

## Pastor's Ponderings

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." Hebrews 4:15

Jesus knows.... Jesus wept.... Jesus was angry.... Jesus said, "they without sin cast the first stone".... Jesus said, "forgive them for they know not what they do." We have a Savior who has empathy. Jesus knows our struggles and our pain, our failings and our sin.

There is something circling around the USA that empathy is bad. What! How can feeling someone else's pain be bad? Thinking empathy is bad hardens hearts, makes a person like the Pharaoh, who despite the many plagues, would not let the Israelites go free. Without empathy we don't see another person's struggle.

Empathy for others can make someone overwhelmed, so it sometimes has to be accompanied by an understanding of what one's capacity is for other people's pain and how do we process it, so we do not lose hope. The above quote from Hebrews helps us know that our High Priest, Jesus with power, understands and is empathetic. And our Jesus is a person we can leave our struggles with even if it's for a moment, to relieve pressure.

I have a cross in which the horizontal piece is JE US and the vertical piece is S. At the base of this cross is a basket. A basket to hold our pain, another's pain, regrets, sin, sorrow, anger, hurts, anything we carry. It's a basket that cannot be filled and can always receive more.

JeSus is our empathetic example of how we are to look at the world. As Jesus did, we as Christians must see people's suffering, people being oppressed, people being bullied, people who are hungry, sick, and hurting in any way. Jesus sees God's Creations, humans, and loves them. We may never understand another's life or even try to walk in their shoes, but we can lead with empathy and welcome them into our hearts.

So we, like Jesus, are to have empathy and act on what we see, hear and feel. And when this gets overwhelming, there is a basket at the foot of the Cross.

Amplifying my empathy,  
I remain Pastor Fred Kopp he/him/his



## Annual Congregational Meeting / Potluck Lunch Sunday, March 8, following worship

For the Potluck, 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, March 1. If you would like an email copy, please contact Nancy in the office (716-836-4868).



## Mid-Week Lenten Soup Suppers and Worship Services Soup Supper at 6:00 PM -- Worship at 6:30 PM

- March 4: Good Shepherd  
(2669 Sheridan Drive, Tonawanda)
- March 11: Augustana  
(3143 Eggert Road, Tonawanda)
- March 18: St. Martin  
(322 Old Falls Blvd.,  
North Tonawanda)
- March 25: Trinity Old Lutheran  
(hosting the Soup Supper)

**Note:** 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!



**Souper Bowl of Caring/Sharing...** Thank you to all who brought in non-perishable food items and monetary donations on Sunday, February 15. The narthex shopping cart was full! 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. Thank you to Karen who delivered the items--and to those who helped put them in her car!



**Lenten Collection:** Pastor Jeremiah Smith, our Conference Dean, announced that we're not having a competition this Lenten season, but invites all the local ELCA churches to join together and collect healthy cereals to support local food pantries. TOL's donations will go to the Good Shepherd LC pantry. Please place your cereal (and all other shelf staple foods) in the narthex shopping cart. Thank you!

## Sermon Discussion/Input with Pastor Fred Wednesday, March 25 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, March 2026

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



### Holy Week Schedule

- † Palm Sunday, March 29, 9:30 AM  
Three-church worship at Augustana LC  
(3143 Eggert Road in Tonawanda)
- † Maundy Thursday, April 2 (St. Martin LC)
- † Good Friday, April 3  
Augustana LC, 11:00 AM  
OL, 7:00 PM

### ELCA Prayer Ventures, March 2026\*

- † *Palm Sunday* Praise God that the humility with which Jesus enters Jerusalem demonstrates a powerful love for us that is down to earth yet undeterred by the stress, chaos, injustice and uncertainty of the world. As an act of faith, we give thanks and pray that we will follow his example.
- † Give thanks to God for the faith and gifts of hymn writers, musicians, choir members and directors of music ministries who help us express our praise, thanksgiving, joy and petitions to God.
- † *Women's History Month* Remember, celebrate and give thanks for the contributions, achievements, leadership, wisdom and gifts of women and girls in the church, our communities and the world throughout history.
- † Remember in prayer those recovering from winter storms and flooding in various regions of our country, that they will receive support, encouragement and resources from neighbors, communities of faith, and disaster relief agencies and ministries, including Lutheran Disaster Response.
- † Pray for Women of the ELCA to flourish in its ministry of helping women grow in faith, discover their gifts, and encourage one another to engage in ministry and promote healing and wholeness in the church, society and world.
- † Give thanks and praise to God who walks with us throughout life to guide, comfort, nourish and restore us through its twists, turns and challenges.
- † Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications" (Psalm 130:1-2). Lift up your problems, worries and fears to God, trusting that your prayers are never too small, complicated or unimportant to be heard by God who cares deeply for each of us.
- † Who are we? Imperfect people wonderfully created by a perfect God who calls us children, loves us dearly and is faithful to us. Offer up prayers of joy and thanksgiving!



"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted." *Aesop*

## Trinity Tidings

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### March Mission: Pastor Sohail and South Asian Worship Community

For the month of March, our focus will be Pastor Sohail and South Asian Worship Community, which began in 2024.

"Our Congregation Council is continuing to **Love** others as they affirm the support of Pastor Sohail's ministry to start a South Asian Worship community based out of TOL. Pastor Sohail asks for our prayers and thanks us for use of our space as this ministry begins and serves people whose language of origin are Urdu, and Hindi. He will be having office hours on Friday as this starts up."

[from: Pastor Fred's 2023 Annual Report article; Congregational Meeting, April 7, 2024.]

For monetary 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 mail, please enter "South Asian Worship" on the check memo.

### February Mission: Thank You

Thank you to everyone for your donations to Hearts and Hands—Faith in Action! TOL continues to support this local interfaith coalition that provides services to caregivers and care receivers in Erie and Eastern Niagara Counties.

### 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 (Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 9:00 AM to Noon). Thank you!



### 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.

## My Musings by Diane Schmidtke

### A Tale of Bound and Broken (written Sunday, January 25, 2026)

I have a favorite plant that sits atop a 3 foot stand in the south-facing window of our living room overlooking the neighbors' garage and garbage totes. Inside, at a right angle, are the love seat and the couch.

Our seats of choice are in this corner. From here we can see the living room, dining room, and through the picture window, facing west, to the porch and the front yard.



The plant has long, firm, green leaves which gracefully emerge about a foot up from the soil. It originally belonged to my aunt, and I "inherited" a piece of it when she died.

Thankfully the change of venue from Amherst to Parkview in Tonawanda didn't cause too much trauma, and the plant has bloomed several times. The flowers are a lovely vibrant orange. Luckily it seems to thrive on benign neglect: a drink of water every 7-10 days.

Today, after ZOOMing to church under a Winter Weather Watch, Charlie and I sat chatting in our little corner. We reflected on Pastor Fred's heartfelt sermon about leading with 'Light' in facing today's world, about how our baptism lays down a commission to go out in love to serve. It was then that I noticed something was lying on the floor next to the plant stand. The way things are arranged it is not an easy reach.

I jokingly said to Charlie, "What is that next to the wall? It looks like a dead mouse!"

Now, I really didn't think it was an animal, but there sat something brown and unrecognizable.

As it turned out, my plant had become totally root-bound and pushed its way through its ceramic pot. On the ground was a large section of pottery with soil clinging to it.

After moving things around, disposing of dirt and shards, repotting and repositioning, we now have a clean floor and a plant adjusting to new 'digs' in a new container...

Time will tell whether the light we brought to the situation will yield fresh, healthy growth, but I am reminded that

sometimes, with help,  
"bound and broken"  
becomes brave  
and  
brilliant and beautiful...

Used with permission.

### Adult Ed. Classes with Charlie Schmidtke

You are 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.

The updated class schedule is below.

March 2	Corinth - Letters
March 16	Ephesus - Paul
March 30	Alexandria and Byzantium
April 13	Galatia and Thessalonica - Paul
April 27	Gospel of Judas
May 11	Spain and France - James (Major) and Mary Magdalene



### ELCA Prayer Ventures, March 2026\*

- † Pray for the ministries and organizations that help us understand the value and fragility of creation and the environment. Bless their work as they remind us of our responsibility to be grateful, wise and responsible stewards of these gifts from God – gifts that nourish us and sustain all living things. Remember in prayer the ministries of synod creation care teams, Lutherans Restoring Creation, Lutheran Outdoor Ministries, the Creation Care Network, ELCA Advocacy and Creation Justice Ministries.
- † *First day of spring [March 20]* Ask God to direct our attention to those things in nature and humanity that stir our hope, wonder and joy, reminding us of our awesome Creator from whom all things flow. Pray that we will radiate hope, compassion and the good news of Jesus Christ through our faith, values, words and actions.

### 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. She 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.



**The Support Group for Grieving 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 and Diane and Jean.

### World Day of Prayer, March 6, 2026 Theme: "I will give you rest."

From: "Rest for the Weary" By Gift Amarachi Ottah



"The WDP Nigerian committee has woven together their cultural wisdom with the universal need for rest. Through symbols like the calabash bowl, which represents both daily sustenance and divine provision, they remind us how God meets us in our weariness. As we prepare for WDP 2026, may we learn to embody Jesus' invitation: 'Come to me, all you who are weary.' Together, let us become channels of God's rest in our troubled world."

[from: <https://worlddayofprayer.net>. ©World Day of Prayer All rights reserved.]

### Sandwich Ministry Update

Thank you to the volunteer teams who continue to prepare and deliver 100 sandwiches to Friends of Night People each week!

We also collect warm clothing, sleeping bags, blankets, boots, hand and foot warmers, gloves, hats, hygiene items, lip balm, and mugs. Please place your items in the blue barrel located in the donation area. Thank you!



Happy  
St. Patrick's Day!



**Adult Ed. Classes with Charlie Schmidtke**  
**Study Notes: “Bible Canon”**

**Part II: The New Testament**

**New Testament (NT)**

We'll start in 382 CE when the Pope asked St. Jerome to revise the Gospels and put them into Latin. He translated the entire bible instead. It is called the Vulgate. By the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Vulgate Bible was the standard Roman Catholic version. In 1592 Pope Clementine made it the official translation. A revision was published in 1979 by the Catholic Church. Jerome's original was based on the Septuagint, although at times he checked the Greek translation against the original Hebrew. So this Latin translation is basically a translation of a translation. So English language, Catholic bibles are English translations of Latin translations of Greek translations. By the way, Martin Luther used all three (Hebrew, Vulgate, and Septuagint) and translated first the New Testament, then the Old Testament into German. English translations of Luther's bible would be an English translation of a German translation of various translations. You get the picture.

Let's start looking at the NT with the “easy” part—the letters from Paul. By the way, the NT has similar translation problems as the OT as we noted last month. Let's turn to the table of contents and review the letters, starting with Paul's. Although these letters are all attributed to Paul, he actually wrote very few of them. For many, he dictated the letters and a scribe wrote them down. Timothy and Silas are two probable scribes, while Tertius was Paul's scribe for Romans. In others, it appears they were written after he was martyred but attributed to him for credibility purposes. Scholars do not have a clear consensus on this issue.

**Letters or Epistles**

Romans. Paul dictated this letter to introduce himself to the church in Rome. In actuality the letter was written by Tertius who was his scribe. Romans was an important letter for Luther. Chapter 10:9-10: “So you will be saved, if you honestly say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and if you believe with all your heart that God raised him from death. God will accept you and save you, if you truly believe this and tell it to others.” In other words, by faith alone shall you be saved.

Corinthians. We have two letters to the church in Corinth. Actually, Paul wrote four letters to the church. What we call First Corinthians is really the second letter he wrote to them. We know that because after he wrote his first letter the people of Corinth sent him questions. In First Corinthians, Paul mentions he had written a previous letter and is responding to the questions the people sent him in their letter. Chapter 13 may be one of the most famous passages in all of his letters. Second Corinthians was probably a composite of two letters, one of which may have been lost.

Galatians. Galatia is in central Asia Minor (Turkey today) and Paul is explaining how his mission to the Gentiles was given to him by Jesus and approved by the apostles. He reiterates that faith is the only way to be saved.

Ephesians. Ephesus was a port city in Asia Minor and the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire. This letter includes a message that Jews and Gentiles are being brought together in Jesus to break down the wall of hatred. Believers have one faith, one baptism and are part of one body. This letter may have been written after his death.

Philippians. He wrote (or dictated) this letter while in prison. Philippi is located in northern Greece and was the first city Paul went to in Europe. Paul makes it very clear that the members in the church who say that the faithful must obey all the laws of Moses are wrong. The faithful do not need to be Jews to follow Christ.

Colossians. Colossae was in western Asia Minor about 100 miles east of Ephesus. Paul didn't go to Colossae. He heard about the church from a fellow prisoner in jail (Epaphras). This may be another one actually written after he died.

Thessalonians. Thessalonica was an important city in northern Greece and Paul started the church there while he was working as a tent maker in the area. Paul had to escape to Athens when people in the city went after him. He sent Timothy to find out how they were doing. This letter addresses two real problems in the early church. People stopped working because they expected Jesus' return was imminent. Secondly, people worried about whether their relatives who had already died could be saved. Paul answers those questions. In the Second letter, he tells the people not to believe that he had said that Jesus had already returned. Don't be fooled because Jesus will not return until the “wicked one” has appeared. The first letter was probably written by Paul, but the second appears to have been written after he died.

Timothy. Timothy was like a son to Paul and one of his most faithful co-workers. The first letter isn't really to him; it addresses issues Paul has with the Christian “church” in general (e.g., how to select leaders and officials). The second letter to Timothy is more personal. It is possible neither of these were actually written by Paul.

Titus. Titus worked with Paul in Asia Minor and Greece. Paul is giving him instructions for the church leaders in Crete. Another letter probably not written by Paul.

Philemon. He was a wealthy man who owned slaves and used his house for church meetings. He probably lived in Colossae. Paul is writing from jail on behalf of one of Philemon's slaves who has become a follower of Jesus. This letter is personal.

Hebrews. This is a general letter addressing some of the common questions people, especially Jews, of the first century had about becoming a follower of Jesus. Jews had miracles (the Red Sea), laws to support their faith and beautiful ceremonies. What do Christians have? All is found in faith with Jesus. This letter may actually be an anonymous sermon.

*Used with permission.*



**Operation Christmas Child**...is not just for Christmastime. It takes a full year to collect enough items to put in the boxes and even with what we receive, we still need to make additional purchases. Suggestions for March are: brushes, combs, barrettes and Scrunchies.

Any and all are greatly appreciated! If you are out and about shopping and come across items for any month, please place them in our box in the hallway donation area. Thank you!

