

Pastor's Ponderings

"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name." *John 20:30-31*

I find these verses comforting and enlightening. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts and the rest of the New Testament only holds a small portion of Jesus' activity in the world. And witnesses have recorded what they think might move us, with the Holy Spirit, to believe in Jesus. This is comforting because the New Testament allows for dreaming and interpretation and is not to be taken literally. What we get from the New Testament is a sense of who our God is, and the width and breadth of God's impact on humanity. John writes that Jesus is the Bread of life, the Light of the world, the Gate for the sheep, the Good shepherd, the Vine and the Way, Truth and the Life.

In 1st John 4:7-8, the author writes: "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love."

God is Love, God is a Good shepherd, God is Light, and Bread. Jesus is He who's Love is greater than we can understand, so it encompasses all the world and humanity, because the God of Love created them. Jesus is He who is Light that shines into oppression and darkness exposing sin, and deceit and helping all come into relationship with Jesus. Jesus is the Bread that desires that the world and humanity are fed and taken care of.

In this Easter Season, we are called to review the actions of Jesus and renew your faith in the one who was, who is, and who will be. After faith renewal, we are empowered to act lovingly to all of God's creation. To take a quote from Carl Jung and Anna, of *Frozen 2*, to "Do the next right thing!"

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Fred he/him/his



Volunteer Evening at Friends of Night People

Join us for a volunteer night at Friends of Night People on **Friday, May 30!** Volunteers will be assigned one of several positions including serving food, cleaning the dining hall or working in the donation center. If you feel called to serve, please use the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board.

Please plan on meeting at Friends of Night People (394 Hudson Street in Buffalo) at **4:45 PM** and plan to stay until 7:00 PM. If you would like to carpool, please meet us in the TOL parking lot at **4:15 PM**. For more information, please contact Matt.

Can You Help?

Dear Folk,

When we have a significant expense for building repair and upgrade, we are coming to you and asking if you would consider an extra gift towards the building issue. This past week we had a water issue that luckily was identified and dealt with quickly. It could have been disastrous. Because of this issue we had to hire a plumber. Along with the immediate issue, a number of maintenance issues that were years in the making were dealt with.

The bill for the two visits is \$4,000. Lanny was thinking of getting his plumbing degree, but says those days are down the drain, so we must pay it. We have money assigned to repairs in the budget, but this amount is over and above that. If you can help, please give through Tithely or an envelope and mark it building repair and maintenance. Already, \$400 was given so we are on our way. Thank you for your consideration.

Pastor Fred and Lanny

Support Group for Grieving Parents... This group, specifically for parents of children and grandchildren who have died, meets each month in the Fireside Room on the **1st and 3rd Tuesday (10:00 AM to 11:30 AM)** and also on Zoom. Coordinators are: Charlie, Diane and Jean.



Please join us in the Fireside Room on **Sunday, May 4**, for a coffee hour following the worship service. All are welcome!

Guest Speaker Night—with Charlie Schmidtke!
Theme: "The Myths and Realities of Aging"

Hosted by the TOL Women's Group (WWI)

In lieu of a Men's Breakfast in May, **all men** are invited to join the Group on **Tuesday, May 13 at 7:00 PM** in the Fireside Room. You might be surprised at what stereotypes are true and which ones are false—come and find out!

Sermon Discussion/Input with Pastor Fred
Wednesday, May 28 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.

Holy Rest Cemetery—Clean-up Day Planned!

Save the date!! A clean-up day is scheduled for **Saturday, July 19!** Volunteers are needed to help with various tasks to help spruce up the grounds. Watch for more details in the Sunday bulletins and *Trinity Tidings*.

Trinity Tidings, May 2025

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



ELCA Prayer Ventures, May 2025*

- † Sing praises and give thanks to God for being our strength in *all* circumstances and for attending to our need for help, renewal and encouragement.
- † Pray for Lutheran Disaster Response and its collaborations with other disaster relief organizations – domestic, international and ecumenical – to provide physical, emotional and spiritual care for people affected by disasters and to support them during short- and long-term recovery efforts.
- † “May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us” (Psalm 67:1). Pray that all people and nations will know and give thanks for God’s boundless love, forgiveness and power to make all things new through Jesus Christ, even when we can’t envision the possibility.
- † Thank God for the ELCA’s special relationship with the United Church of Christ, a full communion partner since 1997. Pray for the church, its members and its leaders, that together we will find strength and resources for the work of sharing the gospel and serving our neighbor.
- † *Mother’s Day* Pray for mothers, stepmothers, foster mothers and expectant mothers. Pray for women who struggle with parenting, who are trying to conceive or who cannot bear children of their own but serve as loving and faithful adults in the lives of children and youth.
- † Remember in prayer people who work in seasonal jobs, that communities of faith will welcome and support them and that employers will meet their needs for housing, food, fair wages and recognition. Pray that we might express our gratitude to and affirm those who work behind the scenes.
- † *Memorial Day* Remember, honor and give thanks for those in the armed forces who have given their lives for the sake of peace, justice and freedom. Remember the families and loved ones who supported their service, grieve their loss and carry forward their memory and legacy.

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.



Memorial Day
Observed Monday, May 26

Trinity Tidings

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May Mission: Family Justice Center of Erie County (FJC)

The organization opened its doors in 2006 in response to a growing number of local domestic violence incidents. Since that time, FJC has assisted thousands of clients dealing with domestic and family violence. Current FJC locations are in Buffalo, Amherst, Grand Island and Orchard Park.

“The Family Justice Center of Erie County provides services and support to individuals in unhealthy relationships, and the education our community needs to break larger cycles of relationship abuse.”

“Our Vision: Unhealthy relationships no longer exist in our community. All the support needed for a safe, secure and thriving environment is available to everyone.”

[from: www.fjcsafe.org]

To make a donation, 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 “Family Justice Center” on the check memo.

April Mission: RIDE Program

Thank you to all who continue to support the RIDE program at Augustana LC. Your donations will be used to assist immigrants and refugees in receiving driver instruction training as a lead-up to obtaining Learners’ permits.

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 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!



ELCA Prayer Ventures, May 2025*

“[Peter] said to [Jesus], ‘Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my sheep’” (John 21:17). Ask God to help us align our expressions of faith and love for God with how we respect, love and care for our neighbors in need and our siblings in Christ.

**Pastor's Report, excerpts from the
2024 TOL Annual Report**

*"Let your light shine before others, so that they may see
your good works and give glory to
your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:16*

"This verse is incorporated into our Baptismal Liturgy. It is an encouragement for those connected to Jesus to not be shy while doing God's work. It is important to be humble, but if we are not witnessing to Jesus' mission to the least of these, or to loving our neighbor as ourselves we are being the ambassadors that Paul encouraged the people of Corinth to be in his 2nd Letter to the Corinthians. In that same letter Paul praises generosity.

As I look back at our year together, I see God's light shining in all aspects of the Church. Our church is centered around worship. Thank you to all who let their light shine." "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord." Psalm 150:6

*"Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable,
always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you
know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."
1 Corinthians 15:58*

"Thank you to those who do the work of the Lord and keep the church running."

*"Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still."
Proverbs 8:9*

"Thank you to all who make TOL a welcoming and faith filled place to serve and worship."

Into the Future

"I continue to pray that we move into the future with a sense of God's abundance and can work for change even though change can be fearful and anxiety producing.

The Lord continues to be a 'lamp to our feet, and a light to our path.'"

"May God bless us as a church as we share the light that is in us in our community and the world."

Pastor Fred Kopp



Thank You...

- ♥ to all who helped in many ways with the Annual Meeting and Potluck Luncheon on Sunday, March 30—and to those who brought in delicious food and desserts!
- ♥ to Nancy for preparing and distributing the 2024 Annual Report!
- ♥ to all who purchased plants for Easter Sunday and to the TOL Voice and Bell Choirs for Easter music!



Thank you for your help!...On the evening of Easter Sunday, we had a flood in the small bathroom on the first floor, which caused basement ceiling damage and flooded basement floors. We made a few phone calls on Monday morning, and a wonderful crew of helpers showed up to clean up the mess and dry everything out. Thank you to Dick and Lanny for spending their Easter evening here to help mitigate the damages, and to Pastor Fred, Jan, Karen Frank, Karen & Eric, and Leanne for all their help on Monday!

With gratitude, from the Property Team

*My Musings
by Diane Schmidtke*



The Orchid

It now sits on our dining room table, a small orchid plant with seven purple flowers blooming from one of four strands. The other strands look withered with no potential so I am delighted with this unexpected life and color.

I have no talent, no green thumb when it comes to plant growth. I take the advice of someone who said, "If it thrives, be grateful; if not, pitch it!" I water every 7-10 days and hope for the best.

I first met this plant while visiting my best friend who was in rehab recovering from surgery. She had received it and wasn't interested in taking it home so it then found a home in my kitchen window above the sink where it has not bloomed in two years.

Why now? Perhaps it is in response to the outside gloom with its chill and wind and rain. We are more than ready for sunshine and mild temperatures...

And yet, it **is** Spring, which always brings with it hope and promise despite the weather. Everywhere crocus, hyacinth and daffodil defy the odds as they push through the cold soil.

My friend died nine months ago; her birthday is in April as I write this. Memories keep her alive in my heart. I'd like to believe this sweet, blooming orchid represents new life. I look at it and smile and remember the law of physics which states:

"We are energy, and energy never dies.

It just changes form."

Used with permission.

Adult Ed. Classes with Charlie Schmidtke: The last class (until Fall) will be on Monday, May 19, in the Fireside Room (or Zoom) from 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM. The topic is Jesus and Mary Magdalene. Please contact Charlie for a Zoom link.

Operation Christmas Child: The suggested donations for May are washcloths, soap, and band-aids. Please place your donations in the bin marked Operation Christmas Child located in the hallway. Thank you so much for any and all donations! -- *Kelly and Debbie*

TOL Goes to the Theater!: TOL members enjoyed an afternoon of "Who Done It" by attending a presentation of Agatha Christie's "Mousetrap" on Sunday, March 23, at the Ellicott Creek Playhouse. It was performed by The Niagara Regional Theatre Guild. This entertaining production was followed by fellowship and food at Family Tree Restaurant, where we enjoyed a wonderful meal, great conversation and each other's company. A good time was had by all!

Stephanie and Linda



**Happy Mother's Day!
Sunday, May 11**

Part II: Jesus and Judas

During my performance of Judas, I make the following observations of how Judas would have assessed Jesus' closest followers: the apostles generally were weak, petty and self-absorbed. He didn't think they were committed enough to the cause of freeing the Jewish people from their corrupt and evil oppressors (the Romans and the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem).

Mary Magdalene was Jesus' most important advisor. Jesus talked to her more than anyone else and she seemed to understand him the best; she never argued. **Peter** was a better fisherman than a leader. His mother-in-law was valuable in Capernaum, otherwise Judas had no idea why he was chosen. His brother, Andrew, should have stayed on his boat. Peter was rather weak and undependable, while Andrew was useless. Judas probably never understood what Jesus ever saw in either one. **John** was too young to amount to much and his brother, James, wasn't very bright and was too loud and self-centered. **Matthew** was creepy. Judas thought Matthew resented him because he was in charge of money matters rather than Matthew. **Thomas** was the only one Judas trusted. Thomas was the only one who would follow Jesus whenever and however he wanted; he was the most faithful. Judas probably thought that Thomas, like him, wasn't liked by the other apostles very much. But neither probably liked the others much either. Judas thought that the other apostles probably wouldn't amount to much because they seemed too interested in what they would get out of their loyalty to Jesus.

When they went to Jerusalem for the last time, Judas would have been completely conflicted. Jesus was difficult to understand and his behavior was strange. First, he had a triumphant march into Jerusalem and had the crowds in his hands. Judas probably thought that Jesus blew an opportunity to rally the people against the Romans. Jesus easily could have created an armed movement to free the Jews from the slavery of the Romans and maybe even from some of the Jewish leaders.

One episode would have galled him. Jesus had Peter and John make preparations for the Passover eve and Passover meals—that was Judas' job. It was either an insult or a sign. At first, Judas would have been insulted, then he may have realized it was a sign. Jesus was telling Judas it was time: Judas knew Jesus wanted him to turn Jesus over to the authorities. They had had such conversations privately. Judas knew that Jesus saw the eternal world as the better place to be and that the spiritual life was the true life and that our physical bodies were just dragging us down into a corrupt world. Judas also knew Jesus had to be challenged and he had to change the way things were going. Judas would have seen Jesus as a descendent of David—a king who understood that power requires the sword. David created the nation of Israel with the sword. The sword had taken the nation away from the Jews by the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, and the Romans, to name only a few. So for Judas, in order to restore the nation, the Jews needed a sword—a leader—a Messiah. If Judas was an Essene, he would have been trained to fight the Sons of Darkness. For Judas, the Messiah was to lead the Jews and overthrow their oppressors. That's what Jesus was sent here by his father to do. But Judas saw Jesus losing his way—wasting precious oil when Mary poured it over his feet. Judas probably got irritated with Jesus talking too much about loving his

enemies. During Holy Week, Judas probably thought it was time for Jesus to take up the role as a true Messiah and lead his followers out of the yoke of Rome. Rome was not just a power, it was an immoral travesty in the world. Sin and evil existed in that corrupt world and the Messiah was supposed to lead the Jews out of it.

My assumption has been that Judas was a loyal follower. If that is true, then why did he turn him over? It was an act of faith. Faith in Jesus as the Messiah to overthrow the enemies of the Jews; faith that Jesus would act the way he should; and faith in what Jesus had asked him to do. It was time and Jesus told him to do so. Judas' purpose as an apostle was to allow Jesus to show us the way to eternal life. In order to do so, we need to shed our bodies. I'm not sure Judas believed Jesus would be crucified. He was conflicted and saw two likely options: (1) Jesus would stop being so passive and be forced into carrying a sword and leading the people in a revolt. That would have been consistent with Judas' Essene and Zealot tendencies; (2) He and Jesus talked about gnosis—the real salvation is shedding one's body and becoming eternal. For Judas (who thought Jesus believed the same things) there is no resurrection of the body, only becoming an eternal spiritual being. This is consistent with the Gnostic belief that we are saved through the wisdom and moral ways of living that Jesus taught us. Crucifixion for our sins isn't really the point. Eternal salvation is. Judas would have been motivated by either or both beliefs. I don't think the money was relevant. Thirty pieces is what was always paid if you killed someone's slave accidentally; that's what the authorities had to give Judas. If money were a motive, then why kill the man who was the reason people gave money to his followers. Judas could have embezzled a lot more money than 30 pieces of silver, if money motivated him at all. There is no real evidence that Judas was motivated by money. That became the justification for the apostles to condemn his actions.

Jesus' death would have been a real puzzle for Judas. Either Judas misunderstood what Jesus expected of him or Jesus really wasn't who Judas thought he was or that Jesus miscalculated what was supposed to happen. Judas would have replayed his private conversations in his own mind. Did he kill the man he worshipped? Was Jesus' death really the plan after all and that Judas had done his role correctly? If Jesus' death was the real plan, then what was going to happen to Judas? He knew he would be condemned and hunted. Was he just like the other apostles who misunderstood everything or did he just have to accept the consequences of his actions? These ideas would have been crushing, because Judas probably looked down on the Galilean followers of Jesus and he didn't want to be seen as being like them or being judged by them. There are three versions of Judas' death.

- 1) Matthew 27:3—Judas returned the money to the Chief Priest and says that he has sinned by betraying Jesus. The Chief Priest uses the money to buy the Field of Blood. Judas hangs himself.
- 2) Acts 1:18—When selecting Judas' replacement, Peter tells the others what happened to Judas. He bought the Field of Blood with the money and while he was in the field, he fell over and his bowels spilled out onto the field (the Field of Blood had two connotations then—Jesus' and Judas' blood).
- 3) According to the Gospel of Judas, some of the apostles found him and stoned him to death—probably on the Field of Blood.

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