a Christian in Rome, who meets with Paul.

### Mary Magdalen in the Gospels:

#### 1. Going with Jesus

Luke 8:1-3 — Mary Magdalene was one of the women traveling with Jesus who once had seven demons in her. Were the seven demons really a form of schizophrenia, bi-polar, autism, clinical depression, epilepsy or neuroses? These diagnoses didn't exist at the time, so anyone who would have exhibited any of the conditions would have been seen as possessing a demon. If she was a business woman, her "possession" could not have been so crippling as to make her incompetent. Two other women included Joanna, the wife of a steward to Herod, and Susanna. There are no details available about who Susanna may have been or why she is included; it is possible that she was wealthy and helped support Jesus' followers.

#### 2. At the Cross and Jesus' Burial

Mark 15:40 — Mary was at the cross, along with Mary the mother of James the lesser (son of Alphaeus). Salome was also there. Salome may either be the mother of James and John, married to Zebedee (known as Mary Salome OR a half-sister of Mary). There is speculation that Mary's mother, Anne, had one or two other daughters with unknown husbands. Salome may have helped with Jesus' birth and traveled with the family in Egypt.

Mark 15:47 — Mary M. and Mary the mother of Joseph (also of James, married to Alphaeus) were present when Joseph of Arimathea placed Jesus' body in the tomb.

Matthew 27:61 — Mary is present when Jesus is put in the tomb.

#### 3. Easter

Matthew 28:1-10 — Mary M. and the "other" Mary (wife of Zebedee or wife of Alphaeus) went to the tomb. There was a strong earthquake and the Lord's angel came from heaven. Guards shook with fear and fell down. An angel told Mary not to fear because God had raised Jesus from the dead. The angel told them to go to the disciples and tell them. Jesus met and greeted them as they ran. Jesus told them to tell the disciples to go to Galilee and they will see Jesus there. (This was important because Jesus eats with disciples in Galilee proving that he had totally risen from the dead and wasn't just a ghost.)

We'll finish a look at Mary M. in the gospels in the next issue.

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### Ways to Give to TOL



Online: [Tithe.ly](http://Tithe.ly) is available. For instructions, please visit the church website at [www.trinityoldlutheran.com](http://www.trinityoldlutheran.com) or download the [Tithe.ly](http://Tithe.ly) app to your smartphone. Please call the church office at (716) 836-4868 if you have any questions. [Giving by mail](mailto:Giving@trinityoldlutheran.com): Please send your checks to the church and to the attention of the Financial Secretary.

*Wishing you a Blessed Christmas!*

