



Pastor's Ponderings

¹²But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened. Luke 24:12

On the devotional card for Easter, from our Wandering Hearts theme, the question for the day is "What are you running toward?" As you think about your answer, my mind is going to the many times I am running away from stuff; the times I am avoiding, shifting from side-to-side to avoid stuff. I also think of the many times I stand still, in shock, or do not know where to turn. It is only at certain points in my life that I do run to stuff; it seems rarer for me to run toward God.

Maybe it is the fear of commitment, or the wariness of the choices that a person running toward God has to make. It may be the open-ended nature of following a call to God that keeps my running sporadic. However, I notice that when I do run toward God, as John the Baptist did for Jesus, my mountains become lower to climb and my valleys become less deep. Also, there is usually a stillness that reminds me of the words from Psalm 46, "be still and know that I am God," or a portion of the stillness and confidence that the great servant of God, Mary, felt when she was asked to bear God's son.

It seems to me that running toward God needs to be an event that I undertake more often. How about you?

The devotional prayer card ends with this prayer: "God of the garden, just as Peter ran toward you that Easter morning, I too am running. I am running toward a stronger sense of self. I am running toward my call. I am running toward deeper relationships and deeper faith. I am running into the arms of love. Like Peter, I run toward you. Wait for me. I am on my way! Amen."

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Fred he/him/his

Sermon Discussion/Input with Pastor Fred Wednesday, April 24 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.



Thank you...to everyone for your generous support of this year's Lenten Community Collection of socks (and underwear) that will benefit Friends of Night People (men) and Harvest House (women and children). The March Notes from Pastor Jeremiah Smith (Niagara Frontier Conference Dean) lists TOL as having donated 150 pairs of socks and 53 pairs of underwear!

TOL Sandwich Ministry – Notes from Sharon

It has been two years since the start-up of the Sandwich Team Ministry at TOL—and the "team" is still going strong. It is really pleasing to know that over 10,000 sandwiches have been made and delivered so far to Friends of Night People, an agency on Hudson Street in Buffalo. Thanks be to God that we can do this!

A Lutheran Charities grant for 2024 has been applied for, and good news was recently received for the approval. Buffalo has many hungry people who will directly benefit from the grant. The funds we will receive from Lutheran Charities should cover a lot of this ministry's expenses in 2024!

Five teams, and six teams in the summer, have been meeting weekly in the TOL kitchen on either Monday evenings or Tuesday mornings. The sandwich making takes only 1½ hours weekly. The recipients are thankful and enjoy the sandwiches we're told; Friends of Night People, which distributes the sandwiches, is thankful for our help, and the volunteers enjoy getting together for a good cause and have a few laughs while doing it. So this is a WIN - WIN - WIN situation.

If anyone is interested in volunteering for the Sandwich Ministry, please contact Nancy or Lanny or me. If anyone is willing to help with shopping, that would be appreciated. Contributions toward this endeavor are welcomed as well.

You're Invited – Spring Coffee Hour!

The WWI Women's Group will host the Coffee Hour on **Sunday, April 28**, 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!



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!** 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



Trinity Tidings, April 2024

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



Christ Is Risen

ELCA Prayer Ventures, April 2024

- † Pray for the people of Haiti, who have suffered multiple natural disasters in recent years and are now experiencing civil and political unrest and violence.
- † Pray that the leaders of Russia and Ukraine and of Israel and Palestine will commit to their respective cease-fires and meet face-to-face to resolve their conflicts and create peaceful ways forward, ending the widespread human suffering and destruction that have impacted generations of their people.
- † Praise God for the lengthening daylight of spring, which stirs new life and reminds us of the light God brings into the world through the gift of Jesus Christ.
- † Remember in prayer our neighbors and siblings in Christ whose vocations pull them away from their family, friends, congregation and community. Pray that the Holy Spirit will sustain their faith and spirit and that we will express our connection with them as they come and go.
- † To whom do we turn when we are tired or unsure of our path in life? Praise God, who stays by our side through every twist and turn.

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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.

For anyone in need of prayers, a TOL Prayer Partner will be available in the Parent's Room following worship.

The Prayer Chain is available to anyone having a prayer request. Please contact the church office with your request (716-836-4868).

"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.



Trinity Tidings

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Mission for April: Augustana's Refugee & Immigrant Driver Education (RIDE)

The program began in 2007 at Augustana LC and continues to this day. It is a one-of-a-kind program to assist immigrants and refugees in obtaining Learners' Permits and driver instruction training, which enables them to more easily access employment, healthcare, neighborhoods, schools, and to participate in community activities. The cost for a Learner's Permit is about \$70 per person; 10 professional driving lessons are about \$615 per person.

Interest and participation in RIDE continues, along with rising costs. Donations to help defray program costs are received from a number of other sources, including grant funding from Lutheran Charities of WNY. All donations received are most welcome—as well as new volunteers!

If you have any questions, please speak to Pastor Fred or Pastor Johanna. More information can be found on the Augustana website at www.augustanaonline.org/outreach.

For your monetary donations, please use the marked envelopes found on the table in the narthex or use Tithe.ly through the TOL website. If using the mail, please enter "RIDE" on the check memo.

March Mission

Thank you for your donations to support Family Justice Center of Erie County (FJC). The organization continues to help clients deal with issues of domestic and family violence.

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]

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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 to Friday, 9:00 AM to Noon). Thank you!



"Let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:18). Praise God for ELCA World Hunger's 50 years of action to end hunger, bring relief to those who suffer, develop sustainable solutions to hunger and raise awareness of the needs of our neighbors — here and around the world. Pray that we might exercise generosity, wisdom and perseverance to meet the challenges of ending hunger.

[from: ELCA Prayer Ventures, April 2024]

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ELCA Prayer Ventures, April 2024

“Everything they owned was held in common ... and it was distributed to each as any had need” (Acts 4:32-35). Ask the Spirit to stir our generosity and nurture our unwavering concern for the well-being of our neighbor so that we might share our assets with those in need and foster concerned communities.

Ask God to help us see the presence and influence of Jesus in our daily lives, our relationships and our conversations with neighbors, co-workers and siblings in Christ.

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Men's Breakfast

Our first Men's Breakfast in many years was held at TOL on Saturday, March 16. Thirteen people attended—including a few from Augustana—a great turnout for our first meeting! Devotions and prayer were given by Pastor Fred. The breakfast included breakfast pizza, pastries and fruit.

After breakfast, Dave talked about his experience of climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro and he brought photos and read from his journal. Wow, thank you, Dave, for bringing this presentation to us! It was so well done!

Our next Men's Breakfast is on Saturday, May 18, with a speaker to be announced. After that, we'll take a break and meet again in the Fall. There will be a sign-up sheet posted soon. We hope all of you can make it that day!

Your brother in Christ,
Lanny

Thank You...

- * to the Church Council and all who helped with the Mid-Week Lenten Soup Supper and Worship on March 13—and to those who brought soups and desserts.
- * to all who helped with the St. Patrick's Day coffee hour hosted by the WWI Women's Group on March 17—and to all who brought in delicious desserts.



ELCA Prayer Ventures for Earth Day (April 22) and Arbor Day (April 26)

Earth Day Praise God for the gift of creation in all its beauty and wonder; thank God for sustaining life through Earth's abundant resources given to us and entrusted to our care, stewardship and sharing justly.

[from: ELCA Prayer Ventures, April 2018]



Give thanks to God on **Arbor Day** for the beauty, life-giving qualities, resources and habitats provided by trees, woodlands and wilderness forests, and pray for wisdom and renewed commitment to steward and protect these gifts entrusted to our care.

[from: ELCA Prayer Ventures, April 2017]

Dinner Theater at TOL—A Review from Nancy

On Friday, March 8, we had the pleasure of meeting Marius from Les Miserables, a Victor Hugo novel which was adapted to film and stage. Charlie Schmidtke did an excellent job of characterizing Marius, and in doing so, we learned so much about the plot and all the individuals from Les Miz. Charlie brought to life the character development of Marius in a manner which was vibrant, easily understood and so interesting. I think everyone in the audience was fascinated by this presentation, which received a standing ovation.

Oh, and we started the evening with a potluck dinner—kudos to all the TOL chefs who brought their favorite (and most delicious) dishes.

Thank you, Charlie, for this gift of an enjoyable evening at TOL! You are so talented!



Operation Christmas Child



The suggested donations for April are small toys (ball, Slinky, jump rope, small cars/trucks, plastic animals, Yo-Yo, etc.). We also continue to collect yarn. Any and all donations are greatly appreciated! They may be placed in the box in the Narthex labeled “Operation Christmas Child.”

Thank you!
Kelly and Debbie

Thank You to TOL from Veteran's One-stop Center of WNY (excerpts from letter of January 23, 2024; complete letter is posted on the main bulletin board)

Dear Reverend Frederick,

On behalf of the Veterans One-stop Center, I'd like to personally thank you for your support of our local Veterans, service members, and their families. It is because of the continuing support and generosity from individuals and organizations within the community that we are able to continue providing services right here in Western New York and beyond.

There are many organizations out there doing great things in the world—but you chose us. Thank you for your commitment to joining us on our mission to empower Veterans here in Western New York and we look forward to sharing our continued successes with you in the future.

Yours in Service,
Heidi Phillips
Senior Director of Operations & Finance

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



The 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 main bulletin board.

Adult Ed. Classes with Charlie Schmidtke

Study Notes: Coptic Beliefs

Part III: The Family's Journey through Egypt

The Coptic Church believes that Jesus, like Moses, came out of Egypt: Isaiah 19:1, 19-20, 21, 25, and Hosea 11:1. They believe Matthew's Nativity narrative about the visit of the Magi and the flight of Mary, Joseph and Jesus to Egypt. In fact, they have a detailed itinerary for the family's travels throughout Egypt. Mary, Joseph, Jesus and their donkey probably followed the "way of the sea"—a Roman built highway through the desert and into Egypt. It was a relatively safe route to take.

Note: Different references about the family's travels in Egypt use different sounding names. The problem is that towns, cities, mountains, etc., have Greek, Roman, and Egyptian names. These names are written in different languages, including Greek, Latin, Egyptian, Hebrew and Aramaic. So, the name I'll use for the area may not be the same used in other references. The events may have different details too depending on the translation (comparable to our two Nativity stories). I'll give one version with one name and not go into the varying names and story line differences because that would be just too confusing. There is controversy whether or not the family traveled with a caravan or with other individuals.

1. The Coptic Church believes they travelled alone (Mary, Joseph, Jesus, and sometimes Salome, Mary's aunt) being guided and protected by God. They went from Bethlehem to Gaza, then to El-Zaraniq to El-Arish to Farma. This stop finished the Sinai portion of their journey. It was a miraculous journey through desert wastelands, plateaus, hidden valleys with wild beasts all around. From 384-412 CE, Pope Theophilus was the 23rd Patriarch of Alexandria. He wrote in his annals that the Holy Virgin appeared to him and told him about the Holy Family's travel to, within and then from Egypt. This is the primary source that led to building of churches and shrines at the places the family stayed or visited. Their belief is that oral tradition passed the stories from one generation to the next and Pope Theophilus finally wrote them down, accurately (guided by divine revelation).
2. They traveled the Roman's Way of the Sea—a road that followed the Mediterranean Sea. Before heading along the way, they stayed in a grotto that was southeast of Bethlehem. Salome went with them. This grotto was an ancient sanctuary and is venerated today by Christians and Muslims. The Armenian tradition claims that some of the milk Jesus was drinking from Mary fell on a rock and turned it completely white. A church was built on this spot in the late 4th century by a woman named Paula. Originally the church was called the Virgin Mother, but later was changed to Paula. The church in the 14th century belonged to the Greeks and eventually passed into Roman Catholic control. The white rock is a favorite pilgrimage for women who will take pieces of it because it has healing powers. The family travelled from the Grotto through Gaza to Egypt. The trip to Egypt itself would have been at least six days. It is not clear whether or not they rented camels to ride until they got to Farma. There is a Spanish tradition that says the family was accompanied by Salome and three men.

Family in Egypt, According to the Coptic Church

1. They travel from Farma (the last stop in Sinai and a swampy area leading to the Nile's delta) to Basta (about 100 kms northeast of Cairo). Jesus, the baby, made the sign of the cross in the dirt and caused a water-spring to well up from the ground. His presence caused idols to crumble. The people become angry and the family headed southwards. They left and a day later they encountered a funeral procession. The baby Jesus raised the man from the dead. He was the son of a widow who proclaimed that Jesus was the True God and Savior of the world. The inhabitants of nearby Basatah became followers of Jesus.
2. Mostorod (10 kms from Cairo). It became known as the Bathing Place because Mary bathed Jesus and washed his clothes. On their return to Nazareth, they stopped here and Jesus caused a spring to "gush from the earth," which still flows today.
3. Belbeis (55 kms northeast of Cairo). They stayed here awhile and rested under a shade tree which is called "The Virgin Mary's Tree." They sought shelter in a cave but wild animals came out of it and frightened Mary. Jesus calmed her and the animals, and they all lived in harmony. This is seen as fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." Isaiah 11:6.
4. Meniet Samannoud is where they crossed the Nile to Samanoud, a city on the delta. The people welcomed them with kindness. Today there is a large granite trough where Mary kneaded her dough and a water-well, which Jesus created.
5. Sakha (means the foot of Jesus). Jesus' foot print was marked in bas-relief on a rock. It was preserved and hidden until the mid-1990s. It is called the foot print of Jesus. Some small towns on the way have local traditions of their stay.
6. Wadi el-Natroun is a western desert of Egypt. It becomes home to a number of monasteries and settlements in honor of the family's passage through the Valley. Only a few still exist. The family leaves the desert and crosses the Nile.

Note: The remainder of their journey through Egypt will be included in next month's *Tidings*.

Monday Afternoon Adult Ed. Classes, led by Charlie Schmidtke

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

April 15: The Great Compromise
April 22: Rabbi Gamiliel, Paul's Teacher
May 6: Destruction of the Temple

Tai Chi with Charlie

The sessions at TOL are being postponed until Fall 2024. More details will be available in the coming months.

