



## Pastor's Ponderings

### Let it snow! Let it snow! Let it snow!

That's all right for Dean Martin who grew up in Southern California. But enough is enough! Five feet and counting! Now that I got my whining out of the way. Let us give thanks!

"O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever." Psalm 136:1

Being grateful and hopeful is our calling as well as serving and working for justice. I give thanks for the congregations I serve. I give thanks for the ministries we support and work towards. I give thanks for all the faces we see each week in worship and on Zoom.

I turn to a book called Attitudes of Gratitude by M.J. Ryan at this time of year for inspiration. The author encourages us to take 'thank you' deeper than the thank you we were taught as good manners when we were young. Being grateful is an awareness and attitude that can be part of us in our struggles and in our joyful times. M.J. Ryan quoted Melody Beattie who writes: "Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion to clarity... Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today and creates a vision for tomorrow."

As we look to the Advent of the Lord we are challenged to find gratefulness along our journey.

Peace,  
Pastor Fred he/him/his

## New! Advent Bible Study

Pastor Fred will lead this three-week Bible Study on Friday mornings, 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM, at Augustana LC. The classes will meet on December 2, 9 and 16. A Zoom invite will be offered for those who can't attend in person. Hope to see you there!



## You are invited to join us on Christmas Eve!

(in-church and on Zoom)

**Augustana LC  
Candlelight &  
Communion Service,  
4:30 PM**



**TOL Candlelight  
Service of Lessons &  
Carols,  
7:00 PM**

## Annual Budget Meeting

The budget meeting will be held following the worship service on **Sunday, December 11**. Also on the agenda is the election of council members for 2023 and a vote on the updated Constitution. Please plan on attending, either in person or on Zoom! Thank you.

*TOL Church Council*

## Table Talk

### Wednesday, December 14 6:30 to 8:00 PM (in church and on Zoom)

Each month, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday, we get a view of spiritual beliefs and practices throughout the world as we watch Oprah Winfrey's "Belief" series.



In November we saw a former skateboard champion who was desperately searching for meaning in his life after a lonely, unhappy childhood. He made a pilgrimage to the Kaaba in Saudi Arabia. The second section focused on two warring factions in Nigeria. Each leader—a Christian and a Muslim—hated each other and urged their followers to aim for the death and destruction of the other group... until a news reporter got them together for conversation. The third section introduced us to a mother whose son had been murdered. How could she find a way to forgive and bring her heart some peace? She visited the murderer in prison and we saw God at work.

We had interesting conversations on forgiveness, grief, addiction, regret and hope.

Contact the church office if you'd like to Zoom. Each session stands alone so you can jump on board at any time.

The November meeting was accompanied by a huge, beautiful moon shining above us as we came and went.

*Diane S*

## Decorating the Church for Advent and Christmas

Please join us on **Saturday, December 3 at 10:00 AM** to help decorate the church for the seasons of Advent and Christmas. We need willing hands and a joyful spirit!

*Diane S*

**Christmas Poinsettias...** If you wish to purchase a plant for the sanctuary, please use the sign-up sheet on the main bulletin board. The **deadline** is Sunday, December 11 and the cost will be about \$8/plant. If you have any questions, please speak to Barb.

## A Blue Christmas Service

### Saturday, December 17 at 5:00 PM

Abiding Savior Lutheran Church  
1534 Ruie Road in North Tonawanda

This special service offers healing and a safe space for those struggling with loneliness, grief, or depression during this time of year.





### Worship With Us Every Sunday!

The Reverend Frederick Kopp, Pastor  
Worship at 11:00 AM

Augustana Lutheran, Sunday Worship at 9:30 AM

### Seasons of Advent and Christmas

*Second Sunday of Advent, December 4*

*Third Sunday of Advent, December 11*

*Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 18*

### Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at TOL

**December 24 at 7:00 PM**  
**(in-church and on Zoom)**

**Christmas Day Worship, 11:00 AM**  
**(in-church and on Zoom)**

**Come, share the Christmas spirit with others—  
invite a friend or relative to  
in-church or Zoom worship!**



### 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.

### ELCA Prayer Ventures, December 2022

Remember those who are alone during this time of community celebrations, meals and worship, including refugees, immigrants, and those who are imprisoned, confined to home or an institution, without family, or separated from family and community by work or deployment.

Ask the Spirit to help us invite and welcome with enthusiasm our neighbors and surrounding community to join in our congregational activities, celebrations and worship during Advent and Christmas, and throughout the year.

Hope, joy, love and faith are infectious. Pray that the hope and joy stirred by our faith in God's love and presence in the world will spill over into our personal and professional relationships and our interaction with strangers.

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### Trinity Tidings

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Trinity Old Lutheran Church

3445 Sheridan Drive, Amherst, NY 14226

Church Office: 716-836-4868 or 716-836-4990

Church email: trinityoldlutheranchurch@gmail.com

Karen Mulartrick and Jan Sherman, Co-Editors



### November Mission: Veterans One-stop Center of WNY

Thank you for your donations to this important organization in Buffalo. The Veterans One-stop Center of WNY brings people, resources and organizations together to improve the quality of life for those who have served or are serving in the Armed Forces of the United States and their families.

### December Mission: Restoration Society, Inc.

Our December mission will support Restoration Society, Inc. RSI is a peer operated agency that offers recovery-based mental health services in Western New York. RSI offers holistic, person-centered services premised upon the client's self-determination and self-direction. They help clients in these four areas: Health, Home, Purpose and Community. Pastor Fred did an internship at this agency and saw the good work they did.

Please place your donations in the marked envelopes in the narthex or mail your donations to the church office (indicate on your check that it is designated for Restoration Society, Inc.).

### 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. Suggested items needed are listed below.

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).

- Canned fruits, vegetables, beans, soup, tuna and chicken
- Pasta, Mac-and-Cheese
- Peanut butter and jelly
- Spaghetti and pasta sauces
- Cereal and other breakfast items (oatmeal, grits)
- Instant potatoes
- Paper products, feminine hygiene products

Gift cards (Tops or Wegmans) (mail to church office)

### TOL Photo Directory

Please use the sign-up sheet on the main bulletin board. Continuing through December, there will be photo opportunities available both before and after worship. Additional dates/times will be scheduled. Details will also be in the Sunday bulletins. If you have any questions, please contact Scott or Jenna. If you can't make it to TOL, you are invited to submit your own photo and updated contact information.

**December 31** is the deadline.

*When you're smiling.....*

## Women's Luncheon Group

The group of ladies met on Sunday, November 6 following worship. It was decided to continue with these luncheons and to gather on the second Thursday of each month. We'll meet on Thursday, January 12, 2023 at Bob Evans Restaurant (1925 Niagara Falls Blvd. in Amherst) at 9:00 AM. This will be a breakfast and a planning session for the coming year. All women are invited to join us! Please bring your ideas and names (and addresses) of restaurants you would like to visit.



Velma has resigned as co-chair for this group and Judy and Barb will be the new co-chairs. If you need a ride to the restaurants, please contact Judy. (And a big "thank you" to Velma!)

## Adult Ed. Classes led by Charlie Schmidtke

Please join us **Monday afternoons at 1:00 PM** in the TOL Fireside Room and on Zoom. We continue to look at who the "Real Jesus" may be through our review of some biblical passages and through sources and writings that are not included in the bible. The remaining class for 2022 and the schedule for 2023 are listed below.



### 2022

Dec. 5 The Gnostic stories of Jesus' childhood

### 2023

Jan. 16 Was it the Temple or Mount of Olives?  
Jan. 30 Jesus' young adulthood: Nazareth or India?  
Feb. 13 The Essenes' influence on Jesus  
Feb. 27 Jesus according to Thomas and Judas  
Mar. 13 The Armenian Jesus  
Mar. 27 Jesus and Mary Magdalene  
Apr. 10 What the Q documents tell us  
Apr. 24 How the Gospels were selected and what was lost  
May 8 The Council of Nicea and how Jesus was defined

## ELCA Prayer Ventures, December 2022

*Christmas Eve* Offer prayers of thanksgiving and joy for the gift of Jesus, our Savior, life and hope, who brings light to the darkness, "for he came down from heaven above to help a world in need" (*ELW*271).

*Christmas Day* All glory and praise to God — everything we have seen, heard and been taught about Jesus Christ, our hope and salvation, is true. Give thanks that God's love and mercy, present in the birth of Christ, have shaken the world and awakened our hope.

*Kwanzaa* Today begins Kwanzaa, a weeklong celebration of African culture and traditions that emphasizes family, community and shared principles. Give thanks for the rich and enduring traditions, celebrations and practices of our African American siblings and the global African community.

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"Untitled"

I hope you are warm and safe this day  
As life opens up in many-a-way  
With good things to ponder and good things to say  
With joy in your heart, come what may...



Diane S

*Used with permission.*

## Election Day Bake Sale

Our bake sale was a huge success! We raised over \$300 and a portion of the proceeds will be donated to Hearts and Hands—Faith in Action. Thank you to everyone who brought in goodies and to those who helped price and plate on Monday night. Thank you also to the ladies who were our greeters/sellers on Tuesday morning.

Special thanks to Nancy who opened the church for the polling staff at a very early hour and then "manned" the bake sale table! You're all so wonderful!



Earlene

## Operation Christmas Child

A big thank you to everyone who was involved in this year's outreach program. Our congregation sent **44** Operation Christmas Child boxes on their way—this is a new record!! I will be able to track where they are sent so we will know where Jesus' love is going. Stay tuned for updates. Thanks again! PS: Check the January *Tidings* for ways that you can help make next year's program just as successful.

Merry Christmas,  
Debbie and Kelly

## Hearts and Hands: Faith in Action

Hearts and Hands (HNN) continues to serve 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 Visiting at Home, Sharing a Meal

For more program details and information (and how to become a volunteer), please visit the HNN website at [www.hnncares.org/services](http://www.hnncares.org/services) or call 716-406-8311.

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

## Ways to Give to TOL

Online: [Tithely](https://tithely.com) is available. For instructions, please visit the church website at [www.trinityoldlutheran.com](http://www.trinityoldlutheran.com) or download the Tithely 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.



## Books and Puzzles for Sale

Looking for a Christmas gift for a relative or friend who enjoys reading or working on puzzles? Stop by the TOL book sale located in the Resource Library—you might just find what you are looking for. There are items available for all ages and new items are continually being added.



Peace  
On  
Earth

## Adult Ed. Classes with Charlie Schmidtke

### Study Notes: Islam

#### Part 3 - Islamic Beliefs I

Here's a quick summary of what Mohammad believed.

- He restored belief in one God who was all powerful, majestic and deserving of worship. He also restored faith in Abraham.
- Islam means submission or surrender to Allah. Each Muslim has a personal relationship with Allah as His servant or slave. We commune with Allah through praise and prayer.
- God will come on the last judgment at the end of the world. We should prepare ourselves to go to heaven.
- God demands moral behavior, such as chastity, obedience, generosity to poor, orphaned, weak and outcast.
- Always have awe and gratitude to God.
- Unity and uniformity in religion is essential because it must reflect God's unity and greatness.
- Quran condemns those who call upon God only in their times of need and then forgets God afterward.
- Quran condemns hypocrisy, especially those who act so they can receive benefits from their beliefs.
- Paradise is promised to those who pray humbly; have no sexual relations except with one's spouse; use their wealth honestly; and follow their duty.
- Humans are born good; there is no original sin.
- There should be no graven images. This follows from Abraham who destroyed his father's workshop images. When the west depicts Allah or Mohammad in a picture, it is insulting to all Muslims.
- Islam means surrender to Allah. There is to be no compulsion; no forced converts. Mohammad is Allah's messenger.

Islam began in Arabia and has been influenced by Arabian culture. Arabia was historically polytheistic and most of the gods were considered to be protectors. It was a tribally based culture which emphasized hospitality, humanism, honor, manliness and equitable distribution of goods. There were hundreds of different tribes throughout the area and there was no central form of governing. Participating in raids on other tribes displayed courage, and was usually vengeful showing a devotion to one's Genealogy. There were few cities and was comprised of independent nomadic tribes with fragile alliances. People were conservative and not accepting of change. They raised camels, sheep and were hunters. Caravans usually had body guards to fight off raids. Allah was the chief god among many; he had three daughters who were female gods. He was the god of trading in Mecca and going to the Kaaba in Mecca's town square on a pilgrimage was a way to honor him. To honor its maker, Adam, tribes called a truce each year so everyone could make a pilgrimage to Mecca and circle the Kaaba counterclockwise, usually seven times. Arabia's language was Semitic, like the Aramaic of Palestine/Israel during Jesus' life. The establishment of Arab culture came from Ishmael's sons who blended their beliefs with the Canaanite ways of their wives. In essence they shared the same basic cultural traits with Jewish/Canaanite tribes. The Canaanite highest god was named EL: both Yahweh and Allah are derivatives of this name. Nabateans (an ethnic group that

overlapped Arab and Jewish peoples) lived in Southern Palestine, Southern Jordan and Northern Saudi Arabia. John the Baptist may have been a Nabatean and one of the reasons Herod really beheaded him was because Herod feared an Arab based revolt headed by John and the Essenes.

Here are some basic cultural traits for Arabs.

- Paternal ancestry determines family membership.
- Women remain members of the father's family; only recently have some women begun adopting their husband's name.
- The oldest male settles all domestic disputes.
- Honoring one's family is very important – this carries kinship obligations throughout life.
- Female chastity and children's obedience are expected.
- Weddings are pivotal events. From the time of Abraham marrying cousins strengthens families and when a husband dies, the brother-in-law steps in to marry the widow.
- Sustain honor, courage and manliness.
- Their private space is 6"—for Americans the space is 18".
- People are expected to talk nose to nose, so touching and feeling the breath from another's face is important. Failing to breathe in another's face signals fear or shame.
- Speech is usually high volume which reflects one's sincerity.
- Silence, not necessarily distance or walls, is used to establish privacy.
- Space needs to be unobstructed, with high ceilings. (A primary characteristic of mosques.)
- The language is the primary identifying trait since Arabs are light, dark, and black. They include ethnic minorities like Nubians, Kurds and Berbers.
- They began as Fellahin (farmers/shepherds) and Bedouin (nomads).
- Originally a person was identified with his/her tribe; now it is with religion, nation or city.

Today: Twenty percent of Muslims in the world are Arab and ten percent of Arabs are Christian. Eighty percent of the world's Muslim population is non-Arab with Indonesia being the most populated Muslim country in the world. In Mohammad's day northern Arabia was controlled by Christian Byzantines whose authority was in Constantinople. The East was controlled by Persia (today, Iran) and the rest was Arab clan culture. Each tribe had its own patron god and Mecca was seen as the center of a polytheistic world.

*Used with permission.*

#### "Christian Cancer Support"

If you are on a cancer journey and are in need of support, please contact Linda. She is on a journey as well and she can offer you support, hope and healing.

If you would like to reach out to her, she can be contacted through Augustana LC's office (716) 832-5720 or email at [augustchurch@yahoo.com](mailto:augustchurch@yahoo.com).

