



## Pastor's Ponderings

"Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, "Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye," when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye." Luke 6:41-42

Sometimes being introspective is difficult. Instead of looking and changing ourselves we go the path of least resistance that leads to concentrating on others, seeing other people's



faults, or telling others how to go about their business. Lent is a time to help "right the ship" and to attempt to catch a breeze from the Holy Spirit that will lead us in a direction to use our gifts and to share the Good News we know from Jesus. It is a time to deal with the logs in our eyes and to renew a relationship with Jesus. As the Psalmist puts it, create a clean heart, or

begin again, the journey we suspect Jesus wants us to go on. It may not take us away from where we are, but it will open our eyes to opportunities to serve, to help, to care, to share, to grow and become closer to Jesus.

Our gifts are used best when they are used to further people's lives and help others get on a path where the wind of the Holy Spirit guides them. We begin Lent with wandering hearts and a fickle faith; let us leave Lent with a stronger understanding of what being a loved child of God is and be more in tune with a faith that leads us to understand and use the gifts God has given us.

Attempting to let Jesus into my heart and to guide me,  
I remain,

Pastor Fred he/him/his

## Men's Breakfast

We will meet on **Saturday, March 16, at 9:30 AM** in the Fellowship Hall. Breakfast will be provided, with a freewill offering to be collected.

All are welcome to eat and run, or stay to hear a story about a member's climb up Mt. Kilimanjaro, or to help out with some odd jobs.



We've invited the members of Augustana to join us. We also hope to meet on the third Saturdays in May, September and November.

Lanny and Peter

**\*Postponed/Rescheduled\***

**Annual Congregational Meeting & Potluck Lunch**  
Sunday, April 7, following worship.

## Tai Chi with Charlie Returns on Monday, March 11 (6:30 PM to 7:30 PM)

Time for Tai Chi! I'm planning to start another 10-week session beginning on **March 11** (\$20 for the session). We'll start from the beginning and probably use the first class or two to review last fall's session. Newcomers or those who only went to a couple of classes are welcome to return. I'd like to know if there is enough interest in holding another session. Please contact me if you are interested.

Charlie



## Mid-Week Lenten Soup Suppers and Worship Services

Below is the remaining schedule (soup suppers at **6:00 PM** and worship services at **6:30 PM**).

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>March 6</b>  | <b>St. Martin Lutheran</b><br>(322 Old Falls Blvd., North Tonawanda) |
| <b>March 13</b> | <b>Trinity Old Lutheran</b>  |
| <b>March 20</b> | <b>Abiding Savior Lutheran</b><br>(1534 Ruie Road, North Tonawanda)  |

## TOL Community Collection—Lent to Easter

We will continue collecting "new socks and underwear for men, women and children." Your donations will benefit Friends of Night People (men) and Harvest House (women and children). Underwear should be packaged. Please place your donations in the marked container in the narthex.



## You're Invited – St. Patrick's Day Coffee Hour

The WWI Women's Group will host the Coffee Hour on **Sunday, March 17**, following worship. If you would like to bring a dessert, please use the sign-up sheet posted on the main bulletin board. We hope you can join us!



## Dinner/Theater Returns to TOL! Friday, March 8

A Character Portrayal by Charlie Schmidtke  
(Marius from "Les Misérables")

Potluck Dinner at 6:00 PM -- Theater at 7:00 PM

In "Les Miz," Marius is an old man and Charlie will be sharing the man's life review. You will hear music from the London production throughout his performance.

If you plan to attend, please use the sign-up sheet posted on the main bulletin board or call the church office (716-836-4868).

Admission Free

All are welcome!

## Trinity Tidings, March 2024

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

Palm Sunday, March 24, TOL at 11:00 AM

Holy Thursday, March 28, Abiding Savior, 7:00 PM

Good Friday, March 29

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



### Easter Sunday, March 31

TOL at 11:00 AM

### ELCA Prayer Ventures, March 2024

- † Remember in prayer individuals, families and communities as they continue to recover from natural disasters, and ask God to give them strength, resilience and hope. Promise that we will persist in our commitment to support and assist these individuals, families and communities through a process that can be long, difficult and lonely.
- † “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer” (Psalm 19:14). Praise God for being attentive to our thoughts, prayers and lamentations – spoken and unspoken.
- † Sing for joy and give thanks to God for providing comfort in times of distress, healing us when we are broken and reassuring us that we are valued when we feel insignificant.
- † Reflect on the people for whom you have concern. Pray for them and commit yourself to expressing your love and care in a personal way – an in-person conversation; a phone call offering help; a note, text or email.

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### 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.

## Trinity Tidings

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### March Mission: Family Justice Center of Erie County

**History:** “When the Family Justice Center opened its doors on May 2, 2006, it was the culmination of a dream that began in 1995. That’s when the Erie County Coalition Against Family Violence and the Multidisciplinary Coordinating Council first came together to find a way to improve the response to incidents of domestic violence in Erie County. The result was the 1995 Erie County Long-Term Strategic Plan which received its final assessment in 2000.”

“On May 2, 2006, the Family Justice Center of Erie County celebrated its grand opening. Since that time, the FJC has helped thousands of clients deal with issues of domestic and family violence.”

“The FJC will continue bringing unity to a once fragmented system; holding abusers accountable for their actions; and providing a safe place for victims and their children to find hope and healing.” [FJC Locations: Buffalo, Amherst, Grand Island, and Orchard Park.]

[from: [www.fjcsafe.org](http://www.fjcsafe.org). ©2024 Family Justice Center of Erie County. All rights reserved.]

To make a donation, please use 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.

### February Mission

Thank you for your continued support of Hearts and Hands: Faith in Action. TOL is part of this community of volunteers!

“Live out the spirit of giving by sharing your time, treasure & talent with Hearts & Hands Neighbors Helping Neighbors since 2003.” [from: *Hearts & Hands, 2020*, [www.hnhcares.org](http://www.hnhcares.org)]

### Support for Local Food Pantries

Your donations of non-perishable goods to 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 them in the narthex shopping cart or leave them in the elevator entrance during the week (Tuesday to Friday, 9:00 AM to Noon). Thank you!

**Souper Bowl of Caring:** Thank You to everyone for your support of the pantries at Good Shepherd LC and Community of Good Neighbors on Sunday, February 11!

## A Letter to the TOL Congregation from Pastor Sohail

Dear TOL church family,

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

About 10 years ago, when I came to Buffalo, my family arrived here and joined TOL. In the beginning, it was a hard adjustment; we faced some challenges and lots of struggle was involved, but God had a plan for us. Through TOL, God gave us hope and we were able to understand God’s plan in our lives. With the help of Pastor Fred and the TOL congregation, I completed my seminary journey and was ordained at TOL, and I feel honored to say this is my home church in the USA. Thank you for your prayers and help.

Now, it is still the continuation of God’s plan, and I am glad to share, that with the cooperation of Upstate NY Synod, we are creating a worship community of South Asian community to join for worship and Bible study in Hindi, Urdu, and Punjabi languages. It is an extended ministry of First English and St. Peter’s church with the partnership of Trinity Old Lutheran church. It’s a Synod Authorized worship community (SAWC). Please keep this new ministry in your prayers and please accept my heartfelt gratitude for opening your doors and giving us office space and other facilities. I hope for your continued support and help for the growth of South Asian Lutheran Ministry.

Yours in the vineyard of Christ,  
*Pastor Sohail and family*

The Church Council in November 2023 unanimously affirmed supporting this ministry through the use of our space. Pastor Sohail will be using the Counseling room at the bottom of the side stairwell. He will place a sign on the door to indicate it is the location of South Asian Lutheran Ministry. He will have office hours Fridays. We will continue to pray to God to bless this ministry.

### Monday Afternoon Adult Ed. Classes, led by Charlie Schmidtko

Classes meet from 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM in the Fireside Room and on Zoom. Please contact Charlie for a Zoom link. All are welcome!



March 4: Between Easter and Pentecost  
March 18: Pentecost

### Sermon Discussion/Input with Pastor Fred Wednesday, March 20 at Noon TOL Fireside Room

Pastor Fred invites everyone to join him in a bag lunch discussion of the texts for the next month of sermons. It is known as a “Pericope Study.” Please let Pastor Fred know if you plan to attend so he can prepare materials.

### Operation Christmas Child

For the month of March the suggested donations are combs, brushes, hair items, barrettes, small bags (ex., make-up size bags) or drawstring backpacks. Some of these items come in multipacks, so one package can go a long way. We also continue to request donations of yarn. There is a box in the narthex labeled “Operation Christmas Child” for your much-appreciated donations. Thank you so much for your continued support! ~Kelly and Debbie

## Easter Plants



Easter Sunday is **March 31**. If you would like to purchase a plant for the altar area, please use the sign-up sheet on the main bulletin board. Four varieties will be available: Tulips, Mums, Hyacinths and Lilies. Please contact Barb if you have any questions.

## ELCA Prayer Ventures, March 2024

*Women’s History Month* Give thanks for women throughout history and in our lives who have shared their gifts and leadership with the church and society, raised and cared for us, inspired us and nurtured our faith, and fought for justice, equity and inclusion. Pray for women everywhere who suffer injustice, demeaning stereotypes, violence and poverty, that they will not lose hope but will be delivered from their suffering and persecution to live freely and boldly.

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## “Christian Cancer Support”

If you are on a cancer journey and are in need of support, please contact Linda Sokoley. She is on a journey as well and she can offer you support, hope and healing. Please contact Linda through Augustana LC’s office at 716-832-5720 or by email at [augustchurch@yahoo.com](mailto:augustchurch@yahoo.com).



## A Night at the Theater – Saturday, May 4!



You’re welcome to join us for a Niagara Regional Theatre Guild presentation of “Young Frankenstein” at **7:30 PM** (doors open at 7:00 PM) on **Saturday, May 4, 2024!** The performance is at the Ellicott Creek Playhouse, 550 Ellicott Creek Road, Tonawanda.

**Tickets are \$18 each.** Please use the sign-up sheet on the main bulletin board or contact us by **Sunday, April 7**, so that we are able to sit together to receive this discounted price. If you have questions, please let us know.

*Stephanie and Peter  
C/E/O*

## Premiere: “A Pitch from Satchel Paige” Written by Loren Keller (late) & James Keller

**April 5-28  
(Fridays/Saturdays, 7:30 PM; Sundays, 4:00 PM)**

African-American Cultural Center’s  
Paul Robeson Theatre  
350 Masten Avenue, Buffalo, NY

Satchel shares his own story from growing up, playing in the phenomenal Negro League and ultimately the Majors. Perseverance lived. Songs from the various time periods will be shared as well (Verneice Turner).



This play was a winner of the New York New Works Theatre Festival in NYC in 2017.

For ticket prices and complete details, please see the flier posted on the bulletin board near the office!

**Adult Ed. Classes with Charlie Schmidtke**  
**Study Notes: Coptic Beliefs**

**Part II: Egyptian Culture and Religion in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century**

Egyptians are well known for their engineering and embalming skills. They developed papyrus (3000 BCE), writing/hieroglyphs, which were phonetic renderings of language, the first decimal system in math, irrigation systems, glassworks, the use of ramps, bowling, the lever, geometry and astronomy. They may have built the first stools, beds and tables (2500 BCE) and brewed beer. In 1800 BCE they began the treatment of women's health issues, including developing contraception and dissecting bodies to learn about diseases. They developed dentistry, invented toothpaste, toothbrushes, the toothpick, and breath mints. They expected personal hygiene and bathed regularly and used perfumes and cosmetics. There was no prohibition of female fashion and nakedness was considered a personal choice. Women could own land and reject marriage proposals. The man was the head of the house and the woman the head of the home. Gardens were prized.

There is no archeological evidence to confirm that Jews were enslaved and settled in Goshen, Egypt. The Jews did come to Egypt with the destruction of the Temple and the Babylonian exile in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. This time frame, however, is at least 600 years after the time of Moses. It is highly likely that Egyptians paid workers to build the pyramids and did not use slaves of any kind. The Exodus was written during the Babylonian Captivity and may not have been historically accurate, rather it may have been based on their desire of escaping Babylonian Captivity.

The burning of Alexandria's library plus Roman indifference in funding it became major reasons for the loss of important written works from the ancient world. Untold volumes were lost over the centuries following the Resurrection. Arabic became the national language in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and Islam became the major religion.

In the centuries before Jesus, major Egyptian cities had a triad of deities, while philosophers believed there was one supreme being. Egyptians were preoccupied with the idea of resurrection and the afterlife (pyramids, which are a symbol of continued life, are an example). Dying outside of Egypt was a problem. Death was a transformation that required burial in Egyptian soil. The Ankh (similar to a cross) is a sign of eternal life. God is a unity, eternal, infinite and with loving kindness. Gratitude was a primary virtue and ingratitude was a gateway sin. The Creator God was Atum who spoke the world into being. Death is the rejoining of the individual's soul within the eternal realm. Eternity was not feared. The dead are seen as transformed spirits.

The Coptic Church split with the Roman Church in 451 CE. The Coptic, Syrian, Armenian, Ethiopian and Indian churches believe that Jesus has only one nature, an Incarnate Logos. Just as humans are one person with body and soul, so Jesus has one nature, which is divine and human. This belief contrasts with West's idea that Jesus is one person with two natures. Copts are a mix of Greek, Jew, and Egyptian. The final break between Rome and Egypt came when the Islamic conquest turned Egypt into a Muslim country.

The Coptic Church was founded by St. Mark, the Evangelist, who was an African Jew. His family moved to Jerusalem when barbarians attacked them and took their property. He was the cousin of Barnabas and Peter. His mother, Mary (not any of the other Mary's we've discussed), owned the room where the Last Supper took place. It also became the home where the apostles stayed, where Jesus visited and was the

location of Pentecost. Mark was one of the 70 disciples sent out by Jesus. He started going with Peter when Peter started his travels, which ended up in Rome. It is possible that Mark wrote down Peter's sermons and used them as the basis for his gospel. Mark then went with Paul and Barnabas, and in 49 CE went to Alexandria, founding the Coptic Church. Some aspects of modern Coptic liturgy date back to Mark's liturgical practices. Mark went back to his original home, Pentapolis in Northern Africa. He returned to Alexandria in 68 CE and was killed by the pagans who resented his efforts to turn the people away from the local, traditional gods. He was dragged through the street by a rope that was around his neck until he died.

The Copts believe in abstinence before marriage, condemn adultery, foster humility; their liturgies can be 2½ hours long; truth is universal; the Incarnate Logos is a central belief. (Incarnate Logos had a number of interpretations. For the western church, John's gospel calls Jesus the word and proclaims that Jesus is the Logos. Logos was understood to be the underlying meaning of life; it means word or making sense of life. For John, the Word was in the beginning and involved in creation. The Logos is not physical but John's gospel proclaims that the Logos/Word became flesh.) Splits occurred defining what the nature of the Logos was and what was its relationship with the body. For the Copts, the Incarnate Logos basically meant that Jesus was truly spiritual and divine. His incarnation meant that his Logos adopted a body. There is complexity and division in defining what the nature of this adoption was and whether it was a part of Jesus' nature.

The Copts merged science and religion and promoted practical natural laws. They taught meditation and concentration and promoted harmony with others. Love, will and wisdom should be guides for living. Each person's soul is eternal and the Copts accepted the spiritual law of cause-effect (karma). Those who have harmony with God will be happy, healthy and joyful, for example. Priests do not have a vow of celibacy. The Coptic Church uses the Septuagint (a Greek translation) for the Old Testament and a literal translation of this Greek for the New Testament (like the King James Version). We'll talk about the development of the bible in a later class.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century, two Christian boys became shipwrecked in Ethiopia and introduced Christianity to that country. The king adopted Christianity and made it the country's religion. Today, Christianity is the largest religion in Ethiopia. The area had historically included a significant Jewish population. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church uses the Star of David and celebrates Christmas on January 7. They have a "mass" and their festivities include King David's dance. Priests represent the unity of heaven and earth. The Ethiopian Church is Coptic and was united with the Coptic Church until 1959. That year the Coptic Pope granted Ethiopia's Church its own Patriarch. Ethiopia is the only north African country to remain predominately Christian instead of becoming Muslim.

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**ELCA Prayer Ventures, March 2024**

Rejoice and give thanks for the wonderful variety of songs  
and musical styles that calm, energize,  
unite and inspire us.

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