

DECEMBER

EVENTS

@ Zion & Trinity

MISSION DOOR OFFERING

12.4.22



Pastor Pedro Lopez
Missionary to Hispanics in
western Iowa



Zion Lutheran Church, Manning IA

ADVENT CONCERT

December 4 @ 7:00 p.m.

Featuring Zion's Praise Team

Peace is proclaimed!

Freewill offering / No tickets required
Refreshments following
All invited



Sunday, 12.4.22

Gary Thies, Mission Development Counselor with the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, is coming to Zion!

- News from the mission field.
- Artifacts from around the world.

Presenting in Bible Class. All invited!

Gary has traveled to over 75 countries and communicates regularly with over 100 missionaries.





Midweek Advent Series at Zion

11.30, 12.7, 12.14 @ 5:45 p.m.
Supper following



Pattern, Presence, Prophecy

Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament



Zion's Annual Voters' Meeting
12.11.22 after worship



Zion's DCE Committee has prepared an important information packet for you to read in advance of our Voters' Meeting on December 11 (This is a new packet with new information from the one shared in August). In it you will find an explanation of the Calling process, details on how you can support the expansion of Zion's ministry, a compensation worksheet for the recommended DCE, and the committee's thoughts on the recommended DCE. This has also been texted and emailed. **PLEASE READ IT.**

Also available for you are proposed budgets (one including the DCE, one not) and an ACH form that will allow you to establish automatic giving. This will ensure your support remains consistent and Zion is able to plan with confidence. Visit the Take Home Table in the Fellowship Hall.

Christ, the Savior,
is born!

Children's Christmas Programs
Sunday, December 18 (at Zion)

6:00 Student Musicians

6:30 Pre-K - 1st

2nd - 8th Following



Good News of
Great Joy!

Christmas @ Zion & Trinity

12.24 (4:00) - Trinity

12.24 (3:00 & 7:00) - Zion

12.25 (9:00) - Trinity

12.25 (10:00) - Zion (Brunch & Hymn Sing)



Youth Gathering

The youth gathering's theme this year was "Say what?" We looked at 1 Peter 3:15. The gathering centered around the idea of hope, where we find it and how we explain it to others. The kids were challenged when it comes to the idea of reading their Bibles individually. We had seven high schoolers and it was so much fun, a definite bonding time.





The Eternal Word Dwelt among Us

Have you ever been deeply moved by a piece of art? For me, Rembrandt's etching *The Three Crosses* has proven powerfully provocative. The juxtaposition of profound grief (depicted in Jesus' mother who has collapsed in sorrow as Jesus dies) and casual indifference (shown in the passing merchants engrossed in their pursuit of profits) both mashed into the menagerie of the on-looking crowds and patrolling soldiers is deeply moving and stirs powerful reflective questions in my mind as it simultaneously pierces my heart with grief and stirs deep emotions of gratitude and humility.¹



Something similar happens when I reflect on John's opening words in his gospel. Whereas Rembrandt worked with wax, acid, and metal scrapings, John worked with words. To be more specific, John worked with *the Word*. And if we pause to appreciate his words (and the Word!) we will discover a poetic beauty in his artfully and intentionally ordered words along with an equally beautiful message.

John writes,

^{1:1} In the beginning **was** the Word,

and the Word was **with God**,
and the Word **was God**.

^{1:2} This one was in the beginning **with God**.²

With the help of the underlined and bolded phrases and words, notice the symmetry. Notice how John has set phrases and words in parallel to one another and how He is connecting profound truths about the Word (the identity of which he's about to reveal).

John says this Word was in the beginning. John is masterfully throwing a lasso around Genesis 1 and roping it into his discussion of the Word. In other words, he wants you to hear and to imagine the Genesis creation narrative as you reflect on John's opening words. This Word was present at creation when God was wording all things into being! As John goes on to detail in verse 3 (*All things came into being through him, and apart from him not one thing came into being that has*

¹ We featured this piece in our Lenten series *Contemplating the Crucified Christ*

² I am using the Lexham English Translation of the Bible here. It's an online only version of the Bible (i.e. it's not available in print). I appreciate it for its close

literalness to the Greek and Hebrew and that it provides a slightly different rendering of the English, enough to get us to slow down and consider what we're reading.

come into being), this Word was the means by which all things were created!

Then notice what John does with the words **was** and **with**. This word was **with** God and this Word **was** God. And in the beginning **was** this Word and this Word was in the beginning **with** God. In other words, this Word is God and yet is distinct from God. This is one of the great mysteries of God and of Scripture.

John is drawing on a rich theology of the Word of God throughout the Old Testament that communicated this idea of God's Word being God and being distinct from God. Space will prevent a full treatment of this, but let's dedicate a few paragraphs to illustrating this profound insight.

Consider first Stephen's last words in Acts 7 (before he is stoned for confessing Christ):

"Men—brothers and fathers—listen: *The God of glory appeared* to our father Abraham while he was in Mesopotamia, before he settled in Haran, and said to him, 'Go out from your land and from your relatives and come to the land that I will show you.' (Acts 7:2-3).

For our purposes, notice the phrase "The God of glory appeared..." We see God (Yahweh) appearing to Abraham (still called *Abram* at this time) in Genesis 12:

And **Yahweh** said to Abram, "Go out from your land and from your relatives, and from the house of your father, to the land that I will show you... And **Yahweh appeared** to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." And he built an altar there to **Yahweh**, who had **appeared** to him (Genesis 12:1, 7).

Notice how *Yahweh* appears to Abraham. Now, look at what happens in Genesis 15 where God

repeats and ratifies His covenant promise to Abraham:

After these things the **word of Yahweh** came to Abram in a vision, saying: "Do not be afraid, Abram; I *am* your shield, and your reward *shall* be very great." ² Then Abram said, "O Yahweh, my Lord, what will you give me? I continue to be childless, and my heir is Eliezer of Damascus." ³ And Abram said, "Look, you have not given me a descendant, and here, a member of my household *is* my heir." ⁴ And behold, **the word of Yahweh** came to him saying, "This *person* will not be your heir, but your own son will be your heir." ⁵ And **he brought him outside** and said, "Look toward the heavens and count the stars if you are able to count them." And he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶ And **he believed in Yahweh**, and he reckoned it to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:1-6).

Did you see it? In Genesis 12 *Yahweh* appears. In Genesis 15 the *Word of Yahweh* appears. Not only is Moses (the main author of the Torah) connecting *Yahweh* and the *Word of Yahweh*, but he's saying that the *Word of Yahweh appeared in visible form*. Abraham didn't just hear the *Word of Yahweh*; he *saw* the *Word of Yahweh*. The *Word of Yahweh* is *Yahweh* but is distinct from *Yahweh*. The *Word of Yahweh* makes *Yahweh* visible. This is the conceptual backdrop for John's words in John 1.

This alone would be enough to capture hearts and ignite imaginations, but John builds on this in verse 14 where he writes perhaps the most profound words ever written by man:

And the Word became flesh and took up residence among us, and we saw his glory, glory as of the one and only from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

This Word didn't just *appear*; He *became flesh* and established a residence among us! That God would appear to man is surprising, but not inconceivable. That God would become flesh and take up residence among us is unheard of! And John wants to see it all happening in Jesus! But John's word choice to communicate this is more significant yet because he's not merely suggesting that Jesus established a P.O. box; he's insisting that in Jesus Heaven has entered earth!

Literally, John writes that Jesus *pitched His tent* among us. To appreciate what John is saying, think *tabernacle*. The tabernacle (and later the temple) was the place where God made His presence known among the people of Israel. Referring to the tabernacle, Yahweh says in Exodus 29, "And I will dwell in the midst of the Israelites, and I will be their God" (Exodus 29:45). So, throughout the Old Testament the tabernacle/temple was the place that people would go to encounter God, to be in the place where Heaven and Earth overlapped.

Process, then, what John is saying: In Jesus, Heaven and Earth overlap! When you're in Jesus' presence, you're in Heaven's presence! As you read the Gospels, then, you effectively see a walking tabernacle moving about the country. So when you see Jesus forgiving sins, casting out demons, healing the sick, loving the outcast, and raising the dead, you are seeing Him bring Heaven into the midst of sin, brokenness, and death. It's astonishing.

Understanding this helps us make sense of Jesus' repeated announcement that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. In Him, Heaven was coming near. In Him, Heaven was appearing. And this has been the great goal and hope of Scripture. Recall that Eden was the overlap of Heaven and Earth. God and His heavenly beings dwelt with man in joy and happiness. Man's rebellion, however,

sadly severed Heaven and Earth and set into motion God's plan to reunite the two dimensions, a plan that takes a huge leap forward in Jesus' incarnation.

Now, understanding this, consider how Jesus manifests Heaven's presence among us. As we're preparing to celebrate the Sacrament of the Altar, what do we confess?

Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and singing together...

And then, in the *Sanctus*, we join Heaven's song (Holy, holy, holy...) with earth's song (Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna) into one song in order to confess that in the Sacrament of the Altar Jesus is making Heaven's presence known among us! Heaven still comes among the sick, the sinful, and the broken today!

And this, we confess, is but a foretaste of the feast to come! In other words, we're saying that God is doing in a small way today what He's going to do in a cosmic way on that Day when Jesus returns to resurrect the dead, renew the earth, and establish Heaven's eternal presence on earth. So we're wrapping the reality of Jesus' incarnation and His presence among us in the Sacrament of the Altar into one joyful confession of Heaven's presence among us now and its coming complete overlap with earth upon Jesus' return.

It's no wonder the opening words to John's Gospel have been treasured and celebrated for generations. May they be your treasure, too! – Pastor Conner

Planning

F E A R
F A I T H
F U T U R E

I did a thing. I planned my funeral a few months back. I picked the hymns and the readings. I even formatted the bulletin. Why am I telling you this? A part of me doesn't know. Another part of me wants to share that this process, if I'm being honest, stoked internal fear. However, I also became free to express the content of my faith for my own benefit and, ideally, for the benefit of others too who might attend my funeral. Producing the funeral plan also oriented me towards the future – to a time and place where death has died itself. I share with the hope that you can experience the same sort of liberation I've encountered by planning for my inevitable end (whenever that may be).

FEAR

Death stirs fear. If you don't find death scary, you are probably young. As we age though the truth settles in: we're not as young as we used to be (which I think is a nice way of saying we're a little closer to death than we were the day before).

I suppose I can only speak for myself, but the idea of dying scares me for a number of reasons. First, what will happen to Tiffany? Will she be alright? Or, will she be upstream without a paddle? I fear that my death will hinder her wellbeing financially speaking. I don't want to do that to her. So, I find that my fear is wrapped up in a layer of guilt.

I also fear the actual process of dying. Will it hurt? How cognizant will I be throughout it all? What is it like to be disembodied? Dietrich Bonhoeffer argued that our bodies are “essential” to our identity. “Man does not ‘have’ a body; he does not ‘have’ a soul; rather, he ‘is’ body and soul.” In other words, there is nothing natural about death because the natural thing – that is, the connection between a soul and body – unravels. I love my body just as much as you love your own body. You wouldn't be so critical about your body if you didn't love it. I fear not being *me* along with the physical disintegration that leads to the separation of my soul from my body.

I also fear, or better yet, I have my doubts concerning the Christian faith. Pastor Tim Keller writes, “I spent a lifetime counseling others [as a pastor] before my [cancer] diagnosis. Will I be able to take my own advice?”³ He goes on, “One of the first things I learned was that religious faith does not automatically provide solace in times of crisis. A belief in God and an afterlife does not become spontaneously comforting and existentially strengthening. Despite my rational, conscious acknowledgment that I would die someday, the shattering reality of a fatal diagnosis provoked a remarkably strong psychological denial of mortality. ... I found myself thinking, *What? No! I can't die. That happens to others, but not to me.* When I said these outrageous words out loud, I

³ Keller, Tim. “Growing My Faith in the Face of Death,” in *The Atlantic*, March 7, 2021.

realized that this delusion had been the actual operating principle of my heart.” It doesn’t really matter if you’re 7 or 70, our hearts deny the presence of death. So much so that our fear questions the reliability and truthfulness of the God revealed in history and the Scriptures when death starts breathing down our necks.

I fear on account of the rationality of Christianity, but there is also fear over my sin. Death slingshots our sin into our faces. There’s a reason why it’s called a deathbed confession and not a life-is-A-ok confession. Dying is a visual cue that we are helpless humans physically and morally speaking. We have contributed our fair share of insanity to an already saturated sin-filled world. We know we deserve condemnation because of our contributions. So, will this God who promises forgiveness actually forgive? Are words like *atonement* and *substitution* real?

Hopefully you get the picture; I have no shortage of fears when it comes to death.

FAITH

Planning for my funeral, however, has given me an opportunity to reexamine the Christian faith (*fides quae*) in order to bolster my God-given faith (*fides qua*). The experience of planning has allowed me to question the character and accomplishments of Jesus of Nazareth; in other words, I have preached Jesus to myself – what He did, what He said, what He promised. That ongoing preaching has liberated me from overwhelming fear.

What does that reexamination of the faith look like? For me it began with the Bible. In my funeral, I’ve designated Hebrews 2:14-18 as the introit. The text begins by emphasizing how Jesus shares in our experience through His incarnation as a

man. He knew death personally so that He could lead the ultimate jailbreak from death. He went behind enemy lines. Based on the doctrine of the incarnation, I write in my funeral bulletin: *“Leading up to my temporary end, I’ve experienced a great deal of fear (If I’m being honest). But Jesus shared ‘in flesh and blood’; He knows what I’ve felt. But He wasn’t content with simply empathizing. He has, as it says, destroyed the power of death. He has delivered me. He’s made atonement for my sins. His sinless life, is my sinless life (‘He is able to help those who are being tempted’).”* I would not be able to come to that conclusion on my own, but planning based in the Bible reequipped me with truth for my circumstances.

Furthermore, the many resurrection accounts in the Old as well as the New Testament have moved me to anticipate my own resurrection. How the gospel accounts are written make little sense. In a time when women weren’t allowed to serve as witnesses in court, why would the gospel writers make them the first witnesses of the resurrection? I mean talk about undercutting the authenticity of your claim. Unless of course what is reported actually happened. If you were writing a legend, you wouldn’t write the resurrection accounts like Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John did. This coupled with Paul’s identification of 500 witnesses to Jesus post-resurrection (1 Corinthians 15) leads me to write in my funeral bulletin: *“All I can do now is trust Jesus like a child. My accomplishments, undergrad degree, master’s degree, savings are useless in that they cannot get me out from falling asleep. But I know Who can wake me up...I’m trusting Him.”*

Engaging the Christian faith by investigating the Scriptures does not erase fear entirely, but it does give me a point of Light to fix on as the fear of death attempts to darken my view.

FUTURE

Funeral planning has allowed me to envision the future. Namely, a future where death goes bye-bye. Again, that *envisionment* is not derived internally or by viewing nature or something like that. Rather, it is grounded; grounded specifically in the Sacraments. It's the Sacraments that make God's love real when death would like to convince me that I'm not really loved.

In the funeral rite, we acknowledge the faith into which a person was baptized by reciting Paul's words from Romans 6 along with the Apostles' Creed (the same creed we use in the Rite of Holy Baptism). Both of these moments affirm that we were connected to Christ through Water and the Word. We play follow-the-leader with Jesus. He died and we die; He rose and we will rise too. That's the baptismal guarantee. Baptism fastforwards me from decaying to future dancing in the New Heavens and the New Earth.

While Holy Communion is not built into the funeral service, I've grown more appreciative to receive the Sacrament. The Meal has a nowness along with a future perspective. The preface – the words right before the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy) – typically ends with the words: “Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying...” You can sense the nowness in that we mutually celebrate the Eucharist with spiritual beings and the “company of heaven.” But there is also a future orientation when we speak verses like, “As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until **He comes**” [1 Corinthians 11:26]. The glory of the Feast that we currently celebrate in Manilla and Manning will only be intensified upon Christ's return. Holy Communion scrubs away guilt and fear over sin;

literally, we taste and see the goodness of God – we feast on forgiveness.

When I look at my personal failings it breathes in me dread, but the Sacraments make it plain that my personal failings are overshadowed by Christ's personal faithfulness. His sinlessness is mine; my sinfulness is His. As humans we rely on our senses to get by. Baptism and Communion cater to our senses – water on the forehead, bread and wine in the mouth. Where death likes to take us into the unknown, Christ reveals certainty regarding forgiveness and resurrection and the future. As the hymn goes, “There is nothing worth comparing / To this lifelong comfort sure! / Open-eyed my grave is staring: / Even there I'll sleep secure. / Though my flesh awaits its raising, / Still my soul continues praising: / I am baptized into Christ; / I'm a child of paradise (LSB 594).

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As hard as it was to put together my funeral, I'm glad I did it. At the end of the day, I am a nobody. I'm just another poor sap left to decay in the ground. However, Jesus made me a somebody by becoming a nobody on the cross. As fears tighten my chest, Christ extends His hand to me. I don't enter the Valley alone (Psalm 23:4), and one day I'll be able to leave the Valley (you can too). Planning the funeral helped me re-realize all that I have and all that I am on account of Christ. And as an added bonus I am afforded the opportunity to share what matters, or, better yet, Who matters to me to the people and communities I love dearly. Overall, planning for my temporary end has been a positive experience. Maybe it can be positive for you also. – Pastor Johnson

Exciting News

Trinity is excited to announce that Deaconess Tiffany has been accepted into Concordia Irvine's online counseling master's program. This degree will take approximately 2 years to complete.

We're also excited to announce that Lutheran Family Service is partnering with Tiffany. LFS will pay for her schooling, provide an internship, as well as a Call to her upon completion of the program.



Health Update

Despite the somber tone of my newsletter article, I am not done yet. However, I restarted receiving chemo to deal with two small lesions. I will also be working with Mayo's genetic lab to identify a targeted treatment to deal with my specific cancer. We are thankful for the continued prayers throughout this process. It's been a year since we (re)began this experience of dealing with cancer. Throughout it all, Manilla, Manning, and beyond have been tremendously helpful and supportive, and we are tremendously thankful! We couldn't do it without you. – Pastor Johnson

Vocation Bible School

Kindergarteners through 4th graders are invited to attend Trinity-Manilla's winter VBS. Use the QR code to sign-up your kids. 5th graders on up are welcome to sign up with the same QR code to help with the event.



The Respect for Marriage Act Codifies a Lie and Tramples the Rights of Children



In mid-November the U.S. Senate, in advancing the deceptively named “Respect for Marriage Act,” put us one step closer to enshrining into law the Supreme Court’s *Obergefell* decision that essentially threw out a creational view of marriage (one man united to one woman with the unique potential to conceive and bear children) in favor of a consensual view in which any two people could marry.

As we have shared in these pages before, this promulgates (and now would enshrine into law) a false definition of marriage even as it overlooks and tramples the right of children to their mother and father. These are both moral evils. To be clear, I am not suggesting that those who embrace this redefinition of marriage are seeking to do evil (many of them think they’re doing great good); I’m asserting that codifying a lie into law and trampling the rights of children is a moral evil and this cannot further the hope of human flourishing. In the name of defending what God has called good, we must oppose that which undermines it.

In the clearest language possible, we must assert that marriage is not the union of any two persons. Further, marriage is not founded on love. Marriage is blessed when love lives in the marriage house, but the house of marriage is not built on love. If it was, then limiting marriage to two people would be completely arbitrary. In fact, Chief Justice John Roberts argued this in his dissent to *Obergefell*:

Although the majority randomly inserts the adjective ‘two’ in various places, it offers no reason at all why the two-person element of the core definition of marriage may be preserved while the man-woman element may not. Indeed, from the standpoint of history and tradition, a leap from opposite-sex marriage to same-sex marriage is much greater than one from a two-person union to plural unions, which have deep roots in some cultures around the world. If the majority is willing to take the big leap, it is hard to see how it can say no to the shorter one.

And, as detailed in the pages of this newsletter before, many municipalities in our nation are now embracing plural marriage in recognition of the arbitrary limiting of marriage to only two individuals who love one another. To be clear: if marriage is built on love, then there is no rational reason to limit it to two people (or to set limits on the ages of those marrying).

Marriage, as Scripture and reality insist, is the union of a man and a woman that God has blessed with the potential to procreate and to raise children. Ryan Anderson, President of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, and author of numerous books on this subject, offers a more comprehensive definition:

Marriage, properly understood, is a comprehensive union, that it unites a man and a woman in a comprehensive act, ordered toward the comprehensive good of procreating and raising new life in a family, and requiring of them a comprehensive – exclusive and permanent – bond.

This definition of marriage did not arise out of animus, bigotry, or hate. It arose out of the nature of reality itself. Chief Justice John Roberts acknowledge this in his dissent from *Obergefell*:

The universal definition of marriage as the union of a man and a woman is no historical coincidence. Marriage did not come about as a result of a political movement, discovery, disease, war, religious doctrine, or any other moving force of world history – and certainly not as a result of a prehistoric decision to exclude gays and lesbians. It arose *in the nature of things* to meet a vital need: ensuring that children are conceived by a mother and father committed to raising them in the stable conditions of a lifelong relationship.

In other words, marriage is not primarily a romantic relationship; marriage is a pro-creational relationship. To be clear: marriage is built on creation (it is “pro” creation) and marriage has been blessed by God with the potential to procreate. It is therefore, by necessity, limited to one man and one woman.⁴

And, as Chief Justice Roberts alluded, not only do children fare better in every measurable category when raised by their biological father and mother,⁵ but every child *has* a biological father and mother and every child has a right to their father and mother. But that is the very thing the Respect for Marriage Act will deny *in law*. It will require children to deny their right to be raised by at least one of their biological parents by insisting they accept that two men are the same as a father and a

mother or two women the same as a mother and a father despite the fact that no child on the planet believes this. And you don’t believe it either. It is not sexist or unloving to say that a woman is not a dad or that a man is not a mom; it’s true.

Understand this truth: when *Obergefell* made male and female optional in marriage it also made father and mother optional in parenting.

And that is unfair to children. And the Respect for Marriage Act will make this the law of the land. This is an unjust law.

And it will have other impacts as well. Alliance Defending Freedom,⁶ in a published letter, explains:

The proposed bill represents a startling expansion of what marriage means-and who may be sued for disagreement. This threatens the freedoms of Americans of many faiths, creeds, and walks of life who wish to conduct their lives and religious practices consistent with deeply-held beliefs.

For example:

The Respect for Marriage Act effectively deputizes interest groups to sue religious individuals, organizations, and businesses that operate according to sincerely held beliefs that

⁴ Space prevents us from extolling marriage’s esteemed role as an image of Christ and the Church. Suffice it to say that same-sex marriage muddies the mystery of marriage and weakens its witness to Christ and the Church.

⁵ See <https://thembeforeus.com/biology-matters/> for the data. This is not to disparage or downplay the heroic work single parents, step-parents, foster parents, and adoptive parents do in raising children. Every parent in that situation, however, will acknowledge the increased challenges these arrangements present. What we must acknowledge is

that these arrangements are aiming after the ideal (and/or lamenting the loss of the ideal). What they are not doing is institutionalizing an arrangement (same sex “parents”) that knowingly disadvantages children and requires them to forfeit their right to being raised by at least one of their biological parents.

⁶ ADF is the world’s largest legal organization committed to protecting religious freedom, free speech, the sanctity of life, parental rights, and God’s design for marriage and family.

marriage is between one man and one woman, and that also act "under color of state law." Private organizations such as faith-based foster care providers and religious social service organizations that participate in a joint activity with the state or whose operations are entwined with government policies, will likely face litigation for merely practicing their faith.

This bill would require federal recognition of any one state's definition of marriage. Should a state adopt polygamous or open marriages, marriages involving a minor or close relative, or time-bound marriages, the federal government would be bound by it. This would impact countless federal laws on marriage benefits, as well as the rights of parents and children.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) could move to strip our 501(c)(3) organizations of tax-exempt status should we hold fast to our belief that marriage is only between one man and one woman. Then-U.S. Solicitor General Donald Verrilli acknowledged this possibility during the Supreme Court's *Obergefell* oral arguments, and the Respect for Marriage Act provides congressional support for the IRS to pursue the punishment of religious nonprofits.

In other words, our lives could be made uncomfortable, very uncomfortable. This should come as no surprise, though. It was Justice Samuel Alito whose prescient clarity warned in his dissent to *Obergefell*:

[The decision] will be used to vilify Americans who are unwilling to assent to the new orthodoxy. In the course of its opinion, the majority compares traditional marriage laws to laws that denied equal treatment for African-Americans and women... The implications of this analogy will be exploited by those who are

determined to stamp out every vestige of dissent.

I assume that those who cling to old beliefs will be able to whisper their thoughts in the recesses of their homes, but if they repeat those views in public, they will risk being labeled as bigots and treated as such by governments, employers, and schools.

But this is no time to fear. This is a time to gain our voice, to extol what God has called good, to invest in creational marriage, to support families aiming for the ideal, to insist on the rights of children, to support organizations that defend marriage and family, and to ensure we vote for representatives who do, too.

What do we do for the same-sex attracted? We love them... in line with the truth. We vigorously share that our identities are not founded on our desires, but on our creation as male or female and on our redemption in Jesus. And *together* we aim for sexual purity (for living in line with what God has called good).

What do we do for children? We extol marriage built on creation. We invest in fathers and mothers. We bless single parents, step-parents, foster parents, and adoptive parents by supporting their heroic efforts to raise children in the face of increased challenges.

And we continue to do what the Church has always done: even in the face of opposition we offer everyone forgiveness, life, and salvation in our Lord, Jesus Christ. – Pastor Conner

December 2022: Fellowship Club

Zion Fellowship Club invites congregation and friends to a special presentation by **Wanda Pritzel**, Lutheran Family Services Director of Counseling on **Monday afternoon, December 12, at 1:30 p.m.** Wanda will share an update on the various initiatives of Lutheran Family Services. While counseling ministry continues to be a primary focus of LFS, life initiatives and church worker health are also receiving additional attention.



The Christ-centered focus of LFS now includes partnerships with Nebraska, South Dakota, and Illinois. Recently LFS has launched a "Founded on Christ, Building to Serve" campaign. Zion is blessed to have Ken Puck serving on the LFS Board of Directors. In addition to Wanda's informative presentation, Fellowship Club hosts will provide an assortment of favorite Christmas deserts after the presentation. Join us for this special Advent activity.

Thank you for the clothing donations to Orphan Grain Train. The items were delivered on November 1. Thanks especially to the Zion Quilters for the quilt donations. Sharon Irwin and the Ida Grove team are making plans for another OGT shipment from the local warehouse to an appropriate needed area. Through our financial and material donations, OGT brings the love of Christ to distressed and impoverished areas of the world. Be watching for another donation opportunity in late January.



Priscilla Guild Summary:

The Priscilla Guild treasurer reported an ending balance after all expenses were deducted of \$2,2263.36. Trinity's missionary, Cindy Wrucke, continues teaching English; the group anticipates helping her at the December meeting.



Remaining funds from Thrivent monies will be used to help offset expenses for the Advent meal. Funeral policy guidelines regarding how the Priscilla Guild will assist with events is still being typed up. The Guild sponsored two poinsettias. The Guild will produce 40 Christmas bags for children at the Christmas Eve service. The Guild is also exploring the possibility of hosting a bake sale sometime in the Spring (perhaps, to support a child in Haiti's tuition). Christmas potluck is scheduled for December 13 @ 12:30pm. Quilters will not meet until the furnace is fixed.

Ladies Guild Summary: Zion Ladies Guild November Secretary Report: Nov.9, 2022

Pastor Conner opened with a study on Ecclesiastes. President Roe called the meeting to order with Name of the Triune God. League Pledge. Roll call was answered with a giving a memory of your mom, dad, sibling. 14 present. Thank You from Shona Weitz read. Donations were received from Bev Rix and Bill Weitz funerals. Circle and Human care reported they are continuing to quilt.



Old Business: Advent concert was discussed (12/4/22). We signed up for a refreshment/ dessert following the concert. We will serve coffee and hot apple cider. Mary, Gloria are taking care of Christmas tree decorating this year. November coffee date has been changed to the 3rd Sunday in November. New Business: Circle 2 will be serving the next funeral. Cynthia spoke about doing a Mite box Sunday. No decision was made at this meeting.

Nomination for President for 2023. Becki Ehlers has agreed to take this. Voted and passed. Joann Thomas agreed to stay on as VP. The officers will need to meet and finalize the new booklet, and decide on mission disbursements in December. December 14th is the noon potluck event. Everyone is to bring a dish to share, and ask a friend. Meeting was adjourned with the table Prayer and Lord's Prayer.

Lunch was served by Becki Ehlers and Gloria Ewoldt.

Preschool Praises for November



November, a month to reflect on how much we are thankful for. We are thankful for the students, the parents, the volunteers, the parishioners, Pastor Conner, and the community for all making Zion Lutheran Preschool a blessing to work at.

We started the month by enjoying the Fall Festival with our families. It was so fun to see the kids run around enjoying the games and crafts. We even were able to have a costume parade around the tables to see everyone's Halloween costumes! We also had another great visit this month by Kelly with the Nature Center. This month she taught us all about turkeys! The kids had fun learning all the fun facts about turkeys and even made some adorable turkey headbands to take home! We are thankful to have Kelly come in to visit our classroom.

Pastor Conner spoke to the kids about the Tower of Babel where God confused the languages since people were defying him by trying to build a tower up to heaven instead of spreading throughout the World. He also shared with the children about Abraham and Sarah and the promise that God made to them for a child, even in their old age. Abraham and Sarah's children eventually lead to Jesus, which is how they blessed the whole World.

In the classroom, we discussed the Bible stories Joseph & The Colorful Coat and Baby Moses. Joseph's brothers were very jealous of him which made them angry. They also ended up lying to their father which made their father upset when he thought Joseph had died. There were so many feelings and emotions brought up! We discussed all the different feelings we have and how to recognize when someone else feels a certain way. We also realized that even if you wake up sad or mad there is always time to "turn that frown upside down". We liked to share what all helps make us happy.

We spent a good time in November discussing all that we are thankful for. A few popular answers were: moms, dads, family, pets, friends, and candy! After we heard what everyone was thankful for, we remember that all our blessings are because of the love of Jesus. Zion Preschool is thankful for Jesus! We are also thankful for our Veterans! We made a special craft to give to a Veteran to celebrate Veterans Day this past month. We are forever grateful for their service!

We continue to work on letter recognition, our shapes & colors, and counting. We are starting to work harder on letter formations to help learn to write. The kids really enjoy practicing their names. Our latest addition has been learning our songs for our upcoming Christmas Program on Wednesday, December 14th at the beginning of Worship Service. The children have already caught on quickly. It's very enjoyable to see how much they learn with repetition. A lot of the class can now say the Pledge of Allegiance and our morning prayer right along with us. Here is our morning prayer to share with all of you:

Dear Jesus,
Please show me how to spend this day,
sharing your love in every way.
Help me to be kind to everyone.
To play and laugh and have lots of fun.
Shining your light and giving you grace,
sharing your joy with a smile on my face!
Amen

Ending our month with a thankful and grateful heart!
-Ms Amy & Ms Melanie



Praise God for the privilege of sharing Jesus with children!



Creating Joy During This Joyful Season

What does your to-do list look like this time of year? If it is anything like mine, it grows bigger every day. I celebrate when I can cross something off the list. I am going to ask you to add something to your list. Now, no groaning please. Here it is – pencil in a little pleasure in your life.



Good feelings can boost your ability to bounce back from stress, solve problems, encourage flexible thinking, and even fight disease. There are studies that show that laughing decreases pain and may help your heart and lungs, promote muscle relaxation and even reduce anxiety. So pick up that joke book or watch a comedy show that you enjoy. I happened to turn on the TV one afternoon and was watching an episode of Green Acres. I was actually laughing out loud at the characters and the predicaments that they got into. I noticed that I felt less stress after laughing and found myself smiling at the thought of the show's events, and it carried itself throughout the evening.

When you are joyful, those positive emotions can decrease stress hormones and build emotional strength. Find some fun in your day through social support such as going to coffee with friends and leisure activities that you may enjoy such as golfing with friends. These activities can combat stress by offering giving you a break from difficulties in your life and provide an emotional lift.

Some people may find joy in doing something new such as learning a new skill like knitting or painting. Others may find in joy doing something familiar to them such as baking a familiar cookie that they know the family enjoys. Whatever that might be, it is important to free up time in your calendar to do that. Whatever you decide to do, it will make you feel effective, confident, and in control.

If your life doesn't let you stop and notice the positives in your life, it is like they barely exist. If this is your life, take a step back and evaluate your to-do list.

Schedule joy – get a massage, take a nature break, and go on that mental vacation. If you can't hop on a plane and go someplace soothing, just close your eyes and envision a scene you love. Sometimes you don't need to add new activities to get more pleasure. We just need to soak up the joy in the ones we already have.

When you do find the joy, share it with others. If you want to more fully experience your positive experience, tell a friend about them. That way you will get to relive the moment – and enjoy your friend's reaction.

Janet Brus





The Poetry of the Incarnation

The soul needs poetry. It needs poetry like an artist's canvas needs color and a musician's score needs notes. Without poetry, the soul hardens, dries, and cracks. Eventually, it dies to beauty.

But poetry isn't practical, so many see no need for it. It isn't instantly usable or immediately clear. Its meaning isn't plain and it doesn't yield to cursory readings. Poetry is art, art that invites contemplation and study. And those who pause to appreciate it find a mysterious potency, a living beauty that lifts the reader above the words on the page into a place where truth lives in hope-filled pictures, vibrant colors, and soaring melodies.

Nearly a third of Scripture is poetry and all of our hymns are poetry. If we do not pause to ponder them, if we run roughshod over them because their meaning isn't plain, our souls will eventually confine themselves to a plain life absent beauty. We will simply be unable to appreciate not only the beauty of what God has said, but also beauty of what God has done.

As we move toward Christmas, toward the incarnation of God, we draw near something so marvelous, so mysterious, and something so beautiful, that plain words simply seem insufficient. To assist your contemplation of Christmas, I have included a poem by an 8th century man known as St. Cosmas the Melodist, a devout Christian dwelling near Jerusalem. Linger over his words. Read them aloud. Hear them. Consider them.⁷ Let the poetry water your soul and produce the fruit of joy and wonder. – Pastor Conner

Christ is born! Tell forth His fame!
 Christ from Heaven! His love proclaim!
 Christ on earth! Exalt His Name!
 Sing to the Lord, O world, with exultation!
 Break forth in glad thanksgiving, every nation!
 For He hath triumphed gloriously!

Man, in God's own Image made,
 Man, by Satan's wiles betrayed,
 Man, on whom corruption preyed,
 Shut out from hope of life and of salvation,
 Today Christ maketh him a new creation,
 For He hath triumphed gloriously!

For the Maker, when His foe,
 Wrought the creature death and woe,
 Bowed the Heav'ns, and came below,
 And in the Virgin's womb His dwelling making
 Became true man, man's very nature taking
 For He hath triumphed gloriously!

He, the Wisdom, Word, and Might,
 God, and Son, and Light of light,
 Undiscovered by the sight
 Of earthly monarch, or infernal spirit,
 Incarnate was, that we might Heav'n inherit;
 For He hath triumphed gloriously!

⁷ If you find yourself unsure of some of the language or Biblical allusions (for there are many), you are welcome to visit with me. I'd enjoy the conversation!



Deepened Faith Through the Tithe

Have you ever prayed to God to deepen your faith in Him? Have you ever begged Him to strengthen your relationship with Him? Have you ever pleaded with Him to help you grow spiritually? We all have. But have we ever stopped to consider that God's answers to these prayers often involves us, that He accomplishes these things through changing us? For example, it's often said that when you pray for patience that God provides opportunities for you to develop this virtue. God doesn't grant an instant download of patience from heaven, but He involves us in His answer to our prayer.

Might a prayer for a deeper faith, a stronger relationship, and a more mature spirituality mean the same thing? Think about it. If you were God, what might be one way that you'd answer your prayer? Scripture details one means through which God strengthens faith. Deuteronomy 14 says, "Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year... so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God always." (22-23)

Process that. God's Word exhorts Israel to tithe⁸ for this expressed purpose: "that you may learn to revere the LORD your God." Tithing was a merciful command given by God for His people's benefit.

Might tithing benefit us, too? Does it not still have the power to teach us to revere the Lord? And might it not be a means through which God answers our

prayer for a deeper faith, a stronger relationship, and a more mature spirituality?

I know, tithing isn't a command given to the Church. But didn't Jesus teach that our hearts follow our money? He did. Check out Matthew 6:19-21. And didn't Jesus endorse the tithe? He did. Check out Matthew 23:23. If we're praying for hearts more in tune with God and His Kingdom, why are we resisting the tithe? Might tithing, in fact, be God's gift to us?

Think about it. Scripture doesn't encourage the tithe because God needs the money. God doesn't need a dime; He owns the world. He's got plenty of money – the streets in Heaven are paved with gold, the gates are solid pearl, and the foundations of the city are covered in precious stones.

God mercifully invites us to tithe not because He needs to receive it but because we need to give it. He knows we're weak and easily stray from what we confess to believe and He knows that tithing with lead our hearts to Him.

I think Mark Allen Powell said it well in his book *Giving to God*, "on a simple, practical level, I find ... it is easier to sing hymns and not really mean them than ... to part with my money and not really mean it" (12). God knows this. For this reason He lovingly invites us to tithe so as to continually strengthen and deepen our faith and trust in Him.

Tithing helps us practice what we confess—and isn't that exactly what we so often pray for?

Remember, tithing is God's gift to us and it may be His answer to our prayer. Tithing teaches us to confess Him as Creator, Sustainer, and Provider. And tithing helps us to "revere the Lord our God always." – Pastor Conner

⁸ The tithe refers to a tenth of one's income. Traditionally, Christians have given their tithe to their local congregation. Once the tithe has been met,

Christians look for opportunities to give charitably as they see need and are able to meet it.



Serving in Varied Ways

The fall was a busy one for the Ferrys, what with borders opening up again and our partners hungry for more good preaching and teaching of the Word. We had guests to Taiwan, and Charles was a guest himself in places like Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and a brief visit to the USA. Thank you for giving us the chance to serve you in this part of the world and to give our partners opportunities to hear, learn, study, and “inwardly digest” the saving and life-giving Word of God in Jesus.



Gathered in Colombo, Sri Lanka with staff of the CELC and with visiting dignitaries from the Kenyan partner church for the installation of the CELC's new bishop



← With Dr. Arthur Just, in town to teach a class for our partners in Taiwan as part of our new seminary initiative.

In Singapore with managers of the Asia region, discussing our goals and strategies for the upcoming years. →



Caitlin turned 13! She worked with Cheryl to make and decorate a cake with one of her favorite animals: the River Otter. She's maturing into a lovely young lady, but all too soon. She's always quick to lend a helping hand around the house and is usually seen with a book.

Caleb turned 17 in September. His sisters bought him a cake with mini cream puffs to celebrate.



← With the Asia Sacred Music Educators in Fort Wayne.

Friends in the Philippines studying Lutheran theology →



Rev. Charles Ferry serves the LCMS as the Regional Director for Asia. He is responsible for all the LCMS Asia missionaries and mission work in this part of the world. He often represents the congregations and people of the LCMS before our partner churches as we work together toward common goals.



Amigos en Cristo

News from **La Iglesia Evangelica Luterana Amigos en Cristo:**
Friends in Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church
Pastor Pedro Lopez, Denison, Iowa

ember 2022

Hello! I am so excited to tell you of the many new things happening with your Hispanic Ministry; great things in which the Lord is being glorified with, meeting new people and touching lives with Gods love and an open invitation to be part of our churches. After much planning and getting things in place, we finally got our English as a Second Language (ESL) program started. God is blessing people in the communities of Denison in Crawford County and Hartley in O'Brien County as they learn English and also learn about God!

We began our first class on October 24 in Denison. Classes are offered every Monday and Thursday from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. We have around 17 to 20 people attending here. In Hartley, we started classes on November 8 with an average of 17 people. We begin class with a praise and prayer time, they practice their pronunciation by reading a Bible verse, and we sing praises to the Lord with a bilingual hymn! At the end of class, we close with a prayer.

We are so thankful for the many people who volunteer at both places. These volunteers come from about five different churches. We have been touching the lives of many new families! They come with their children too, we have been getting about 10 kids every time, volunteers at both places help us with this ministry too. I pray that some of these new families will join the ministry in Denison. In Hartley, we pray that the new families we are meeting through these classes will be a part of a future Hispanic Bible study and Worship service. We ask you to pray with us so that the Lord of Harvest touches the hearts of these new found friends!

We had a great opportunity to be part of the bilingual worship services at St. Paul in Ida Grove and Christ Lutheran Church in Denison. I shared a presentation about the challenge of not missing the opportunity to outreach to the ever-growing Hispanic community. I also shared this presentation with the pastors of a few regions and with several LWML groups. Thanks to all of you for giving me this opportunity.

I was blessed to work with a couple from Denison and celebrate their wedding at Zion. We have many opportunities to witness to new people and invite them to come and join our efforts to grow our ministries!

I invite you to continue to pray and support your Hispanic Ministry as we gear up for Christmas time, gracias and bendiciones!

Sincerely, Rev. Pedro L. Lopez, 2
Corinthians 5:17



Rev. Pedro Lopez, Asst. to the President
Missionary at Large, pedro@iowadistrictwest.org, 571-606-7600



Faithful volunteers deliver and sort clothing donated to Orphan Grain Train.



Snapshots of Zion



Confirmation kids play kickball and hangout before class begins.



In our Service of Grief and Hope on November 9 we brought our grief tree into the nave as we gathered our griefs together and waved the banner of hope in Jesus.

Approximately 30 kids gather for a children's message.



A big thank you to the Morris family (and Alan's grand-nephew) for putting the chrismos on Zion's tree!

Six youth from Zion attended the Sr. Youth Gathering. Thank you to Tiffany Johnson and Amelia Vetter for chaperoning!



I would like to express my gratitude and thanks to you and the others who gave such a wonderful and heartfelt Grieving service. Your words and music touched my heart and when you began to discuss grieving for the child who was abused I felt that twinge in my stomach and realized that I had never really grieved for the loss that little girl suffered. It was hiding so deeply inside me. The passion, sincerity, and words from the Bible that you passed along in the service was all it took for me to realize that I can now grieve. I pray that there will be other opportunities to share this kind of service. We all share grief but I know that Jesus is there for me to carry that grief away. Thank you so much Pastor Conner for all the love and care you share to my church family. – Church Member

Please Note! All times and events are subject to change



**Sunday
Morning**

**Zion Family Bible Class (after worship)
Sunday School at Trinity**



December 4

Mission Door Offering of Pastor Pedro Lopez

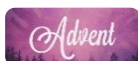


December 4

Gary Thies at Zion! (presentation during Bible class)

December 4

**Advent Concert at Zion (7:00 p.m.)
Freewill donation / no tickets required**



December 11

**Annual Voters' Meeting at Zion (after worship)
DCE Vote**

December 15

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



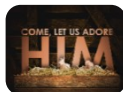
December 7 & 14

**Advent Midweek Services
Zion: 5:45 service / 6:30 supper
Trinity: 5:30 supper / 6:30 service**



December 18

Children's Christmas Programs



December 24

**Trinity: 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**

2022 Thrivent Action Teams: Thrivent members! You have 1 or 2 Action Teams per year. These need written & approved by the end of the year. They are \$250 on a VISA card in Thrivent's name which is seed money to assist volunteer team in serving. Apply on line. If you don't have internet, call 800-847-4836 & ask for Action Teams. They will assist over the phone. (Ideas: Fellowship after church, Sunday School materials, community meals, fund raisers, fall hayrides & bonfires, mission projects, Alter Guild, Elders, quilt, food pantry, veterans, school, painting, repairs, lawn needs, construction, people in need.) Call Janet Smith for assistance 712-210-4776



December Birthdays and Anniversaries @ Zion & Trinity

Birthdays (T = Trinity)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Robert Ewoldt
Takara Hoffmeier
Debra Janssen | 15. Cheral Buhr
Miranda Lingle (T)
Sheryl Zinke |
| 2. Melodie Boell (T)
Renee Grimm
Vera Hodne (T)
Kamryn Ketcham
Stephen Muhlbauer
Emma Schwieso | 16. Mabel Langel
17. Octavia Hodne (T)
Lonnie Jahn (T)
Derrick Janssen
Taylor Roe |
| 4. Janet Gruhn
Tracie Kurth
Rozora Schroeder | 18. Zane Diersen
19. Gracelyn Pinney
20. Casie Eischeid
Courtney Eischeid
Kourtney Grimm |
| 5. Tiffani Beck
Jase Hull
Ross Kusel
Brian Lage | 21. Leslee Gore
Carson Swanson (T) |
| 6. JoAnn Petersen
Eryn Ramsey
Nancy Wanninger | 22. Kathy Vollstedt
23. Shane Boeck (T)
Joyce Schroeder
Gary Witt |
| 7. Mike Heaton
8. Owen Grabill
Annette Hilsabeck
Brian Stoberl | 24. Robert Christensen
Brittany Page |
| 9. Deb Birks (T)
Piper Doyel
Wade Ranniger | 25. Ben Booth
Chris Greving
Carol Joens (T) |
| 10. Athena Bess
Keaton Otto
Martin Wanninger | 26. Brody Chapman
Larry Mahnke
Laurene Meeves |
| 11. Michell Lile (T)
Jaxen Vollstedt | 27. Eric Ramsey
28. Blake Diersen
Mila Irlbeck (T)
Elissa Riesberg
Billy Weitl |
| 12. Everlynn Bauer
Mike Bruch
Zoey Heaton | 29. Caden Muhlbauer
Jade Sellner |
| 13. Tricia Beck
Courtney Grabill | 30. Cody Eischeid
Ginger Wardrip |
| 14. Rachel Hofbauer
Neeka Jacobsen | 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

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

Official Acts

Transferred Out:

Kim Wegener to Trinity Lutheran Church, Algona, IA
November 2, 2022

In Our Prayers

Jim Deevers, Rick Spack, Lyle Mundt, Pastor Johnson, Paxton Bierl, Stan Baack, Justeen Schwieso, Nancy Grimm, Sherri Steffes, Tawnya Jacobsen (Kristin Backhaus sister), Rhonda Sandison (Laurene Meeves' daughter), John Bexten (father of Beth Alexander and Amy Blackwell), Cheral Buhr