



**Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**Monthly Newsletter - December 2025 - January 2026**  
The Rev. Frederick W. Kopp, Pastor  
The Rev. Phillip Vender, Pastor Emeritus  
*Sharing the love of Jesus in our changing world.*

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## *Pastor's Ponderings*

***“for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. Jesus sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.”***  
***Mark 9:34-35***

When I was in fifth grade, I rode my bike a mile to school through our village. I was proud to be a fifth grader. In our elementary school fifth grade was the highest grade. I was so proud to be a fifth grader that one day, I remember this vividly, I was riding my bike past younger children, in lower grades on my way home from school. I was riding my bike without my hands on the handle bars. They were probably either straight up in the air or laid smugly across my stomach. Passing all the younger children, from the middle of the road, I yelled, “I’m a big fifth grader!”( or something of the sort) I was showing off and claiming my greatness. As I was proclaiming my superiority I hit a bump in the road and fell off my bike scraping my skin, tearing my clothes, causing bruising on my body, but mostly I experienced embarrassment. (how the mighty have fallen) lol

I thought about this incident in my past when I read the above quote

from Mark. It reminded me of Jesus' other quote in Matthew that the 'last shall be first and the first shall be last' I displayed hubris, and claimed to be number one, whereas the truth with Jesus is that those who are first or number one are not the greatest but are the oppressed, the widow, the child, the stranger, and the poor. The Last are first. The Least of these are priority.

"Then he took a little child and put it among them, and taking it in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes on such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me." Mark 9:36-37

So what is the big fifth grader's calling? What is the well off, healthy, cisgendered male, employed, and nonimmigrant's calling?

To be the servant. To recognize our privilege and support others in becoming safe, whole, employed, protected, fed, housed and strengthened in our society.

Falling on the ground helped me realize that I am called to help lift people up off the ground to a better place.

Maybe this holiday season we can be a lifter of our fellow siblings.

in Christ.

Pastor Fred



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

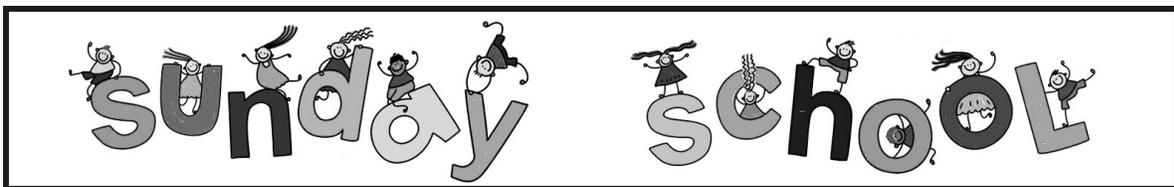
## Council:

- Augustana, Trinity Old Lutheran, and Good Shepherd worshiped, ate and chatted together (coffee hour) together in October (Reformation Sunday) and November (Veteran's Day). Our next shared worship and coffee hour will be **Sunday, December 7** (Christmas pageant) at **10:00 am** at Good Shepherd.
- With the help of Devie Ellis, Andrew Gruszka, a sound system consultant, Pastor, and Paulette Hotchkiss we have been improving the sound system in the sanctuary and on Zoom. One of the final steps will be the installation of a camera (soon), and several other tweaks...Thank you for your input and help.
- Our November council meeting was held on Thursday, November 20. New business was recommending the approval of the 2026 budget at our Annual Budget Meeting. It follows worship on Sunday, December 14. Your presence is important.
- Stewardship letters were sent out the week of November 9 th. Thank you for your generous giving.
- The overhang roof over the front entrance has been fixed to allow for proper drainage of water.
- The Augustana, Trinity Old Lutheran, and Good Shepherd committee recommended each church have inspections and appraisals for future conversations. These have been completed.
- We look forward to electrical work to begin in the spring.

## Thank you:

- Thank you for coffee hour! It is filled with love and goodness and goodies!
- Thank you for everyone who helped make the chicken chowder sale so successful! Special thanks to Nora's idea and leadership, Judy's "decorations," Donna's work on publicity, the kitchen crew, the potato cookers and dicers, Gary's setting up and taking down..., Devie's gift of Thrivent money, all of you who purchased chowder, and so many others!!!
- Thank you for adorning the chancel with flowers!
- Thank you for your coffee hour donations for those in need.
- 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!

Wishing all of you a blessed Advent and Christmas season. Thank you for the gift of you!



Sunday School is held after Service on the 1st and last Sunday of each month. Please spread the news about Sunday School to your friends and neighbors. We'd love to have them "come and see."

Again, thank you so much for your encouragement and support.  
Dave Ellis, Linda Sokoley, and Johanna Andritz

# Refugee Immigrant Driver Education



*Drive to Thrive*

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

We are so thankful to announce that Augustana has, again, received a \$10,000 grant from Lutheran Charities, in conjunction with The Lutheran Foundation, for 2026.

The majority of this year’s grant money has been used for our learner permit classes, learner permits, and driving lessons. Learner permits cost about \$75 and ten driving lessons for one student, now, cost \$795.00. A small amount of money has been left for the possibility of a few applicants being ready for lessons this month or next.

As always, those in our program are so very thankful for this gift of greater independence and broader community.

Thank you for helping so many immigrants and refugees receive their learner permits and learn to drive so that they can: go to school, go to work, go to the grocery store, pick up their children, take their children to appointments and activities and so much more!

Drive safely!



## **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, **December 17**, in the Fireside Lounge at TOL at noon for two hours. Please inform Pastor Fred if you are interested, so he can prepare enough materials.

### **FOOD PANTRY**

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

## **Items of the Month**



Please consider buying **these items** when doing your regular food shopping.

**For December**

**Flour ❖ Sugar**

**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)

# Bible Study

# JONAH

Pastor Fred will lead discussions  
on the book of Jonah  
at Augustana Lutheran Church

**Fridays Nov. 21, Dec. 5, 12, 19**

**10:00 - 11:30 am**

Participate in any weeks that fit your schedule.

3143 Eggert Rd., Town of Tonawanda  
(near Colvin)  
Wheelchair accessible.

Contact the church for more info:  
(716) 832-5720 [augustchurch@yahoo.com](mailto:augustchurch@yahoo.com)

## Augustana Book Club

Book to be discussed:

### Remarkably Bright Creatures

by Shelby Van Pelt

Thursday, January 15

@ 6:30 pm

in the Fellowship Room  
on the main floor

From the author's website:

"Charming, compulsively readable, and full of wit, Shelby Van Pelt's debut novel is a beautiful exploration of friendship, reckoning, and hope—a reminder that sometimes taking a hard look at the past can help uncover a future that once felt impossible."

**Augustana Lutheran Church**  
3143 Eggert Rd. ,  
Town of Tonawanda

Questions? Please see Devie Ellis or  
contact her at [RevDevie@aol.com](mailto:RevDevie@aol.com)

**\* Please note that there is a date  
change.**

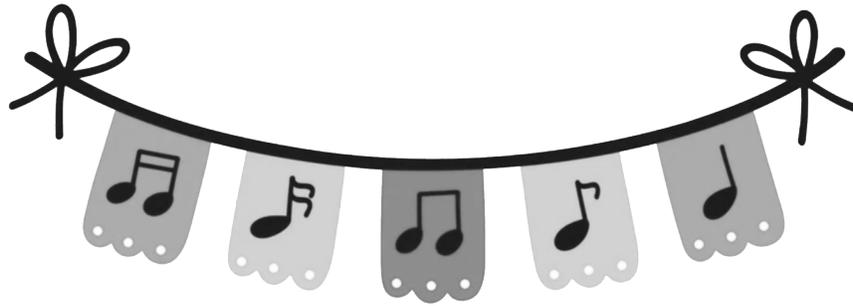
## AUGUSTANA FUNDRAISER

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.





## The Lutheran Chorale of the Niagara Frontier

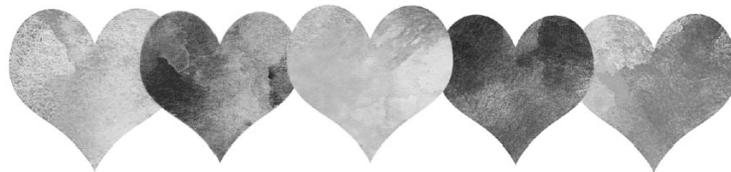


Christmas Concert is Sunday, December 21,  
at 3 pm at First Trinity Lutheran Church  
1570 Niagara Falls Blvd., Tonawanda, NY.

## 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."

## 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



## Hats, Scarves, Gloves/Mittens

We are collecting these items during the month of December.

Please put them in the bin in the narthex.

If you have any questions you can talk to Judy Thomas.

## WINTER CLOTHING COLLECTION

We are collecting **WINTER ONLY** clothes for Good Shepard Lutheran Church during the month of December and January.

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

Any questions, talk to Paulette Hotchkiss. Thank you

# Around the Area



## **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)

**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**

## **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**



## **On-going Collections!**

Look for the marked containers in the donations area in the main hallway.  
Thank you!

**Can Tabs** for Buffalo's Ronald McDonald House.

**Recycle Cans and Bottles...** Your donations can be placed in the marked container or you may also redeem them at Bottle and Can Redemption Center (2790 Sheridan Drive in Tonawanda). TOL has an account there.

### **Friends of Night People**

- Collection of new men's socks, and small-size hygiene products (soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste) or create care packages.
- Men's seasonal clothing collection. Your donations of blankets, sleeping bags, hoodies, jackets, hats and gloves are most appreciated as well!

### **Miles of Pennies**

**Dash's Register Tapes** for Niagara Health System





**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.**

**December 8**

Infancy Gospels (Thomas and Syriac)

**January 19, 2026**

Gospel of James (Infancy Stories and Mary's Perpetual Virginity)

February 2

Rome - Peter and Paul

February 16

Corinth - Letters

MERRY CHRISTMAS  MERRY CHRISTMAS 

**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
2669 Sheridan Drive  
Tonawanda, NY 14150  
Phone: (716) 832-5390**

**Email:  
office.gslc.tona@gmail.com**





## December Chowder & Chili

Preparation: Thursday & Friday, the 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>

Sale: Saturday, the 20<sup>th</sup>

Sign-Up in the Narthex If You're Available to Help!

or call/email Barb VanDusen at  
716-553-2423 / barbv17@yahoo.com

Order Presale Online Today @ [www.GSLCTONA.ORG](http://www.GSLCTONA.ORG)

or pre-order and pay day of pickup by emailing:  
[goodshepherdchowder@gmail.com](mailto:goodshepherdchowder@gmail.com)



**Join Us  
Wednesday  
December 17th**

**6:30 PM  
@ The Dome**

Questions? See Kevin Cronyn (832-6650)

## 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.

Questions? See Wally Swanson!





GRADES 6-12

# UGLY SWEATER PARTY

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19TH  
5:30PM-8:30PM

HOLY TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH  
1080 MAIN STREET BUFFALO, NY 14209

Break out your ugliest sweater and  
celebrate the start of winter break with  
friends and festive activities!

Please RSVP:  
[bit.ly/LYUglySweater](https://bit.ly/LYUglySweater)



# Christmas Blessings



May this Christmas season wrap your heart in peace and your soul in joy. May the gentle light of Christ's love guide your every step, bringing hope where there's been worry, and warmth where there's been waiting. May laughter echo through your home, and may even the quiet moments feel full—full of grace, full of gratitude, full of God's promises. May you find beauty in the simple, blessings in the ordinary, and miracles tucked in the smallest corners of your day. As the star once led wise men, may you be led into a new year with renewed faith, deeper love, and a heart ready for all God has prepared for you. Merry Christmas, and may His peace be with you now and always.

**In Jesus Christ's name, Amen.**