

The SOLEMN Time is Coming

We are a people who struggles with solemnity and reflective thought. A constant media stream of talking heads, virtual pleasures, and intoxicating entertainments invite us to jet ski over the ocean depths of life. But then Lent comes. Lent calls us to stop our frenetic, inch-deep jet skiing and reflect upon the solemnity of the season.

On the far side of Lent a great celebration awaits – Easter. But on the near side stands a cross. Lent forces us to look at the cross. Jesus Christ hangs on it – bloody, bruised, beaten, and pierced. Why?

The great Lutheran hymn writer Paul Gerhardt asked this question in his hymn *Upon the Cross Extended*: “Who is it, Lord, that bruised You? Who has so sore abused You and caused You all Your woe?” But He knows the answer: “We all must make confession Of sin and dire transgression While You no ways of evil know.”

Gerhardt owns his sin in the next verse: “I caused Your grief and sighing By evils multiplying As countless as the sands. I caused the woes unnumbered With which Your soul is cumbered, Your sorrows raised by wicked hands.”

Lent forces us to see the blood on our wicked hands and calls us to confession. We stand guilty. This is no small matter. We stand guilty before a holy and righteous God, a perfect Judge who will not be deceived by clever justifications, pathetic excuses, or diversionary blaming. He sees our hearts, our deeds, and our motives with perfect, penetrating vision.

And the cross is what He thinks of it. The hymn writer Thoma Kelly captured this reality in verse three of *Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted*: “Ye who think of sin but lightly Nor suppose the evil great Here may view its nature rightly, Here its guilt may estimate. Mark the sacrifice appointed, See who bears the awful load; 'Tis the Word, the Lord's anointed, Son of Man and Son of God.” The cross is what God thinks of sin: it deserves death.

But astonishingly, Christ stands in our stead and dies the death we deserve. Bernard of Clairvaux, writing nearly 1,000 years ago, captured this wonder in his hymn *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*: “What Thou, my Lord, hast suffered Was all for sinners' gain; Mine, mine was the transgression, But Thine the deadly pain. Lo, here I fall, my Savior! 'Tis I deserve Thy place; Look on me with Thy favor, And grant to me Thy grace.”

Christ hangs. We don't. God has mercy on us by pouring His wrath on Christ.

Lent is the preparation for this event. Lent calls us to reflect, to search our souls for the sin that we have hidden in the cellars of our heart. It must be named. It must be exposed. It must go. This is why Lent is sometimes referred to as “the solemn season.” Sin is a matter of great solemnity. For this reason we bury our alleluias and dampen our joy during Lent. Easter will come, our alleluias will be resurrected, and our joy will be restored – but first the cross.

An 11th century hymn, *Alleluia, Song of Gladness*, which we sing just before Lent, expresses this reality: “Alleluia cannot always Be our song while here below; Alleluia, our transgressions Make us for a while forgo; For the solemn time is coming When our tears for sin must flow.”

But even in the midst of our sin-sorrowed tears we cling to the joyful hope of Easter. Our last words before entering Lent echo in verse four of the aforementioned hymn: “Therefore in our hymns we pray Thee, Grant, us blessed Trinity, At the last to keep Thine Easter With Thy faithful saints on high; There to Thee forever singing Alleluia joyfully.”

Lent begins February 18th. The solemn time is coming. May we appreciate the significance of its solemnity, rightly repent of our sins, and look with joyful hope to Easter. – Pastor Conner



MINISTRY APPS—Zion Lutheran – February 2015

Applying the Gospel to Hearts and Homes

The Gospel in the Book of Psalms

"In the Psalms one sees into the hearts of all the saints, as into a fair and pleasant garden—as into heaven itself" (Martin Luther). Twenty Zion members enter the "garden" of the Psalms every Thursday morning at 9:45 a.m. "Selected Psalms" is our present LifeLight focus. It's still early in the course sequence. Understanding the Hebrew poetry of the Psalms unlocks the truths of the Psalms which are so central in our corporate and individual worship. Additional class members are welcome. Pastor Riggert facilitates the weekly study.

The Gospel Message: The Cross

Lent is early this year—beginning with the Ash Wednesday service on February 18. This year's Lenten focus will be "The Parables of Lent." Each week one of Jesus' stories will provide an opportunity to review the ultimate Story—the suffering and death of Jesus. Besides the individual meditation and reflection, Lent provides an opportunity for the FAMILY to focus on the cross of Jesus. The services will include special opportunities for CHILDREN to gather at the cross of Jesus. The Lenten services at Zion are designed to be family-friendly. The weekly Lenten schedule includes:
Worship: 5:45

Fellowship meal: 6:30

Midweek (grades 5-8) classes: 7 p.m.


Living the Gospel by Feeding the Hungry

"For I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me." Matthew 25:35

Responding to the physical needs of our neighbors, we demonstrate the love and concern of Jesus. The C-3 initiative brings the love of Christ to the community as we partner with brothers and sisters in Christ to care for one another. Praise God for the vision; donations of time, talent and treasure; and the prayer support which now makes a community FOOD PANTRY a reality. In partnership with New Opportunities the pantry will be open each Saturday morning from 8 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Individuals and families needing assistance are encouraged to contact New Opportunities (712-791-9266) to learn about the application process. The partnership with New Opportunities provides a broader network of services. Zion members can help with this new community ministry by:

- Continuing to donate food items (your donations are especially critical the first three months until we can receive assistance through other State resources)
- Giving monetary gifts to purchase food and other items
- Serving as a volunteer—stocking shelves, assisting with distribution, etc.

IKM-Manning Schools, C-3, and community churches will partner in a "Wolf Pack for Hunger" event on Wednesday, April 8, with food packaging from 3:30 to 7:30. Much more information will be coming on this event. If the community can raise \$12,500 we buy the resources to package 50,000 meals and provide a meal for 300,000 people. Generous contributions are needed. – Pastor Riggert



Celebrating as STEWARDS

Generosity

*Celebrating Generosity
in Zion Members*

“For they gave according to their means . . . and beyond their means, of their own accord . . . and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.” 1 Cor. 9:3-5

As the Apostle Paul commended the Macedonian Christians for their gifts to the church, so too can the members of Zion be commended for their gifts to the mission and ministry of Zion in 2014. A budget of almost \$260,000 was adopted by the Voters’ Assembly for the year. By God’s grace over \$278,000 was contributed. The generous gifts (\$180,000) to the “Generations” campaign were in addition to the budget gifts. Thanks be to God and to His Spirit-led generous people. Because of the additional resources, the Church Council has decided to pay off the \$30,000 Lutheran Church Extension Fund note (for previous facility improvements). Zion is debt free!

The Voters’ Assembly (December 2014) has adopted a budget of almost \$274,000 for 2015. We invite every member to experience the joy of giving and supporting the mission and ministry of Zion. If you have not picked up your 2015 offering envelopes, they can be picked up in the fellowship hall. If you would prefer online giving, please contact Jeff Hargens or Amber Neumann.

Celebrating Vocation

Stewardship Committee chairperson Rick Lohrman and the pastors have selected a stewardship emphasis of “Generations in Vocation” for 2015. The theme invites us to celebrate our privilege and responsibility as stewards in every role (vocation) of

our lives. Stewardship is ALL of life. Monthly themes include:

- February**—Vocation is motivated by LOVE
- March**—Vocation is lived under the CROSS
- April**—Vocation and the LAND
- May**—Vocation as God’s WOMEN
- June**—Vocation as God’s MEN
- July**—Vocation and CITIZENSHIP
- August**—Vocation as TEACHERS and LEARNERS
- September**—Vocation as LABORERS
- October**—Vocation and CHURCH MEMBERSHIP
- November**—Vocation and GIFT GIVING
- December**—Vocation and GIFT RECEIVING

Celebrating “Generations”

The Generations Campaign continues. God-willing the next weeks will see construction of a family handicapped restroom along the east wall of the fellowship hall and the construction of a youth room on the lower level (locker room area). The Building Committee met with the architect in mid-December to review plans for these projects as well as to finalize some thoughts on improvements in the office area, education wing, and fellowship hall. Information on costs of those improvements and other details will be shared and explored when the architect’s report is received. In addition the additional sanctuary furniture (baptismal font, pulpit, lectern, etc.) should be arriving soon and will be dedicated shortly upon its arrival. – Pastor Riggert

Bowling Party!



Zion’s Board of Education is sponsoring a congregational bowling party in Manning.

Date: Sunday, February 22

Time: 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Cost: FREE!

Details: One game, shoes, and snacks are provided

Sign up in advance in the Fellowship Hall!



The Sanctified Imagination

Apple, Hollywood, the NFL, Xbox, Bud Light, McDonald's, Acura, and Under Armour all have one thing in common. It's bigger than trying to sell a product or to gain a larger market share. What they're really after is your imagination.

They know what too few of us have realized: whatever captures our imagination, captures us.

Whatever captures our imagination, captures us.

A brief look around our homes will reveal this truth. Their products line our shelves, their songs fill our playlists, their stories replay in our minds, their beverages are in our fridges, their games are on our screens, their wrappers are in our garbage, and their logos have branded our children.

None of them is necessarily bad, for God "richly provides us with everything to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17). It's not wrong to own an iPad, rent a movie, watch a football game, drink Bud Light, or enjoy a Happy Meal, but it is dangerous. And that's not just because fallen man might find a way to use these products for ill. Remember, these companies aren't simply selling you a product; they're luring your imagination. And the thing that captures our imagination, captures us.

As Christians, we have been "captured" by another: Jesus Christ. Scripture describes us as "redeemed" (1 Pet. 1:18), "chosen" (1 Pet. 2:9), and "ransomed" (Rev. 5:9). We are called God's "possession" (1 Pet. 2:9), "people" (2 Cor. 6:16), and "sheep" (John 10:27). Our imaginations belong to Him. Scripture calls us to take our thoughts captive to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5), to be transformed through the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2), and to "think about these things:" truth, honor, justice, purity, loveliness, goodness, excellence, and praiseworthy goods (Phil. 4:8). In other words, we are called to cultivate Christian imaginations.

Two questions immediately arise: *why* and *how*. Beyond the bare command of God, *why* should we cultivate Christian imaginations and *how* are we to do it?

Why should we cultivate a Christian imagination?

While God does claim sovereignty over our thoughts, the reason for aligning our imagination with Him is bigger than just obedience. In their recent book *Imagination Redeemed*, Gene Veith and Matthew Ristuccia point out the good that results from a sanctified imagination: "When God captures our imagination, he captures the rest of our mind, including our understanding and our will." As we observed before: whatever captures our imagination, captures us. We will give our time, our resources, and our thought life to the thing that captivates us. Who is more worthy of our captivated imagination than God Himself?

How do we cultivate a Christian imagination?

As with most things of great value, there's no shortcut. Veith and Ristuccia observe, "A Christian imagination comes, above all, from reading the Bible continually, studying it, meditating on it, and just saturating your mind and your imagination with the Word of God." There's simply no shortcut to this.

They add, "Hearing good preaching week in and week out can profoundly shape a Christian worldview and a Christian imagination." By "good preaching" they aren't referring to the preacher's speaking skill or to his ability to tell a good story; they're talking about good, solid, Biblical Law/Gospel preaching. They further observe, "Life in the church at every level will help you cultivate a Christian imagination." This includes faithfully hearing the Word read and preached, receiving the Sacrament of the Altar, singing the Church's hymnody, and learning the Church's liturgy. These rituals coupled with personal and corporate (group) study of Scripture will cultivate a Christian imagination and leave you captivated with Christ. – Pastor Conner



Defeating Fear and Becoming Manly Men

Last month we examined the distinctive marks of Godly fathers and learned that Godly fathers do three things:

1. They walk a good path in the sight of their son, thereby communicating, "It can be done."
2. They occasionally turn around and look at their son, thereby communicating, "You're not alone."
3. They confidently follow the Lord, trusting their son will follow, thereby communicating, "I believe in you."

This month we transition from the Godly father or father-figure to the Godly brother-figure. As Dr. Crabb explains, "Fathers encourage by leading the way, by walking *ahead* of us on the path. Brothers encourage by sharing our struggles, by walking *with* us." Dr. Crabb argues that men benefit from a peer "with whom they [feel] no shame," someone they feel comfortable sharing deep struggles and painful secrets.

Men who lack such brother-figures (and most do) struggle in three distinct ways to be a manly man.

Effect 1: Weakened courage to face life's unknowns.

Despite what women may think and despite the confident way men often act, most men struggle with fears of inadequacy and insufficiency. They deeply fear being exposed as incompetent. Further, many men have secret struggles and temptations that they hide deep within their beings.

A mature brother-figure provides a safe outlet for men to share their fears and secrets with a peer who understands and listens without reproach. Men who lack a mature brother-figure lack that safe outlet and expend a lot of energy concealing their secrets and

struggles and avoiding the uncertainties of life. His defensive posture that he must maintain to hide his struggles and secrets keeps him from moving forward with confidence into the uncertainties of life, and thereby from being a manly man.

Effect 2: Isolation

Secrets isolate. Crabb says secrets leave us feeling "alone, disconnected, shut out, like strangers in a crowd in which we want to belong. Secrets create distance." This can become especially damaging in a man's relationship to God. No matter how he might act on the outside, the man isolated by his secrets "is always looking down, away from the possibility of contact with anyone's eyes, especially God's." Crabb continues,

The effect is serious. Not only do secret-keepers feel that some part of them remains disengaged during routine conversations, but when the topic turns to spiritual things, these men feel more like eavesdroppers than participants... They find little comfort in thoughts about God. Neither prayer nor Bible study connects with the hunger within them.

Forgetting God becomes a way of life... Remembering God, thinking about him, speaking with others about him, feels stiff and forced. Sexual thoughts, or discussions about the last football game, connect far more powerfully with something deep inside. And keeping God out of our minds makes it easier to enjoy our secret sins.

Men with secrets do not remember God the way he wants to be remembered. They therefore fail to keep the memory alive or to pass it on to others.

This is a very important point. Men without brother-figures with whom they can share their struggles, fears, and secrets isolate themselves from one another and ultimately from God. It's simply too difficult to move closer to a God from whom one is keeping secrets.

Effect 3: Eroded confidence to bring order and build beauty in the lives around them through their vocations.

Men bound by secrets struggle to move beyond their fears and their perceived inadequacies. They can scarcely imagine themselves bringing order and beauty into other people's lives through their God-given vocations. They are more likely to be paralyzed by their fears and failures, believing they are such a mess that they could never truly be a blessing to someone else. Further, they fear leadership in any area that they don't feel instantly competent. Their fear of failure keeps them from moving with confidence into the unscripted areas of life where God may be calling them.

A Godly brother-figure, however, can change that. Dr. Crabb explains,

Something happens within a man when he makes known to another man that which is least attractive about himself. When we share our secrets with a brother, something happens that will happen in no other way. Pouring our hearts out before God is foundational. But presenting ourselves as we really are, with every secret laid bare, to one other human being puts us in touch with the liberating power of God's grace in a manner that no secret-keeper will ever know.

And when this happens, Dr. Crabb argues that men hear three life-giving messages. We quote him at length:

1. Nothing you are or have ever done dooms you to defeat. God's arm is long enough to reach into the deepest black hole, and strong enough to lift you out. We will walk together, with courage to face life honestly that nothing can take from us. *Together we will look into the dark, terrifying confusion of life.*

2. You have something powerful to give. Your secrets do not define you. Beneath your worst failure and deepest wound lies a man, a bearer of God's image, who can know God and reveal him only in community. With hope and joy you can look into the face of God. You can remember him and pass the memory along until the memory yields to the dazzling reality of his presence. You have something to say. So do I. *Together we will seek to know God and to realize the vision he has for our lives.*

3. There is a calling on your life that no secret can remove. God has made the mystifying choice to work through redeemed failures. And we continue to fail; but we are men with an appetite for God, an appetite that keeps us moving into the mystery, where he can be most fully revealed. We are men called by God to restore the order of his design and to release the beauty of his character until the day when he will stun us all with the order of a new world and with the beauty of Christ revealed in his children. *Until then, together we will speak into the dark reality of this world, on his behalf.*

Imagine if men consistently heard these messages! It too few will, but this can change – one man at a time. If you're a man, is there a brother-figure you can seek out? Is there a man to whom you can be a brother? Together you can become the Godly and manly men God has called you to be. – Pastor Conner



Talking about Tithing

WARNING! This article is about money – *your* money. If you continue reading you may have your current financial practices challenged by God's Word. The only safe thing to do is to pull out your usual defenses for when people start talking about tithing:

- The New Testament doesn't command the tithe.
- Tithing is legalistic.
- I can't afford it.

There, now you've safely insulated yourself from the actual content and reasoning of this article. No matter what you read from here forward, you can dismiss it with one of your favorite one-liners.

Except, this article is about your excuses.

We begin with excuse #1: ***The New Testament doesn't command the tithe.***

Good news! You're right. The New Testament doesn't command us to tithe (to give 10%) on our income. That was an Old Testament law. Israel was commanded to tithe so they could support the temple, the priests and Levites, and the daily sacrifices (Lev. 27:30; Num. 18:21, 25-26).

That means that so much of the stuff you hear on tithing is misguided. First, anyone who makes tithing sound like a law of God that *directly* applies to His New Testament church is simply wrong. St. Paul writes in Colossians 2, "let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ." Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament law. We do not live under it.

Second, anyone who tells you, "If you tithe, God WILL bless you financially" or "If you don't tithe, God WILL punish you financially" is also wrong. Many like to quote God's words from Malachi 3,

Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.

But these words were spoken to God's people who were living under the Old Testament law. It's not that there aren't promises in the New Testament for faithfulness; there are. Jesus promises,

Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life (Mk. 10:29-30).

And St. Paul writes, "Godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). And Peter says, "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit..." (1 Peter 3:10).

All things being equal, a life lived in faithful obedience to God will be more blessed than a life lived in disobedience, but we must remember that our lives are lived in the shadow of the cross. Faithfulness to God may bring suffering. Following Jesus may require us to bear a cross.

So, tithing isn't a law we must slavishly obey and it isn't a guaranteed method to secure God's financial blessing.

Excuse #2: ***Tithing is legalistic.***

You were right on excuse #1. You may be right on excuse #2. If someone adds tithing as a binding law for the New Testament church, he is making tithing legalistic. But tithing doesn't have to be legalistic. Just ask any mature Christian who tithes. You can't pay them enough not to tithe. They know, as Jesus taught them, that their heart ALWAYS follows their money and they are joyfully putting their money where they want their hearts to be – into God's

hands. Further, they joyfully tithe because they understand that their vocation as church member makes a claim on them and it is right and proper for them to respond with their tithe. They understand that their tithe supports the ministry of the Word and the continued preaching and administering of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If you ask them, legalism is the last thing on their minds when they tithe.

Excuse #3: *I can't afford it.*

You were right on excuse #1, possibly right on excuse #2, but in all likelihood your excuses against tithing have run up against the hard shores of truth with excuse #3. Before we address your situation, consider the situation of a brother Christian in China. Brother Yun writes in his autobiographic account (available in the church library) of persecution in China of his various incarcerations for worshiping Jesus. He tells of his fellow Christians in prison who received \$3.00 per month to pay for all of their personal care items: toothpaste, toilet paper, deodorant, etc. The first thing these Christians did when they received their \$3.00 was set aside a tithe (30 cents) that they could share with their church when they were released from prison.

It's time for some honest questions and some straight talk about tithing. First, can you really not afford to tithe? There may be extreme circumstances, but yours probably isn't it (one could argue Brother Yun's circumstance was extreme, but he didn't). If your income was reduced by 10% would you starve? You might have to go without some of the small luxuries that you currently enjoy: cable TV, a smart phone, eating out, one of your magazine subscriptions, a few of your convenience store purchases, etc. Or, it might require bigger sacrifices like selling your new car that you can't afford and buying a less prestigious used car that you can. Or it might mean foregoing the frequent visits to the sports arena or theater or shopping trips. Or it might require you to make a budget and get out of debt. Might it be the case that you can afford to tithe; but what you can't afford is your lifestyle? That's a hard

reality to face, but truth is always better than deception.

Second, while the New Testament doesn't command us to tithe, it speaks repeatedly about giving. St. Paul writes, "On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper..." (1 Cor. 16:2). Again he writes,

Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work (2 Cor. 9:6-8).

And finally, speaking of giving, Paul writes, "as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you — see that you excel in this act of grace also" (2 Cor. 8:7). So the New Testament speaks of giving

- Voluntarily and cheerfully
- Proportionately
- Faithfully
- As an act of grace in which to excel

Tithing seems to be a reasonable place to start. Further, if we are to *excel* in the grace of giving, does anything less than the Old Testament tithe qualify? Ask yourself, have you, the recipients of the grace and truth of Jesus Christ, received more or less than God's Old Testament saints? If we answer "more," should our response in giving be less than theirs?

If you've been keeping tithing at bay, ask yourself why: What are you afraid of? What are your hang-ups? What are your excuses? What piece of your lifestyle are you resistant to change? Now ask yourself what you might gain – not financially gain, but spiritually gain. Why do Christians who tithe do it so joyfully? What have they found that you haven't? And still further, how might your tithe bless the ministry of the Word? It's time to talk about tithing. Want to continue the conversation? Come visit with Pastor Conner.

The Beautiful Ordinary Life

I want to change the world.

I want to do something significant with my life.

I want to live a life that matters.

I want to live my dream.

Sound familiar? It's the doctrine of our age. Youths and young adults are taught through music, movies, and social media to parrot this doctrine: lives that matter are edgy, radical, extreme, alternative, revolutionary, or world-changing. Few question this doctrine. Christians should (for an excellent book that addresses this, read Michael Horton's *Ordinary*).

Why?

It leaves youths vulnerable.

Adults who've watched their hair gray have seen dozens of "edgy, radical, extreme, alternative, revolutionary, and world-changing" causes come and go. Youths haven't. When they imbibe the doctrine of our age they make themselves vulnerable to the latest "radical" cause. They can be easily co-opted into causes they don't understand in the name of "edgy, extreme, alternative, world-changing" promises. Many are the youths who have been duped by savvy politicians or revolutionaries echoing the "world-changing" rhetoric of the age. Few realize it, but the doctrine of our age dulls discernment with the lure of significance. Non-discerning people are vulnerable people.

Vocation. Vocation. Vocation.

The problem with the doctrine of our age is that it attaches significance and meaning only to the extraordinary and rips it away from the ordinary. Distributing humanitarian aid in a war-torn African

village is far more extreme than making breakfast for your crabby children. Being in the first wave of a new movement is far more exciting than being a member of a local church. Being on the cutting-edge of technology or style is far more significant than cutting coupons for your weekly grocery run.

The doctrine of our age belittles the ordinary and robs it of its beauty and significance. But in God's eyes ordinary vocations such as church member, spouse, parent, and neighbor are beautiful because through these vocations he channels His love to His creation. The father who play-wrestles with his children or leads family devotions before bed is doing a beautiful thing and God is channeling His love through him. The mother who scrubs the grass stains out of her children's clothes or wipes her baby's nose for the hundredth time is doing a beautiful thing and God is channeling His love through her. The spouse who washes the dishes or mows the lawn is doing a beautiful thing and God is channeling His love through him or her. The person who cries with a grieving neighbor or brings a meal to a new parent is doing a beautiful thing and God is channeling His love through him.

Martin Luther wrote of a majesty that was concealed in these ordinary vocations, a majesty that God revealed to the eyes of faith that had been trained by God's Word to see vocations as God sees them. The doctrine of this age, however, misses this majesty and teaches people to look beyond the ordinary vocations for significance. This leaves them restless and discontent. It's not enough to be a faithful spouse, loving parent, and committed church member because these aren't edgy or extreme enough.

Further, it encourages people to neglect their primary vocations (church member, spouse, parent, child, neighbor) in the name of their personal dreams. As a result, friends, family, and neighbors are reduced to supporting cast members in the individual's personal movie. And if truth be told, it's far easier to chase your personal dreams than to sacrifice them for the well-being of another. It's

easier to love a cause than to love your neighbor. Many of the significance-promising cutting-edge, radical, alternative, and innovative lifestyles require less of us than the ordinary vocations to which God calls us. Managing your elderly parent's medications, paying her bills, and cleaning her bathrooms demands more from you than managing a trend-setting blog. Feeding your family every day, balancing your children's schoolwork and extracurricular activities, and being consistently loving to your wife or respectful to your husband requires more from you than leading short term mission trips. Someone once put it this way: everyone wants a revolution; no one wants to do the dishes.

When people are indoctrinated in the mindset of the age they are led to resent the very people they're called to serve in their vocations because they stand in the way of their personal dreams and desire for significance. Their ordinary vocations call them to die to their dreams for the well-being of others.

As Christians, we need to remember that God works through the ordinary. God attaches His Word to ordinary water and forgives sins. God attaches His Word to ordinary bread and wine and gives salvation. Every week God gathers ordinary people around ordinary means to give His extraordinary gifts. God blesses the ordinary. In God's eyes the ordinary is beautiful. Baptism is beautiful. The Lord's Supper is beautiful. And the ordinary vocations are beautiful. Yes, God may call individuals to extraordinary endeavors, but that takes nothing away from the beauty found within ordinary vocations.

The doctrine of our age is a lie. It implies that the ordinary lacks significance and beauty. Scripture teaches otherwise. To save our youth and young adults from the disappointment and depression that the doctrine of our age will bring as the edgy dulls, the extreme fades, the revolutionary fizzles, and the demands of the ordinary impede the achievement of their dreams, we need to re-discover the beautiful, ordinary life. The ordinary is significant. The ordinary is beautiful. – Pastor Conner

January was an exciting time for my family- our son Jeff was united in marriage to his love Michelle on January 7th at Sunset Beach Montego Bay, Jamaica. It was a beautiful wedding ceremony at sunset next to the beach.

I found myself in the emergency room early in the morning on January 21st with an unusual virus that attacked the cartilage behind my ribs. Very painful! I want to thank the parents for their understanding of rescheduling Dad's Night. I especially say thank you to Janice Nemitz, Shannon Walters and Kristy Hugeback for all your extra work.

Zion Preschoolers will be singing February 15th.

Zion Preschool is accepting registrations for next year. You may enroll your child (morning class 3 years old by Sept. 15) or (afternoon class 4 years old by Sept. 15) by picking up a registration form at the church office. Space is limited.

We are collecting empty cereal boxes; please save for the preschool.

Serving Him,
Deb Fink





RESPONDING with



Recently, nine democrat legislators have proposed a bill in the Iowa House to legalize physician-assisted suicide. The bill, House File 65, also known as the Iowa Death With Dignity Act provides for a patient, who is deemed mentally competent, to request physician-assisted suicide. Below is an excerpt of an article on how Christians can respond to physician-assisted suicide by Dr. James Lamb, president of Lutherans for Life (The entire article can be found here: <http://www.lutheransforlife.org/article/questions-and-answers-concerning-the-end-of-life/>)

Where should the Christian begin in discussing assisted suicide? We begin with the value and purpose that God gives to life regardless of circumstances. God creates life, He redeems life in Jesus, and He desires to call every life into a relationship with Him.

How does this relate to assisted suicide? Assisted-suicide advocates speak of the “quality of life” and claim that life’s value and purpose diminish with diminished physical and mental capability. But when value and purpose come from God, then diminished capabilities are irrelevant. “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9a). Still, can’t we see death as our friend? When a Christian dies, suffering ceases and there is eternal peace. Death is not our friend. Death is our enemy and foreign to God’s intentions. Death results from sin and should be equated with God’s wrath. But Paul said, “My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better” (Philippians 1:23). What’s wrong with wanting this “far better”? There is nothing wrong with wanting this. But Paul says in the next verse, “But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.” We live in the tension between the “far better” of being with Christ and the “more necessary” of continued living. God is in charge of the more necessary.

Assisted suicide is often paired with euthanasia. What’s the difference? The difference is in who does the last act that causes death. In physician-assisted suicide, the doctor prescribes the pills. The recipient does the last act that causes death by taking the pills. In euthanasia, someone else does the last act, usually a lethal injection. I notice that these laws are never called “Assisted-Suicide” laws but have names like “Death with Dignity.” Why is that? The axiom says, “Verbal engineering always precedes social engineering.” “Suicide” has stigma attached to it. The devil loves to make evil look good.

Still, taking some pills and “falling asleep” does seem more dignified than dying in pain hooked up to machines, doesn’t it? We can control pain in most circumstances, and the majority of people do not die hooked up to machines. But most importantly, “death with dignity” has an entirely different meaning for the Christian. Stephen “fell asleep” (Acts 7:60), but his death was by stoning! Nevertheless, Stephen died with dignity, not because of the circumstances of his death, but because he died in faith, trusting in the mercy and will of God. Maggie Karner, director of LCMS Life Ministries, who has a stage-four brain tumor, said this: “Death sucks. And while this leads many to attempt to calm their fears by grasping for personal control over the situation, as a Christian with a Savior who loves me dearly and who has redeemed me from a dying world, I have a higher calling. God wants me to be comfortable in my dependence on Him and others, to live with Him in peace and comfort no matter what comes my way. As for my cancer journey, circumstances out of my control are not the worst thing that can happen to me. The worst thing would be losing faith, refusing to trust in God’s purpose in my life, and trying to grab that control myself.”

But can we go too far in in sustaining life with all the modern technologies? We should use treatments that sustain our lives. However, we need not use treatments that only prolong the dying process. When a person is dying, certain treatments such as IVs or feeding tubes may do more harm than good. We must base our judgment upon the worth of the treatment, not the “worth” of the individual. We can and we should allow the dying to die. We must never intend for the death of the living.

What would you say is the bottom line in all of this? “It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death” (Philippians 1:20).



January Highlights

Ladies Guild

President Cheral Buhr called the meeting to order and introduced Janet Smith to give a Thrivent funds update. Janet said in order to qualify a project must bring volunteers together in a Christian cause serving others in need. Application must be on line and 21 days in advance of the event.

A benefit member, one holding Thrivent insurance or annuity, may apply twice a year for a project. An associate member may apply once a year. She went to on to cite many different projects that could be done.

Following Janet, the LWML Pledge was recited. Pastor Conner then led the ladies in a study of the hymn "Thy Strong Word" and closed with prayer.

Roll call found 13 members present who shared their favorite color. The secretary read the minutes of the previous meeting. The minutes were amended to say that the quilts for the Kusel and Sandage families were given to auctions for the families rather than to the families directly and the minutes were approved as amended. Thank you notes from Christmas gifts were read and given to the historian. The first 5 articles of the constitution and by-laws were read. President Buhr encouraged the guild ladies to read the rest of the document to see if any changes need to be made. It was noted that the meeting time had been changed by vote last year to begin at 1:00 P.M. rather than 1:30P.M.

Treasurer Barb Anderson reported disbursing \$4000.00 in mission projects and gave each member a list of the projects supported and the amounts they had received.

Human Care Chairman, Audrey Roe, said she had 4 quilts ready to be donated and tied at the national convention in Des Moines. She also said that the youth group at the church will host the Quakerdale meal but that nothing is yet scheduled. Sunshine Chairman, Bev Grundmeier, sent 7 cards this month. Circle #3 will serve the next funeral.

In Old Business, President Buhr asked the guild to consider how we might help with transportation to Sunday services and find helpers to run errands for congregational shut ins.

New Business included motions to send activity money and transportation money to the zone. A donation will be made to the Zion library in honor of former member Arlene Musfeldt.

In the absence of Margaret Backhaus, Bev Grundmeier read a piece called "An A'ha Moment" that spoke about the time of Epiphany revealing Jesus as who He is. The mite box prayer was said and the mite box passed.

Plaza Bingo will be held on January 23rd with Margaret Kuchel, Janet Gruhn, Darlene Vaollstedt and Judy Musfeldt as workers. The February meeting will be on the 11th with Carol Kahl and Susan Schilling as hostesses. The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Puck, secretary

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



December 2014

Selamat Tahun Baru (Indonesian for “Happy New Year”)

Cheryl said it best: this was the first Christmas with mosquito bites! Truly, this was an incredible month here in Indonesia. There may not have been any snow this Advent, but there were lots of hymns, much preparation, and many new experiences.

The month of December started out with an opportunity for me to attend a joyous event with the *Gereja Kristen Luther Indonesia* (GKLI) in North Sumatra, on the shores of Lake Toba. They were dedicating a new church building, opening a new congregation, and ordaining a new pastor. And this was all on *one* Sunday! I was the only foreigner present, and was graciously received as I participated in the formal dances and did my best to present greetings in *Bahasa Indonesia*.

Back at home in Jakarta, our family was in full swing making preparations for Advent. The kids made *Chrismons* (Christian symbols) to decorate the Christmas tree, Cheryl led them in making Advent wreaths, and they crafted many decorations. Cheryl even tried her hand at making Christmas cookies and discovered what a difference the humid, tropical weather can make in the recipe.

I had the chance to visit Singapore twice during Advent, bringing Word and Sacrament to the Lutherans there. What a joy to bring the Lord’s gifts to those who would otherwise go with hungry spirits! I’ve been appointed by the LCMS to be visiting Singapore regularly this next year to provide pastoral care until we can call a full-time pastor to serve there again. More to come on that in an upcoming newsletter.

SELAMAT

On Christmas Eve we joined an Indonesian-speaking congregation for the Divine Service in Jakarta and even got to sing “Silent Night” in Indonesian. We returned to the house, got the kids ready for bed, and gathered together with a few others to read the Nativity account from St. Luke, chapter two. Not only were *our* kids listening, but we had a few Muslims and Hindus as well. This was truly a wondrous night.

The day after Christmas, we were saying prayers of thanksgiving: the rain was so intense that a portion of our dining room ceiling collapsed, flooding part of the house. We were thankful that no one was hurt, and the damage was minimal. We know our confidence is in Christ, and not in possessions.

As we look forward to the new year, we recount all the blessings of this past year. We are incredibly thankful for your prayerful support and love during 2014, which was a year of dramatic change and adjustment. But we take great comfort from knowing that you are with us in prayer and in spirit. God’s blessings to each of you for a peaceful 2015, where the joy of Christ’s forgiveness accompanies you no matter what the new year may bring.

Prayers, Praises, and Thanksgiving

- Thanksgiving for all our partners who shower us with generous support so we can continue working in this land!
- Thanksgiving for safety of the Ferry Family during recent flooding in Jakarta
- For the residents of Bandung, our former home in West Java, as they deal with terrible flooding
- 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.

SELAMAT

Dear Friends in Christ at Zion,

Merry Christmas (it's still the seventh day of Christmas!) from Jakarta, Indonesia!

We've recently received word from Mission Central of your generous donation. What a great Christmas present!

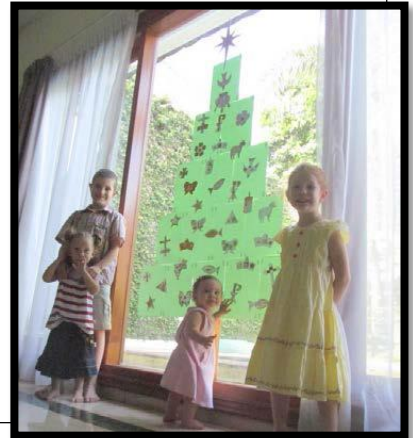
It's been an interesting Christmas this year... a holiday that is so important in the West really means very little here. Of course, it's really just another day for the Muslims that surround us, even though it's an Indonesian national holiday. But even for the Christians here, it's not that big of a deal.

But that's okay... we know who we are as Christians, and how important it is for us that our Lord Jesus came to earth and took on human flesh for our redemption and salvation. We used Advent to prepare, and then enjoyed our celebrations on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, even getting to sing Christmas hymns in Indonesian.

Thank you for your support! Because of your generosity, I got to share the account of our Lord's birth from St. Luke's Gospel with a group of about eight folks this year... some Christian, some Muslim, and some Hindu. It was amazing. We couldn't be doing that if it weren't for your partnership in this work we've been called to do together.

As we march forward into 2015, we hope you'll continue to work with us as you're able. And we count on your prayers to our gracious Lord Jesus, for His protection, His wisdom, and His daily peace.

Yours in Christ,
The Ferry Family
(Charles, Cheryl, Caleb, Caitlin, Carissa, and Cassie)



2015 Scholarship Application
Lutheran Church Extension Fund
Apply by February 28, 2015

Lutheran Church Extension Fund offers \$1,000 Scholarships

Six \$1,000 [LCEF upper Midwest districts Scholarships](#) will be awarded this year. Your college choice can be anywhere, as long as it is accredited. Awards are not based upon the type of degree you are pursuing. Students must be a current LCMS member in one of our [upper Midwest districts](#).

A one page essay and two letters of recommendation are required. Graduating seniors and current college students should visit Icefuppermidwest.org/scholarships for qualification details and application. Deadline to apply is Feb. 28, 2015.



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

Iowa District West, LCMS
Year 11, Issue 2, February 2015

Christmas/Epiphany Blessings: Our Advent, Christmas and Epiphany celebrations each year are a blessing. This year was special again. We began the Advent season with three weekly home gatherings, a tradition called Posada. The Posada is the reenactment of Joseph and Mary's search in Bethlehem for a place of birth for Baby Jesus. It is an evening of Bible Study, food and fellowship. Because it is such a popular tradition in many Hispanic countries we were thankful that many visitors came.

On Christmas Eve we had our traditional candle light service with special music. The 9 members of the Perez family came and took their annual family pictures including a picture with Paula and me. What a great family tradition! We are so thankful for this family and all of our families that have been so faithful to our church over the past year.

This is a picture of our Epiphany celebration with some of the children of our congregation. Hispanics traditionally celebrated Epiphany with the visit and the gift giving of the Wise Men as a big part of their Christmas. So we always celebrate it with the procession and the children's bilingual message of that great event to make sure they understand the true Christmas story. Each child was also given 2 bilingual Christian books to help them grow in their faith and to share with their families.



After the worship service we gather for fellowship and the cutting of the Rosca cake. It is a round traditional cake with little plastic baby figures baked into it. Those who get a piece with a baby figure in it will have to prepare tamales for the celebration of the Presentation of the Lord 40 days after the birth of Baby Jesus. This year that will be February 2nd. I got one of the baby figures along with Jose & Marbella and Arcadia and so our three families will be working on our tamales. I then used the time while we were eating the cake to teach and review the Christmas story, the chronology of the early life of Jesus and especially the story of the visit of the Wise Men.

Special Wedding in Storm Lake: I had the honor of officiating for the wedding of Jose and Irma Ibarra. Both have been members of our Hispanic church in Storm Lake for many years. I worked with Irma at the Tyson plant in both Denison and Storm Lake. So I agreed to marry them before I ended my work in Storm Lake. The wedding was a Christmas wedding with two very happy families. Many blessings to Jose and Irma. +

My Tyson Chaplaincy at the Plant in Denison: The picture at right is a Baby Shower for two workers during the noon lunch break. All is not work at the plant as lots of fun and fellowship takes place during break time. God bless the ladies who put on the party and Lucy and Angelina expecting babies. +



Please Pray: +In thanksgiving for the blessings of our traditional Advent, Christmas and Epiphany services. +For the honor of preaching at Immanuel, Schleswig and at the January Pastors' Conference of the Denison/Mapleton Circuit. +In preparation for our Call meeting with President Sieveking. +For the new leaders of our new church, Amigos en Cristo and our future in 2015. +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 the Iowa District West who monthly support the Lord's work among Hispanic immigrants in Denison and in our other 3 Hispanic missions. + + +

TO CONTACT ME:

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E-mail me at: Dan.Vogel@idwlcms.org

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

HAPPY
ANNIVERSARY

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

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

Thrivent Choice Dollars

\$8,800 choice dollars have been directed to Zion. Our congregational coordinators for Thrivent have directed \$6,000 to our *Generations* campaign, \$2,000 to our youth, and \$800 towards purchasing new confirmation robes. 2014 choice dollars will expire March 31, so please call in, log on, or call Janet Smith to designate your dollars soon.

Action Teams

And don't forget you can designate two Thrivent Action Teams per year, each with \$250!

Happy
Birthday