



Meditating on the Manger

Tucked in the pages of our hymnal is a marvelously profound hymnic meditation on the manger of Jesus Christ written by the 17th century Lutheran theologian Paul Gerhardt. It merits our notice. But before you read it, resolve to read it SLOWLY. Thoughtful poetry should be enjoyed like red wine or quality coffee. Don't gulp. Sip and savor and then swallow joyfully.

Gerhardt begins,

*O Jesus Christ, Thy manger is
My paradise at which my soul reclineth.
For there, O Lord, Doth lie the Word Made
flesh for us;
here-in Thy grace forth shineth.*

Gerhardt sees the significance of Jesus' incarnation, for where Jesus is, there is paradise. Further, he sees in the manger the Word of God made flesh for us and the grace of God shining for us. And because he sees the startling implications of Christ's manger, he finds rest for his soul as he reclines his soul before it.

*He whom the sea And wind obey
Doth come to serve the sinner in great
meekness.
Thou God's own Son, With us are one,
Dost join us and our children in our weakness.*

As he reclines before the manger, he considers who lies within it. It is none other than God's Son, the One whom the sea and wind obey! And yet this One comes in weakness and meekness to serve us sinners. He has taken on our flesh and has become one with us. But He comes for more.

*Thy light and grace Our guilt efface,
Thy heavenly riches all our loss retrieving.
Immanuel, Thy birth doth quell
The power of hell and Satan's bold deceiving.*

Consider Gerhardt's words! The light and grace radiating from Jesus' manger efface (wipe away) our guilt! And who among us does not daily battle guilt over sin? Jesus' heavenly riches restore all that was lost through Adam's sin – life, fellowship with God, peace, and wholeness. Jesus retrieves it for us and restores our loss. Further, this child in the manger – Immanuel, God with us! – His birth quells (quiets and stills) the power of hell and the deceptive tongue of Satan. For once God plays His hand, what power does hell have, what lie of Satan can remain unexposed?

*Thou Christian heart, Who-e'er thou art,
Be of good cheer and let no sorrow move thee!
For God's own Child, In mercy mild,
Joins thee to Him; how greatly God must love
thee!*

Now Gerhardt turns to us who have joined him in his meditation as he encourages us to be of good cheer and unmoved by sorrow. For as Gerhardt directs our gaze to the Christ child, God's child has, in mercy, joined us to Himself. How greatly God must love us! It's as if he's saying, "Look, look who's in this manger! This is God's Son. He has come in our flesh. He has come to redeem us. He has come to reconcile us to God. How great must God's love be for us!"

*Remember thou What glory now
The Lord prepared thee for all earthly sadness.
The angel host Can never boast
Of greater glory, greater bliss or gladness.*

Here Gerhardt reminds us of the reality of our earthly sadness. Tears, brokenness, disappointment, and grief remain. Jesus' manger doesn't remove them; it does, however, prepare us to face them. For in the manger we see God's glory enfleshed. Sorrow, sadness, grief, and pain will end. This is why Christ took on flesh, not only to bear our sin and sorrow, but to bear them away. The angels in heaven can't boast of such Divine action. They may look upon the manger in awe and wonder, but not with the same deep appreciation. With this deep appreciation, Gerhardt invites us to keep Christ as our true treasure:

*The world may hold Her wealth and gold;
But thou, my heart, keep Christ as thy true
treasure.
To Him hold fast Until at last
A crown be thine and honor in full measure.*

The world boasts of its great wealth, but Gerhardt resolves even as he invites us to see and keep Christ as our true and lasting treasure. To Him we are called to hold fast until God honors us with the crown of life. Then earth's treasures will be exposed as frauds, as false infinities and substitute treasures. Then Jesus will be revealed as the great treasure of the Church. Our confidence and trust in Him will be vindicated as He honors His saints with the crown of eternal life. – Pastor Conner

12.19.21



CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS

PROGRAMS

6:00: Student musicians
6:30: Pre-K - 1st
7:00: 2nd - 8th





Hear the Christmas Story in Song and Word.
Bring family and friends.

Zion Lutheran Church, Manning, IA

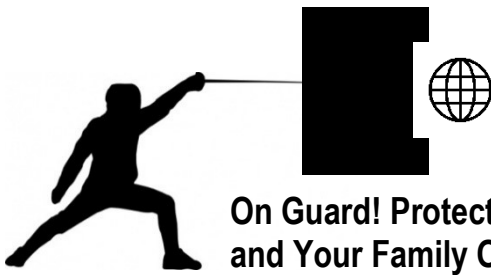
ADVENT CONCERT



Sunday, December 5 @ 7:00 p.m.
Freewill Offering, No Tickets Required



Zion Praise Team
directed by Dr. Tom Ulrickson
narrated by Pastor Jonathan Conner



On Guard! Protect Yourself and Your Family Online Part 3

Over the last couple months we have emphatically made this point: the internet is not safe. It's not that it's evil, any more than steak knives and pickup trucks are evil; it's that it's not safe (just like steak knives and pickup trucks). And because it's not safe you **MUST** take action to protect yourself and your children online. In order to do this we have emphasized two main points: #1 Strengthen identity in the family, and #2 Use devices/software designed to protect you online.

Last month we focused on #1 as we emphasized the need to anchor identity in the family. We reviewed these action steps:

- Put your phone down and talk as a family.
- Turn off the TV and play games as a family.
- Eat supper as a family.
- Read books and talk about them as a family.
- Worship as a family.
- Discuss the sermon as a family.
- Pray as a family.

And we added these:

- Establish screen-free zones in your house.
- Establish screen-free times in your family life.
- Set device curfews when all screens must be turned off and turned in.
- Decide upon family guidelines for tech usage.
- Teach tech safety.

We **MUST** do these things. Remember, as we heard from Dr. Leonard Sax, author of *The Collapse of Parenting*,

Part of the task of the parent is, and always has been, *educating desire*: teaching your child to desire and enjoy things that are higher and better than cotton candy. Video games, Instagram, and text messages are the cotton candy of American popular culture today (152).

Grounding identity in the family and not in the ever-expanding internet world (now being termed “the metaverse,” an alternative virtual world increasingly disconnected from the real world and increasingly influential over the hearts and minds of people) is essential not only for our safety, but for our moral foundation (rightly ordered desires) and our connection to reality (to God’s world as it really is).¹

This month we turn to #2: devices and software designed to protect you online. If we care about rightly ordered desires (esteeming what is good, right, true, and beautiful), what we and our children view online should matter to us. Images and the possibilities they suggest are very powerful and we would be exceedingly foolish to believe we and our children are invincible before them.

We wouldn’t drop our children off outside an adult bookstore, a casino, or drug house and expect them to be un-curious or un-tempted, and yet all of these images, ideas, and opportunities are easily accessible online. We need to protect ourselves and our family online. The following devices and software are specifically designed to enable you to decide what content can be displayed on your or your children’s screens.

¹ I again commend James Smith’s *You Are What You Love* for its excellent treatment of intentionally habituating our way to rightly ordered desires.



Research shows that children are being exposed to porn with the average age of first exposure hovering somewhere between 9 to 11! Canopy (www.canopy.us) detects and blocks pornographic material online and on your child's phone camera by using advanced computing technology, including artificial intelligence and machine learning. It also offers Sexting Alerts that help detect and prevent sexting (Yes, this is happening. Studies vary, but they suggest somewhere in the range of 15% of teens have sent sexts and 27% have received them. And the numbers for adults were, sadly, much higher.) Canopy also includes Removal Prevention that keeps kids from disabling it.

Canopy provides an app management tool that tells you about every app on your child's device even as it allows you to choose which ones he or she can use. Much like the app Life 360 (highly recommended!), Canopy provides location awareness so that you can know where your child is and when.

Canopy works with Android devices, iPhones and iPads, Apple computers, and Windows operating systems. Canopy does not, however, filter on-demand streaming services like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu, HBO Go, and so forth. Parents permitting these need to utilize the parental controls on them. If you need help setting these controls, Canopy provides detailed instructions. Monthly subscription plans start at \$8 (covering three devices) and go up to \$16 (covering up to ten).



Firewalla

"In technical terms, [Firewalla] is a Firewall, IPS (intrusion prevention system), IDS (intrusion

detection system), Adblocker, and VPN all merged into one." That's its website's fancy speak for, "It's a tiny firewall that plugs into your router that allows you to protect yourself and your family online."

More specifically, Firewalla allows you to see what your children are doing online (gaming, surfing, or homework), to block ads and malicious and inappropriate content. Further, it allows you to block specific activities on specific devices (i.e. game blocking for set times, like when children are supposed to be doing homework!). Firewalla also alerts and protects you from cyber threats like a hacked baby camera, smart speaker, or phone. For those uncomfortable sharing private information on public Wifi, Firewalla provides a built-in VPN server (A virtual private network (VPN) that ensures online privacy and anonymity by creating a private network from a public internet connection).

Firewalla has no monthly fees, but offers a suite of device options with varying levels of speed and function depending on need. I suspect over 90% of us would be happy with the \$120 basic unit.



Parents often have a love/hate relationship with children and their smartphones, loving the ability to communicate with their children when they're away from home and to track their whereabouts through apps like Life 360, but hating the bad stuff (addictive gaming, pornographic content, social media drama and skewed presentation of reality, and general time wasting). Fortunately, two companies have taken steps to preserve the good and eliminate the bad: Gabb and Pinwheel.

Both manufacture smartphones and both agree that kids need to be protected online. So both

devices have no social media, no streaming, no web browser, no games, and no app store. Kids may balk, but every parent's heart should swell with hope. As we emphasized above, it's not that these are evil, but they are most certainly not safe. And giving kids unfettered and ungoverned access to unfiltered content and unknown "friends" is the epitome of unsafe.

And with the mounting evidence of social media's deleterious (negative) effects on people (especially young people!) (i.e. Facebook and Instagram's negative impact on body image and mental health and Tik Tok's never ending stream of often suggestive videos and recommendations), parents should be especially pleased that both smartphones block social media. Both phones operate under the premises that phones are for communicating with parents and personally known contacts and that parents, rather than the internet, should be the primary influencer in children's lives. What conscientious parent would object?

Gabb and Pinwheel return control to parents and protect kids from getting sucked into a world apart from and ungoverned by parents, which is one of the great dangers of smartphones.

Gabb comes loaded with 14 essential apps (music, phone, messaging, camera, calendar, calculator, etc.) while Pinwheel allows parents, through its caregiver portal, to choose the apps to which they want their children to have access. This provides a graduated approach to app access, but social media apps cannot be added to the phone.

Both phones allow parents to approve contacts for texting and calling. So if a contact isn't approved, the contact can't text the child and the child can't text the non-approved contact. Pinwheel also allows parents to see the phone's call history and

entire text conversations (not just who is texting whom).

Pinwheel, like Life 360 and Canopy, provides location data. Parents can decide whether picture texting is allowed and group texting is allowed if everyone in the group has been approved by the parents (which is quickly and easily accomplished through the caregiver portal). Pinwheel also allows parents to establish modes in which they set app access to certain days and times (i.e. prohibiting certain apps during school or homework hours).

Gabb requires users to establish a monthly cellular contract through them (\$20 per month), while Pinwheel provides the phone through a one-time purchase and allows users to add it to their existing cell plan. They offer a graduated monthly fee for their caregiver portal service that gets smaller with additional lines added (the first line is \$15 per month). Parents may question the expense, but they need to remember that they're paying for a service that isn't selling their data, or their kids' attention, or violating their privacy. "Free" services are never really free; they use us as their product. Paying for services frees us from being used.

The internet, like so much technology in our lives, allows us to do great and wonderful things, but like much of the technology we use every day, it's not safe. We must take steps to protect ourselves and our children online. The software and devices shared in this article provide a variety of ways to help. If you know of or use other devices/software or if you have other safety practices, I'd love to hear from you! Please share. And if you want to visit about things like identity theft protection and password management software (areas we didn't even touch in this article!), come visit with me. Together we can help keep one another and our children safe online. – Pastor Conner



Tech-Wise Family

Wisdom: living well in God's world.

Like a fine wine or a learned skill, wisdom must be crafted and cultivated. It's not an instant download or a Prime delivery. It must be practiced. We practice it in relationships, in finances, in education, in time management, and in our interactions with technology. In fact, as we have highlighted many times before, we habit our way into wisdom. In other words, wisdom is not limited to knowing important information; wisdom is living well (thoughtfully and reverentially) in God's world. It means practicing, through repeated actions, what we know and confess to be true.

In the opening article, we shared wisdom regarding devices and software designed to keep you and your family safe online. In this article, we're going to highlight a concise, thoughtful, and practical book designed to help you develop and practice wisdom with the internet, media, and the ubiquitous (appearing everywhere) screens in your life.

Andy Crouch, author of the insightful book *Culture Making*, has written a book on wisdom and technology entitled *The Tech-Wise Family*. I highly recommend it (it's available in the church library). In it he observes, "The pace of technological change has surpassed anyone's capacity to develop enough wisdom to handle it" (17). In what

seemed like a blink of an eye, everyone was walking around with screens in their hands, the internet at their fingertips, and soon to be the "metaverse" before their eyes.² A world of content (for good and ill) is available to anyone and everyone. Beyond content, though, is the way this new medium has changed our interaction with truth as truth has been removed from divine revelation, from creation, and from the wise (those living and practicing wisdom) to anyone who can tap the "share" button.

In addition to atomizing (breaking into pieces) and disjoining truth from God and His revelation in Scripture and creation, our addiction to screens has diminished our understanding and appreciation of wonder. Mr. Crouch explains, "My iPhone's wonder generators, from Instagram to Temple Run, turn out to be only distractions from the things that really spark wonder" (12). Wisdom, therefore, reminds us that "Wonder comes from opening your eyes wider, not bringing the screen closer" (12-13).

In other words, wisdom teaches us to see something bigger, brighter, and better than screens in the real world all around us. Wisdom, therefore, drives us to focus on "something older and better than the newest thing" (11). It doesn't mean eliminating screens; it means taming them, intentionally limiting their presence in our lives so that we can meaningfully engage in the world beyond the screen.

It involves, as Mr. Crouch emphasizes, three fundamental choices, choice every individual and family should thoughtfully make. We'll list them then explore them:

² The metaverse is a continuous online 3-D virtual world accessed through computers and virtual and augmented reality headsets. It's why Facebook has

rebranded its parent company as "Meta." It sees the future technology coming online and it is intentionally moving to align itself with it.

1. Choose character
2. Shape space
3. Structure time



Choose Character

Choosing character, as Mr. Crouch puts it, means making “the mission of our family, for children and adults alike, the cultivation of wisdom and courage” (38). Appreciate what he’s saying, families should have a mission. Your family should have a mission: living and practicing wisdom and cultivating the courage to do what is right (even when no one is looking).

More foundationally, it’s critical for us to appreciate that wisdom and courage are best cultivated *in families* which serve as the bedrock of society and the cradle of culture. Schools, extracurriculars, clubs, etc. are important, but they are built on the family bedrock and are strengthened by the family bond. So, while it is right and good to emphasize education and extracurricular activities, it is shortsighted to do so without appreciating and strengthening the family.

Forging courageous, resilient, wonder-awakened people happens first and foremost in the family through the discerning habits they intentionally hone. So the question is: “How or will any particular technology help us in developing these wisdom-honing habits?” As Mr. Crouch puts it: “Will this [technology] help me become less foolish and more wise? Will this help me become less fearful and more courageous?” (68).

That question, whether intentionally or unintentionally, is daily asked and answered in families. And we must acknowledge, as Mr. Crouch emphasizes, “Technology, with all its gifts, poses one of the greatest threats ever conceived by human society to the formation of wise, courageous persons that real family and real

community are all about” (62). As we’ve emphasized before, though, it’s not that technology is bad, but it most certainly is not neutral. To choose character families need to practice discernment in screens and media.

Further, if families truly desire to learn wisdom, they need to find meaningful ways to connect to the church. Mr. Crouch writes,

The first family for everyone who wants wisdom and courage in the way of Jesus is the church – the community of disciples who are looking to Jesus to reshape their understanding and their character (60).

As emphasized before in previous newsletters, the church becomes the hub of the family’s life. As their week turns, they, like spoke sliders, go out into their vocations with the confession of Christ on their lips and the virtue of wisdom in their lived choices, and they then return to the church weekly for worship and training in wisdom.



Shape Space

Shaping space involves giving careful thought to the main living areas in your home. As Mr. Crouch emphasizes, “We want to create more than we consume. So we fill the center of our home with things that reward skill and active engagement” (71). The goal is to make the heart of your home about “things older and better than the newest thing” (82), things like conversation, creativity (making music, toys driven by imagination, family games), and reading (aloud as a family and as individuals).

To do so we need to “Find the room where your family spends the most time and ruthlessly eliminate the things that ask little of you and develop little in you” (79). This will require brutal honesty. It will make you stand in front of your TV

and ask, “Does this technology help me and my family become less foolish and more wise? Will this help me and my family become less fearful and more courageous?” It will require the same with every item in your main living space. Is the space shaped for creation or consumption, for cultivating wisdom or facilitating distraction, for strengthening the family or fragmenting it?

It may require dramatic change to rearrange rooms for the cultivating of wisdom. Mr. Crouch is straightforward about it: “You don’t have to become Amish, but you probably have to become closer to Amish than you think” (29). We need to remember that developing wisdom won’t happen on its own. It requires intentionally shaped space. It requires asking hard questions about the heart of our homes and then shaping our living spaces in a way that facilitates the cultivation of wisdom.



Structure Time

Structuring time is bigger than daily schedules and to-do lists; it involves intentionally, as Mr. Crouch explains,

Build[ing] rhythms into our lives, on a daily, weekly, and annual basis, that make it possible for us to get to know one another, God, and our world in deeper and deeper ways (38-39).

God, Himself, built this rhythm into His creation with six days being given for work and the Sabbath for rest and for remembering His creative and redemptive works. Mr. Crouch reflects on this: “Sabbath will be most powerful and helpful if we let its core pattern of work and rest become the defining pattern of our lives” (98).

How that pattern of work and rest plays out in each individual and family will vary, but the existence of the pattern shouldn’t be ignored. There is great wisdom in regular rhythms, but it is a wisdom that can only be appreciated and enjoyed when it is

lived. Therefore, work, especially meaningful work *as a family*, should be thoughtfully embraced. Mr. Crouch acknowledges that practicing and modeling meaningful work may be exacerbated by labor saving technology, but he emphasizes,

In a technological age, even those of us who have good work to do have to make an extra effort to show our children how our work requires real skill and produces something worthwhile (92).

Real cooking, hands-on projects, planting, weeding, mowing, pruning, building, cleaning, and so on not only produce worthwhile results, but they connect work to meaning and purpose and they give children (and adults!) something to admire and value.

And rest, intentional, structured rest, gives us time to reflect, to recharge, and to reenergize relationships. And this rest may need to be applied to our screens so that we can accomplish the purpose of rest. Mr. Crouch writes,

We are designed for a rhythm of work and rest. So one hour a day, one day a week, and one week a year, we turn off our devices and worship, feast, play, and rest together (83).

As with shaping space, this may look different in different individuals’ and families’ lives, but time and the way we interact with it should not be ignored. Wisdom calls us to structure time around the divine pattern of work and rest.

If you’d like to learn more about putting these choices into practice to become wise and courageous people, check out Mr. Crouch’s book (in the church library or available online) or come visit with me. – Pastor Conner



An author moved me recently to reconsider how I view the parables of Jesus. He argued that the first Christians used the parables to inform their everyday lives. Parables were like Swiss Army knives, capable of fixing and dealing with that which they faced in a typical week. I was moved because if I'm honest with myself, typically my everyday life really isn't formed by Jesus' parables. I don't recall in my mind, "Well, this reminds me of a story Jesus told once where...." So, I want to test the author's argument that early Christians practiced parables and we have every reason to do the same in order to better our everyday lives on an individual and communal level. What would practicing parables look like?

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²⁶ And [Jesus] said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. ²⁷ He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. ²⁸ The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come." [Mark 4:26-29]

What does Jesus reveal in the parable of the mustard seed? Like mustard seeds, God's work in His kingdom isn't all that impressive. You would

never expect a tiny seed to expand into a home for animals or a source of nutrients, but it does.

In the same way, you would never expect God's work in Jesus of Nazareth to turn into anything impressive. He chooses uneducated fishermen as his disciples. Sure, His miracles were impressive, but at the end of the day He was still executed. Point being, nobody expected anything special from Jesus.

But God's kingdom expanded like a seed sprouting out of the ground. Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus created a safe place for thousands in His Church for generations to come just like the mustard tree gives safety to birds. He forgave His enemies. Jesus' kingdom is impressive!

So how do we practice the parable of the mustard seed?

What God has done and is doing appears unimpressive like the tiny mustard seed. It can *feel* like God has abandoned you or doesn't care. The parable challenges our perception. God's present work, especially in the context of the Church, isn't all that impressive, but when people take the forgiveness of sins and everything else God accomplishes seriously then the result is as breathtaking as a seed transforming into a tree. When you don't *feel* God, remember that the reign and rule of God, or what we call His kingdom, is equally a tiny seed, almost impossible to see, sometimes hidden; but, God's kingdom is also a humongous, noteworthy tree too!

*Practice the parable by remembering that God's kingdom is **small and large** both at the same time the next time you're discouraged by how God seems absent in our culture, community, or life circumstances. You may not see His presence, but God *is* ruling! – Pastor Johnson*

Midweek Advent Services 12/1, 8, 15



Of the Father's Love
Begotten

Zion and Trinity:

- Trinity supper: 5:30
- Zion worship: 5:45
- Trinity worship: 6:30
- Zion supper:
following worship



CHRISTMAS AT TRINITY

Friday, December 24

1pm - Family Craft & Songs

4pm - Candlelight Service

Saturday, December 25

9am - Divine Service with

Holy Communion

No 4pm Service

Christmas at Zion

12.24:

3:00 & 7:00

Candlelight Services

12.25:

10:00 Brunch & Hymn Sing

12.26:

9:00 Divine Service w/ Holy
Communion

Hello Friends!

I feel like we say this every month, but November flew by! We began the month with our annual Fall Festival! The Zion Preschool invited all the students and their families to the church on the evening of November 2nd. We prayed and ate supper together, played games, made art, and the kids won fun prizes. Some wore Halloween costumes and joined in on a costume parade!



The preschool celebrated Veterans Day on November 11th by watching a video explaining who a veteran is, saying the Pledge of Allegiance, making hats, and making crafts.

On November 23rd we celebrated Grandparent's Day! The preschoolers invited their grandparents or a special friend to school. We made homemade butter to go on muffins, made a craft, and played games. What a special day it was for the kids and their loved ones!

We visited Pastor Conner on Wednesdays for chapel. Pastor Conner taught us about the Tower of Babel and how we should love everyone despite their differences (languages, skin color, etc.) He used the story of Abram and Sara to teach us that God ALWAYS keeps his promises. We end each chapel with the Lord's Prayer, and the students are learning it really, really well.

This month, we focused on identifying and writing the letters G, T, O, and Q. We are still working on identifying our names and the letters in our name, counting, and identifying numbers through 10. The students really love the STEM activities introduced this month-- using different materials to build towers, vehicles, and many more things.

All of the kids have been working hard on learning three songs they will sing at their Christmas concert in December. Some of the preschoolers remember one of the songs from Sunday School, Jesus Loves Me, so they enjoy singing it loud and proud to help their friends learn it. What a blessing to have such strong youth programs in our church!

The Zion Preschool thanks you for your ongoing support of our program and for giving us the opportunity to share the love of Jesus in word and deed with children and families! Thank you to all our parents for sharing your children with us here at Zion, to the congregation for your very generous monetary and supply donations from our Wish Wall, and just for thinking and praying about our program. We feel so blessed that we have this available for our community.

Enjoy the pictures from November!!

Blessings,
Miss Shelly and Miss Ashley





**Your
support
makes this
possible!
Thank you!**





At long last, the Ferry Family has returned to the USA. We weren't sure it would happen at all, what with the restrictions, border controls, and other requirements. But after three years of being gone, we are finally back on US soil. Here are some highlights of visits and reconnects we've been blessed to enjoy recently:



Above: Pastor Robb Roloff at Emanuel Lutheran Church in Tipton, Indiana

Right: Pastor Jon Conner at Zion Lutheran Church in Manning, Iowa on Reformation Sunday.

Below: Pastor & Mrs. Binz at West Portal Lutheran Church in San Francisco, California.



Above: During a visit to St. Louis, Caylee gets introduced to Rev. Dr. Hank Rowold, a true pioneer and legend in LCMS Taiwan mission work.

Below: Ferry family together with good friend Brian Thompson during a visit to Immanuel Lutheran Church in Seymour, Indiana.





← **Caleb** turned sixteen in September, and loved being able to celebrate his birthday with his grandfather in Milwaukee. They competed over who got to blow out the candles, and generally had a great time.



Caitlin → turned twelve years old in August and took an active role in making her own birthday cake. It was important to her that it be decorated with her favorite animal, the Red Panda. She's growing up into a fine young lady, right before our eyes



Carissa ← made the good confession of faith in Jesus, and our Lutheran theology, capping off three full years of catechesis. After an examination by one of our LCMS pastors, she was confirmed and admitted to the Lord's Supper for the first time in our local Taiwan congregation. She's not done studying, but has a good foundation

Please Pray For:

- The people of Taiwan as they struggle with emerging from Covid lockdowns.
- Safe travels as our family continues to visit various places in the USA.

Give Thanks for:

- A joyous opportunity to gather with many of our partners in person for the first time in three years or more.
- Carissa's faithful confession of faith in Taiwan.
- Our incredible network of partners who provide such gracious and generous resources.



What a joy to welcome our missionaries from Taiwan, the Ferry Family, on Sunday, October 31st! Thank you, Zion, for being committed to mission work locally and globally!



Zion and Trinity confirmation kids gather around the altar as Pastor Johnson instructs them on the significance of the symbolism on the altar. Thank you for supporting the youth of Zion and Trinity!



Pastor Conner taught us from Mark 13 where Jesus is discussing with his disciples the end times. Jesus spoke not only about the time coming when the temple would be destroyed but also about the time when the world would come to an end and reminded us that suffering and hardship are not inconsistent with following Jesus. Christian Life Chairman Cheral Buhr read a devotional entitled "I Can Do It Myself" and pointed out that as much as we would like to think we can do things by ourselves we should remember that only God really takes care of us.



November 10, 2021

adies Guild

President Roe called the business meeting to order in the name of the Triune God. We recited the League Pledge. Roll call was answered with a memory of a Thanksgiving gathering. 13 members and one guest were present. Treasurer Mary Grimm reported a balance on hand of \$2262.95. Kitchen treasurer Darlene Vollstedt reported a balance of \$3683.22. The mite box was passed while the mite box prayer was said.

Committee reports: Circle #2 served for the Betty Maasen funeral.
Human Care is still quilting on Thursdays and is encouraging others to join them.

Old Business: Nominating chairman Becky Ehlers placed in nomination Sheryl Zinke for treasurer and Gloria Ewoldt for secretary. Sue Puck moved that nominations cease and a unanimous ballot be cast for those nominations. The motion was seconded and passed. Sheryl and Gloria will be installed at the next meeting. The book *Lineage of Grace* will be purchased for the church library in memory of Betty Maasen.

New Business: Advent concert flyers designed by Pastor Conner have been sent to each of the zone societies, to Trinity, Manilla, and have been posted in business around town. Mary Grimm and Sue Puck volunteered to decorate the Christmas tree for the fellowship hall and members were asked to bring battery operated candles to decorate the hall. Officers of guild will meet in December to distribute the money in the treasury to missions.

The meeting was adjourned with the Lord's Prayer and the table prayer. Lunch was served by Bev Grundmeier and Sue Puck. The next meeting will be our December noon potluck. Hostesses will be Mary Grimm, JoAnn Thomas and Becky Ehlers.

Sue Puck, secretary

LWML Mission Grant for \$50,000.00 is to go to Helping Hands for Lutheran Deaf Outreach.

Lutheran deaf Outreach wants to help deaf people have a saving relationship with Christ by training deaf and hearing people to share Jesus with deaf people. They work through congregations to reach deaf people in their community. There are over 500,000 deaf people plus their families in the United States. The need is great to equip more deaf leaders through Jesus Signs Training Workshops so they may effectively witness the saving message of Jesus Christ. This grant will assist in expanding training through the sharing of resources, by assisting pastors, and by instructing individuals to lead the workshops. It will also help with workshop expenses to expand training and provide resources throughout the United States.

Living in LIGHT--Fellowship Club Updates

The Fellowship Club will meet **Monday, December 13, at NOON at the RIGGERT HOME** (810 Nishnabotna Drive). Soups will be provided by the hosts for the Advent fellowship meal. Fellowship members and guests are invited to bring accompanying items: sweets, relishes, breads, cheese/sausages and crackers, etc. Following the meal, Pastor Riggert will continue the devotional series on the Light of Jesus.

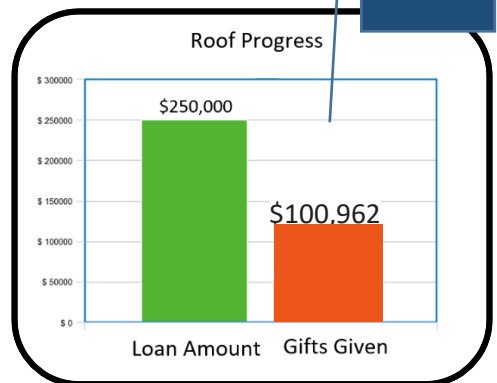


An Orphan Grain Train clothing drive will be held again the end of January. Items can be brought to the quilting/storage room beginning January 23. A delivery will be made to the OGT warehouse in early February. Start gathering your good, used clothing items (all sizes and seasons), or buy new underwear, socks, etc. to ship to regions in need around the world.

The Fellowship Club voted to again send a financial gift to Iowa District West seminary students. A donation has also been made to the Lutheran Hour Ministries Rose Bowl parade float. The club will host a Zion fellowship in January. New members and guests are invited to join the Fellowship Club to support Zion and beyond. January and following months, the group will meet at Zion the second Monday of the month at 1:30 p.m.

thrivent®

2021 Thrivent Action Teams – need applied for & approved before year end. You may still have \$250 - \$500 per Thrivent member to be used as seed money for your team of volunteers serving others. They can be applied for 4 months in advance of your event. If applying in Dec. they can be for events way into April. The Thrivent member must be involved in the activity. Think of ways you are involved and serve others in the church, preschool, community, schools, veterans, people/families in need etc.



Please consider making a special gift to the roof or to other ongoing and upcoming mission and ministry expenses at Zion, including technology and facility needs. Ask in the office for a detailed list of giving opportunities. Thank you for your partnership!

There Goes another Year

The holiday season can trigger a number of feelings for people, from joy and anticipation for what the next year brings, to sadness and pain to face the months ahead.



The holidays may trigger depression symptoms for a number of reasons such as not being able to have family home for the holiday to sadness regarding not being able to financially give to your family like you would like. If you are going through a difficult time, it can be tough to see others with extra joy in their lives. The feelings of sadness can be overwhelming during a time of change. The holiday months often present challenging demands due to obligations to prepare for the holiday gatherings. If you are feeling an increase in stress and depression, know that you are not alone.

The symptoms of increased depression and stress are also known as the Holiday Blues. This is true of people who may or may not have already been dealing with depression. You may feel like simple activities are more difficult than normal to accomplish. This may include getting out of bed, making dinner, and doing your basic self-cares. Other symptoms include feeling more tired than usual, losing interest in things that used to bring you joy, and having trouble concentrating.

There are several ways to help manage those symptoms to get through the holidays. You should limit your alcohol intake. If this is a challenge, try to not keep it available in your home. Alcohol is a depressant and can amplify any negative feelings that you may have.

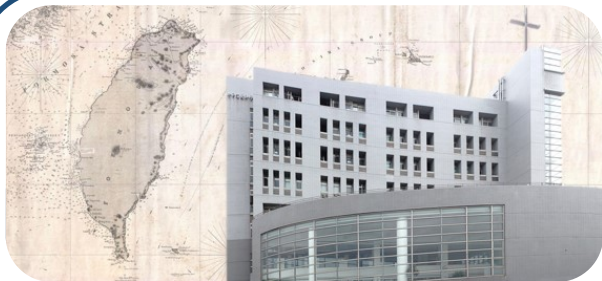
It is important to get plenty of sleep and to keep a routine as much as possible. Being well-rested can help improve your mood and help you feel ready to take on the day. It is also okay to say “no.” When your schedule is overfull, it may be hard to make time for yourself and this can lead to emotional breakdowns.

A tradition is something that should feel good and you look forward to. However, if the tradition is painful considering a change in your life, you may want to think about a new tradition. If you have experienced the loss of a loved one, the holidays may be especially tough. Although it may be tempting to isolate yourself and grieve, it can be beneficial to spend time with your family and friends. They can support you through this difficult time.

We were all hopeful that this year would look a lot different than it did last year, and while it has much improved, we still have to consider the COVID-19 in our population. Some people remain hesitant to gather and therefore continue to isolate in their homes, as well as long term care facilities, due to the threat of contracting COVID. We should continue to think about our friends and family that cannot safely gather. This may be done in ways that are not face-to-face, such as phone calls, cards and letters. If you feel like you are experiencing symptoms that are affecting multiple areas of your life, please visit with your pastor or contact your primary care provider or a mental health professional. We are all in this together.

Janet Brus, RN
Psychiatric Medical Care / Manning Regional Healthcare Center
Program Director – Senior Life Solutions





Special Update 2021

Stephen, Maggie, Ginny,
Gary, Isaac

Dear Prayer Partners,

A few days ago [in October], I was driving my children to school and while stopped at the stoplight before their school, we noticed the scrambling of Taiwan fighter jets in the sky as they vectored off to the West. There is a major air base near their school. Later that day, I heard on the news that a number of military aircraft from China had penetrated the defense identification zone of Taiwan and the fighters we saw had scrambled to defend against possible attack and to ward off the unwanted aircraft.

Everything on the ground was going on like normal and just as with our family, things are going well and few people are giving it second thought in Taiwan. In fact, these news reports are becoming far more prevalent in US news than in Taiwan news. However, it is a reality as Jesus has said in Luke 21 (wars, rumors of wars, pandemics, earthquakes, etc.) about the end times. Carefully noting the verses surrounding these prophecies, we can see that He doesn't say to hide out and stop spreading the Word, but rather that our witness will ramp up in these times, and although those who don't know God's Word will experience "hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth," (v.26) He says to us: "Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near." (v.28). And while everyone else is scrambling around to save the economy, the environment, the "peace", and everything else about life on this earth, we are scrambling to spread the One thing that can really Save: The Word of the Lord which endures forever, which is "the Gospel which was preached to you" (1 Peter 1:25)!!

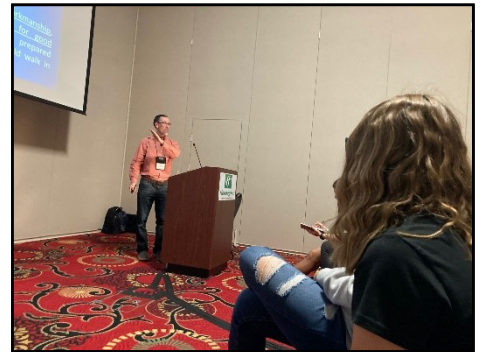
We are partners in this, and there is great joy and fulfillment in this mission as we share in Jesus' joy in pressing forward in the Great Commission! Thank You! Thank You!

Missionary Stephen Oliver in Taiwan

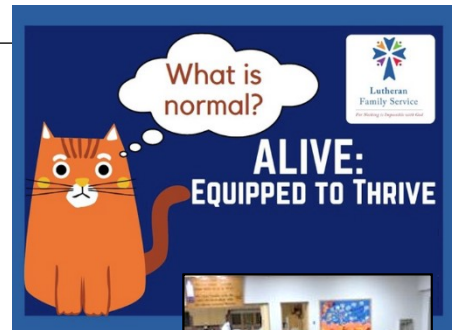




Six high-schoolers from Zion-Manning attended the Iowa District Gathering held in Des Moines. With a focus on Hebrews and the image of Christ as our anchor, the kids appreciated Lutheran Family Service's presentation that we should share our challenges with trusted adults. The main speaker highlighted how God harnesses us into Himself and His truth through Holy Baptism. Overall, the kids attended instructional sectionals and two Bible studies over the course of 3 days. On Saturday night, the kids were able to relax by playing team trivia and bouncing around on obstacle courses. The weekend finished by celebrating the Divine Service on Sunday morning. Thank you for supporting the youth of Zion!



Several families of Zion gathered on Sunday, November 7th to ask the question, "What is normal?" Specifically, what is normal for teens and tweens? Lutheran Family Service was present and led parallel sessions for youth and adults. Special thanks for Pastor and Tiffany Johnson for providing the meal and to Jen Morris for planning the family activity. And thanks to you, Zion, for supporting meaningful ministry to families!





Amigos en Cristo

News from **La Iglesia Evangelica Luterana Amigos en Cristo:**

Friends in Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church

Pastor Pedro Lopez, Denison, Iowa

December 2021

Hello! Great things have happened since our last communication. We have made some changes to our worship service schedule in order to better serve our congregations, and this seems to be working out well. There was a news article written about our ministry and vision in the Storm Lake Newspaper. This was done so that we could share information with the community about our Spanish speaking congregation and invite them to our first cross cultural bilingual worship service at Grace in Storm Lake. It was great for both congregations to get together to worship and enjoy each other's company while eating all kinds of delicious food.

Pictured (right) is Humberto Diaz and his wife Francis. We are so happy to share that he has joined Grace-Storm Lake as one of their elders. We look forward to both congregations working together to spread the Word of God. We pray and hope to involve our people in more of these roles.



At Amigos en Cristo (Denison), we have great participation in our worship services and Bible studies. I have been visiting former members and meeting new people asking them to join us in learning about God! I had the opportunity to share about our ongoing efforts to continue ministering to our Hispanic communities at our District Pastors Conference and at our Circuit Pastors' meetings.

12.5.21

Mission Door Offering

Pastor Pedro Lopez
Amigos en Cristo (Denison) & Grace
(Storm Lake)





Rev. Pedro Lopez Assistant to the President
Missionary at Large
pedro@iowadistrictwest.org
571-606-7600 (cell)

Please Note! All times and events are subject to change

TRIZION

Sunday Evenings TriZion Youth Group @ Zion (6:00 – 8:00 p.m.)



December 1, 8, 15 Midweek Advent Services
 Trinity: 5:30 supper, 6:30 worship
 Zion: 5:45 worship, supper follows



December 5 Mission Door Offering (for Pastor Lopez at Amigos en Cristo in Denison and Grace in Storm Lake)



December 5 Advent Concert at Zion (7:00 pm.) Freewill offering



December 12 Zion's Annual Voters' Meeting, after the Divine Service



December 14 Priscilla Guild Potluck (12:30) at Trinity



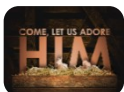
December 16 Thursday afternoon Communion Service at Zion (1:30 p.m.)



December 18 Moving furniture in offices (following worship for new flooring) at Trinity



December 19 Children's Christmas Programs at Zion (musicians at 6:00, programs start at 6:30 p.m.)



December 24 Trinity:
 1:00 Family Craft and Songs
 4:00 Candlelight Service
Zion:
 3:00 and 7:00 Candlelight Services



December 25 Trinity: 9:00 a.m. worship w/ Holy Communion
Zion: 10:00 a.m. Brunch and Hymn Sing



January 9 Family and Friends Bowling at L & M in Manning
 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

**DISCIPLING
EVENT**

January 26 Confirmation Discipling Event (Can We Trust the Bible?)
 (6:00 p.m.)

December Birthdays and Anniversaries @ Zion & Trinity

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

Birthdays (T = Trinity)

1. Robert Ewoldt
Takara Hoffmeier
Debra Janssen
2. Melodie Boell (T)
Renee Grimm
Vera Hodne (T)
Kamryn Ketcham
Stephen Muhlbauer
Emma Schwieso
4. Darlene Asmus
Janet Gruhn
Tracie Kurth
Rozora Schroeder
5. Tiffani Beck
Jase Hull
Ross Kusel
Brian Lage
6. Melissa Leslie
JoAnn Petersen
Eryn Ramsey
7. Mike Heaton
8. Annette Hilsabeck
Brian Stoberl
9. Deb Birks (T)
Piper Doyel
Wade Ranniger
10. Athena Bess
Breyton Johnson
Keaton Otto
11. Michell Lile (T)
Jaxen Vollstedt
12. Everlynn Bauer
Mike Bruch
Zoey Heaton
13. Tricia Beck
Courtney Grabill
Arlene Jahn (T)
Carla Rodriguez
14. Neeka Jacobsen
16. Mabel Langel
17. Octavia Hodne (T)
Lonnie Jahn (T)
Derrick Janssen
Taylor Roe
18. Zane Diersen
Amanda Rosener
19. Gracelyn Pinney
20. Casie Eischeid
Courtney Eischeid
Kourtney Grimm
21. Leslee Gore
Carson Swanson (T)
22. Kathy Vollstedt
23. Shane Boeck (T)
Joyce Schroeder
Gary Witt
24. Robert Christensen
Brittany Page
25. Ben Booth
Chris Greiving
Carol Joens (T)
26. Brody Chapman
Larry Mahnke
Laurene Meeves
27. Eric Ramsey
28. Blake Diersen
Mila Irlbeck (T)
Elissa Riesberg
Billy Weill
29. Caden Muhlbauer
Jade Sellner
30. Cody Eischeid
Erica Lohrmann
Ginger Wardrip
31. Larry Ahrendsen
Amber Ehlers
Ellie Ranniger

Anniversaries

3. Gene & Colene Lohrmann
4. Karl & Angela Albertsen
5. Steve & Nancy Muhlbauer
8. Richard & Beth Mundt
10. Wyatt & Sylvia Badow (T)
12. Robert & Linnet Nissen
13. Greg & Amber Neumann
14. Bruce & Mary Grimm
23. Carl & Carol French
29. Glen & Shirley Ahrendsen
Kent & Karen Vollstedt

Official Acts

Baptisms:

Beau Nicholas Diersen; son of Blake Diersen and Jasmin Nelson, November 6, 2021; Pastor Jonathan Conner

Weddings:

Johanna & Nathan Kropf; November 13, 2021; Pastor Andrew Johnson

Lucas Schwery and Andrea Nulle; November 26, 2021; Pastor Jonathan Conner

In Our Prayers

Louise Kinnan (Darlene Asmus' sister), Justeen Schwieso, Nancy Grimm, Julie Weller, Jeanne Gruhn, Sherri Steffes, Jim Deevers, Rick Spack, John Sonnichsen (Bobby Doyel's Brother in law), Gage Carlson (great grandson of Russ and Virginia Mohr), David Bohlmann, Patty Meeves (Laurene's daughter in law), Bob Hagedorn, Leggy Thomson, Virgene Kroeger, Janet Smith, Gene Mahnke, Nina Pratt, Dorothy Kusel, Janice Monson

