



# TRINITY TIDINGS

The Mission of Trinity Old Lutheran Church is  
Proclamation, Fellowship and Service  
in the name of Jesus.

Volume 50

August 2010

Number 8

Trinity Old Lutheran Church is a member of the Niagara Frontier Conference of the Upstate New York Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## Vacation Bible School at TOL "Baobab Blast" — August 9-13 9:00 AM to Noon — Pre-K to 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

This year's theme is centered on the gigantic Baobab tree, which is found in Africa. The tree is a hub of activity, energy, and life. The children will learn about trusting, loving, following, caring, and sharing through Bible stories and fun.



Visit our website for more information—including the registration form:

[www.trinityoldlutheran.org](http://www.trinityoldlutheran.org)  
The cost is \$5 per family.

During August, the Stewardship Committee will continue collecting monetary donations for this year's program.

Please mark your envelope "VBS" and place it in the collection plate. Your donations are greatly appreciated!

### Trinity Old Lutheran Church

Sunday, August 8

One Service Only at 10:00 AM

THE HOLY SPIRIT INVITATIONAL

A Contemporary Healing Service

Come and join the leadership of Trinity Old Lutheran Church as we seek healing and to ask for strength to boldly go forward in proclamation, fellowship and service to Jesus the Christ.

### Coming in the Fall!

Charlie Schmidtke will resume his Sunday morning Adult Forum starting on Sunday, September 19 (9:30 AM). He will also resume the Ethical Decision-making group starting on Monday, September 13 (7:00 PM).

Pastor Miss' noontime Lunch Bunch Bible Study returns on Thursdays (topic: Paul's Letter to the Galatians). He will also lead "Introduction to the Bible" that will continue on the first Monday in October (Oct. 4) at 7:15 PM.

Watch for more details in the September issue.



Thank you to all who helped prepare the church backyard for the Summer Outdoor Worship Service on Sunday, July 4. It was a very sunny and pleasant morning. Thanks be to God!

**"7 Church Ministries" needs your help** collecting and assembling Hospice kits for a Lutheran Hospital in Tanzania through Global Health Ministries and at the request of Dr. Kristopher Hartwig of Westfield, NY. (Dr. Hartwig and his wife are medical missionaries sponsored by a number of ELCA congregations in our Synod.) Assembling will take place at Grace Lutheran Church (375 Payne Avenue in North Tonawanda) on Sunday, September 19 at 12:15 PM. Lunch is included. TOL members are invited to collect items **and** help assemble the kits. Items needed are shown below and can be placed in the marked box in the Narthex.

New or gently used items:

- 1 regular size bath towel
- 1 wash cloth

New items:

- 1 bath-size bar of hand soap (wrapped) - any kind
- 1 toothbrush
- 1 tube toothpaste, medium or large (or two small sample sizes) - any brand
- 1 "pick" comb
- 1 nail clipper
- 6 band-aids
- 1 jar or tube of petroleum jelly
- 1 pair heavy-duty household gloves (kitchen type) size: medium

1 small devotional booklet such as *Portals of Prayer* or *Christ in our Home* (does not have to be current issue)

Click on link below for more information:

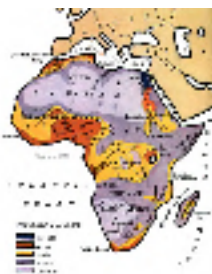
<http://www.ghm.org/resources/hands-on/hospicekit.html>

## August 2010

<b>SUNDAYS:</b>	<u>Worship and Holy Communion</u> 8:30 AM and 10:00 AM (except Aug. 8, one service at 10:00 AM)
Aug. 8 (Sun.)	Contemporary Healing Service at 10:00 AM (one service only)
Aug. 9 - Aug. 13 (Mon. - Fri.)	Vacation Bible School 9:00 AM - Noon
Aug. 15 (Sun.)	<b>Trinity Tidings Deadline</b>
<u>Sundays:</u>	Gambler's Anon., 7:00 - 9:00 PM
<u>Mondays:</u>	Overeaters Anonymous, 9:30 AM
<u>Tuesdays:</u>	Crazy Quilters, 10:00 AM Gambler's Anonymous, Noon Co-Dependents, 7:30 PM

## ELC-Zambia Prayer Concerns

- ✝ Pray for good rains for farming, which many church members depend on to avoid seasonal hunger.
- ✝ Pray for love and unity within and between ELC-Zambia congregations and leaders.
- ✝ Pray for wisdom for the Zambian church leadership in decision-making.
- ✝ Thank God for the courage the church has shown in moving towards self-reliance.
- ✝ Pray for health and safety for the Strasser Family—Arden, Susan, Chloe, and Alea.



## Looking back to 1960...with Evelyn Menge

Pastor Pretzlaff purchased a home and the men of the church helped to spiff it up...The Cradle Roll was reorganized...A replica of our proposed new building was used by the Sunday School to collect their offerings for the new church...Communion was held for the first time in our new locale on August 7 (it was only held the first Sunday of the month then). It was decided not to have a separate confessional service, but to combine it with our worship service...We were legally one united congregation, the court having approved our consolidation papers. The TOL name was used because of its historical significance.

The Conference men each year sponsored a Joint Mission Festival in Wheatfield...1,500 people attended the August 14 affair, with an offering of \$1,900 received. This was divided between World Missions and the Buffalo Mission Extension Society...Four new members were welcomed...Baseball team had won 4 and lost 2 games.

## WORSHIP WITH US EVERY SUNDAY!

The Reverend Dieter Miss  
Worship, with Holy Communion  
8:30 AM and 10:00 AM  
(August 8, one service only at 10:00 AM)

“Parent’s Room” is available for families with children during both Worship Services.



Please continue to bring your paper recyclables to our bin in the rear church parking lot, near the fence. Thank you!

## WESTERN NEW YORK SHIPS LWR SUPPLIES

As the humanitarian needs increase worldwide, the requests for quilts, kits, layettes, and soap have also been on the rise. On May 5, a delivery was made to the Lutheran World Relief (LWR) warehouse in New Windsor, MD of 1,197 quilts, 323 health kits, 67 school kits, 16 sewing kits, 14 layettes and approximately 200 pounds of soap. (Of this, Trinity Old



Lutheran Church gave 26 quilts and 21 health kits.) This was the result of much hard work and time given by some members of 21 congregations in the Western New York area. Many thanks to all those involved who made this possible.

The Niagara Falls Chapter 30720 and Erie County Chapter 30716 of Thrivent paid for all the expenses involved in the delivery. We certainly appreciate their generosity.

In the past 20 years 25,871 quilts, many kits and much soap has been delivered from churches in the Niagara Frontier and Rochester areas to LWR. (TOL gave 699 quilts, 59 health kits, and 63 pounds of soap during that time.) This has surely been a blessing to families in need throughout the world and has provided a way for us to share our blessings with others who are less fortunate than we are.

*Gladys Haseley*  
Sanborn, NY

Come September, we will again be sewing LWR quilts. We invite all our ladies to join us Thursday mornings (beginning September 9) from 9:00 AM to Noon. Don't be afraid if you don't "know how to sew." Actually, there's more pinning and tying involved than sewing—and we do have fun!!

*Evelyn Menge*



## If you can't join us Thursday mornings...

...could you please check your closets and storage areas for any large-size pieces of material that could be used for Lutheran World Relief (LWR) quilts? The quilters are in need of old bed sheets, tablecloths, and curtains. These items are usable even if they are worn or torn. Please leave your donations in the Sewing Room next to the Church Office. Thank you!

## TRINITY TIDINGS

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## Pastor's Page

### The Mustard Seed - or: Gardening in God's Kingdom

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

The preparations for our Vacation Bible School have begun, the first registrations have been received, on paper and through our website and I hope that you have noticed these colorful additions to our presence on the worldwide web. Once more we will witness during VBS, how the seeds of the faith are planted in the hearts of many children, through all who will help in any way. We pray that this seed will grow into a plant that one day will bring forth its fruits. We will sit in the shades of the Baobab trees, which are growing all over the African continent and in Madagascar and we will listen to the stories of old.

Jesus asked, "To what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use to present it? It is like a mustard seed that when sown in the ground, even though it is the smallest of all the seeds in the ground – when it is sown, it grows up, becomes the greatest of all garden plants, and grows large branches so that the wild birds can nest in its shade."

**Mark 4:30-32**

All that reminded me of a Vacation Bible School I attended many years ago, listening to the biblical stories, especially those Jesus told. I remember that we were asked to open our Bibles at Matthew 13 and the facilitator strew tiny black grains onto the open Bibles, so that we could look at the mustard seeds later on, as they were stuck in the binding of the pages. I had never seen these tiny black mustard seeds before, I only knew the greenish-yellowish mustard to put on the bratwurst.

During my theological education I had to write a thesis on one of Jesus' parables – we had several parables to choose from and I decided to write on the "mustard seed" because of its length – a short text would require less work, I thought. However, the first thing I had to recognize was the fact that we have three different versions of the parable in our New Testament – and another parallel in the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas. That was confusing... Which of the four versions was the one taught by Jesus – and what did he want to say?

Mark emphasizes the contrast of the tiny beginning and the immense result. As is customary in all his parables, Jesus used facts and events taken from everyday life in order to illustrate aspects of God's kingdom. In our parable of the Mustard Seed Jesus used the smallest objects people of his time in Palestine knew: black mustard seeds with their 0.04 inches in diameter. Such a tiny grain, says Jesus, is like the kingdom of God. Once sown into the ground, the plant will reach up to 6 feet in just 3 months under good weather conditions. And where mustard once grew, mustard will always grow again through the many seeds that naturally fall to the ground. Jesus knew that this plant and its seeds were attractive to birds – and so the prophet Ezekiel is quoted to underline that. But while Ezekiel thinks of a large Cedar tree with birds nesting in its shades, Jesus speaks "only" of a mustard plant. But those who heard him quoting Ezekiel knew that the Rabbis saw in this prophecy the foretold Messiah. Indirectly Jesus related through his parable the kingdom of God and the coming of the Messiah. The people in Palestine were longing for this savior and for the kingdom of God beginning with him. And Jesus tells them that the beginnings will be modest, even invisible, but in the end God's kingdom will have developed into breathtaking glory. He makes clear that in just a short time the seeds he sows will grow into the marvelous kingdom of God. The sowing is sufficient, everything else will follow naturally – and it will be lasting, like mustard once grown in one place always returns.

For the Evangelist Matthew the contrast of small and big is not the main focus any more. Matthew emphasizes the growth. The plant certainly begins as a tiny grain, but in the end it develops to a big tree – and the birds of the sky will nest in its branches. If we compare Mark's and Matthew's versions, we can see the differences. First of all, Jesus does not need to think about the images to use in order to describe the kingdom of God – in Matthew's Gospel he knows right away how to describe it. Matthew's version introduces the man who sows – and the mustard plant of Mark becomes a "mustard tree" – a different plant which in Palestine only grows in the Dead Sea area and which has nothing in common with the real mustard. The birds nesting in the branches do not allude to the book of Ezekiel any more but to the book of Daniel (Ch. 4), where the birds are a metaphor for the pagan nations. Daniel 4:9+18 may be the reason for the zoological and botanical incorrectness that birds nest in the branches of the mustard plant – well, they don't. Just the growth that needs only the initial seeding is important in the parable according to Matthew. The combination of the Mustard Seed image and the image of the sour dough suggest that Matthew wants to emphasize the continual growth without anyone's intervention, until the result is clearly visible to all. A small piece of sour dough added is sufficient to ferment the whole batch – in a short time and without further intervention by anyone. Matthew could see this breathtaking growth of God's kingdom in

the growth of the first congregations: It began with 12 disciples and a few women – and finally the first congregations counted hundreds of people: the image of the mustard plant was literally outgrown – and a “mustard tree” was inserted.

In Luke’s Gospel the aspect of growth is even more important than in Matthew’s version. Luke does not even mention the tinyness of the seed. The kingdom of God is planted into the soil and becomes an immense tree - “automagically”, just like the potential to ferment all the flour is already present in the sour dough. Luke’s message is: the kingdom of God will grow, no matter what! The small beginnings are not in Luke’s perspective any more – as he lives and writes in a time in which the Gospel had already reached Rome. And he’s convinced: it will go on until the whole dough rises, until the whole Roman empire will be evangelized.

The apocryphal Gospel of Thomas focuses, according to the character of this whole book, on the ethics. It reads: “The disciples said to Jesus, ‘Tell us what Heaven's kingdom is like.’ He said to them, ‘It’s like a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds, but when it falls on prepared soil, it produces a large plant and becomes a shelter for birds of the sky.’” (Gospel of Thomas, 20). The Gospel of Thomas emphasizes the activity, the work of the ground: those who have received the seed of the Gospel will bring forth benefit for others. A benefit which is not “accidental”, like the shades in Mark, or the branches used by the nesting birds in Matthew, but here in Thomas the purpose of the activity of the “ground” in sending out the sprout is to provide a shelter for the birds.

So, what did Jesus really say? How did he want to be understood? Obviously, Jesus’ teaching was meant to make people think – and rethink – especially rethink their lives in the perspective of the coming kingdom of God. Jesus certainly encouraged his disciples not to lose hope while facing the small beginnings and the difficulties while sowing and working the ground. And the allusion to the messianic idea in Ezekiel is more closely related to Jesus’ ministry than the idea of the nations coming to salvation – as Jesus came, first and foremost to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Compared to the version in Mark, Matthew and Luke emphasize aspects and interpretations which make more sense in a later time of the development of the early church, when growth – almost exponential and from today’s perspective almost unbelievable growth – was part of the daily experience in the early church. Matthew and Luke read the parable anew in the perspective of the situation in their time and then told the parable again, emphasizing different aspects of the same picture.

These different aspects are now all equally present in the canon of our Holy Scriptures, they are equally “Word of God” for us, but they relate differently to our lives and lead us to different applications and consequences for life and faith.

Beginning in September we will study the Gospel of Mark, by reading it continually and by studying special examples more thoroughly, in order to get an idea of the general message of Mark’s Gospel and its particular differences compared to the other Gospels. We will follow the path of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem, we will stop at different stations and take the time to engage in dialogues with the Evangelist, with each other – and hopefully we will dialogue fruitfully with our Lord himself, so that the mustard seeds he will throw on the prepared ground of our lives will grow into big Baobabs with many fruits.

You are all invited to join the group. No prior experience in Bible Study necessary!!! All Study material will be provided – you need to bring your interest to discover God’s Word, that’s all! Well, and bring your preferred Bible – if you have one... Our first session will be September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010 at 7:15 p.m. in the fireside lounge and subsequently every last Monday of the month. I hope to see you there!

Your servant in Word, Sacrament and Prayer,  
Dieter