



## Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church

Monthly Newsletter - April - May 2026

The Rev. Frederick W. Kopp, Pastor

The Rev. Phillip Vender, Pastor Emeritus

*Sharing the love of Jesus in our changing world.*

## Pastor's Ponderings

March Madness has come to Buffalo again, and I am attending the games! There will be upsets and Cinderella teams winning as well as some of the favorites playing great basketball!

March Madness is also being played on the weekend that we welcome in the first day of Spring and the weather has been cold/warm/rain/snow and barely sunny.

March Madness happens during Lent too.

All of these things are swirling in my mind as I try to focus on this article.

What is there to gather from these seemingly random occurrences.

Time marches on, and there are many things we cannot control, however there is much we can rely on. James writes, "Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." 1:17

Jesus has brought into the world a life choice from the Father of Lights.

That life choice is the act of giving generously. So in the midst of confusion, chaos, upsets, and time marching on there is one thing that is to be kept in the forefront, GIVING GENEROUSLY. Looking outside ourselves and

seeing needs and fulfilling them. Helping to make this world God created better and more livable for all people and creatures.

Disciplines of Lent are meant to help us focus on what is needed. And the prophet Micah puts it plainly to God's people..." He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."

Maybe March isn't so confusing when Jesus shows us the way.

Yours in Christ

Pastor Fred.

## Odds *"N"* Ends **from the Council President**

### **Council ...**

- Augustana, Trinity Old Lutheran, and Good Shepherd continue to meet and share. On Saturday, May 2, everyone is invited to attend an all day three-church retreat. This will be followed by worshipping together on May 3. Both the retreat and worship service will be at Good Shepherd.
- A new water heater was installed. Heating issues (some places too cold, others too hot, due to a hard winter...) continue to be worked on.
- Easter Sunday would be a lovely day to invite family and friends to join us at worship. There will also be an Easter breakfast and Egg Hunt!
- There is an expected \$19,000 deficit, due to increased energy bills

(especially natural gas, a difficult winter...), **How can you help?:** please use the **monthly yellow envelopes** in your offering envelope box. Donations to cover utilities are running below budget. Thank you!

### ***Thank you:***

- ◆ Thank you for adorning the chancel with flowers!
- ◆ Thank you for your coffee hour donations for those in need.
- ◆ Many thanks to all who baked, cooked, set up, advertised, purchased chili and baked goods... Proceeds went to help Josh Kennedy's fund, Patrick's lawyer fees..., and to the needs of our congregation. :
- ◆ Many thanks to all who are supporting Patrick in so many ways. Patrick is so very thankful.
- ◆ Thank you to all who helped us host the March 18<sup>th</sup> Lent soup supper and service. It was a lovely evening.
- ◆ Thank you to everyone who joins us through Zoom! It is so good to worship together.
- ◆ Thank you for all the little things, big things, and all the in-betweens you do for our congregation, our neighbors, and the world!

### ***Congratulations***

- Devie Ellis will celebrate the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her ordination on June 7<sup>th</sup>.
- Dave Ellis will celebrate the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination on June 14<sup>th</sup>
- This will be 34 years for Pastor Fred (and 15 years for me)

# Refugee Immigrant Driver Education



*Drive to Thrive*

***“Serve one another humbly in faith.” Galatians 5:13***

We receive requests for driving and permit lessons almost every week. And sometimes, we get a rush of requests. Now is one of those times. There have probably been 3 new requests this week alone. Their requests are to help their families, help further their education, help them to find and have work... --- all to help them become better neighbors, parents, students, ...

In the last few weeks, we have received \$8,000 of our \$10,000 grant money. Just this week, three more refugees and immigrants will begin their nine (+ the road test) free lessons through Stevens Driving School. (a cost of \$795.00 each)

Immigration is on the forefront of many thoughts, I think, especially in recent years. Our Sunday prayers include refugees and immigrants in “THE PRAYERS” regularly. The prayers printed below are from recent church prayers. (January, March 2026 *Sundays and Seasons*)

Dear Friends, let us pray:

“As God’s beloved children united in Christ, let us pray for the church, the whole human community, and the well-being of the earth, our home.

God our friend, we praise you for the diversity of people among us. Awaken us to share and receive the gifts we each possess, and stir up a spirit of understanding, celebration, and welcome for all.

Merciful God, ***receive our prayer.***

Holy Judge, your power is love, and you judge the nations by the measure of Christ. Free any who are unjustly accused or wrongly condemned, especially, we pray for Patrick. We pray for those in authority.

Merciful God, ***receive our prayer.***

Healing God, you lift up those who are bowed down by trouble, oppression, or illness. Bring an end to social injustice and inequities of every kind, so that all people may have abundant life.

Merciful God, ***receive our prayer.***

When quarrels ensue, soften our hearts. Quell hostilities between nations and peoples, and reconcile all humans across the lines of race, class, nationality, moral conviction, religion, and all else that divides or oppresses.

Merciful God, ***receive our prayer.***

God our healer, we call to you in our need. Uplift all who are made to feel unimportant, and transform the hearts of all infected by bigotry and prejudice. Care for all in special need this day .

Merciful God, ***receive our prayer.***”

God of all, we rejoice in the gifts of the immigrant, the refuge, the asylum seeker..., our RIDE neighbors, and their loved ones. Help us to welcome and invite and walk alongside them each day with joy and thanksgiving. Help us to be gifts to all our neighbors, both near and far. Amen.



**Augustana Sermon Discussion/input:** Join Pastor Fred in a bag lunch discussion of the texts for the next month of sermons. The next discussion group will be **Wednesday, March 25**, in the Fireside Lounge at TOL at noon for two hours. Please inform Pastor Fred if you are interested, so enough materials can be prepared.

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### **FOOD PANTRY**

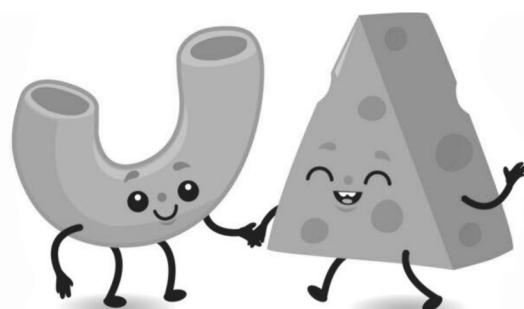
Augustana is now collecting non-perishable food items for Good Shepherd's food pantry. Please bag your donations. Bags are available by the food collection tote.

Please consider buying a few items when doing your regular food shopping.

**For April**

**Peanut Butter ♦ Jelly  
Macaroni & Cheese**

**THANK YOU for your continued support.**





For anyone affected by a cancer diagnosis, Linda Sokoly can give support, through phone calls, e-mail, texts or 1:1 In person conversations and prayers.

If you or someone you know is in need of support, or if you have questions please contact Linda through the church office at (716) 832-5720 or ... [augustchurch@yahoo.com](mailto:augustchurch@yahoo.com)



### **AUGUSTANA FUNDRAISER**

Any donations to our "lawyer fee appeal" can be placed in the offering.

Please label it: "fundraiser" or "lawyer fee appeal"... Envelopes are on the table in

Please make checks payable to Augustana Lutheran Church. Thank you.



### **WNY Church Unleashed**

If you are unable to join us for in-person or ZOOM worship, you can watch Lutheran worship on Cable TV Chanel 5 MeTV, Sundays at 10:00 am. "Church Unleashed" is run by Lutheran Pastors, Beigner, Griffiths and Smith. For previous weeks, go to YouTube and search for "WNY Church Unleashed."

**Congregational Meeting, Sunday, April 26, following worship:** to vote on whether to join in serious planning about how we three churches can merge to insure a prosperous future. Second, if it becomes necessary, we are willing to sell our church building.

# Augustana Prayer Chain



If you have a prayer that you would like to be shared on the Prayer Chain, contact Devie Ellis:  
RevDevie@aol.com / (716) 909-9583



## SEASONAL CLOTHING COLLECTION

We are collecting **Seasonal** clothes for Good Shepard Lutheran Church during the months of April and May.

Please make sure the clothes are clean and have no stains or are new. You can donate any type of clothing but larger size are greatly needed.

Any questions, talk to Paulette Hotchkiss. Thank you

### Seasonal Clothing Is Needed!



The GSLC Clothing Closet (open Food Pantry days) \* is in need of seasonal items: think warm to cool weather and layering!

**Child ❖ Teen ❖ Adult / All Sizes**

Donations can be brought to church on Sundays, or during Office Hours.

\* Food Pantry Days: 3rd & 4th Saturday each Month



# Around the Area

## **Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, ELCA**

2669 Sheridan Drive, Tonawanda NY 14150

**Rev. Adam Arends, Transitional Pastor**

Email: [pastor.gslc.tona@gmail.com](mailto:pastor.gslc.tona@gmail.com)

**Church Office**

Email: [office.gslc.tona@gmail.com](mailto:office.gslc.tona@gmail.com)

Phone: (716) 832-5390

**WWW.GSLCTONA.ORG**



**Join Us  
Wednesday  
April 15th  
6:30 PM  
@ The Dome**

Questions? See Kevin Cronyn (832-6650)

**Your Bottles & Cans Support the  
Food Pantry and the General Fund!**



Take your donations directly to the  
return center at 2790 Sheridan  
Drive or bring them to church and  
we'll return them for you!

***Save the Dates:***



**Three Church  
Cooperation**

**May 2nd**

**Three Church Retreat**

an all-day event

**August 30th**

**Three Church**

**Outdoor Worship & Picnic**



## **Trinity Old Lutheran Church**

3445 Sheridan Drive

Amherst, New York 14226

Phone: 716-836-4868 or 716-836-4990

Email: [trinityoldlutheranchurch@gmail.com](mailto:trinityoldlutheranchurch@gmail.com)

### **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.

### **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 and Diane Schmidtke and Jean Campbell**



## Chicken Chowder in May? You heard that right!

TOL's annual chicken chowder sale is now bi-annual! This Spring's sale will take place on **Saturday, May 16**, with chowder available at Noon for \$8 per quart.

A portion of the proceeds will be used to purchase two new 80-quart stainless steel chowder kettles and heating elements. Approximately \$750 is needed to purchase the kettles and two outdoor burners. Having our own equipment at TOL will allow us to hold many more chowder sales in the future. The remaining proceeds will support TOL and its ministries.

If you would like to donate soup ingredients—such as canned vegetables or fresh produce—please sign up on the board in the narthex. Thank you to everyone who has already signed up!



**Volunteers are also needed** to help with chowder preparation and the day of the sale. A sign-up sheet is available on the main bulletin board. The primary chowder prep day will be **Friday, May 15 at 9:00 AM**.

For more information, please contact Matt Grabau.



### Adult Ed. Classes with Charlie Schmidtke

You're 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.

|          |                                                     |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| April 13 | Galatia and Thessalonica - Paul                     |
| April 27 | Gospel of Judas                                     |
| May 11   | Spain and France - James (Major) and Mary Magdalene |



# An Easter Message

We remember the whispers of Advent as we anticipated the birth of Jesus. Now, as we journey through Holy Week, we anticipate the joyful noise of alleluias on Easter Sunday. But before we reach the Easter celebration, we make our way through Lent, through an in-between time where we don't know what tomorrow will bring. We often describe ourselves as an Easter church, but in this holy, solemn time that begins with Ash Wednesday and moves on to Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, we are also a Lenten church. Living in uncertainty, waiting and hoping for renewal. Longing for the moments when God's presence feels closer and more sure.

During Lent, we learn what it means to live on unsettled ground.

In Matthew's retelling of the resurrection, he describes a "violent earthquake" as the angel came down from heaven and rolled the stone away from the entrance to the tomb where Jesus lay.

I imagine the earthquake, the rumble deep below the earth, as the ground shifted far under the surface. Perhaps those who were nearby felt the tremble. Maybe the women who were on their way to the tomb with prepared spices felt the earth shift. They were unsettled, but they knew something powerful was happening.

We can understand that human experience of feeling out of control, of not being able to make sense of what's happening around us. Many of us can relate to this as we witness the current unrest in our world and in our communities. Like the women at the tomb, we feel isolated, disconnected. We're unsettled, unsure, living the Lenten reality of waiting and hoping.

And then, in the midst of that shaking, comes the promise.

The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen."

God's promise offers reassurance and hope. The resurrection does not deny disruption — it meets us within disorder and disturbance. The stone is rolled away. Death does not have the final word.

Yes, we are Easter people. Even when the ground below us is shaking, we will not grow weary. We know that Jesus is our foundation. Christ is risen, and that truth strengthens us. It gives us courage to live, to hope and to proclaim joy.

*Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

The Rev. Yehiel Curry, Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

HE IS RISEN

Forgiven

For God so Loved the World

LAMB <sup>of</sup> God

love

He is Risen Indeed

CHRIST THE LORD IS RISEN TODAY

HALLELUJAH

Eternal Life

Redeemer

my savior