



Pastor's Ponderings

When a flashlight grows dim or quits working, do you just throw it away? Of course not. You change the batteries. When a person messes up or finds themselves in a dark place, do you cast them aside? Of course not. You help them change their batteries.

Some need:

- AA... attention, affection
- AAA... attention, affection, acceptance
- C... compassion
- D... direction.

And if they still don't seem to shine...simply sit with them quietly and share your light. (*internet*)

***"The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness did not overcome it." John 1:5***

Jesus is the light coming into the world from which we get our light. There is so much darkness in the world so there is a great need for sharing batteries, our light, or Jesus, who is the light of the world.

I encourage us to light up our part of the world, like a candle lit in a dark room, and let our light, Christ's light, spread into the darkness of people's lives.

I am planning on practicing sitting quietly and sharing my light.

Peace,
Pastor Fred he/him/his

P.S. Anne and I wish everyone a blessed new year and thank all for their prayers and kindnesses this Christmas season.

New Members!

On Sunday, December 19, we were blessed to welcome Cheryl and Dan and Kathy into the Trinity Old Lutheran Church family. God's blessings to our new members.



Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship Service

It was a blessing to have both TOL voice and handbell choirs singing and ringing at the traditional service of lessons and carols—along with a little something different. Pastor Fred and Charlie Schmittke presented a rendition of the nativity that was written by Charlie. A recording of "O Holy Night" played in the background as Charlie read, and then Pastor Fred accompanied the reading with plucking the strings on his cello. Thank you Pastor and Charlie!



We have reached our goal of raising \$1,000 to cover the cost of replacing a broken hot water tank. Thank you for your extra donations that helped offset this unexpected expense!

Ways to Give to TOL

- Online: Tithe.ly is available through the TOL 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 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.

Annual Congregational Meeting/Report Submissions

The Annual Congregational Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, March 6 (it is hoped to have a luncheon preceding the meeting).

Please submit your reports to the church office by Sunday, February 20 (email: trinityoldlutheranchurch@gmail.com).

Congregational Budget Meeting

On Sunday, December 12, the 2022 Budget was passed. We thank current Council members Earlene Crocker, Peter Stecher and Rob Yendall for agreeing to continue their service.

2021 Financial Statements and 2022 Offering Envelopes

The offering envelopes are available in the narthex—please stop by and pick up yours whenever you are in the church building (Sunday or Monday-Friday, 9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon). If you would like your financial statement mailed to you, please call Nancy in the office (716-836-4868).

Visioning Session—February 5 from 10:00 AM to Noon

The Council invites all members and friends of TOL to a visioning session led by The Rev. Jeremiah Smith on **Saturday, February 5**. Donuts and fellowship will begin at 9:30 AM and visioning from 10:00 AM to Noon. We hope all are able to come and talk about the future of God's ministry at TOL.

In-church Worship Guidelines (January 2022)

We welcome you to join us for in-church worship! In keeping with the Covid guidelines recently set by Erie County and New York State, we ask that people wear masks all the time while in Trinity Old Lutheran. Also, please continue to keep in "bubbles" and maintain six foot distances when relating to others.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation in support of TOL ministries.

Pastor Fred and the TOL Opening Committee



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.



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*

January 18: Week of Prayer for Christian Unity



Throughout this week, pray with our siblings in Christ from diverse cultures, traditions and confessions around the world for the unity of the church, so that, together, we will shine a bright light of hope, healing and good news on our troubled world.

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"Christ in Our Home" 2022 Devotionals

Booklets for January through March are available in the narthex. Please take a copy! If you would like a copy mailed to you, please call the church office at 716-836-4868

Wishing everyone a Blessed New Year!

Trinity Tidings

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December Mission: Thank You!

Thank you for your recent donations in continued support of the Cable TV Worship that is led by Pastors Biegner, Griffiths and Smith. It airs each Sunday at 10:00 AM on MeTV, Cable Channel 5.

January Mission: Lutheran Disaster Response—U.S. Tornadoes

The focus will be on all who were affected by the deadly and devastating series of tornadoes that impacted six states on December 10. From the ELCA website at www.elca.org:

"Lutheran Disaster Response is engaging with partners in the affected areas, including the Indiana-Kentucky Synod, to respond to immediate needs. Given the initial damage assessments, recovery will likely take years, and Lutheran Disaster Response is prepared to accompany survivors until the response is complete.

Gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response designated for "U.S. Tornadoes" will be used entirely (100%) to assist those affected by tornadoes until the response is complete. Together, we can support those who are on the long road to recovery."

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Please use the marked donation envelopes found on the table in the narthex or use Tithe.ly through the TOL website. If using the mail, please place "ELCA Disaster Response: U.S. Tornadoes" on the check memo.

Thank You from Barb!

Thank you to the large group of helpers who decorated our church for this holiday season. They worked hard to make it look so festive and we appreciate it so much!





Adult Ed. with Charlie Schmidtke

Classes resume on **Monday, January 17 (1:00 PM to 2:30 PM)**. We will 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, Second Wednesday Evenings (6:30 PM)

Starting this month, 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?

Hope and Healing: A Christian Cancer Support Group

4th Tuesday of each month, 3:00-4:00 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 in giving 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

December Food Pantry Donations—Thank You

During December, all items collected were delivered to the food pantry at Good Shepherd Lutheran in Tonawanda. Thank you to everyone for your continued support and your generous donations!



Thank You to...

- * ...all who placed beautiful red and white poinsettia plants at the altar area for Christmas.
- * ...Lisa for creating a beautiful collage of photos that were taken during the 2019 TOL Christmas Program. The framed collage is on the desk in the narthex—stop by and take a look!
- * ...everyone who returned a pledge card for 2022. "Things look good for next year!" *Dick*
- * ...Sue for filling in for Don at the piano on Sunday, December 26.



Community of Good Neighbors (CGN): Mobile Food Pantry Needs

TOL's January food drive will support CGN. The pantry truck is located on Doat Street in Buffalo and needed items are listed below.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| ○ Canned fruits and vegetables | ○ Pasta |
| ○ Canned beans and soup | ○ Mac-and-cheese |
| ○ Cereal and other breakfast items (oatmeal, grits) | ○ Granola bars |
| ○ Canned tuna and chicken | ○ Spaghetti and alfredo sauces |
| ○ Instant potatoes | ○ Ramen noodles |
| | ○ Peanut butter and jelly |

Please place your non-perishable items in the narthex shopping cart or leave them in the marked boxes at the elevator entrance during the week (Mondays – Fridays, 9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon). Thank you for your support!

TOL Book Sale: The holidays are over and as we move into winter, you may have more time to relax with a good book, or maybe read to a child, or work a puzzle. If you do, please stop by the TOL on-going Book Sale in Room 103—you might just find something to enjoy—there are many, many items to choose from. New items have been added; you're invited to bring in your donations.



Stop by after worship—or anytime you visit TOL!



ELCA Prayer Ventures, January 2022

Praise God for attending to the needs of humanity through us, utilizing our diverse gifts and generosity to serve our neighbors in need, everywhere.

Thank and praise God for restoring our relationships as children of God, so that we can live with faith, hope and freedom as new creations and siblings in Christ.

Continue to pray for healing and unity in our nation, and ask God to draw us closer to our neighbors, especially those we perceive as different or opposed to our perspectives, beliefs or values. Pray that we will grow in understanding and respect for one another and will work together for the well-being of our communities and neighbors in need.

Praise God, who is mighty and eternal, the creator of all that exists and the source of our blessings and strength.

Pray for our neighbors who are struggling with or recovering from COVID-19, discovering the long-term effects that will impact their lives or grieving the loss of friends or loved ones. Continue to pray for the well-being and renewal of health care workers dedicated to serving others in times of illness and vulnerability.

By turning water into wine during the wedding at Cana, Jesus taught us how deeply God is engaged in every aspect of our human life—our joys, worries, celebrations, problems and sorrows. Praise God for knowing us so well!

Martin Luther King Jr. Day Remember in prayer the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his bold work, ministry, vision and sacrifice, which revealed all people to be children of God deserving respect, opportunity, equality and freedom from unjust laws. Ask God's help in righting the injustices that continue in our nation and throughout the world; pray for the wisdom, humility, courage and persistence needed to welcome all people into our church, society and institutions.

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Hearts and Hands: Faith in Action (HNN)

HNN continues serving Amherst, Clarence, North Tonawanda, the Southern Tier and 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 information (and how to become a volunteer), please visit the HNN website at www.hnncares.org/services or call 716-406-8311.

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

Operation Christmas Child for 2022

Because of your generosity in support of this very worthy cause, we surpassed a total of 33 boxes in 2020, and we were able to contribute 38 in 2021.

Collecting items each month during the year really helped. It's amazing how quickly the items added up!! We will again collect items each month, and below you will find a list of suggested items to donate. (Maybe cut it out and put in on your refrigerator!)

We appreciate all that you do in helping us to get ready for this year's donation to Operation Christmas Child!!!

Happy New Year!
Debbie and Kelly

2022 Operation Christmas Child

| | |
|--------|--|
| Jan.: | toothbrushes, dental floss, washcloths |
| Feb.: | hats, mittens, scarves, socks |
| Mar.: | combs, brushes, hair items |
| Apr.: | small toys for boys and girls (foam ball, slinky, jump rope, small cars, trucks, etc.) |
| May: | sunglasses, stickers, jewelry |
| June: | stuffed toys 10" or smaller, small musical instruments, small dolls |
| July: | pens, pencils, small manual pencil sharpeners, colored pencils/cases |
| Aug.: | markers, coloring pads, notebooks |
| Sept.: | coloring books, crayons, watercolor paint sets |
| Oct.: | games, puzzles |

Update on 2021 Boxes:

Eighteen of our boxes went to the Dominican Republic, which is located in the Caribbean Sea. It occupies the eastern side of Hispaniola, the island it shares with Haiti. Stay tuned for where the rest of the boxes went.

Thanks again to everyone who helped make this happen. Jesus' love is being spread around the world!



"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

Adult Ed. Classes with Charlie Schmidtke— Study Notes on Hinduism (Part III)

This completes the three-part series on Hinduism. [Classes will resume on Monday, January 17, 2022 when the group begins its discussion of Judaism. All are invited to attend in-church or on Zoom. The schedule appears elsewhere in this issue.]

Hinduism—Part III

The Gospel of Thomas and his life story are important elements for the Indian Christians. We rarely hear about his gospel and his life, other than he is referred to by John as the Doubter. Some of the details that follow have been corroborated by researchers; others are matters of belief. The Gospel of Thomas was written by his disciples (sometime between 60-250 AD). They believed in the Hindu Jesus and Thomas was their leader. It is also referred to as the Coptic Gospel of Thomas. A copy was found near Nag Hammadi (Egypt) in 1945 with other "lost gospels." Thomas in our gospels was called Didymus, meaning he was a twin. Scholars and theologians have debated who his twin may have been. The most common belief was that he and St. Jude (another apostle) were twins. In India many of Jesus' followers believed that Jesus and Thomas were twins. There are books and records in India that give sightings of Jesus in India after his resurrection. There are also passages saying that Thomas and Jesus were often mistaken for one another.

There is general agreement that Thomas stayed in Jerusalem, maybe eight years, then he went to Syria, Persia and ended up in India. He started in the northwest, now Pakistan, and moved to the southwest. He studied with Jesus while both were in India and learned the Dharma and Hindu ways. Legend says that one proof that they were twins happened when Mary was dying in Ephesus (where John had taken her). Thomas received an inner call that Mary was dying. He immediately went to Ephesus, arriving three days too late. He went to her tomb and Mary's radiant living body emerged from the stone sepulcher and she ascended to heaven (Catholics celebrate this as Mary's Assumption). Thomas cried out imploring her not to leave. She looked upon him with tenderness and took the belt from her waist that she habitually wore and threw it down to him with words of blessing. After his experience with Mary, Thomas went to Qumran and persuaded some Essenes to go to India with him. Many did. In the 20th century excavations in southern India where Thomas died have found coins from Qumran dated to the first century.

Thomas was killed sometime around 72 AD. The earth around his tomb was the sight of many miracles. In 1292 Marco Polo visited the site and took some of the red-colored earth. Upon his return to Venice, he healed many people with the earth. In the 16th century, the pope summoned clergy and laymen who were followers of Thomas and Jesus. He asked them to bring their sacred liturgical and theological texts. The pope surrounded them with soldiers and confiscated all the material and burned it in front of them. This event is a primary reason why there are so many gaps in our history of Thomas and Christianity in India. There were books of magic and healing among them also. An Archbishop from Portugal sent soldiers to "convert the pagans" in the area of Thomas' ministry. They went house to house to destroy any books they found. They also destroyed the books of astrology used by the priests who followed Thomas. The Portuguese Archbishop also demanded that Thomas' followers stop Hindu practices and conform to Western standards of Christianity. Thus, what was once a thriving Hindu Christian community became dismembered and

only a small number of Syriac followers remain (from Syria to India). In the 19th century, Saint Greforios helped restore Jesus Hinduism and St. Thomas' Christian Church in southern India. The primary beliefs for Indian Christians were:

- The traditions of Thomas and Jesus are intact in practices of Dharma and Yoga.
- Jesus was born a man and became God—this is consistent with Hindu belief and practices.
- Their theology is one of Wisdom, not of salvation on the cross.
- Redemption comes from within, not from the outside; from inner wisdom, not from crucifixion.
- Jesus is the inner voice of mystery and the self.
- The cross was a way to get rid of the body, not salvation from sin.

Thomas was mystical and he saw God's kingdom as the sacred place between alpha and omega. His gospel is synchronic, not a narrative like our gospels. It contains the sayings, questions and teachings of Jesus (with no miracles) and connected by their meanings, not chronology or history. Questions may be answered in later sayings, which illustrates the inner meaning and connectedness of truth. Truth can never be found in the material world of space and time.

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