It's February, and for much of our country that means Valentine's Day. According to the data, Americans will shell out a small mountain of cash in name of love. On average, Americans will spend nearly $131 per person to celebrate the holiday. As a country we will spend $1.6 billion on candy, $1.9 billion on flowers, and $4.4 billion on jewelry. The total amount spent on Valentine's Day will exceed $18 billion!

Clearly, love matters in America, and we're willing to spend big money on it. But do we understand it? As a culture we regularly speak about "falling in love" or "being in love," but that makes it sound like love is something you fall into and out of, as if it's something you are in or out of. Is that the case? What does the Bible say about love? Consider a few passages about God's love in Christ:

- God ***shows*** his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ ***died*** for us. – Romans 5:8
- [Jesus] loves us and has ***freed*** us from our sins by his blood. – Revelation 1:5
- By this we know love, that [Jesus] ***laid down*** his life for us… – 1 John 3:16
- In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and ***sent*** his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. – 1 John 4:10

Did you notice the action verbs throughout the verses? God shows, frees, lays down, and sends His love to us in Jesus' sacrificial death. Love is an action verb. It's something that is done in person for persons. What's astounding is that God has loved us in such a way! The Lenten hymn "My Song is Love Unknown" captures this astonishing reality in its opening verse:

My song is love unknown,
My Savior's love to me,
Love to the loveless shown
That they might lovely be.
Oh, who am I
That for my sake
My Lord should take
Frail flesh and die?

In Christ God has shown His love to us, the loveless, that we might be lovely, that we might be the loved of God. Such love moved the author of "Chief of Sinners Though I Be" to marvel:

Love that found me—wondrous thought!
Found me when I sought Him not.

It's no wonder the author of "My Song is Love Unknown" asks, "Who am I that for my sake my Lord should take frail flesh and die?" Who are we that God would love us in such a way? Our hearts are bent inward, absorbed in self-worship, and yet God has loved us in this way! St. John, in perhaps the most well-known Bible verse, expressed this with these words, "For *in this way* God loved the world: He sent His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Such love is astonishing and such is the love that God has showed to us. It was such love that moved St. Valentine – yes, there was a Saint Valentine – to boldly confess Christ even in the face of martyrdom. He knew He was loved by God and when he refused to renounce the God who loved him, the pagan authorities executed him on, you guessed it, February 14 (circa 270 A.D.).

The great joy of Valentine's Day, then, isn't the flowers, candy, chocolate, or jewelry (even though these may be a fine part of the celebration). The great joy is God's love in Christ – love that cost Him everything and us nothing. We are loved by God in Christ and we have the opportunity to show such love to our spouse, our children, our neighbors, and even our enemies. It's not a love we fall out of or a love we stop being in. It's a love that we show, do, and share because we get to, because we are loved by God.

Ministry "apps"—Zion Lutheran

Christian Education Apps
Applying the Truth of Scripture
to Children and Families

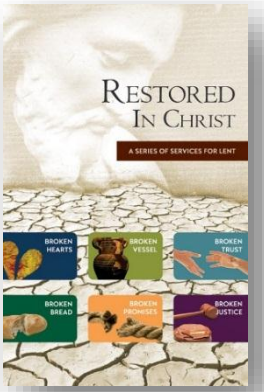
Zion February 2014 Newsletter

YI Club

Did you know that there's a "club" meeting at Zion the third Sunday of every month? The Lutheran Church Extension Fund "Stamp Sunday" has transitioned to "Young Investors' Club." Children ages 0 to 18 can participate with the purchase of stamps or simply making deposits on their account. In addition to earning interest (3.5% on the first $1000) members are taught the blessings of sharing and saving. Children in 1st through 12th grades can earn financial credit for good grades. Teenagers can also receive credit for service hours and qualify for college scholarships. Children also learn the joys of being part of the LCEF mission club where investments build churches and schools. Parents, grandparents, and godparents: consider a Young Investor Club membership for a child. See Warren Puck, Pastor Riggert, or visit www.lcef.org for additional information. The Young Investors Club will meet again on Sunday, February 16.

Coming Up: Lenten Worship

The season of Lent is a time for us to face together the brokenness of our lives and our world, and then turn that brokenness over to Christ so that we can be restored by him through the cross. The Lenten season will begin on Ash Wednesday, March 5, and continue for six weeks leading to our Holy Week and Easter worship. Lenten services will again be held at 5:45 with the fellowship meals to follow. The March newsletter will have additional information on restoration themes.



Gifted Generations

For over twenty five years (more than a generation) I have been privileged to observe the gifts that God has given Zion Lutheran Church. God has gifted the congregation with committed leaders, dedicated Sunday school teachers, talented musicians, and energetic volunteers in the kitchen and on the church grounds. The "Generations" campaign has given even more evidence to the generosity of laborers in organizing the many special activities and the generosity of financial donors as more than $200,000 has already been gifted and more than $500,000 pledged over the next three years. Praise God!

Celebrating God's gifts to and through Zion has generated the 2014 emphasis "Gifted Generations." With the lay leadership of Stewardship Chairman Rick Lohrmann and the Fulfillment Committee the theme will be celebrated this year. See page ___ for some exciting thoughts from Rick.

2014 Stewardship Emphasis

Gifted Generations

St. James writes, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights…" (1:17). As our stewardship board sat down early in 2014 we reflected on this reality. We worship a God of gifts. As the recipients of these gifts, it is our privilege and responsibility to steward them. Throughout the year (usually on the third Sunday) we will praise our God of gifts as we reflect on godly ways to steward them. Below is a list of some of the gifts God freely gives that we will focus on in 2014:

February 16:	Gift of Love	March 16:	Gift of New Life
April 27:	Gift of Church	May 18:	Gift of Family
June 15:	Gift of Children	July 20:	Gift of Rest
August 17:	Gift of Minds	September 21:	Gift of Vocation
October 19:	Gift of Word and Sacrament	November 27:	Gift upon Gift
December 21:	Gift of Christ		

Gifted Generations Serious about Stewardship

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights…" (1:17)

How does your day start? Is it heading to your work place where way too often we get caught up in a daily pep talk? It's time to get serious! Get Engaged! Give it 100% all day long! At the end of the day you may ask yourself, what was my reward?

Did you know you have a rewarding opportunity in front of you every day? Making stewardship a part of your life every day in ALL aspects of life is a gift from God. What are we stewards of? It is everything on earth that God has entrusted us to take care of. Our bodies, our families, our church building and church family, our land, seed, water, all natural resources, Word / Sacrament, new life (the birth of a new born), Baptism, forgiveness/reconciliation, our heritage, love. These are just a few of the things we get involved in each day. We can make a big difference each day in someone's life and we can nurture one of God's gifts to be a blessing to another. See the reward?

In 2014 our church family is going to take a Stewardship journey one Sunday each month. Some of the topics above will be the focus of our study on stewardship. Our stewardship theme is ***Gifted Generations***. This theme fits very well with our continued Generations campaign journey which we will continue the next two years. Your stewardship leadership team is excited about 2014. We are planning many opportunities and activities at Zion this year which will help us: Get Serious, Get Engaged, give it 100% toward stewardship. Get ready to see the reward! I am leaving you with two pictures that remind me of my stewardship journey and my reward because of God's grace.

4 generations of love, laughter, mentoring and thanksgiving. Our grandson is ready for spring and summer fun! Put on your shades, Zion, we are going to have a lot of fun learning and spending time together!

Rick Lohrmann
Stewardship director

The UnChosen

If our world is characterized by anything today, it's choices. Consider our choices in the world of technology alone: We can talk, text, or snap chat on an iPhone, Galaxy 4, or Razor. We can surf on a Dell, an Apple, or a Toshiba. We can watch the big game on a Sharp, a Vizio, or a Sony. And once we're logged-on or tuned-in to these devices, the choices multiply exponentially. There are currently over 120,000 television programs available in the U.S. and over 2 million worldwide. Both Google and Apple just recently boasted that they were each the first to offer 1 million apps. And when it comes to websites, there are over 644,000,000 active websites – enough to keep us busy for 20 years if we visited one every second. It's no wonder so many of our conversations revolve around what to choose.

According to research, we, as a culture, are swimming in the ocean of media choice quite often. One study found that American children are spending 7.5 hours per day with a wide array of media on. By the time a child turns 18, he will have been exposed to 60,000 hours of media! And that compares to only 11,000 hours of school and only 2,000 hours of quality conversations with his or her parents. One wonders where church, devotions, and prayer rank?

When one further considers the content we consume, the reality becomes starker. On average, a child will see 8,000 murders on TV by age 12. By 18 he'll see 200,000 violent acts and 16,000 murders. And this is to say nothing of the sexualized content and unbiblical worldviews.

As disturbing as these realities are – and they are – our minds are being robbed of their ability to think logically, our imaginations are being ravaged by a steady stream of banal content, our fantasies are being sexualized into eroticized dreams, and our understanding of truth has shifted from true or false to like or dislike.

Aside from the disturbing content, there's a deeper observation that needs to be made. If we're only concerned about which media source to consume, we're missing the bigger picture. We must realize: *Our choices always come at a cost*. In the act of choosing to log-on, tune-in, or boot-up, we are choosing not to do something else. Every choice leaves something unchosen. This doesn't mean choosing media is necessarily wrong, but it does mean our choices necessarily involve un-choices.

According to one study, two-thirds of American families say that the TV is on during meals. 51% admit the TV is on during most waking hours and 71% of families have 8-18 year olds with a TV in their room. These choices leave un-choices. Consider some of the choices left unchosen: family conversation, family games, crafts, or projects, reading together, devotions, prayer, making a card for a grandparent or homebound individual, calling a friend or a struggling neighbor… The list of un-chosens is surprisingly long.

So before you log-on, tune-in, boot-up, or flip open your media gizmo, think about the inherent cost in your choice. What are you leaving unchosen? A family conversation? Devotional time with your children? An opportunity to bless a neighbor? The chance to produce something rather than simply consume? God has called us to discernment, and that begins with our choices. Choose well.

ASK THE PASTOR

Q: If God is good, as the Bible says, why is there so much evil?

The problem of evil is perhaps one of the greatest and most difficult questions that we can ask (and answering it will take at least two installments). Before we dive into Christianity's answer, however, we must first remember that the problem of evil is a problem for all religions and worldviews. Consider very briefly how other worldviews address the problem:

- Buddhism says evil (as with all of reality) is ultimately an illusion. Os Guinness, a Christian author and apologist, writes, "in the Buddhist view there is quite simply no remedy for suffering in this world. Nor is there any prospect of a coming world without suffering. There is not even the hope that you and I will ever live free of suffering. And finally, there is no 'you' or 'I' at all."[1] According to Buddhism our real problem is existence itself. The answer to evil, then, is realizing the illusion of existence.

- Hinduism claims evil is a result of karma (you get what you deserve in your various re-incarnations). One Hindu proverb puts it this way: "Just as a calf will find its mother among a thousand cows so your sins will find you out among a thousand rebirths."

- Islam asserts that evil is essentially fatalistic – it's simply the will of Allah and it must be endured.

- Atheism denies that "evil" exists as a moral category. Atheist philosopher Michael Ruse gets to the point when he writes, "Morality is a biological adaptation, no less than our hands and feet and teeth. Considered as a rationally justifiable set of claims about an objective something, ethics is illusory. I appreciate that when someone says, 'love thy neighbor as thyself,' they think they are referring above and beyond themselves. Nevertheless such reference is truly without foundation. Morality is just an aid to survival and reproduction, and any deeper meaning is illusory."

The question we must ask is, "Which worldview offers the best response to the problem of evil?" To answer that, let's turn to the Christian response.

When we come to the problem of evil, it's helpful to clarify which aspect of it we are addressing. Some struggle with "the intellectual problem of evil" and some with "the emotional problem of evil." We'll address both in turn. This moth we'll discuss the intellectual problem and next month the emotional.

The Intellectual Problem of Evil

Skeptics often raise this version of the problem of evil as evidence for God's non-existence. The objection usually goes something like this:

- If God is good, evil shouldn't be.
- Evil exists.
- Therefore God (at least the good God of the Bible) doesn't exist.

There are a two things to notice before we address the challenge. First, the skeptic is invoking evil to deny God, but remember what atheist philosopher Michael Ruse said about what God's non-existence means for the category of evil. If God doesn't exist, "Morality is… illusory." In other words, if God doesn't exist then evil is not definable and the skeptic's question becomes meaningless.

Christian author and apologist Ravi Zacharias address the matter this way:

> When a person says there's too much of evil in this world, they're assuming there's such a thing as good. When they say they assume there's such a thing as good, they must assume there's such a thing as a moral law on the basis of which to differentiate between good and evil. But when they posit such a thing as a moral law, they must posit

[1] *Unspeakable,* 120.

the moral lawgiver, but that's whom the skeptic is often trying to disprove and not prove, because if there's no moral lawgiver, there's no moral law. If there's no moral law, there is no good. If there is no good, there is no evil. What becomes of the question?

Second, when the skeptic denies God's existence on the basis of evil, he's assuming that God has no morally sufficient reason for allowing evil. That's a pretty big assumption. Are we truly in a position that allows us to conclude that God doesn't have a good reason for allowing evil? Might God have good reasons far beyond our understanding? If it's at least possible for God to have morally sufficient reasons for allowing evil, then the skeptic's denial of God is unfounded.

Having addressed the underlying assumptions and problems in the skeptic's assertion, let's look at some basic Christian assertions that relate to God and evil:

1. ***Life's purpose is NOT happiness, but knowing God.***

Understanding this basic truth will take us a long way in our approach to evil. It means that our lives are not about comfort, ease, and pleasure; our lives are about knowing God. Evil may stand as a roadblock to happiness, but it might move us to call out for God. C.S. Lewis, in his perceptive book *The Problem of Pain*, writes that pain and suffering are God's "megaphone to rouse a deaf world." Then he adds,

> No doubt Pain as God's megaphone is a terrible instrument; it may lead to a final and unrepented rebellion. But it gives the only opportunity the bad man can have for amendment. It removes the veil; it plants the flag of truth within the fortress of a rebel soul.

Evil and suffering may awaken our hearts to our finitude and mortality and move us to call out for God – and that is good.

2. ***Mankind stands in rebellion against God and God's purpose for man.***

The Bible teaches that man was created innocent and placed into a world free from evil, but he chose to rebel against God and, so, brought evil and suffering into the world (even into the natural world as God cursed the ground because of Adam's sin). Further, in his state of rebellion, man does not reach out for God, but prefers, in Philip Yancey's and C.S. Lewis' words, "substitute sacreds" and "false infinites." The Bible calls these idols and false gods. The terrible evils in the world, then, are the result of man's morally depraved and rebellious heart that continually put its idols before God. The Bible tells us that God gives sinful man over to his depraved desires and does not intervene to stop him. Man, then, is forced to see the depth and breadth of his evil and his need for forgiveness.

Why couldn't God create a world where evil wasn't possible?

Where there is free will, it is possible to choose evil. If we say that God should have created Adam and Eve without free will, we are essentially saying that we would prefer a world of robots that do only as they are programmed. Such a world would certainly be free from evil, but consider what else would be lost: love. Robots can't love because they don't have freedom. A world with freedom allows for real love – and for the possibility of evil. And this is the world God created: a world where real love and real evil are possible. At creation real love was given; in the fall into sin real evil was chosen. It's a choice that affects us all and a choice, sadly, that we continue to choose.

Why couldn't God prevent evil from happening to good people?

If we say that God should prevent evil things from happening to good people, two more problems arise. First, for our actions to be meaningful, natural laws must work in regular ways. If God were to prevent accidents or evil actions from happening, He would need to stop causes from producing their normal effects. A child swinging his fist at his sibling would find that some invisible force had stopped him an

inch from contact. A wife opening her mouth to berate her husband would hear only respectful compliments coming out. A man trying to watch a seedy late night movie would discover a sermon on sexual purity. Someone plotting to burglarize a family would find himself anonymously filling their house with gifts. Our actions would cease to be meaningful.

Second, we make a major assumption when we speak about "good" people. How are we defining the word? Are "good" people only those who haven't murdered or stolen or harmed? Where are we to find such people? Jesus says hating a brother in our heart is equivalent to murdering him. Coveting another's possessions is equivalent to stealing. And withholding help when help could have been given is the same as harming. Who then is good? The Scriptures say, "None is righteous, no, not one… all have turned aside… no one does good, not even one" (Rom. 3:11-12). It may be hard to accept, but we are not good; the capacity for evil resides in every human heart. Without realizing it we are suggesting that God owes evil people a life free from evil and suffering. Such a suggestion, at the very least, is a bit presumptuous!

In summary:

Let's make sure we understand the implications of what we've just discussed and then get to the incredibly good news of the Bible.

- First, all worldviews must answer the problem of evil. Christianity's answer is distinctly different from other worldview's answers. Unlike Buddhism, Christianity acknowledges that evil is real. Unlike Hinduism, Christianity doesn't subscribe to karma or reincarnation and thereby blame evil and suffering on a previous life. Unlike Islam, Christianity doesn't treat evil fatalistically. Unlike atheism, Christianity acknowledges a moral law giver (God) who allows us to define good and evil and differentiate between them.
- Second, evil doesn't disprove God. In fact, God, the moral law giver, must exist before we can even define the word evil.
- Third, God has morally sufficient reasons for allowing evil to remain.
- Fourth, life's purpose isn't found in pleasure or happiness, but in knowing God.
- Fifth, we are in rebellion against God. We have chosen evil and do not deserve good from God.

God has done something good for evil people!

The good news of Scripture is that God has done something amazing for evil people. First, He has dealt justly with evil in Jesus' crucifixion. Justice for evil has been served. Second, He has reconciled us to Him through Jesus' blood and welcomed us into His kingdom. And when this kingdom comes in its fullness, evil and suffering will be banished and we will be raised with imperishable, glorified, powerful, Spirit-empowered bodies that will never be tempted by sin again.

It's for this reason that St. Paul can write, "For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison…" (2 Cor. 4:17). The life of evil and suffering that we know now, although intensely wearisome and vexing at times, will give way to the thrilling, eternal joy and glory of Heaven and the New Earth.

Holding Your Family Together

Do you ever feel like your family is living a disaster scene in a movie? You're all aboard a ship, fighting for your lives against a gale force wind. You're trying to keep the boat afloat, but every gain is met by another powerful gust… and then, from the bowels of the ship, someone shouts, "She's coming apart at the seams!"

That's not an easy place to be is it? I know; we've all felt that way before. So, when Pastor Riggert mentioned that he was facilitating a parenting series entitled "Holding Your Family Together," Rebecca and I thought, "Let's hop aboard." And we're thankful we did because we've come away not only with a deeper understanding of the value of family communication and devotional routines, but also with five practical suggestions for strengthening our family.

I thought the suggestions were so good that I couldn't keep them to myself. So, over the next several months, I'm going to share what I've learned with you so you too can keep your family together. Let's start by listing Dr. Rich Melheim's (the author of *Holding Your Family Together*) five practical suggestions in bullet points:

- **Share** the highs and lows of your day.
- **Read** a Bible verse or story.
- **Talk** about how the Bible reading relates to your highs and lows.
- **Pray** for one another's highs and lows.
- **Bless** one another.

Even without an explanation of these steps you can see how instantly practical and doable they are. In the coming months, we'll explore them in greater detail. For now, let's simply give a simple description of the five practices Dr. Rich shared (you can read about these in his book).

Faith practice one: *Sharing*.

Make a point every night for each family member to share his or her "highs and lows" from the day. What was good? What was not so good? What brought a smile to their face? What brought a frown? Let each member share while everyone else listens supportively and non-judgmentally.

Faith practice two: *Reading.*

Read a Bible verse or story (if possible, both). The church has great Bible story books available for family devotions or you may want to discuss the Bible readings from Sunday morning throughout the week along with the sermon (which you can have emailed to you if you miss it or want to dwell longer on some of its points). Stories also foster family closeness and introduce life themes that provide great conversation starters.

Faith practice three: *Talking.*

Talk about what you read. How does it speak to people's highs and lows? How does it challenge, encourage, teach, or correct?

Faith practice four: *Praying.*

Pray for each other's highs and lows. Pray for the highs and lows of friends, family, church family, and even the world. Connect Scripture to real life and to prayer life.

Faith practice five: *Blessing.*

This is a great opportunity for parents to speak Scripture over their children (Need suggestions? Ask Pastor Conner or Pastor Riggert), to make the sign of the cross over their forehead and heart to remind them of their Baptisms, and even for children to trace

the cross on their parents or to speak a blessing from Scripture to their parents.

Setting aside a time block every night to do these not only strengthens your family bond, but, as we'll see, has spiritual and physiological benefits.

"Night time is the right time"

Before we get to the nuts and bolts of these five practical family-strengthening, faith-deepening practices, let's first discuss why, according to Dr. Rich, "night time is the right time" to implement them. It goes without saying, but sleep affects our lives in big ways. As we'll see, these five practical steps help families foster good sleep practices, and thereby, live healthier, happier lives.

Children and adults who don't get enough sleep tend to be irritable, tense, and easily agitated – we've all been there! Further, they tend to zero in on life's negatives – and we've all gotten stuck on the "Ain't It Awful" soundtrack before, too! According to Dr. Rich, sleep helps change all this. Sleep functions like a giant sponge that soaks up the stress hormone cortisol. While having several positive functions, (like giving quick bursts of energy in "fight or flight" situations, heightening memory functions, giving a temporary burst of increased immunity, and helping to lower sensitivity to pain), cortisol in high levels has several negative effects. Here's a list of some of them:

- Increased blood pressure
- Decreased bone density and muscle tissue
- Compromised cognitive ability
- Hyperglycemia and other blood sugar imbalances
- Slowed wound healing
- Increased abdominal fat, which elevates risks for heart attacks, strokes, higher bad cholesterol and lower good cholesterol

When we consistently get inadequate sleep, cortisol builds up and increases the risks for all these physiological problems. Further, boys with sleep problems have twice the rate of clinical depression than boys who get good sleep and for girls the rate is multiplied by five! The five faith practices listed earlier all help to establish healthy routines that will foster good sleep patterns in children, which help their bodies (and adults' bodies) return to homeostasis and health.

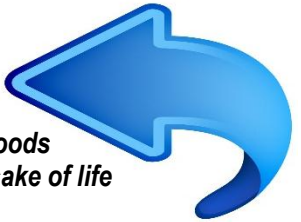
When you add some form of exercise or active play to the evening routine, Dr. Rich says cortisol is reduced even more. Add loving touch, laughing, singing, praying, sharing, and caring to the routine, and the cortisol levels drop even more as melatonin (the body's sleep hormone) increases and helps usher in healthy sleep.

Who knew evening devotions accomplished so much? In addition to getting kids into God's Word and getting God's Word into them, evening devotions can foster health-boosting sleep patterns even as they strengthen families and help hold them together.

You can do this. Turn off, what Dr. Rich calls, "the weapons of mass distraction." Disconnect from the internet, put down your iPod, toss your cell phone in a drawer, unplug the TV and start strengthening your family and deepening your faith. Make "night time the right time" to connect with your children.

Next month we'll begin a more in-depth look at each of these five faith practices as we look at the psychological, sociological, neurological, and spiritual benefits of putting these faith practices into action. We won't be able to stop the gale force winds of life, but we will learn how to sail with confidence.

Counterpoint



Countering falsehoods with facts for the sake of life

A couple months ago we initiated this new article series to equip you to evaluate and respond to the anti-life rhetoric that is constantly streamed into our lives. This month we highlight another popular claim as we evaluate it against reason and Scripture.

Claim:

"People have the right to choose. It would be wrong to restrict a woman's choice by prohibiting abortion."

Questioning the spirit of the age

"Choice" is ubiquitous in America. Supermarkets stock their shelves with choice, auto dealers cram their lots with choice, department stores pack their racks with choice, restaurants glut their menus with it, online stores fill their virtual world with it, online dating services even boast of the choices they offer. If Americans assume anything about life, it's the right to have choices and make choices. It is no stretch to call choice the spirit of the age.

When pro-abortion advocates speak of "choice" and the "right to choose," therefore, it resonates deeply with Americans. When it comes to vegetables, cars, or blue jeans, it's fine to be pro-choice, but we must ask if all choices are morally neutral. Are some choices just plain wrong? Do people have the freedom to choose to shout "Fire!" in a crowded public building? Do people have the freedom to choose to rape, steal, or vandalize? Do people have the right to choose to abuse children? We restrict these choices in our country. Why? Because not all choices are morally neutral.

When it comes to the "right to choose" we must always ask, "What are you insisting that you have the right to choose?" and "Is what you're choosing right?" When it comes to abortion, those who defend it with "the right to choose" are insisting that people have the right to poison, dismember, and dispose of unborn babies as medical waste if they choose to. And they are insisting that it would be morally wrong to tell a woman or doctor that he couldn't make this choice. And yet we regularly tell people they can't make certain choices. We tell people they can't choose to drive drunk, to abuse children, or to engage in false advertising. Why? Because innocent lives could be harmed or taken advantage of and that is morally wrong.

When it comes to abortion, however, advocates tell us that it's morally wrong to limit a person's choice. Such reasoning is more than misleading, it's dishonest and deceptive. Insisting only on "the right to choose" conceals the choice that is being made and keeps people from seeing the severity of the choice. Pro-abortion advocates almost never reveal what they believe people have the right to choose because it would expose the evil they are endorsing. Who wants to admit they are in favor of dismembering unborn babies? To keep the attention off the choice, therefore, they invoke the moral language of "right" and "wrong" to scold those questioning the choice and to conceal the immorality of the choice. In effect, they are saying, "You are wrong for telling people they can't choose to dismember and dispose of unborn children."

Counterpoint:

"Choice" is not an absolute right. Some choices, especially those that might endanger others, are morally wrong and should be prohibited.

The prophet Hosea once wrote, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge…" (4:6). In his time the priests had failed to speak truth and led the people to believe a lie and the consequences were devastating. Today the unborn are being destroyed for lack of knowledge because we are perpetuating and believing lies. "Choice" is not an absolute right. Some choices are wrong. Some choices hurt innocent people. Abortion is one of those choices and for the sake of the innocent, we need to speak up.

We Wait Bowing I
By Grace Carol Bomer

We Wait Bowing

Righteous and devout, Spirit-assured, Simepon awaited the consolation of Israel. Oh, to have such a promise—the Spirit's pledge!—of seeing the long-promised Savior! Surely Simeon's very posture exuded eager anticipation as each day began: *This day, maybe even this morning, this might be The Day!* Did a lifetime of anticipation leave him with a permanent forward tilt, an eager question mark embodied in the neck that craned to search the temple crowds?

Pious patience rewarded: with gnarled hands on new flesh, he exulted:

29"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word;
30for my eyes have seen your salvation
31that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
32a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel." (Luke 2:29-32)

Simeon rejoiced, cradling infinity, and then he returned the fragile infant to the wondering grasp of His mother. And then—Simeon waited. And waited. And…waited. Did he live for an hour after seeing his Savior in the flesh? A year, or even a decade? No matter—though the Spirit's promise had been fulfilled, Simeon died, still waiting. He had received by faith—and seen, and even touched—his salvation, but not yet the consummation of it.

Was Simeon's posture always that of eager expectation before the day Mary and Joseph carried their firstborn into the temple? What of his stance for the rest of his life, whatever its span, after that climactic moment? Did he ever droop, or doubt, or even despair, as time ground on and the Romans ruled relentlessly and the suffering of his people continued unabated?

Of Simeon's waiting posture we can only speculate; our own, we know too well. Sometimes, we wait well. Humming along in our daily-life liturgy, our heads and hearts and hands crane heavenward, busy in service as we eagerly anticipate glimpsing, *any day now, maybe even this very morning,* the face of the One we yearn to see.

But sometimes, the very weight of the wait crushes. Do we see ourselves in the posture of Carol Bomer's *We Wait Bowing I?* Time grinds inexorably. Sudden volcanic sorrows heap heavily upon sedimentary layers of slowly gathering griefs. We wait, bowing under burdens unbearable, our souls aflame with suffering. *For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words,* groanings and sighings that swirl hotly heavenward: funnel clouds of furious despair.

We limp to the Table, singed and smoldering, weary in the wait. We kneel: we wait, bowing, to receive. And—O blessed exchange!—funnel of flame becomes conduit of grace. The Sacrament spirals down, sharp on tongue, hot in throat, burning all the way down: fire fighting fire.

Blood-drenched, we rise, fire-quenched. We sing, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace…For mine eyes have seen thy salvation…"

Still the waiting burns, but this is a purging fire. *Bowed by the weight of the world, yet buoyed by the Hope that we have, we persevere in our wait for the Day when we shall behold our dear Lord's face.*

Come quickly, Lord Jesus. Strengthen us as we wait bowing. – Rebecca Conner

January Highlights

Zion Ladies Guild Highlights January 8, 2014

Zion Guild met on January 8th for its regular meeting, hosted by Delores Kuhn and Janet Gruhn with 17 members in attendance.

Pastor Conner led us in an Epiphany devotion reminding us that Epiphany means "manifest" where God revealed His Son as the Savior for all people. Margaret Backhaus also led us in an Epiphany devotion. President Susan Schilling opened the business meeting. The secretary read the minutes from the December meeting and correspondence thanking the Guild for Christmas gifts and for serving Bob Wagner's funeral. Audrey Roe, Human Care Chairman, noted that there was a large thank you note on an easel that the Quakerdale residents had sent for the Christmas dinner and gifts that had been given them.

Circle Reports were as follows:

Circle # 3 will is serving the January coffees
Circle #4 will have the February coffees
Circle # 2 served 153 for the Bob Wagner funeral

Note: We will continue our collections of stamps, Campbell labels, fronts of Christmas and birthday cards, printer ink cartridges, (no Epson cartridges) cell phones with batteries and box tops for education.

New business noted the $4,000 mission project dispersal. Plaza bingo is on the 24th of January with Judy Musfeldt as chairman, with Delores Kuhn, Janet Gruhn and Margaret Kuchel as helpers. Marion Ream will be the caller. Hostesses for the February meeting will be Susan Schilling and Carol Kahl.
Cheral Buhr, Secretary

Preschool Highlights of January

January was a fun-filled cold month. Our highlight was "Dad's Night" on January 23rd! The dad's enjoyed bumping and jumping with the parachute, ice skating, and the freeze song. Handmade beautiful Valentine cards were made to give to Mom. The topping of the evening was ice cream sundaes topped with cherries! Once again I will say fun was had by all who attended.

In chapel, we learned about Baptism and Jesus 'the boy' in the temple. The children related to how Mary and Joseph felt when they could not find Jesus. February will focus on GOD IS LOVE. February 16th, we will be singing during the church worship service. And on February 18th, we will have preschool registration for next year from 3:45 – 6:15 pm. You may enroll your child by picking up a registration form at the church office. Our class size in limited to twelve children in the three year program and sixteen in the four year old program.

Zion Preschool follows the Iowa Early Learning Standards and the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards. Zion Preschool has also earned a 4 star rating on the Quality Rating System.

Please feel welcome to stop by our classroom anytime to say "Hi" or maybe read a story or play a game. The children would love it!
God's Blessings,
Deb Fink and Janice Nemitz

ZION Lutheran Preschool Manning, Iowa
Christ Centered... Child Focused... Family Connecting

January 2014
Issue #6

When you're traveling through unfamiliar territory, you really have to trust your driver. This was "driven" home to me when I was on my way to the GKLI Convention during my August in Indonesia. The GKLI (Indonesian Lutheran Christian Church) had invited me to present a paper during their convention, which was a great honor. But their meeting place was in Sibolangit, an area two full hours' drive time from Medan, the nearest city.

The ride was fascinating: twisting, turning, two-lane roads with exotic trees on one side, and a sheer drop off on the other side. Motorcycles and other cars passed us with mere inches (centimeters) to spare and I had *no* idea where we were going or when the ride would end. But our driver knew exactly where we were going, how to get there, and what to do on these roads. All I really had to do was let go of my preconceived notions and *trust* him.

What a reminder that's been for me these last months, and for our whole family. **We've just received the word from our Synod that we have the "green light" to plan our deployment!** Thanks to your support and encouragement, and the sacrifices of so many, we have permission to pursue passports and visas. But at the same time, we have a baby due in a few weeks. There are so many loose ends yet to tie: where will we do language training, how quickly will our passports arrive, how long will it take us to get our visas?

Our family is in unfamiliar territory, but we're not alone. We have you, our friends and supporters, along with us as we travel this twisting, turning road. And we follow the Call and leading of the One who Himself "walked the road our wand'ring feet must go… [He] faced with us temptation's pow'r and fought the ancient foe" (LSB 424:1). In the end, this road we walk is not one of our own design or determination, but where our Lord Jesus Christ would *have* us walk. It's a road that He's been down before, and on which He is accompanying us in His Word and Sacraments. He knows the way, because He walked it all the way to Calvary, and up to victory through the empty tomb. There's no road in the US or in Indonesia where He does not walk with us.

As we walk into the first weeks of 2014, we're confident that we do not walk alone. This year will be the one which finds us in overseas service, far from anywhere we've been before. But through your support, prayers, and friendship, you walk alongside us during this journey. And as long as we—together—follow where our Lord Jesus leads, we can never go the wrong way.

The month of January has seen the Ferry Family settling in at our borrowed house, trying to stay close to home until the baby's born in the first few days of February. The kids are into much more of a routine now as they get used to our new surroundings, and they continue to amaze their parents as they constantly adjust to changing surroundings. We've also been getting a healthy dose of winter with lots of snow and bitterly cold temperatures in Wisconsin and Michigan. Many thanks to the winter weather for making it that much easier to move to a country where the *record* low is **62° F** this time of year!

Prayers, Praises, and Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving for all our supporters, for now we can deploy! * For our children, that they would continue to feel safe, loved, and at peace during this transition time * For a safe and healthy delivery for Cheryl and the new baby * For the people of North Sumatra, Indonesia, as they endure a volcano eruption * For *ongoing* pledged support, that we might continue serving overseas according to our Lord's will

To subscribe to the Ferry's newsletter with photos log onto www.cferry.com.

Christmas Blessings:

Once again this Christmas our three missions heard and celebrated the wonderful message of the coming of the Prince of Peace for the world's salvation. Our annual Advent season involves home gatherings called POSADAS (meaning: "Inn...no room for them in the Inn"). This tradition is popular in Central America and Mexico. It leads to the great festival of Christmas, especially Christmas Eve (Nochebuena) when families come together to celebrate the birth of the Christ Child. We are thankful that many of our Hispanic families are now developing Christmas traditions at our churches by first worshiping Baby Jesus followed by their family gatherings. Feliz Navidad!

Our Christmas Eve service in Storm Lake was a special celebration the faithful, with family and friends who came to celebrate the Lord's birth. Following the service we had fellowship together as families had a gift exchange. I then traveled to Denison for our Evening service.

My Tyson Chaplaincy at the Beef Plant in Denison: Prayer at Work:

My work at the Tyson Beef plant is to provide pastoral counseling to the workers. As I have worked in this special work site for almost 10 years, I am thankful for the many workers who have come to me for counsel and for prayers. I have a long list of those who have asked for prayers for family or other loved ones. I take them seriously and try to follow up with the workers to check on those we are praying for. For example, Simon came to me to ask for prayers for his country of South Sudan now experiencing a renewed civil war. Many of his friends and family have been affected. One of his cousins was shot and killed. Another example is Blanca who is very afraid of an upcoming back surgery that she must have to alleviate her severe pain. These and so many other prayers we raise to the Lord that His will be done. As the new year begins we are also praying for the plant itself that this will not be the year it will be closed.

Please Pray: + In thanksgiving for all the blessings from our Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany celebrations. + For Jose, Ingrid, Luis, and Veronica in Storm Lake who are studying to become adult members. + For our new called pastor, Lincon Guerra, who has accepted our call to serve the Hispanic mission in Des Moines and for his Installation service on February 9th. + For plans to charter our mission in Denison after the congregational members voted unanimously to proceed with this new step. + In thanksgiving for the mission hearts of the many individuals and congregations of Iowa District West who monthly support the Lord's work among Hispanic immigrants.

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February Birthdays and Anniversaries @ Zion

1. Gerald Beck
   Paige Mohr
2. Carl French
   Brooklyn Riesberg
   Kendra Walters
3. Ray Christensen
4. Todd Gruhn
   Andrew Puck
5. Jean Hargens
6. Michaela Chapman
   Curt Struve
7. Sasha Backhaus
   Marlyn Fielweber
   Ardith Lage
8. Dena Diersen
   Russ Spies
   Rexanne Struve
10. Joe Ewoldt
    Devontay Hocken
    Olivia Paska
12. Tammi Powers
    Donna Schmarzo
13. Jason Opperman
14. Ken Puck
15. Kristin Backhaus
16. Ryan Borkowski
17. Cory Beyer
    Carol French
    Adam Gruhn
    Jeanne Gruhn
18. Zach Dreier
    Carolyn Kerkhoff
    Ken Spies
19. Shaunda Martin
    Curtis Weems
    Roger Wegner
20. Janice Monson
21. Jean Ferneding
23. Tom Wegner
24. Scott Opperman
    Barb Page
25. Kodilynn Rosener
26. Deanna Frank
27. Rylie-Shea Muhlbauer
    Scott Stribe
    Jeremy Wulf
28. Adam Albertsen
    Gary Dammann
    Katie Sextro
29. Karen Vollstedt

If we missed or misspelled your name, please inform the church office.

2. Errol & Anna Belle Wegner
4. Joe & Becky Karsten
5. Paul & Monica Christensen
9. Bill & Deb Ranniger
   Lowell & Betty Schroeder
12. Lenus & Kristie Borkowski
14. Dave & Bev Grundmeier
15. Bob & Gloria Ewoldt

Congregational Servants

Council:
Curt Struve, President
Sam Musfeldt, Vice President
Donna Forman, Record. Sec.
Amber Neumann, Fin. Sec.
Karen Kienast, Treasurer
Jeff Hargens, CFO

Board of Elders:
Stan Baack, head elder
LaVern Bald, Stan Musfeldt
Dave Grundmeier
Tim Kienast, Lynn Kruse
Craig Musfeldt,

Board of Deacons:
David Bohlman, Bruce Grimm,
Ryan Crawford, Eric Ramsey
Paul Christensen, Richard Zinke,
Don Lamb

Board of Trustees:
Bob Genzen, Dan Dawson,
Kent Vollstedt,
Jason Kienast,
Rodney Backhaus

Board of Missions:
Arlene Mohr, Chair
Dave & Bev Grundmeier,
Frank Mohr, Lynn Kruse,
Gary Schroeder, Warren Puck

Board of Education:
Margaret Backhaus, Chair
Trisha Beck, Shelly Gruhn
Joni Kienast, Laurene Meeves,
Kari Ranniger, Kathy Vollstedt

Preschool Board:
Dianne Riggert, Chair
Jean Ferneding, Diane Riggert,
Sandra Sextro, Heather Kusel,
Jen Morris
Elder: LaVern Bald

Altar Guild:
Monica Christensen, Director

Stewardship Board:
Rick Lohrmann, Chair

Ladies Guild:
Susie Schilling, President

Fellowship Club:
Russ Mohr, President

Choir:
Dr. Tom Ulrickson, director

Children's Choir:
Susie Ulrickson, Jill Arp

White Rose Ceremony

On January 18, Zion members and several gathered guests remembered the lives lost and wounded through abortion. As a special part of the service, worshipers processed 57 white roses (one for every million babies aborted legally in this country) to a cradle in the front of the church. In the process of acknowledging the loss and the need to repent, worshipers turned to Jesus for forgiveness and mercy. Among the songs we sang are the verses on the right. May they be our fervent prayer.

Bless the women of our nation
Guard them from the devil's lies
They have value and importance
They have worth in Jesus' eyes.
They are loved; they are forgiven
They're redeemed by Jesus' blood
Let Your church proclaim this message
That they'll know the God of love.

Raise up men of love and honor
Raise up men of righteousness
Help them triumph over childishness
And be men of holiness
Let them lead their wife and children
To the Gospel of our Lord
Let them stand as men of valor
Let them stand upon on God's Word.

Help your church, Lord, live in holiness
Help us model purity
Help us live our lives in reverence
To our Lord in decency
That all members of the body
May embrace your marvelous plan
That we honor sexuality
Every woman every man.