



2015 resolved

Adam lived... then he died (Gen. 5:5). Seth lived... then he died (Ge. 5:8). Enosh lived... then he died (Gen. 5:11). Kenan lived... then he died (Gen. 5:14). Mahalalel lived... then he died (Gen. 5:17). Jared lived... then he died (5:20). Methuselah lived... then he died (Gen. 5:27). Lamech lived... then he died (Gen. 5:31). Get the picture?

One day your name will begin such a sentence: [You] lived... then [you] died. This isn't being morbid; this is reality in a sin-cursed world. As such, it's something we should talk about in our families. Unfortunately, most don't. Sadly, nearly 70% of Americans die without a will. 70%! IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY! Not only are there excellent online resources that make writing a will VERY EASY (check out USLegalForms.com for one option), but we are blessed at Zion to have a Christian Estate Planner (Jim Schroeder) as a congregational partner. Jim will come to your home FOR FREE and help you get everything in order so that you can write your will and make a plan for your estate. Topics with which Jim can help you include:

- Developing a plan to transfer your farmland.
- Making plans to transfer your personal property.
- Choosing the right executors or trustees for your estate.
- Executing a financial power of attorney and health care power of attorney.
- Avoiding accidental disinheritance on your beneficiary designations by reviewing them regularly.

THIS IS SOMETHING YOU NEED TO DO (are the capital letters getting through?! Financial expert Dave Ramsey explains,

A will is a **gift you leave** your family or loved ones. It is a gift because it makes the management of your estate very clear and light-years easier. If you don't have a will, the state (not known for its financial prowess) will decide what happens to your stuff, your kids, and your financial legacy. You don't want this to happen. Even if you're single, get a will right now!

Zion is privileged to welcome Jim Schroeder on Sunday, January 11th for an informational presentation on the following topics:

- Confessing your faith to your family
- Updating your will and estate plan as your family situation changes
- Avoiding family arguments
- Reducing taxes for your family
- Estimating the value of your estate
- Supporting your favorite ministries
- Using an LCMS "Give it Twice Charitable Trust"

One of the important things that Christians often overlook, which Jim is especially helpful with, is a Christian Statement of Faith. This personalized statement can be read to your family after you die and it's a great way to confess Christ to your children, grandchildren, and extended relatives.

Space at the January 11th meeting is limited to the first 40 people, so waste no time in taking advantage of this opportunity. Resolve to make 2015 the year that you write a will and make a plan. – Pastor Conner



MINISTRY APPS—Zion Lutheran – January 2015

Applying the Gospel to Hearts and Homes

Deprivation of light is a very real physical and emotional problem. The condition even has a clinical diagnosis: Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Deprivation of LIGHT is also a spiritual problem. When the Light of Christ is absent, we continue to live in the darkness of sin and death. The dominant season of the church during the month of January (and into the first weeks of February) is the Epiphany season. The prophet Isaiah announces the theme of the season: “Arise, shine, for our light has come.” (Isaiah 60:1) Each Sunday we are blessed to have the Epiphany Light of Jesus shine on our hearts so that we might shine for Him in our homes, in the community, and into the world.

Light through the Word

In addition to the Sunday morning adult Bible study, a LifeLight series will begin again in January. The series will begin on THURSDAY, January 22 and will explore selected Psalms. Classes will begin at 9:45 and conclude by 11 a.m. Friends and guests from the community are welcome.

Light to Families

In recent years a January/February parenting series for congregation and community families has been offered. Families interested in growing as Christian parents and developing a parent support network, are invited to share their questions and suggestions with Pastor Riggert and an appropriate series will be developed and scheduled.

Light into the Community

Thanks to many members for your generous contributions to the Manning food pantries. God-willing another option for supplying food to community families will be developed with the assistance of Community Opportunities. There will be many opportunities for Zion members to volunteer and donate. Watch for more information.

Zion continues to be well represented on the C-3 (CHRIST + Community + Celebration) committee. The committee meets again on January 26 and welcomes additional partners.

The first phase of the “Generations” campaign focused on enLIGHTening our members through our worship in the nave. The next phases will also be a blessing beyond Zion as any community members interact in the fellowship hall and education wing.

Light to the World

The Light of Christ is shared into the world as Zion continues the missionary adoptions and as Zion participates in the mission of Iowa District West and The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod with a \$28,000 budget designation for “District” support. May our sacrificial weekly offerings bless the kingdom work here and abroad.

Living and Sharing the Light of Jesus!
Pastor Riggert

Stewardship: Beyond Slogans



If we're good at anything in America, it's marketing. That skill can be put to appropriate use by Christians in the church as they communicate church initiatives and opportunities for member involvement. That skill can also be abused as Christianity is sloganized into a product or service. In many ways Christian stewardship has fallen prey to such catchy slogans.

- Growing in faith through generosity
- A journey of faith
- Maximizing God's blessings for His glory
- Live Simply Love Generously
- Time. Talent. Treasure.

These may have their place, but catchy phrases don't usually make for good theology. Stewardship is not a slogan. It can't be defined in three words or captured in one catchy phrase. Christian stewardship is lived every day in our vocations. A vocation, as Lutheran theologian Gustaf Wingren explains,

is a 'station' which is by nature helpful to others.... The life of the home, the relation between parents and children, is vocation, even as is life in the field of labor, the relation between employer and employee. In anything that involves action, anything that concerns the world or my relationship with my neighbor..."

These vocations, as LCMS Director of Stewardship Rev. Heath Curtis explains, "make a claim upon us." Our vocation as spouse makes a claim on us: to love, serve, and care for our spouse as Christ lovingly dies for the church (for husbands) and as the church

lovingly submits to Christ (for wives). Our vocation as parent makes a claim on us: to love, discipline, train, disciple, and teach our children in the fear and instruction of the Lord. Our vocation as child makes a demand on us: to honor our parents, love and cherish them.

And our membership in our local congregation makes a claim on us. Rev. Curtis explains,

Our vocation as a Christian and as a member of a particular Christian congregation where we receive the Word of God and His Sacraments makes a claim on us – on our presence on Sunday morning and on our support for the work of the Gospel.

Faithfully living in our vocations and appreciating the claims they make on us is how we live the sanctified life. St. Paul wrote of such sanctified living in his letter to the Corinthians:

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:2).

They were and we have been sanctified to be saints, to live the sanctified life. Many wrongly view sanctification as our growing in holiness, but Rev. Curtis again brings clarity:

My sanctification is not 'trying to get more holy,' it's trying to get to church more often and be more supportive of the ministry. It's making time to actually raise my children and plan for their future by making sacrifices now. It's allowing room in my life to give alms to my needy neighbor and being present for my neighbor in times of need.

In the coming months we will continue our discussion of our God-given vocations (holy callings) and the claims they make on us and how we joyfully respond to them. – Pastor Conner



Defeating Fear and Becoming Manly Men

Last month we began our discussion on the importance of Godly fathers and father-figures who walk the path of manhood before younger men. We learned that they have the crucial job of communicating these three messages to the men who follow them:

1. It can be done.
2. You're not alone.
3. I believe in you.

We also heard Dr. Crabb introduce three distinctive marks that characterize Godly fathers and father-figures:

1. He walks a good path in sight of his son, to let him know, 'It can be done.'
2. He occasionally turns around and looks at his son to let him know, 'You're not alone.'
3. He resumes his walk toward God, trusting God to lead his son to follow, thus saying, 'I believe in you.'

This month we take a closer look at these distinctive marks.

Mark 1: He walks a good path in sight of his son, to let him know, 'It can be done.'

Godly fathers and father-figures understand the concept of vocation. Whether or not they use the word, they understand that God has placed them in various stations in life that call for their loyalty and sacrifice. They understand that our vocations make claims on us and call us to faithful service.

Martin Luther helpfully defined "vocation" as a station in life that is by nature helpful to others. As such, vocations call our attention outward toward our neighbor, whether that literally be the person next door, or the coworker, the fellow church member, the child beneath a father's roof, or the grown child trying to make his own way in life. Godly fathers and father-

figures humbly accept these God-given vocations and, as Dr. Crabb says, they walk "the path God lays out for [them]."

Godly fathers and father-figures also understand that their God-given vocations will exact a price on them; they will require them to bear a cross. In parenting, it may be the cross of disobedient or defiant children. In leadership, it may be the cross of unruly or surly people. In labor, it may be demanding management or unrealistic expectations. But Godly fathers understand that God didn't ordain their vocation for their personal benefit, but for the benefit and well-being of their neighbor. As such, Godly fathers serve faithfully and joyfully in their vocation even when it is difficult or demanding. With their eyes firmly fixed on Christ and their lives dedicated to the well-being of the neighbors God has called them to serve through their vocations, Godly fathers walk with purpose and resolve. Nothing will steal their joy in Christ and nothing will deter them from the call of their vocations.

And such Christ-centered, neighbor-focused walking makes a strong statement to younger men following in their footsteps. Dr. Crabb says,

The younger man begins to realize that every one of his own struggles has been faced before. He senses a warm hope bathing his weary soul, refreshing him with renewed strength and courage. 'It can be done!' the young man shouts. 'He did it. Look at him. He has faced everything I face, he has endured the same fear and heartache and failure, he has asked the same questions and heard the same silence that enrages me. And he still trusts God. He made it. It can be done.'

Mark 2: He occasionally turns around and looks at his son to let him know, 'You're not alone.'

"A godly father," as Dr. Crabb reminds us, "walks a good path, knowing that his son is walking thirty years behind him." As such, the godly father knows that his vocational calling doesn't end when his son moves out. The daily routine may change, but the vocation remains – and it remains vitally important.

The adult son needs to see his father walking the Godly path before him and he needs to know that he's not alone in his walk.

So at various times Godly fathers turn to their son(s) and communicate, whether directly through words or simply through careful listening, "You're never far from my mind and you're always in my heart. I'm with you. You're not alone!"

Dr. Crabb writes, "A godly father's message is heard by his son:

You're not alone. I'm listening. I hear your pain... Nothing would shock me. I too am a man. And nothing puts you beyond the reach of God's love. His grace is bigger than our sin as the earth is bigger than one grain of sand. We're both fallen men not yet delivered from the presence of sin. I know life is hard, sometimes terrifying, too often painful beyond words. I ache with you as you worry over money problems, career disappointments, family problems. I feel the weight of your unanswered questions and prayers; I know the darkness you often face. But I know what God has pledged to do. Therefore I can hear about your problems without falling apart or needing to rescue you. In your joys and sorrow, I give you my presence. I am *with* you!"

Hearing this message means the world to younger men. As Dr. Crabb explains, "Nothing means quite so much to a struggling man than to know that someone who cares is with him, not requiring acknowledgment and appreciation but simply wanting to be there to care and be available, attentive, and accepting."

Mark 3: He resumes his walk toward God, trusting to lead his son to follow, thus saying, 'I believe in you.'

Godly fathers know that they cannot spend all their time listening to their son, nor should they. There may be seasons when listening is the thing most needful, but Godly fathers know the danger making their son the center of their life. Children are

important, but they aren't the center of a Godly man's life; Christ is. A son needs to understand that. Further, Godly fathers know the pitfalls of over involvement. They may find themselves offering money when their son needs to learn through hardship or insisting their son heed their advice when they should hold their tongue and let their son learn through experience.

What young men need more than anything else is a father who is committed to following Christ. They need to see that pattern lived out. Dr. Crabb explains, "The pattern of a father's life must reflect his commitment to stay on the narrow path, whether his son is following or not." Young men are blessed when they see a rightly ordered life. As Dr. Crabb explains, when a father

puts his son in his proper place... He relieves his son of that unbearable position of being the center of his father's life. The son, freed from a burden he cannot handle and eventually resents, is then more able to cheerfully give to his father that which he possesses and is able to give.

Dr. Crabb then summarizes what a Godly father's life communicates to his son:

A godly father's life demonstrates the first message: that it's possible, no matter what life brings, to follow Christ. His *presence* assures his son that he is not alone. Someone cares. That's the second message. And his *refusal to hover* – to keep too close an eye on things and to carry his son when his son should find the strength to walk on his own feet – communicates the third message: that he believes in his son. He accepts his son as an individual: responsible for his choices and, by God's grace, capable of making good ones; able to get up after he falls.

Young men are greatly blessed when they see and hear Godly fathers and father-figures communicating these messages.

Now the bad news...

Unfortunately, most men never see Godly men living like this. To understand why would require numerous volumes of dense text, but much of it would come back to a misunderstanding of manhood and an under-appreciation of vocation. Along the way we would discover the damage radical feminism has done to manhood and families as men have increasingly been portrayed as irrelevant. We would see how the church has been feminized through manicured presentations of Jesus and love songs for Jesus. We would also discover Darwin's attack on purpose and virtue that has left us with little more than trousered apes walking about thumping their chests, ignorantly proud of their macho nihilism.

We would lament the juvenilization of adulthood into tweens, teens, twenty-and-thirty-somethings and the entertainment culture that trains them to feel and receive rather than to think and work. We would also see the elevation of base desires for physical stimulation and gratification and the objectification through the pill of the female who is now expected to be available 24/7 for male gratification without the consequence of children.

Every one of these deserves a book. For our purposes, however, we simply need to observe the messages men who lack Godly fathers and father-figures are hearing. Dr. Crabb details them:

1. 'Life is too hard to live as God requires. A little compromise, some relief that I can count on, some chance to do what makes me feel good about me now, is necessary. A truly godly life? *It can't be done.*'
2. 'Sure, I care about you. All right, so I don't listen all that well. C'mon, I got my own problems. Seems to me you should be grateful for all I did when you were a kid. Maybe it's my turn now for a little attention. *I don't really care about you.*'
3. 'Look, life isn't getting any easier, you know. Do you have any idea what it's like to grow old? Well, someday you'll find out. I'm doing the best

I can. I know it's not so good. *Bud I doubt you'll do much better.*'

For a moment, imagine the impact these message are having on young men! This needs to change. It has to start somewhere. Why not with you?

Now, if you didn't have a Godly father or don't have one now, Dr. Crabb counsels,

Face the reality of the relationship with your father. Face it honestly. Hurt over what's missing. Feel the anger provoked by the pain and neglect. Rejoice in whatever is good. Hear the message that your father's life has conveyed.

"Then," Dr. Crabb writes,

Cling to your heavenly Father. Watch his Son perfectly walk a narrow path, and know his life is in you, enabling you to grow in obedience and to never quit. Picture our Great High Priest listening every time we call on his name...

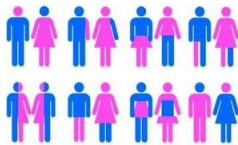
Further, it's important that young men who lack Godly fathers identify an older father-figure who be the example they need so that they know it can be done, that they can live as Godly men.

"Then," Dr. Crabb challenges,

Resolve to become one of those men who quietly speak good messages to younger men on the path behind them. Count the cost of becoming such a man – it's enormous. But value the privilege and anticipate the joy. There is no higher calling than to represent God to someone by living the life of a spiritual father before them.

Imagine the impact you can have on the next generation by becoming this man! Want to talk more about this? Come visit with Pastor Conner, read Dr. Crabb's book (*The Silence of Adam*), and start appreciating the claims our vocations place on us. Next month we'll discuss the importance that brothers in the faith play for men. – Pastor Conner

(Trans)Gender Issues



All of us have filled out forms or questionnaires that have asked us to mark our gender. And since time immemorial there have been two options: Male Female. In the near future you may start to see a third option: other/indeterminate. Proponents of this third category believe people should be free to choose their gender based on how they feel on the inside. They believe this because they reject the age-old view that one's gender is determined by one's body. Instead, they claim that we have been doing harm to people by "assigning" their gender at birth.

In other words, they are asserting that when doctors deliver a baby and announce, "It's a boy!" or "It's a girl!" that they are doing something terribly wrong. They maintain that doctors and parents should let their children choose their gender when they are ready to decide for themselves. As such, a child may be born biologically male but identify as female or vice versa. Or a child may not identify as either.

Proponents of this transgendered view are behind the bevy of new self-descriptors and pronouns that are washing over our society. Based on their feelings people may now describe themselves as "genderqueer, bi-curious, heteroflexible," or even "wiggly." They may also choose their preferred gender pronoun (dubbed "P.G.P."). So a biological male may prefer "he or she or they." Some, in an effort to eliminate any gender association and to avoid the awkwardness of adopting a plural pronoun to describe a singular person, have coined new pronouns such as "xe, xem, xyr, ze, hir, and hen."

Such gender neutral pronouns are making their way into early childhood centers in Sweden and schools in Canada. A couple months ago we featured the brouhaha in Houston over gender neutral restrooms.

Minnesota recently eliminated gender requirements in high school sports, thereby allowing boys who identify as girls to play on girls' teams and vice versa. And nearly 5,000 high schools across America have welcomed Gay-Straight Alliance Clubs in which the transgender movement is finding increasing acceptance.

Those who oppose such gender-erasing pronouns and initiatives are increasingly being slapped with the accusation of "transphobia." And, as with same-sex marriage and homosexual privilege, the church is being goaded to affirm transgenderism in the name of love and cultural relevance. So how should we respond? Love requires that we first acknowledge that people struggling with transgenderism have legitimate struggles. But our love for God also requires that we turn to God's Word for the truth to inform our loving response.

Lovingly acknowledging the struggle

It is an unfortunate tendency among humans (Christians would say a "fallen" tendency) to dismiss and ostracize minorities for being different than the majority. Christians shouldn't do that. People with transgender struggles may comprise less than .5% of the general population, but their struggles are real and painfully intense. We should never belittle or demean them.

Many of these individuals describe feeling as if they are trapped in the wrong body. As such they are painfully conflicted and live daily with the temptation to act in contradiction to their bodies. They also report being mocked, laughed at, and misunderstood. Because of their internal conflict and the external animosity heaped upon them, the suicide rate is drastically higher among people who battle transgenderism. Not only that, young people who struggle with transgender issues have higher rates of drug abuse and they are far more likely to self-mutilate their bodies.

Turning to Scripture

Our first response needs to be listening and compassion. Having said that, we need to be ready with a clear, well-reasoned Biblical response, for as St. Paul reminds us, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). God’s Word teaches us, corrects us, and trains us in righteous living so that we may be complete men and women of God who are equipped for Godly living.

According to Scripture, God created mankind in His image as male and female. There was no third category. Pastor George Wollenburg (a former District President of the LCMS) wrote about the unique ways in which men and women image God in their created maleness and femaleness. We quote him at length:

Both male and female are bearers of the divine image. The woman is created to give life. No male can give life. Just as God is able to give life, so the image of God is reflected in the woman’s created nature. She is capable of giving life.

Not only is the ability to give life inherent in the nature of the woman, but also the nurturing of the life that is given is also con-created with her nature as woman. She is equipped to nurture the life which she has given. To nurture means to nurse at the breast. It is only because, and precisely because God has created her as woman, that she finds her fulfillment, as woman, (not as a human being) in giving and nurturing life....

The man (male) cannot give life. But in order for the woman to give life, she must first receive from the man whom God created in His image. The source from which life flows is the man whom God created...The act of begetting life is likewise a reflection of the image of God, the Father, Who

has begotten the Son from eternity. Thus, in the begetting and giving of life the image of God and oneness of God is reflected.

All this is to say that our bodies, our created maleness and femaleness, matter; they are not irrelevant to our being. Transgender proponents argue that our bodies are irrelevant to our gender. Even more, they assert that if one’s feelings are in contradiction to one’s body, the body, not the feelings, must be wrong. As such, people should live in line with their feelings, even if that means changing their bodies through reconstructive surgeries.

Scripture, however, teaches that all of us, without exception, are born with sinfully bent feelings and desires. As difficult as this may be for some to hear, transgender desires are sin-bent desires. They may be overwhelmingly strong desires – but a desire’s intensity doesn’t make it moral. The problem isn’t bodies; the problem for each of us is fallen desires. When we find that our desires are in contradiction to our bodies, it is not the body that is wrong, but the desires.¹ Transgender proponents (as with same-sex marriage and now thurple marriage proponents²) are encouraging people to define themselves by their desires. The logic goes like this:

Defined by desires:

- I am biologically male but I feel female; therefore I am a transgendered female.
- I am biologically female but I don’t feel male or female; therefore I am genderqueer.

It boils down to this: I feel (fill in the blank) therefore I am (fill in the blank) even if my body says otherwise. Further, it is argued that resisting one’s desires is unhealthy. So, if a biological male feels female or vice versa, he/she should be encouraged to act on

¹ It’s important to distinguish between transgenderism and intersex. Transgendered people have no physical defects; intersex people have chromosomes, genitalia, or sperm/egg

organs that do not allow them to be classified clearly as male or female. This is a physical/biological matter.

² We discussed these last month.

those feelings, even to surgically alter his/her gender specific organs to match his/her internal feelings.³

Scripture teaches otherwise. We are born with sin-bent desires. St. Paul speaks of many of these sin-bent desires throughout his letters. In Galatians 5 he tells us that the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit and then he lists several: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. Then he lists the fruit of the Spirit, among which he mentions self-control – something we must all pray for the Spirit to produce in us. He concludes with these words, “And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

In 1 Corinthians 6 Paul again details those who had been affirming and embracing their sin-bent desires: the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, men who practice homosexuality, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, and swindlers. But Paul writes, “such were some of you.” Then he concludes, “But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

Paul is encouraging all of us not to define ourselves by our desires, but by our inclusion in Christ. We have been washed, baptized into Christ. As such, we reason this way:

Defined by Christ

- I am a male/female who has been created by and redeemed by Christ, and I battle sin-bent desire x.

Our daily lives are defined by Christ’s call to yield our wills to the revealed will of the Creator. Martin Luther wrote of this as a daily dying to the desires of the fallen nature and a daily rising to the new man in

Christ. Every day (sometimes many times throughout the day) we must die to our sinful desires and desperately turn to Christ for help in resisting our sin-bent desires.

Transgender proponents argue that this is asking too much. On the one hand, they have rightly identified the seriousness of Christ’s call. It was Dietrich Bonhoeffer who famously wrote, “When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die.” Certainly that is no small call! On the other, they (and may I suggest we) have failed to appreciate Christ’s call to leave all sin in obedience to His call to follow. All Christians are called to die to lust, greed, envy, coveting, impatience, vulgarity, and selfishness – every day.

This is why we need Christ’s Church and the grace He so freely offers there through His Word and Sacraments. We, who Luther wrote, “daily sin much,” are not turned away when we turn to the Lord for forgiveness. We must not encourage anyone to embrace their sin-bent desires, but urge everyone to turn from them to Christ for mercy and grace and pray fervently that Christ would minister to us through His Word and Spirit so that we can resist sin’s lure and ultimately align our desires with His. May we pray fervently to this end. – Pastor Conner

³ Sex change operations have not been conclusively shown to improve the lives of people who struggle with transgender desires. In fact, many find themselves with

drastically altered bodies and persistent internal conflict.

BIBLICAL APOLOGETICS

Not to Win Arguments, but to Win People for Christ⁴ by Ryan C. MacPherson⁵

Apologetics can both intrigue and intimidate. Some people love to learn how to build strong arguments in favor of their viewpoint and to detect logical fallacies in their opponent's arguments. Other people fear they will quickly be outwitted by a superior debater. It turns out, however, that Christian apologetics truly is for everybody. The goal, however, is not to win the debate, but to win over the people with whom one is sharing the Christian worldview.

"Apologetics" comes from the Greek word *apologia*, which is translated as "defense" in 1 Peter 3:15—"in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense [*apologia*] to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect." Descriptively, the Bible tells of St. Paul engaging in "apologetics" when the Jewish leaders accused him of heresy (Acts 19:33; 22:1; 24:10; 25:8, 16; 26:1, 2, 24; Philippians 1:7, 16; 2 Timothy 4:16). Prescriptively, however, on the two occasions that Christ admonished His disciples concerning "apologetics," He explicitly told them not to prepare in advance but to trust simply in the Holy Spirit to provide them with the right words (Luke 12:11–12; 21:14–15).

So what about Christians today? Should we pursue training in rhetoric, as Saint Paul did, in order to

defend Christian doctrine against false teachings? Or, should we simply trust that the Holy Spirit will guide us in what to say when the time comes, as Christ advised His disciples? Both approaches are appropriate, and in fact the 1 Peter passage harmonizes them. Peter advises that we should be "**prepared to make a defense,**" but the preparation he has in mind is that we "**honor Christ the Lord as holy.**" To honor Christ is to gladly hear and learn His Word, as Luther taught in his explanation to the Third Commandment. When we meditate on God's Word, the Holy Spirit strengthens our faith (Romans 10:17) and prepares us for good works (2 Timothy 3:15–16).

Peter also suggests the kind of "defense [*apologia*]" we should be prepared to give. It is not a water-tight argument designed to make skeptics look like idiots. Rather, Peter urges us to express "the hope" that is in us and to do so "**with gentleness and respect.**" The occasion Peter has in mind is persecution: "**even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake ...**" (1 Peter 3:14). In the end, we desire for others to share the hope we have in Christ. As Paul explained in the middle of his "apologetics" presentation to King Agrippa, "**... I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains**" (Acts 26:29).

What lessons can we learn from these examples today?

First, trust in the Holy Spirit, not in your own intellect. Read and listen to Scripture regularly, so you know that God would have you place your hope always in Him. If you are inclined to build a strong case for God's existence or the fact that life begins at conception from natural law as well, then consider studying science, logic, and other pertinent subjects from a Christian perspective, but do not feel

⁴ This article was originally printed in Lutherans for Life's Winter 2014 *Life Date*

⁵ Ryan MacPherson, Ph.D., is a member of the LFL speakers bureau, teaches at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato,

Minnesota. He is also the founding president of The Hausvater Project (www.hausvater.org) and a personal friend of mine (Pastor Conner).

pressured to become an “expert” in these areas if God has not already given you that desire.

Second, listen to others so that you understand them, just as Saint Paul adjusted his preaching throughout the Book of Acts to reach a particular audience. Some people might support abortion because they do not realize a fetus is a living child in the womb; other people may know this full well, but deny it out of a sense of guilt from a previous choice. In the latter case, presenting further evidence for life in the womb will only increase the guilt and anger, driving a wedge between you and the person you with whom you are talking. Worse, it drives a wedge between that person and God. Such a person needs instead to learn of how forgiving Christ is.

Third, express your hope in God in a manner that it can also become their hope in God. Talk about the comfort you receive from God’s Word through your home devotions, through your favorite hymns at church, or through a recent Bible study you attended. Remember that your goal is not for the other person to assent intellectually to a check list of ingredients in your Christian worldview, but rather for the person’s heart to be inclined toward God who alone can supply that person’s deepest needs.

Does this kind of “apologetics” work? Yes, and sometimes dramatically! Both Norma McCorvey (the “Jane Roe” of *Roe v. Wade*) and Dr. Bernard Nathanson (the “abortion king” who introduced “pro-choice” rhetoric) repented of their sinful association with the culture of death. They became not merely pro-life advocates but—more importantly—forgiven children of God. In McCorvey’s case, a seven-year-old girl drew “Jesus Loves You” pictures that began to melt her heart; in Nathanson’s case, ultrasound images persuaded him that a fetus is a living child and the compassion of pro-life leaders introduced him to the forgiving love of Christ. Whether by coloring a picture or speaking words of compassion, may you, likewise, always be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you.

Good News from and to Zion Preschool

The December 17 Advent Service heard the Good News of Jesus’ birth sung by our preschool children. We appreciated their energy (and their families) at the service. The Good News of Jesus is shared and sung every day the preschool children gather under the professional instruction of Director Deb Fink and assistant Janice Nemitz. Preschool children gather in the nave every Wednesday for a time of worship and learning with Pastor Conner.

On December 18, Nate Knepper, licensing consultant from the Iowa Department of Human Services made his bi-annual accreditation visit to Zion Preschool. Zion preschool will continue to be accredited with strong affirmation from the licensing agency. Among the commendations: + excellent facilities (noting the enlarged learning space, attractive cupboard and entry areas); + outdoor play area that is safe, inviting, and fun; + excellent curriculum; + degreed and professionally engaged staff; + strong congregation and community support. Zion Preschool has also obtained a 4 Star (out of 5) rating from the Quality Rating System, and a “Toward Excellence” rating from Quality Preschool Performance Standards.

The excellence of Zion Preschool is a “team effort” from the congregation leadership (thanks Trustees), preschool board, and the staff. Zion preschool looks forward to preparing kids for the Kingdom and for a life time of learning in 2015 and well into the future.



December Highlights



Ladies Guild

The Ladies Guild met at noon for a potluck meal (December 10) with 14 members present. Our guests were Pastor Conner and family and church secretary, Shannon Walters.

Following the meal, President Schilling led the members in the League Pledge followed by Christian Life Chairman, Margaret Backhaus, reading the Christmas story from Luke and reminding us of the real meaning of Christmas. The mite box prayer was read and the mite box passed.

President Schilling then opened the business meeting in the name of our Triune God. The secretary's report was read and approved. It was announced that four ladies had perfect attendance for the year. They were Cheral Buhr, Bev Grundmeier, Audrey Roe and Susie Schilling. The treasurer and kitchen treasurer's reports were given. Audrey Roe, as Human Care Chairman, said the quilting group will not be meeting again until January 8th. She had given two quilts to the Kusel family and to the Sandage family as well as a quilt to the "adopt-a-family". She said the Quakerdale meal is planned for January. Following her report, Sunshine Chairman, Bev Grundmeier reported sending 8 cards last month and 78 cards during the year.

Circle #1 is hosting the December fellowship coffees with Thrivent providing the funds. Circle #1 also served the Bary Kusel funeral. Circle #2 served the George Musfeldt funeral. Circle #3 will serve for the Tom Grau funeral. If there is another funeral before the end of 2014, Circle 4 will be the next to serve. After the 1st of January, there will only be 3 circles and circle #3 will be next in line.

There was no Old Business. In New Business the Kinderfest cookie walk was discussed. There seemed to be plenty of cookies donated, but there was little help at the site. Ways will be explored to try and find people to work. The Kusel and Sandage benefits and the Advent by Candlelight reportedly went well.

The guild officers will meet and disburse the funds in the treasury before January 1st.

Plaza Bingo will be held on December 26th with Bev Grundmeier, Barb Anderson, Sandra Vahl and Cheral Buhr as workers. The January meeting will be on the 14th with hostesses Darlene Vollstedt and Janet Gruhn.

Pastor Conner ended the meeting with more thoughts on the Old Testament lesson and the gospel of Mark read the previous Sunday. He closed with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Puck, secretary



Charles, Cheryl, Caleb, Caitlin, Carissa, and Cassie Ferry Missionaries to Indonesia



Fall 2014

This was a busy month, and I haven't been home much since the last time we wrote. Right after our last newsletter went out, I was off to Singapore to catch up with Pastor Tom Chryst and to support one of our LCMS professors as he presented at a Reformation Day lecture.

Then it was directly off to Taiwan for a joint meeting of the Southern Asia and Asia Pacific regions of the LCMS. This was an incredible opportunity to gather together with other LCMS servants and meet many more members of my "team" working away from the US.

I returned home to Jakarta for all of eleven hours before it was time to head out once again. This time, I was heading to Medan, North Sumatra, to meet two teachers who were coming to Indonesia to present to gatherings of the GKLI, our local friendly church body here. Pastor Brent Kuhlman of Murdoch, Nebraska, and Deaconess Dr. Cynthia Lumley of Westfield House, Cambridge, UK, agreed to come and teach at two different locations.

After a day of orientation in Medan, we traveled with the GKLI Bishop to Pekanbaru, in Riau Province. We gave presentations to about 50 Lutherans, and spent time getting to know them. Then it was off to Sibolga, in North Sumatra. There, we presented to another 50-or-so, sang together, prayed together, and answered lots of questions.



Pastor Ferry, Pastor Kuhlman, and Dr. Lumley with several of the GKLI ladies attending the theological conference in Pekanbaru, Riau, Indonesia

S-LAMAT

The Indonesian Lutherans here do not have the benefit of the theological education that we so often take for granted in the US. So these theological conferences are vital for furthering their education. These particular seminars were attended by pastors, elders, and other lay leaders from their congregations, and some traveled quite a distance to attend. Your LCMS is making a huge difference in many lives through these conferences.

I was able to return just a few days ago, and have been spending time with my wife and children after nearly the whole month apart. They held up just fine during my absence, despite continued battles with water outages and some days lacking electricity. They keep doing school, taking walks in the neighborhood, and generally living life in perpetual summer here even while it starts snowing in the US.

As we prepare to have our Thanksgiving with chicken instead of turkey, we still spend the day giving thanks for our partnership with you. We are incredibly grateful for your friendship and your prayers, knowing that we are being remembered before our Lord's throne of grace.

Prayers, Praises, and Thanksgiving

- Thanksgiving for all our partners who have made this work possible, and who continue faithfully giving for our support!
- Thanksgiving for a great set of theological conferences, well-received by all the participants
- Thanksgiving for safety of the Ferry Family during recent separation
- For *ongoing* pledged support, that we might continue serving overseas according to our Lord's will;
- That our gracious Lord Jesus would grant His wisdom and grace, so many would be blessed by the work we're doing in Indonesia.

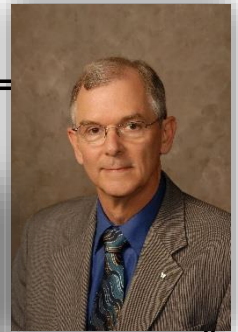
[What You Can Do:]

from

Dr. James Lamb
of



Lutherans
For Life



January 18th is Life Sunday and YOU can make a difference. There is MUCH You can do. Below are a few specific action items that Dr. James Lamb, President of Lutherans for Life (www.lutheransforlife.org), has provided specifically for you. Read them and start doing what you CAN do.

Six things you can do to help post-abortive men and women.

1. Pray that God would provide opportunities for healing through His Gospel message.
2. Inform yourself about the struggles of post-abortive women and men. Materials available from LFL.
3. Make people aware of LFL's *Word of Hope* national "hotline" where Gospel-centered counseling is provided. (1-888-217-8679)
4. Place brochures for *Word of Hope* in the bathroom stalls of your church—men and women's. A discreet place to pick one up.
5. Do ministry with the assumption that there are post-abortive women and men in your congregation.
6. Be open to preaching and teaching on this subject.

Eight things you can do to help affirm life:

1. Pray for a more life-affirming culture and church.
2. View LFL's DVD, the *Handiwork of God* and use the Bible study.
3. Pray for pregnant women and their babies.
4. Tell your pastor when you are pregnant so he can bless your unborn child at the communion rail.
5. Support Pregnancy Centers.
6. Visit those in nursing homes.
7. Visit the home bound members of your congregation.
8. Find things for those in 6-7 above to do to serve the church as they are able.
9. View LFL's DVD, *The Other End of Life* and use the Bible study.

Nine things you can do to stop abortion.

1. Pray for those in crisis pregnancies that they may chose life.
2. Pray that God would change the heart of our nation and its leaders.
3. Support pregnancy centers.
4. Support ultra-sound usage at pregnancy centers.
5. Educate yourself and others about the spiritual nature of abortion. Use LFL's *Matters of the Heart* Life Sunday materials for 2015.
6. Picket abortion facilities.
7. Do prayer vigils at abortion facilities.
8. Participate in 40 Days for Life.
9. Vote for life-affirming candidates.



!Amigos En Cristo!
News from IDW Hispanic Ministry
Missionary/Pastor Daniel Vogel

Iowa District West, LCMS
Year 11, Issue 1, January 2014

!Feliz ano Nuevo! Happy New Year!: To all of our prayer partners we thank you for another year of support and blessings. As we enter our 11th year of ministry we pray God's grace and blessings as together we share the Gospel of Jesus' love for all the world.

Annual Unity/Thanksgiving Service: For the 7th year our Iowa District West Hispanic congregations have met to worship and fellowship together on the Sunday before Thanksgiving. This year for the first time our fourth Hispanic church from Des Moines joined us. It was a joy-filled day with more than 75 in attendance. In the past we were blessed to meet at Trinity in Odebolt. This year we met at Zion in Manning as it is now more central. We gathered to celebrate our united faith in the Lutheran Reformation and so with song and worship we remembered our spiritual blessings. Rev. Eric Moeller of Storm Lake was the preacher. Pastors Lincon Guerra of Des Moines, Henry Witte of Sioux City and myself of Denison were the liturgists. Pastor Witte and I played our brass instruments and our choir from Denison sang "Amigos en Cristo." We thank Zion Manning for their hospitality and support and hope we can continue this special annual tradition in the future.

Our Voters are Moving Forward: Our new church, Amigos en Cristo Evangelical Lutheran Church, is moving forward to become a member of Iowa District West, LCMS. Last month our members met twice to consider our new Constitution, a Budget for 2015 and our future together. This process is a major historic effort for each of our Hispanic immigrants. Please pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ as we move forward in 2015.

Advent/Posada Time: Our unique Hispanic Advent home celebrations began last month at the home (the Posada) of Alejandro and Faviola Orizaba. We sang, we read God's Word in Spanish and English (for the children) and of course we ate great food. Each week we will fill the home of a family from our church to tell the true story of the coming of the Savior. This makes Christmas a special time as we remember Jose and Mary seeking refuge in Bethlehem and in our hearts.

Welcome Missionaries Schullers: Last month, Pastor Rick and Gema Schuller, our friends from Houston, Texas, visited Mission Central as they prepare to serve as missionaries to Puerto Rico. They spent the week with us. They also helped us with our Posada service. Pastor Rick and Gema have more than 30 years of mission experience in the U.S. and foreign fields. God bless and keep the Schullers.

Tyson Chaplaincy in Denison: The greatest blessing at Tyson is the privilege I have to serve the spiritual needs of the plant workers. Last month Simon came to me at break time and asked me to pray for him and his family. After 20 years of marriage he was going through a divorce and didn't feel like there was a chance of reconciliation. He was very anxious. So we prayed right in the busy hallway that God in His mercy would guide, comfort and strengthen Simon through his work and through this difficult family time.

Please Pray: + In thanksgiving for our annual Unity joint worship service. + For the honor of serving Advent services at the churches in Kiron and Deloit. + For God's Christmas blessings as we worship the Christ Child with special services. + In thanksgiving for our Hispanic voters as we finalize the process of affiliating with Iowa District West, LCMS. + For my work as a Chaplain at Tyson and for opportunities to share the Gospel in the workplace. + 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 in Denison and in our other three Hispanic missions.

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January Birthdays and Anniversaries @ Zion

1. Greg Neumann
2. Jennifer Morris
Joel Musfeldt
Alex Ranniger
Rachel Winter
4. Alexis Dawson
Karen Kienast
5. Kenneth Knudson
Kyle Lohrmann
6. Dawn Ketchum
Betty Maasen
8. Amy Hansen
9. Bode England
10. Eli Rood
11. Amy Benton
Glen Kusel
12. Charles Fielweber
Daniel Grove
Jacki Nusbaum
John Opperman
14. Kamryn Leslie
David Page
15. Kari Deal
Kenneth Eischeid
Jaclyn Garrison
Colene Lohrmann
16. Chase Alexander
Mike Kuchel
Jenna Soll
Shona Weitl
17. Kevin Grimm

18. Paul Christensen
Sarah Gruhn
Sara Kobus
Brian Lamp
Noah Martin
Sonia Nulle
19. David Bohlmann
Joe Karsten
Cynthia Ranniger
22. Crystal Dreher
Bryce Mohr
Gary Schroeder
Stephanie Winter
23. Donna Forman
25. Lucas Borkowski
Tabitha Kuchel
William Weitl
27. Marshall Hansen
Deb Knueven
28. Riley Adams
Kelly Ceminski
Karen Joens
Kemper Nelson
Lowell Schroeder
29. Mary Greiving
Stacie Nelson
Robert Riggert
30. Michael Frank
31. Grant Behrens
Barbara Rood
Philip Vogel

HAPPY
ANNIVERSARY

1. Kyle & Jill Arp
Stanley & Lori Musfeldt
6. Mike & Judy Jacobsen
8. Rodney & Kristin Backhaus
9. Curits & Nancy Grimm
12. Steve & Erin Renze
14. Curt & Rexanne Struve
20. Charles & Marlyn Fielweber
22. Kenneth & Dorothy Knudson

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

Happy
Birthday