

## **A statement from LCMS Life Ministry on the ‘Dobbs v. Jackson’ ruling**

THE LCMS,  
JUNE 24, 2022



Life Ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) applauds the action of the U.S. Supreme Court to correct the egregious and mortal error codified in *Roe v. Wade*. We now encourage each state government to follow suit by passing and administering laws that protect human life. The people of the LCMS will continue to pray for the government and all in authority, that we might all live peaceful and quiet lives (1 Tim. 2:1–2).

We rejoice that the truth of God’s desire for His creation was reflected in the court’s consideration and decision issued in *Dobbs v. Jackson*. God’s Word and natural law together teach that life is precious and death is the enemy of all living things. Killing violates our being as humans and cannot be sought as a solution or option for individuals. The lie of abortion has caused immeasurable harm to our society and reinforced a utilitarian view of life at the expense of our children. God sent His Son, Jesus, to be born as a human. His baptism, perfect life, death and resurrection on behalf of every sinner gives eternal life to all who believe and drives Christians

to love and treasure our neighbor with the same love from the heavenly Father.

This latest SCOTUS decision encourages each person to reconsider the importance of every life, and to see each person as a blessing from God. The issue of life has never been primarily focused on laws, and thus changed laws do not mitigate the need to remind everyone of the inherent value of life. Being pro-life does not begin or end with politics. Life’s origin and definition remain in God. The value of life cannot and should not ever form the content of debate. Every living creature knows the value of their life and that of their offspring.

Laws to curb evil can only do so much. While we rejoice in this latest move away from federal abortion rights, the law does not outlaw the killing of the unborn, but leaves the choice to each state. The effort to encourage our government (now at the state level) to govern according to reason and natural law must continue. States that have already decided to protect the unborn should be encouraged by their citizens to stand firm. People who live in states where the killing of the unborn is advocated as a right need to be vigilant and steadfast in expressing the fact that the government is to protect the innocent and punish the evil. The protection of the unborn is one of the most important roles of the government. Children’s lives are not a matter of choice or individual rights.

No court decision or government mandate establishes individual morality. Laws cannot change people’s hearts and minds. Instead, each person must learn from God’s Word the true importance of life in His creation. Sadly, most people in our world care neither for God nor the truth of His Word. No government action or decision will change that.

Killing children is wrong. This basic and fundamental truth should not require a law or a statement from the government. Laws exist to guide society to protect the innocent and punish the wrongdoer. Laws against killing should not be necessary. The abortion debates and contentions in our country have revealed the depravity of a people who explicitly chose their own rights over the lives of their children. Adults must care for children, not kill them. It is time to repent of the evils of abortion and for our sins of self-centered godless living.

The people of God must continue to believe and confess the truth of Holy Scripture, reflecting God's gift of life and His priorities to protect and engender life. We are to not kill, but instead to support life. Though many may argue that everyone has the basic right to decide for themselves concerning their own body, this selfish and shallow view of humanity fails to take seriously our basic role in caring for others.

The first story in the Scriptures after humanity fell into sin involves a person killing another to improve their own situation. Cain killed Abel because Abel was Cain's problem. When God confronted Cain with his sin, Cain's response was telling. "Am I my brother's keeper?" And the rest of Scripture screams "Yes." Each person is placed in community and is called to serve others in all things. Other humans are not an avenue through which we seek gain for ourselves. Humans are not obstacles for what we want. God's love in Christ drives us to love and care for all people as God does. That love is sacrificial and gracious.

The sacrificial and gracious love of God is poured out through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. All who trust in Jesus Christ and repent of their sins receive full

and free forgiveness (1 John 1:8–9) and the promise of eternal life (John 3:16).

The church seeks not the kingdom or rule of this world. The church rejoices in the gracious and eternal reign of Jesus, who conquered sin, death and the power of the devil. The church rejoices in the eternal kingdom of God in Jesus Christ, delivered in forgiveness of sins and justification of sinners by God's grace. This kingdom exists and comes through God's holy Word and Sacraments. All is in Christ and all is because of Jesus. Just as the church is His body and He is the church's head, so the church learns from Him to be as she is to be. Even as Christians see in faith, so Christians also learn to view all things in and through the work of Jesus Christ.

The church, however, exists and remains in this world, the blessed provision of the loving Creator. Until our Lord Jesus' return, the church lives in this world, obeys the authorities God has established and loves those God has placed around us. The church bears witness of the Creator and His great love for His creation, especially His love for each human, in whom remains the echo of Adam and Eve, our first parents, created in the image of God.

"In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). Jesus is the source and example of the love His church is called to have for each person. Even as the whole law is fulfilled and summarized in love, so also the Gospel revolves around love. And love, in both cases, is found in Jesus. The Law is fulfilled and the Gospel composed through Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. Thus, there is love and there is the understanding of how God would have us live.

The Creator redeems His creation, and thus teaches His creation how to live and how to love.

The incarnation of Jesus reflects the Creator's love for His creation and sanctifies every Christian life. As the incarnate Son of God is the image of God, so God created humans in His image. And in Christ all humanity reaches its climax and height. The death of Jesus is the goal of history and the defining event of all time. His resurrection stands as the Father's final Word to exalt Jesus as Lord and Christ. Now, all creation is marked by the gracious attitude of God toward the creation on behalf of Jesus. Even those who do not believe, those who are not adopted sons of God, still receive God's gracious favor. The rain falls on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Now, all creation is to reflect its Creator. And even the kingdoms of this world, the societies and nations, are called to emulate their Creator, the unknown and hidden God seen in the creation and known by the law written on every human heart. The church does not expect the government to seek the kingdom of Christ, but to protect the innocent and to curb the evil present in society. Though the law is not our hope, it is within proper law that God's will is seen and lived.

We trust in Jesus Christ as we walk by faith and not by sight. As we thus walk in His light, we walk with many who are in darkness. Death, which is sin's wages, has been defeated. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true, and this instructs and informs our lives in this world. We join with God, and we seek life.

The people of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have always supported life and the surrounding issues beyond mere words and statements. We take seriously our Lord's command to love our neighbor. To that end, and in reflection of God's love for us, the congregations and people of the LCMS have

always worked with those affected by needs at the beginning of life, the end of life and all of life in between. Most of this work happens in private conversations and Christians serving quietly without notice from others. We also organize our congregations and other organizations to serve in their communities officially and locally.

We recently inaugurated the 1 John 3 Million Dollar Life Match grant program to encourage and enable the congregations of the LCMS to serve their communities specifically in the arena of life issues. The LCMS will grant matching funds totaling \$1 million to LCMS congregations who serve their communities through pregnancy centers, diaper drives, supporting families, adoption services and other ways the church can support those precious lives in our communities. This grant initiative is based on 1 John 3:16–18: “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”

All of this reflects the central reality of our life — “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Christ laid down His life for us. We love in deed and truth.

**Iowa Supreme Court:**  
*Abortion is not a  
constitutional right*



On Friday, June 17, the Iowa Supreme Court overturned a 2018 decision that had declared abortion a constitution right in Iowa. That 2018 decision, sadly, had made Iowa one of the most abortion friendly states in the nation, essentially blocking any attempts by our legislature to protect the lives of the unborn. You have read several articles in the pages of this newsletter about the efforts to undo this ruling through the Protect Life Amendment. The efforts to pass this amendment will continue, but this most recent ruling is a big win for the unborn. And now, with the overturning of *Roe* and *Casey* by the United States Supreme Court, Iowa is free to enact firmer protections for the unborn. This is cause for great celebration!

Kim Laube, Executive Director of Life Ministries for Lutheran Family Service, offered these words: “We are grateful to see this historic day, the culmination of countless prayers and tireless work by so many. At Lutheran Family Service we have and will continue to advocate for law change that protects life at all stages, including the pre-born. All human lives have equal and infinite value, a value that comes from our Creator.” And Iowa Governor, Kim Reynolds, announced: “Today’s ruling is a significant victory in our fight to protect the unborn. The Iowa Supreme Court reversed its earlier 2018 decision, which made Iowa the most abortion-friendly state in the country. Every life is sacred and should be protected, and as long as I’m governor that is exactly what I will do.”

We praise God for our national and state Supreme Court rulings even as we continue to be a voice for life from the womb to the tomb.

Thumbs up for legal protection!



Dear Parents and Grandparents of Zion Young Investors,

Since March of 2020, the Young Investors’ Club of Zion has been on recess. Recent conversations with interested parties have suggested that it is time to resume efforts. The Young Investor program provides opportunity for our younger members and their families to learn the advantages of regular saving and at the same time participate in helping ministries to grow and serve others.

On Sunday, July 17<sup>th</sup>, Zion will hold an information meeting immediately following church services to encourage participation in this worthwhile program. Carole Mandarach (White), IDW representative of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund will be present to answer questions and to update information on additional benefits of the program. Zion currently has 53 young persons enrolled in the program. Your attendance at this meeting is requested and encouraged.



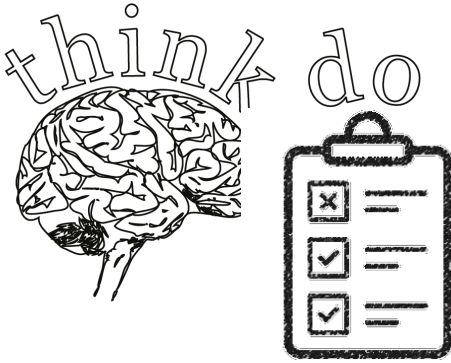
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CAROLE WHITE

## A Way to Think; A Work to Do: Processing and Responding to Bad News



Tulsa, Oklahoma; Centerville, Texas; Buffalo, New York; Uvalde, Texas. The news hasn't been good lately. On the one hand, the news hasn't been good for a long time (really, since Adam sinned!); on the other hand, the kind of news assaulting our ears has been particularly shocking recently (the above cities are all sites of horrific mass shootings). Little ones' lives cut short. Families shattered. Hopes and dreams destroyed. So many tears. So much hurt.

How should we process such news? And what should we do about it? These are important questions, questions that deserve considered thought and an intentional response (sadly, this is not what we have heard from many of our national leaders or media outlets).



So how do we respond in the face of death and suffering? First, we grieve. We lament. We mourn. We acknowledge the rawness of the pain and the immensity of the loss. And Scripture invites us to bring this pain and loss, even our utter confusion

and disappointment, to the Lord. Scripture even gives us the words! Read the following laments slowly and feel the deep, heaving emotions in them.

I am weary with my moaning;  
every night I flood my bed with tears;  
I drench my couch with my weeping.  
My eye wastes away because of grief... (Ps.  
6:6-7).

I am so troubled that I cannot speak...  
Will the Lord spurn forever,  
and never again be favorable?  
Has his steadfast love forever ceased?  
Are his promises at an end for all time?  
Has God forgotten to be gracious?  
Has he in anger shut up his compassion  
(Psalm 77:4, 7-9)?

These are real, raw words and emotions, words and emotions we painfully echo and agonizingly still feel today as we experience our own grief and sorrow. We must not rush past them or use them for political gain, something our political elites have shamelessly done with each new tragedy. Death, loss, devastation, and pain deserve to be heard and they call for our lament. And Scripture is no stranger to the lament. Its pages are so wet with the tears of the saints who have suffered before us that if we wrung those pages those tears would readily flow.

In our grief and sorrow we must, despite the painful difficulty, come to a deeper understanding of the nature of the age in which we live. In other words, we need to acknowledge the way the world is (not the way we wish it was or the way it's popularly portrayed in media), but the way it truly is.

Ecclesiastes (a book I deeply appreciate for its sober assessment of reality) essentially describes “life under the sun” as a *time, chance, and death world*. The rest of Scripture concurs. Paul writes of “the sufferings of this present time...” (Romans 8:18). Peter counsels, “do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you” (1 Peter 4:12). Luke quotes Paul in Acts: “through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). And John quotes Jesus: “In the world you will have tribulation” (John 16:33). Feel the brokenness in these words. This is the age of suffering, sorrow, pain, and loss – and much of it is utterly senseless. We must accept this. This is reality. Denying it or pretending it isn’t real only sets us up for confusion and despair. None of us is exempt from our time, chance, death world.

In the face of such suffering, though, it can be tempting to turn our backs on God – because it hurts so much and is impossible to make sense of! You saw the news coverage from the recent mass shootings. How many times have you seen it before?! How could a good God let such senseless pain and death happen? Why doesn’t He stop it?

But before we, in our hurt, turn away from God, we must pause to consider what we would be turning *to*. This is the all-important question. If not Jesus, then who? Is there anyone who can stop death, anyone who can heal the brokenhearted, anyone who can make all the heartache go away once and for all? Anyone?

Yes, we are hurting. Yes, we have questions for which we have no answers. Yes, there are things about God’s ways and this present reality that don’t make sense, but will turning away from God help? Will it answer any of our questions? Will it provide any hope? Will we find another to save?

Will a politician deliver us? Can any substance do it? Can any entertainment permanently distract us from it? Peter asked, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life...” (John 6:68). In other words, “Lord, there is no Plan B. If you’re not the Savior, then we have nothing.” 2,000 years have passed and that hasn’t changed.

Despite our pain, even in the midst of our pain, hope remains, even lives, in Jesus. We may not understand why we suffer. We may not understand why our loved ones must die. What we understand, though, is *who* has suffered for us and *who* has died for us – Jesus. It’s Jesus. Therefore, despite our pain, despite our grief, we anchor our hope in Him.

One of the great prophets of Scripture, Jeremiah, in the midst of his and Jerusalem’s great, painful lament, directs our hearts to the Lord. His words deserve to be memorized and internalized as life presents us regular cause to speak them:

But this I call to mind,  
and therefore I have hope:  
The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;  
his mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.  
“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul,  
“therefore I will hope in him.”  
The Lord is good to those who wait for him,  
to the soul who seeks him.  
It is good that one should wait quietly  
for the salvation of the Lord (Lamentations  
3:21-26).

The steadfast love of the Lord has taken on flesh in Jesus Christ. He has died for our sins and been raised for our life. Despite our pain, our hope lives in Him. We truly have, as Peter says in 1 Peter, “a living hope” (1 Peter 1:3). This is how we process

the bad news we read, see, and experience every day.



Now, what should we *do*? What should we do as a people, as individuals, as families, as a church in a world assaulted by bad news? There are obviously many, many ways to answer this question (one of them would be ardently and enthusiastically confessing the good news of life and salvation in Jesus Christ, bringing our living hope into the midst of our pain!). I want to offer one answer with three parts. My answer will focus on human flourishing. In other words, what can we do to promote human flourishing, to advance and protect wellness and joy?

The answer may surprise you. We need to build (or re-build) key cultural, institutional, and familial guardrails. Let me explain. When guardrails on the highway fail, when they are weakened or removed, bad things happen. To be more precise, when guardrails are torn down, accidents that might have otherwise been minor become major. The same holds true for cultural, institutional, and familial guardrails. Having good and solid cultural, institutional, and familial guardrails in place won't necessarily prevent bad things from happening, but they will go a very long way in preventing bad behavior and in keeping it from escalating.

Scripture highlights at least three key guardrails that God has established: the family (the cradle of culture) (see Genesis 1:26-31), the church (the hub of our life) (see 1 Timothy 3:15, Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22), and the government (the defender of the good) (see Romans 13:1-7). We need to invest in and meaningfully engage in all three.

How? Here are a few concrete suggestions.

## Family

Prioritize family. Start by turning off your TV. Put down your phones. Eat meals together. Read Scripture together. Read books aloud to each other. Play games together. Pray together. Make intentional efforts to talk to one another. Ask open ended questions: "What was the best thing that happened in your day? What was the worst?" Get a pile of conversation cards and use them to guide conversations during meals (ask me if you need help with this!).

Be a family. Build family identity. Make it clear: *this is who we are. This is what we stand for.* But please, PLEASE, understand: parents must be all in. Parents must prioritize family life. Parents must turn off their TVs (and get them out of their bedrooms and their children's bedrooms!). Parents must put their phones down. Screens aren't evil, but they are dangerously powerful. They have the potential to fracture the family and to destroy this guardrail. Don't let them. Rein them in. If you're going to watch something, make it a family event. Watch it together. Talk about it together. Incorporate it into the family together. Make it part of the family identity.

The multiplication of screens with individual family members separately watching content not only does nothing to build a family, but it does everything to fracture it, drawing individual family members ever away from each other and into the world of the screen. Save your family from fracturing! Be a family.

We especially need men to step up here. We need men who will be honorable men and women who will respect them (there's way too much man bashing today!). It's not that men don't or haven't

behaved badly,<sup>1</sup> but we won't get men to step up by beating them down. The statistical evidence is undeniable, when men stand for righteousness, families thrive. When men check out, families falter. We need men be men. We need men to be pillars of righteousness and honor. We need men to invest in family.

This will build belonging in and among the family and the guardrails that guide behaviors and make certain behaviors unacceptable. To be as direct as I can: we need men who will commit to women, marry them, raise children with them, and confidently walk the straight line of righteousness as a living example for children. This won't solve every societal ill, but it will go a long way toward making things better. It will establish necessary guardrails and foster human flourishing.

## Church

Paul, writing to Timothy, writes of, "the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). These are astonishing words! God's church is His household, His family where His presence dwells! And God establishes this Church as a pillar and buttress of the truth. Or, to use our word, a guardrail! Like the family we just discussed, we need the church. It needs to be strong. It needs to be unwavering. It needs to be consistent. And we need to invest in it. We need to participate in it. We need to hear the Word of truth, of wisdom, of accountability. We need to learn the fear of the Lord.

If we want to flourish as a people, we need to put the Creator before the creature, we need to honor His guardrails. Surprising as it might sound (and in opposition to what the world claims), God's guardrails are liberating. Take a few moments to appreciate what the psalmist is saying about God's guardrails for our life (revealed in God's precepts):

The law of the LORD is perfect,  
reviving the soul;  
the testimony of the LORD is sure,  
making wise the simple;  
the precepts of the LORD are right,  
rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment of the LORD is pure,  
enlightening the eyes;  
the fear of the LORD is clean,  
enduring forever;  
the rules of the LORD are true,  
and righteous altogether.  
More to be desired are they than gold,  
even much fine gold;  
sweeter also than honey  
and drippings of the honeycomb.  
Moreover, by them is your servant warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward (Psalm  
19:7-11).

There is great reward – human flourishing! – in honoring God's guardrails. So, to do this we need to get ourselves and our families into church, into worship, into the life of the church. Sending our children to Sunday school is good; attending worship as a family and everyone studying God's Word in Sunday school and Bible class is better – way better. Discussing the Bible readings from

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<sup>1</sup> Space prevents a further treatment of this, but the sexual revolution and its separation of sex from marriage, the one-flesh union, and the blessing of procreation, has essentially given men the moral

license to see women as objects of sexual pleasure and children as the unwanted result of the sexual act, the unwanted result that abortion "solves."



worship, the sermon, hymns, liturgy, and Sunday school lessons as a family (or with friends) is better still. Get involved in God's church. Respect His guardrails. Experience human flourishing.

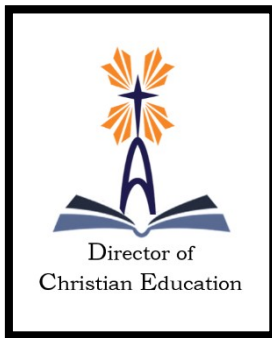
## Government

People love to lampoon and demonize the government. And many of our leaders, in response to the recent shootings have acted inappropriately, slinging a lot of mud in politically motivated rhetoric. This is shameless. The thing about mudslinging though, is that when you fling mud, you not only get dirty, but you lose a lot of ground. Mudslinging gains nothing. It must stop, especially by anyone who confesses Christ as Lord. We are called to honorable behavior. We cannot demonize and dishonor God's governing authorities, no matter how strongly we may disagree with them. If we disagree, we must learn to disagree with grace and to offer what good we believe needs to be defended.

Government is not bad. Governing authorities may behave badly, but government has been given by God. Even more, it has been given by God *for good*, for human flourishing. In fact, Scripture calls the governing authorities *God's servants* (Romans 13:4). Our job is to ensure they know what good is. In other words, we must know what God has called good, what God has established for our good and for human flourishing (which we can find, for instance, in the creation narrative and the Ten Commandments). Then we must tell the governing authorities what is good. We do that both by voting and by contacting our representatives. But to vote wisely, we must pay attention to party platforms. We must learn to consider individual personalities *after* platforms. Platforms govern the governing authorities.

We may even consider running for office. This is a good and honorable thing to do. Remember, governing authorities are God's servants. Serving in government is one way to serve the Lord. Serving in a governing office is one way to facilitate human flourishing. Further, governing authorities have the potential to teach what good should be protected by passing and defending laws designed to protect that good. As we've highlighted before, laws not only protect what is good (because you build fences, i.e. laws, around the things you value), they reveal the things we believe are good and in need of protection (the unborn, for instance, which is why we need good pro-life, pro-natural marriage, pro-family laws). No, these laws won't and don't change people's hearts, but that isn't their purpose. They are the cultural guardrails that we erect to protect us from bad behavior.

Family. Church. Government. These guardrails are good. They need to be maintained, and in many cases, rebuilt because we have let them crumble. No, these guardrails won't stop every tragedy, but they will go a long way toward lessening their severity and even further toward facilitating human flourishing. – Pastor Conner



- 20 kids attending the IDW Jr. Youth Gathering
- 20+ kids regularly up for children's sermons
- 25 kids attending the national youth gathering
- 40+ children in confirmation
- 50+ kids in Sunday school.
- 80+ kids in the children's Christmas program
- 180+ kids in VBS

The reality represented by these numbers has driven Zion's Council to begin exploring the possibility of Calling a Director of Christian Education (DCE). A DCE is a synodically trained and certified individual with special training in Christian education in the congregational setting.

In preparation for presenting this possibility to you (the members of Zion), Zion's council has appointed a subcommittee to research the question. This subcommittee has visited with Ms. Rhonda Mohr (Assistant to the President of Iowa District West for Education, Youth, and Family Life), researched options for Calling a DCE, and compiled a draft of a position description. In addition, Zion's council has studied the necessary financial commitment to Call a DCE.

What would a DCE at Zion do? Among other things, oversee our Sunday school program (partnering with our Board of Education), identify and train teachers, coordinate (and partner with Zion members) the music ministry among children at Zion (Sunday school openings, Confirmation openings, Christmas program, VBS), coordinate

(with Zion members) VBS, offer Bible studies, visit members, serve as a volunteer coordinator, and more.

Or, to put it more officially:

The DCE of Zion Lutheran Church (Manning, IA) exists to be a conduit of God's love and truth and is blessed with the opportunity to partner with Zion's members, Zion's Pastor, and Zion's partners in the Christian disciple making process and Zion's mission to celebrate and share Christ's redeeming love. As such, Zion's DCE will work closely with the aforementioned to plan, develop, and implement the Christian education initiatives at Zion.

After worship on Sunday, July 17, congregational president Jeff Hargens will welcome you to an informational meeting (no vote will occur at this meeting). On behalf of the council, he will share an informational packet for you to review. Then, on Sunday, August 24, Zion's voters will be invited to consider the question (both whether to Call a DCE and what route to pursue in that Call).

If you have questions in advance of these meetings, you are welcome to visit with Jeff, Zion's Council, and/or Pastor Conner. Until then, we ask you to consider these questions:

- Is there a clear and identifiable opportunity/need for a ministry staff person?
- Am I willing to invest in this position through my generous giving?

Thank you for joyfully moving the mission and ministry of Zion forward!

- Zion's Council



The king demanded a response. Either show allegiance by bowing down in the direction of a newly minted statue when the band gives a cue, or melt down in an oven in which flames will force you to your knees. If those were your two options, which would you choose?

Even though Israel faced exile from Jerusalem, it was not all bad for some of the exiles. We are more familiar with their Babylonian names - but Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were offered the ancient equivalent of early social security at a young age. "The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank" (Daniel 1:5). In the ancient world, it is estimated that 80% of an average person's income paid for food (that makes sense of why the people were so taken by Jesus when He fed the 5,000). The boys did not have to worry about where their next meal was going to come from. They also received free college tuition. They had it made in Babylon. They could have lived a pretty cushy life serving as the King's bureaucrats. But we know the rest of the story – in fact, it is one of our favorites. The King haphazardly tossed the men he had invested a great deal of time and income in to a fire because they refused to show

their allegiance to the King in the way he desired. They instead confirmed their allegiance to the God of Israel.

Again, we know this story well. Even though the men were walking fire hazards since they "were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments", an intermediary figure joins the crew in the fire (the Son of God by chance?). They did not burn up in the oven. God rescued them in a miraculous way.

But there is a problem with this story. Or, at the very least, there is a problem with how we practice this story. It is all too easy to say, "Well, if I'm faithful like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, then God will rescue me from any and every adversity I face." In other words, the point from our perspective is that God simply rewarded the three men with a "good job" sticker on account of their faithfulness to Him. If we are faithful, then God will reward us too by snatching us out of the life-flames we face.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, however, never expected to be saved from the fire. Or at the very least, they never expected God to rescue them immediately. They explain to the King: "our God whom we serve is **ABLE** to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he **WILL** deliver us out of your hand, O king" (Daniel 3:17). Notice, they do not say, "He *will* deliver us from the furnace." They simply affirm that the LORD is capable of delivering them from the flames, and ultimately God will reign whether the Three burn up or not.

The men go on by affirming that they will not demonstrate their allegiance with a few simple words: "**BUT IF NOT**...we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image..." (Daniel 3:18). What are they saying? Their allegiance to the

LORD is not contingent on whether or not He rescues them from the furnace. They will love the Lord with every fiber of their beings despite the flames.

The Three demonstrate something really important to us. It is not that God will always rescue you from the flames. It is, however, that even when the flames do their damage, the God revealed in history and the Holy Scriptures reigns over and against the devastating circumstances we face in the here and now. We pray for miracles for sure, “but if not” our allegiance, trust, faith will remain the same to this God, or at least that is what the Three professed to the King.

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The flames are hot. As of this writing, I will soon find out how my medical team would like to move forward in terms of treatment. More chemo? Surgery of some kind? Go home, the end is near? I do not know what they will say. All I do know is it is scary to deal with an aggressive disease at age 31. I hope for a miracle for sure – remission; feeling decent; getting back to fulltime ministry. But for now, the flames are hot. I am tired (I am also tired of feeling tired). Everyday feels like I ran a marathon the day before.

What makes this experience even more difficult is the lingering, burning question – is this cancer going to end me? Like I said, the flames are hot.

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While Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego remain uncertain about their fates, they are sure of one thing: the King will not win even if he successfully burns them up in the furnace. God **WILL** deliver them from the King’s hand. The hand is a word-picture for the King’s *power* and *authority* (so when we talk about Jesus sitting at the right *hand*

of power, we are asserting that He has divine power and authority). The question is, delivering the Three from the King’s hand to whose hand?; from what to what? In other words, you leave the grocery store you have been delivered from inside to outside. We know from what or from whom the Three are being delivered, but what are or to whom are they being delivered to – and how is that deliverance possible?

The Bible text actually tells us how they were delivered: [The King said;] “I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods” (Daniel 3:25). How were they rescued? The intervention of this fourth mysterious figure. The King seems to believe that this figure is special due to His appearance. Rather than getting bogged down in explanation, let’s cut to the chase. A preincarnate or non-human Son of God entered the fire in order to deliver Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and to demonstrate the radical power of God. While the King carelessly sacrificed his own guards from a safe distance along with the Three, the “son of the gods” ran into the furnace despite the flames. The account reveals a significant Christian truth: God delivers you from death to life by entering into the suffering.

This reality becomes more jaw-dropping during Holy Week. Death, sin, and unseen enemies alike were sure that their power would win the day. While Jesus refused to bow down approximately three years earlier in the wilderness temptations, these forces had a final furnace for Jesus. Just as the King was “filled with fury” towards the Three, sin, death, the devil fumed against Christ. So much so, that they were willing to sacrifice their

own minions in order to exterminate Jesus just like the King sacrificed his own guards.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus, like the Three, refused to give in to His enemies. He had a mission – namely, to deliver God’s people from the hands of death, sin, and the evil one. While a miracle could have ended Jesus’ suffering and prevented His crucifixion and death, He moved forward despite the flames. And He burned up; He died. He remained faithful to His Father even though His Father functionally abandoned Him.<sup>3</sup>

+++

Christian discipleship remains the same as it did for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. We are to remain faithful despite the flames; our allegiance to God does not shift even if that means we are denied a miracle.

But we are able to demonstrate this discipleship because Jesus faced the flames *alone* for us. No one delivered Him, but He delivers us. “He will deliver us out of your hand,” O sin, death, the devil’ – and He will move us from dying to sinlessness, eternal life and resurrection, and the presence of God.

Flames remain flames. There is a bite to suffering that we should not snuff out by pretending suffering is no big deal. My cancer is scary for a variety of reasons, and dismissing the experience as insignificant is like saying Christ’s crucifixion was just Him having a bad day with a handful of nails. While I hope for a miraculous recovery, my

health, or lack thereof, does not change the fact that God remains God – and He alone is worthy of my allegiance.

My flames do not compare, however, to Jesus’. But the beauty is that Jesus’ suffering was so great that it unleashed a future reality where my flames and your flames will extinguish completely. The historical resurrection guarantees that reality. The suffering of Jesus, allows us to confidently say, “But if not...” despite the flames, because the dance of the flame and the powers igniting them will end once and for all one day. – Pastor Johnson

## JOYS AT TRINITY

Cathie Segebart represented  
Trinity at the LWML District  
convention in June

Dara, Gloria, and Wendy spruced up Trinity  
with new flowers and organization pieces



Mark Segebart represented Trinity at the Iowa  
District West Convention at Camp Okoboji

Pastors Riggert and Vogel continue to share  
their time and talents with Trinity as Pastor  
Johnson recovers

Arlene Jahn’s memorial helped beautify and  
update Trinity’s sanctuary by replacing  
candles

<sup>2</sup> During Holy Week, Judas served as the guard responsible for hauling Jesus off to the furnace, but he lost his life due to crippling guilt – but sin, death, and the devil could care less about their pawn.

<sup>3</sup> “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?” (Psalm 22:1). David’s words became Jesus’ words on the cross.

## Opportunities to Support Confirmation

For being out in rural Iowa, Manning and Manilla have a strong and large Confirmation program. Consistently, there have been roughly 40 kids across 4 grades in our congregations' program. With so many kids, it does require a great deal of resources! Thrivent members can help though by activating their Thrivent Action Teams. Thrivent Members have access to 2 teams per year, and each team can receive up to \$250 to support a project.



As of right now there are 4 project opportunities that will support confirmation which you can pledge one (or both) of your teams to:

- **Orientation Night:** volunteers will equip students and parents with catechisms and manuals for confirmation instruction.
- **Family Night 1 – Family Devotions:** volunteers will equip families to lead family devotions. Families will be brought together for a meal before instruction.
- **Family Night 2 – How Has Faith in Jesus Made Your Life Better?:** volunteers will share how faith in Christ has shaped their life to families. Families will be brought together for a meal beforehand.
- **Family Night 3 – Evolution Conversation:** volunteers will equip families to constructively think and articulate the pitfalls of evolution. Families will be brought together for a meal before instruction.

If you would be interested in pledging your Thrivent teams to confirmation, please let either Pastors Conner or Johnson know. You would not be expected to be present at these events, but you are certainly welcome to help. Even if you're not a Thrivent member, but these events sound like something you'd like to help with, again, please let us know.



Help out Trinity's Sunday School program by signing up to provide breakfast.

- Each breakfast could be a snack like muffins (homemade or store-bought); fruit (the kids love oranges); or cinnamon rolls have been a big hit in the past too.
- You also need to provide a beverage like juice.

Sign up is located on Trinity's Entry Way Bulletin Board.



## Preschool Praises for Summer

Welcome to Zion Lutheran Preschool's new Director/Teacher Amy Blackwell!! We're so excited to welcome Amy to the Zion team to continue the tradition of excellence in early childhood education and spiritual formation!



Zion is still in need of an assistant teacher. Please share the position need and encourage qualified applicants to apply (see the information on the next page)!



### MEET THE TEACHER

My hobbies: crafting, teaching spin class and spending time with my kids



A little bit about me: My husband Matt and I have 3 children (Brynli, Hayden and Harvey). We have 2 cats (Ozzy and Nugget). We love camping, traveling and watching America's Got Talent!

Why I am excited to be at Zion: I have always had a passion for working with children and I am excited to get to do it every day! I am looking forward to helping the children grow spiritually and academically.



## **ASSISTANT TEACHER**

2022-2023 School Year

**Involves collaboration with the director/lead teacher  
29 hrs/wk; in class 3 1/2 days/wk.**

**Applicants must meet DHS standards.**

**Salary will be based on experience.**

**FULL POSITION, DESCRIPTION AND APPLICATIONS  
AVAILABLE AT ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH**

1204 Center St, Manning, IA 51455

Phone: (712)655-2352

Email: [zionmanningLCMS@gmail.com](mailto:zionmanningLCMS@gmail.com)

**CHRIST CENTERED - CHILD FOCUSED - FAMILY CONNECTING**





**Humbled and amazed.** These are the words that keep echoing in my mind as I reflect on Zion's VBS week. Humbled because I have the privilege of serving with so very many loving, faithful, generous, and talented servants of Jesus. Amazed because we got to celebrate and share the love of Jesus Christ with over 180 kids! I will not soon forget standing in the middle of them all in the nave and seeing and hearing them jubilantly dance and sing in praise of Jesus. It gave and still gives me goosebumps. Thank you, Zion, for loving Jesus and for bringing His love to children and families.

Major thanks to co-directors **Shannon Walters, Kimber Opperman, and Nancy Muhlbauer.** God worked through these women in mighty ways. Thank them! Below, please see the LONG list of loving volunteers who made it all possible. Find them and thank them! (And, forgive me for those I missed!) And thank you to everyone who gave and prayed! You are deeply appreciated! - Pastor Conner

### Crafts

Holly Borkowski,  
Sheryl Zinke, Jessie Blackford, Shirley Ahrendsen, Toni Muhlbauer, Jean Ferneding, Shelly Gruhn, Ashley Hinners, Jayden Bunker, Nancy Wanninger, Sam Musfeldt, Larry Mahnke, Amber Ostebee

### Music

Janet Smith

### Class helpers

Chelsey Jensen, Devyn Sanders, Kathy Vollstedt, Mary Grimm, Grace Asmus, Greg Skeen, Cassey Neumann, Olivia Beck, Bev Grundmeier, Adalyn Stribe, Lauren Greving, Sandra Sextro, Jodi Ramsey, Joni Kienast, Claire Gore, Carolyn Kerkhoff, Courtney Grabill, Emily Albertsen, Merrick Stribe, Eryn Ramsey, Aubrey Alexander, Donna Rutz, Emma Schwieso, Alison Weeks, Gloria Ewoldt

### Class helpers

Sierra Ferry, Haleigh Alexander, Beth Booth, Brooke Booth, Claire Behrens, Neeka Jacobsen, Haylie Irlbeck, McKenna Benton, Kaylee Martin, Paula Vogel, Paula Finken, Barb Page, Mabel Langel, Pastor Johnson

### Registration

Sue Mahnke

### Audio/Visual

Bob Genzen, Josiah Conner

### Parking Lot

Jeff Hargens

### Recreation

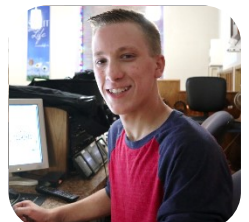
Tyler Heaton, Julianna Stribe, Kari Ranniger, Brennen Morris, Andy Booth

### Decorators

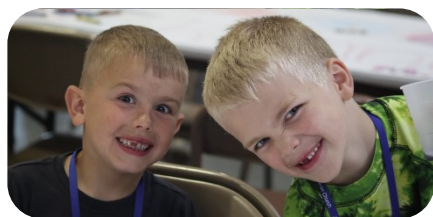
Donna Rutz, Brooklyn Reisberg, Linda Vinke, Jean Hargens, Diane Bogardus, Kala Chapman

### Kitchen

Karen Vollstedt, Cynthia Genzen, Janet Gruhn, Darlene Vollstedt, Diane Genzen, Kay Otto, Luella Borkowski







**Zion VBS  
2022!**



**Thank you for enabling us to share the love  
and truth of Jesus with every one of these  
children!**



## Great Expectations

What do you think our society would be like if our ancestors did not take chances and look for a better life? If we were all negative thinkers, Columbus might have said that he didn't think his ship could make it across the ocean or Neal Armstrong might have said that a rocket would not be able to get off of the ground let alone get to the moon.



Are you a glass half-empty or half-full sort of person? Positive thinking is not magic and it won't make all of your problems disappear. What it will do, though, is make your problems seem more manageable and help you approach hardships in a more positive and productive way. What better time than now to train your brain to think positive.

Focus on the good things. Most situations have a positive side, although it may be hard to see that sometimes. Practicing gratitude has been shown to reduce stress, improve outlook, and foster resilience even in the most difficult times. Think of people, moments, or things that bring you some kind of comfort or happiness and try to express your gratitude at least once a day. This can be as simple as thanking someone for washing the dishes.

Humor is a great way to improve your positivity. Laughter lowers stress, anxiety, and depression. It also improves coping skills, mood, and outlook. Being open to humor in all situations, especially the difficult ones, helps to lighten the mood.

Spending time with positive people has been shown to change a negative mood quickly to a positive mood. It is contagious. Look around at the people that you are spending time with. Have you noticed how someone with a bad mood can bring down almost everyone in the room? A positive person will do the opposite – they will lift you up and help you see the bright side.

Things don't always go as planned. That's okay. We tend to be hardest on ourselves and be our own worst critic. Over time, this will lead you to form a negative opinion of yourself and influence your ability to regulate your feelings, thoughts, and behavior under stress. Try saying to yourself "I really messed that up. I will try it again a different way."

Start each day with a positive message. Tell yourself to have a great day and share some positivity to others by giving a compliment or doing something nice for someone. It might help to listen to a happy song or playlist. There is no shortage of social media options now to find an uplifting message, joke, or song. It is worth it – and possible – to learn how to think more positive.

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







*Rev. Mark and Megan Mantey  
Serving in Uganda*



Dear Pr. Conner and the saints of Zion,

Greetings in Christ from Uganda! Megan and I pray that all of you are doing well. Thank you for your continued prayer and support of the Lord's work here. As we continue to serve in East Africa, we are grateful for your partnership in God's mission.

We praise God for another completed semester at the Lutheran Theological College Uganda. The students took final exams in early June and returned home for a short break. Their next semester starts in August. Last semester Megan taught classes focusing on teaching the men how to teach different age groups in their congregations about Christian conflict resolution/peace keeping. It's always amazing to see the seminarians using the skills they learned in seminary back in their home settings. We're grateful for the opportunity to continue to serve alongside, teach, administer and coach God's people in east Africa. Thank you, again, for your continued prayer and support of the Lord's work in Uganda.

In Christ Alone,  
Mark and Megan



## Orphan Grain Train Clothing Donations

Zion Fellowship Club will again coordinate an OGT clothing collection. Clothing items (men, women, children, all sizes and seasons). Donations can be brought to the Fellowship Hall storage/quilting room. Donations can be brought between July 17 and July 31. Tentatively, the items will be delivered to the Ida Grove warehouse on Tuesday, August 2. Items can be new (especially underwear and socks) or gently used. Items should be of good quality and clean. Shoes (not high heels) can also be brought. Please share this opportunity with friends and neighbors who may be adjusting their own wardrobes or clearing closets of a loved one.

Orphan Grain Train boxes our donations and then sends them to areas affected by natural disasters or areas of poverty or political turmoil. OGT has been very involved in providing support for refugees from Ukraine. OGT also welcomes financial donations as shipping costs are significant. The Zion Fellowship Club has supported OGT the past few years and has made numerous deliveries to the Ida Grove warehouse. The Zion Quilters has assembled MANY quilts delivered to the warehouse and shipped around the world. More information on the OGT ministry is available at [ogt.org](http://ogt.org).

After a delicious picnic on June 13, the Fellowship Club will "recess" for the summer and meet again on Monday, September 12. Program suggestions for the fall and winter are welcomed. The Fellowship Club has highlighted church vocations and community and regional ministry partners. Program suggestions can be shared with Pastor Riggert. Bring your clothing donations by July 31. Join us in the fall!





## *Amigos en Cristo*

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

*Friends in Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church*

**Pastor Pedro Lopez**, Denison, Iowa

July 2022

...s, it is a privilege to share information with all of you about your Hispanic Ministry in our beloved Iowa District West. Many events are coming up very soon. It seems the year is reaching the end too soon!

Our rummage sale (first for me and my wife) was a success! We received many gifts from several churches and families. The second sale is scheduled for July 14-16 at Zion in Denison. This fundraiser will provide scholarships to help people go to Camp Okoboji in August and the Hispanic Convention, also in August. You can help by donating new and gently used items as well as money.

We participated and shared a display about our Hispanic Ministry during the Annual LWML Convention at Camp Okoboji, June 16-18. This gave us the opportunity to meet lots of leaders from our churches as well as to invite them to be part of the coming events where volunteers are going to be needed.

Our District Convention is coming up too (June 26-28) at Camp Okoboji. I will have a display about our Hispanic Outreach. This will also give us an opportunity to meet pastors and leaders and invite them and their congregation to get involved in the efforts to bring the Gospel and message of salvation in Jesus to the ever-growing Hispanic community.

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



On July 24, we will be hosting the "Taco Sale" for those bicycle riders participating in the RAGBRAI event. This will take place at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Ida Grove. We are planning to sell 3,000 tacos plus water and sweets to feed the hungry riders and raise money to support Hispanic Outreach in our District. We will be needing lots of volunteers on Saturday, July 23 and Sunday, July 24 to serve the riders. Please look for more information in how to send your youth groups, ladies, men and any other available volunteers on those dates. This looks like a great opportunity for many to put hands on Hispanic Ministry, bienvenidos!

Continue to keep us in your prayers as we move forward in seeking new possibilities for Hispanic Ministry. I am available to talk to your congregations and groups, bendiciones a todos!





## Snapshots of Zion



### 12<sup>th</sup> St. Removal:

19 volunteers (plus kitchen helpers), along with three loader tractors, three skid loaders, two dump trucks, and two semi-side dump trailers, showed up on June 12<sup>th</sup> to tear out 12<sup>th</sup> St. and the sidewalks in preparation for their replacement. Wow! Praise God for such amazing volunteers! (see names on right)



### Thank you to:

Mike Gore, Eric Ramsey, Larry Mahnke, Nate Jensen, Nate Janssen, Denny Backhaus, Rodney Backhaus, Jim Karsten, Ben Lorenzen, Jason Kienast, Nate Blackford, Kent Vollstedt, Dan Behrens, Tim Kienast, Bary Kienast, Tyler Bruck, Dan Stribe, Kyle Arp, Isaac Grabill

And all who donated, prepared, and served food!



After being lovingly loaded with VBS shoes boxes, Emma Schwieso successfully carries them to their proper location.

VBS children wave happily as they enjoy their snack.

Over 170 VBS children rattle the roof as they enthusiastically sing the VBS songs.



***Please Note! All times and events are subject to change***



**Sunday  
Mornings**

**Zion Family Bible Class (after worship)**



**July 21**

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



**July 28**

**Historic Trinity (Manning)  
6:30 p.m.**



**July 17**

**Director of Christian Education Information Meeting  
After worship at Zion**



**July 17**

**Y.I. Club with Carole White of LCEF  
Meeting for young investors after worship at Zion**



**Camp Okoboji Quilt Auction**

**July 16, 2022 | 12:30 P.M.**

Join us as we admire, bid, & buy the 100+ beautiful quilts that were made & donated. All proceeds go toward Camp Okoboji's Playground Renovation.

For more information, visit [campokoboji.org](http://campokoboji.org)



**Travel Camp: ARK Encounter & Creation  
Museum**

**September 5-9, 2022**

**SAVE THE DATE! We'll be traveling to the ARK Encounter & Creation Museum. Register by submitting your \$75 deposit.**

For more information, visit [campokoboji.org](http://campokoboji.org)  
or call Izaak Wendorff at Camp (712-337-3325)!



# July Birthdays and Anniversaries @ Zion & Trinity

## *Birthdays* (T = Trinity)

1. Heather Adams  
Nathan Jensen  
Judith Lee  
Keely Loing
2. Becki Ehlers  
Rylan Hass  
Brenna Hodne  
Jessica Soll
3. Jace Kucik  
Landry Wiig
4. Mallory Weilt
5. Chelsea Page
6. Janet Smith
7. Leonard Dammann  
Lisa Drier  
Taylor Potthoff
8. Matthew Weilt
9. Reid Neumann
11. Olivia Beck  
Jax Greving  
Jason Kienast  
Jessica Kurth  
Hallie Steckelberg (T)  
Jordan Weller
12. Casey Karsten  
Scott Rosener  
Trisha Rosener  
Clark Tibben
13. Arlene Bald  
Jason Ferry (T)  
Dereck Hilsabeck  
Emma Martin (T)
14. Stephanie Ahrenholtz  
Gregory Conner  
Bary Kienast  
Duane Monson
15. Bill Bruhn  
Owen Kropf (T)  
Ben Lorenzen  
Jesse Weilt
16. Dean Genzen  
Beckett Lorenzen
17. Brock Jensen  
Dacia Stoeckel
18. Joni Kienast
19. Bob Genzen  
Brad Otto  
Rebecca Salter
20. Morgan Bruck  
Shala Hass
21. Louise Bruhn  
Kaylee Martin  
Kenny Steckelburg (T)
22. James Karsten  
Axsol Olson (T)  
Christopher Smith  
Alle Stoeckel
23. Denise Christensen  
Jill Saunders
24. Sophie Alexander
25. Nancy Goodwin  
Nick Woebke (T)
26. Grant Lahr (T)  
Sharon Mohr  
Susan Schilling
27. Kevin Brus  
Ron Soll
28. Bricy Lorenzen (T)  
Rita Saunders  
Adam Vollstedt
30. Kathy Lage  
Karsyn Lorenzen  
Howard Roe  
Natasha Schultes
31. Markus Neumann  
Lyle Ranniger

## *Anniversaries*

1. Randy & Crystal Dreher
3. Warren & Sue Puck  
Martin & Nancy Wanninger
4. Nate & Jessie Blackford
5. Dennis & Michaela Chapman
6. Luke & Taylor Potthoff
8. Brian & Kathy Lage
9. Dan & Cheryl Kerkoff
12. Craig & Debbie Musfeldt
16. Doug & Kate Greving  
Todd & Shelly Gruhn
24. Gale & Linda Vinke
25. Pastor Robert & Diane Riggert  
Ron & Sue Soll
27. Nick & Kristin Woebke (T)
29. Pastor Jonathan & Rebecca  
Conner  
Eric & Jodi Ramsey
31. Steve & Holly Borkowski

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

## *Official Acts*

### **Baptism:**

Elijah Elizabeth Christensen; daughter of Gregory & Leesa Christensen and Wesley Burgett; June 26, 2022; Pastor Jonathan Conner

Kavin Gene Beam; son of Kevin & Andrea Beam; June 26, 2022; Pastor Jonathan Conner

Andrea Marie Beam; daughter of Keith & Brenda Crouch; June 26, 2022; Pastor Jonathan Conner

### **Transferred In:**

Angie and Hayden Miller, from Immanuel Lutheran Church, Harlan, IA

## *In Our Prayers*

Janice Monson, Pastor Johnson, Paxton Bierl, Stan Baack, Joene Bohlmann, Justeen Schwieso, Nancy Grimm, Jeanne Gruhn, Sherri Steffes, Jim Deevers, Rick Spack, Gene Mahnke, Lyle Mundt, Tawnya Jacobsen (Kristin Backhaus sister), Loyce Gray, Rhonda Sandison (Laurene Meeves' daughter)