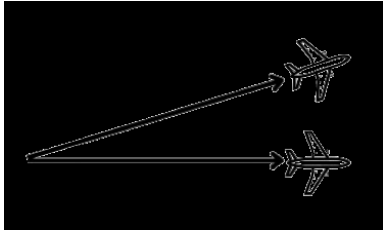


Don't Make Big New Year's Resolutions. Focus on Tiny Trajectory Setting Habits.



It's the New Year and that brings with it the cultural liturgy of New Year's resolutions. Perhaps you have participated with liturgical responses like this:

- I'm going to lose weight this year.
- I'm going to get my house organized.
- I'm going to get out of debt.
- I'm going to read the whole Bible this year.
- I'm going to read more this year.

It's a funny liturgy because we all know that, depending on what data you consult, between 80 and 90 percent of these resolutions fail. And yet we religiously make them. And yes, I use the words *liturgy* and *religiously* intentionally. These almost certainly doomed-to-fail resolutions seem to arise from an innate conscientious voice calling from deep within us to better ourselves, a deep-down voice urging us to be virtuous. So we do obeisance to the idea of virtue by making high-sounding resolutions, even if we are almost certain that we will not follow through with them, because to admit that we have no concern to achieve virtuous living would seem to counter this moral sense hardwired in us.

If space allowed we could more fully explore this virtuous voice calling to us to better things. Where

else but from the source of virtue, our Lord Jesus Christ who created us, would this voice come? Surely it has not come from the monkeys Darwinists claim as our distant progenitors. No one has ever witnessed them at the turn of the New Year purchasing gym memberships, making budgets, or giving conscientious consideration to their calorie intake. Such reflective meditation could drive us to a place of greater wisdom concerning the human person (and the moral voice God planted within him), his condition (the inability to be virtuous), his need (a Savior to deliver him from his moral failings), and the hope made plain in Jesus.

But that will have to wait for another article because we need to discuss how to make positive and lasting changes in our lives, how to flip the percentage from almost certain failure, to a sure path to success. Let's start by scrapping New Year's resolutions. No, I'm not suggesting we simply quit trying to achieve positive change in our lives. I'm acknowledging that New Year's resolutions don't work. They have an 80 to 90 percent failure rate! Why would we, year after year, attempt something with that kind of failure rate? Isn't that the definition of insanity?

You might be thinking, but what other option is there? If this is the best option on the table, then even though it has such an abysmal success rate, it's better than doing nothing. But here's what I want you to appreciate: It's not the only option on the table. There's a much better way to make positive changes in your life and it actually starts with very small changes.

Let me start with a resolution that Christians often make: *I'm going to read the whole Bible this year.* It's a wonderful goal. Truly, reading the whole Bible is a goal all Christians should have. And yes, some people successfully do it in a year, but most

don't. So, most end up discouraged and defeated because they fell short of their goal. And do you know what most people do when they feel discouraged and defeated? They give up! They quit reading their Bibles. They tried it. It was too hard. So, they quit. And this feeling of defeat stays with them for years so that they are very hesitant ever to try reading their Bible again. Nobody likes feeling defeated. So, better not to try than to experience defeat again.

Are you ready to consider a different way? Stop focusing on the goal and start enjoying the journey. The point of reading your Bible is not how much you get through in a year. The point is fellowshiping with Jesus in the act of reading it. Reading plans can be wonderful (and DCE Kathryn has a great reading plan that some are working through), but the point isn't being able to say that you read the whole book (which is a point DCE Kathryn has repeatedly made). The point is the act of reading itself. The point is hearing your Lord speak in His Word and better knowing Him.

So, instead of fixating on the arbitrary goal of reading the whole book, and experiencing the disappointment that goes along with falling behind or not completing it, enjoy the journey. Enjoy every minute you spend in the Word. And don't set up unreasonable benchmarks – *I'm going to read a chapter a day*. That may work for you, but it all

likelihood, it won't, because life happens. Instead, establish a regular time block in your week (it may be every day, it may not be) that you are going to spend enjoying the Word. Anchor this time to something else (your morning coffee, your evening devotions, your lunch break, something is already present and habitual in your life).

Pay attention to what I'm suggesting. Don't fixate on an arbitrary goal; focus on the process. Don't obsess about a distant destination; enjoy the way there. And guess what? You're more likely to get there and to enjoy the way there!

Let's take another example: *I'm going to lose fill in the blank pounds*. This may be a fine goal. And you may make a gangbuster go at achieving it. But what typically happens? Life. You get a cold. You have multiple birthday parties where you indulge more than you intend to. You are up late from a ballgame and are, therefore, too tired to exercise. So you don't reach your goal. You're frustrated, discouraged, and defeated. So what do you do? You give up. And what do you do when you give up? Eat.¹ And the goal only gets farther away.

Are you ready to consider a different way? Stop focusing on the goal and start enjoying the journey. Stop fixating on an arbitrary pound number. Instead, celebrate every day you complete a 20 minute walk. Find some way to

¹ This would take us too far afield from our purposes in this article, but we must acknowledge the spiritual component in play here. What are you turning to for comfort, relief, and release? Often it's food. And while food is a wonderful gift from God that is right and good to enjoy, it is a very bad god. As a god it over-promises and under-delivers, which is what all false gods do. So, a part of your journey with weight loss may need to include repentance. Martin Luther writes in his explanation to the First Commandment (You shall have no other gods) that we are to "fear, love, and trust in

God above all things." If you're turning to food for comfort, relief, and release, are you fearing, loving, and trusting food more than God? From where does your comfort come? From where does your help come? From where does your security come? And, remember, you are your habits. You may answer these questions one way in your mind, but it is your habits that demonstrate the truth. So to lose weight you may need to hear and heed the call to repentance for making food your god.

make it significant. Put a sticker on your calendar. Cross it off your list every time you do it. Mentally congratulate yourself. Don't start off trying to do 20 pushups or 30 crunches. Do one. Then celebrate it. Do one every day for a week. Then celebrate it. Then add very slowly. Add to your walk. Add to your workout.

But this is key: celebrate the journey. The point here is not to fixate on a goal, but to enjoy the journey that leads to it. You are far more likely to achieve positive change in your life (and to arrive at healthy and wise destinations) if you can learn to enjoy and to celebrate the journey. I'm happy to share my personal journey in this, but I want you to know that understanding what I'm sharing with you has been transformative for me.

Maybe you want to expand your mind and your ability to confess Christ to your family and friends. That's a wonderful goal, but it's nearly impossible to achieve. It's not that you can't expand your mind and your ability to confess Christ; it's that the goal doesn't actually exist. In other words, there's no finish line. There's no way for you to objectively measure when you're actually reached your goal. And races with no finish lines are impossible to complete. At some point you will get tired and quit. And you will think that you're just not able to read or confess Christ intelligently.

Instead of setting yourself up to run a race with no finish line, challenge yourself to read one book that I or Kathryn recommend throughout the year. Just read one book (You could start with *Atomic Habits* by James Clear or *You are What You Love* by James Smith, both excellent books on habits!). Even if it takes you three months, read one book. And then celebrate it. Celebrate it by telling someone about it. Invite a friend over and tell them about it. Call me or Kathryn and tell us about it. In fact, don't wait until you finish it. Start telling

people about it as you're reading it. The important thing is the trajectory you are setting for your life, the habit you are establishing of reading, thinking, and talking about it. This is how you expand your mind and your ability to confess Christ. If you set the trajectory and enjoy the journey you will discover one day, much to your surprise, that you have arrived at your destination.

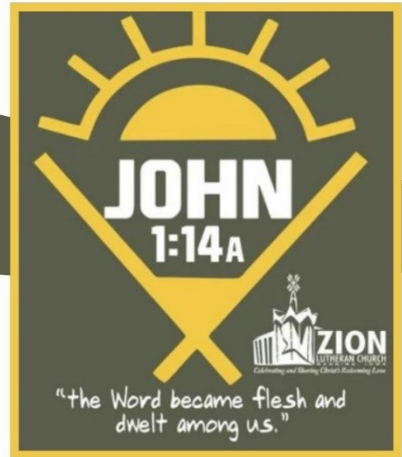
What I have shared in this brief article applies everywhere in your life. It's not the big goals that make us; it's the tiny changes and tiny course corrections we make that make us into competent and joyful people. James Clear (mentioned earlier) compares it to the tiny course adjustments pilots make when flying. A one degree adjustment applied over a long flight makes a major difference in their destination. The same holds true for you. The tiny course adjustments that you make and keep over the long haul make major differences in the outcomes you experience.

But these tiny course adjustments need to be made wisely. Don't try to master 10 different habits simultaneously. Tackle one or two. Get good at them. Then add one at a time. And this is key: celebrate when your system is working. Enjoy the process that you establish.

It's time to give up the doomed-to-fail New Year's resolutions and time to focus on tiny habits to help us set a better, more joy-filled trajectory for our lives.

- Pastor Conner

Christmas Program 2023



A big thank you to Jill Arp and DCE Kathryn Schneider and the many, many helpers who planned, organized, and directed over 80 kids in Zion's 2023 Christmas Programs!



Zion Lutheran Church



Divine Design:

Exposing the Materialist Myth

A Discipling Event

1.17.23

6:00 (supper - confirmation families)

6:30 (session - all invited)

www.zionmanning.com



MARRIAGE 101

GETTING READY TO BE READY

A Discipling Event for High Schoolers & Their Parents

1.21.23

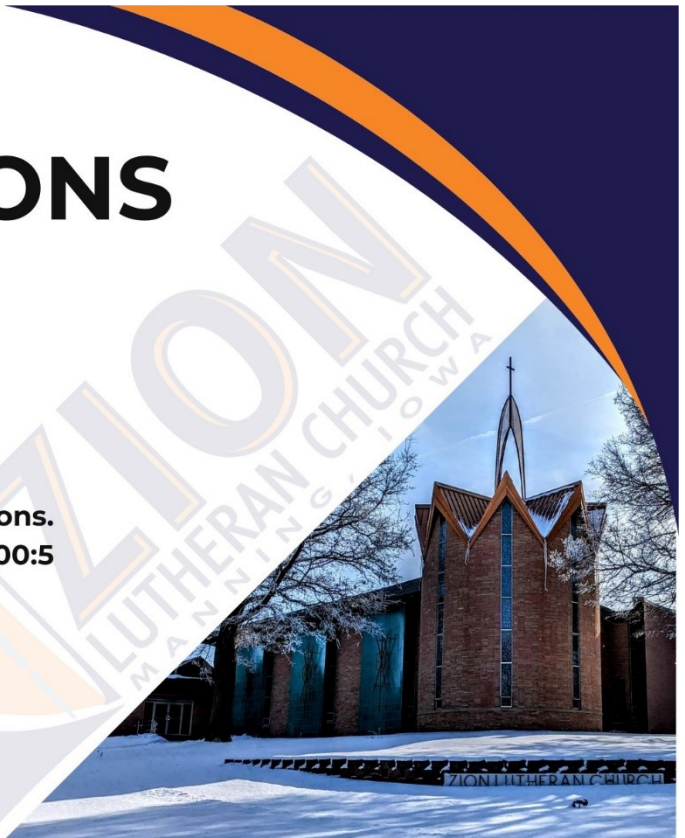
2:00-3:30 p.m. @ Zion



1.21.24

GENERATIONS SUNDAY

For the LORD is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.
- Psalm 100:5



FAMILY & FRIENDS BOWLING

JANUARY 14th 1-3 PM

L&M Bowl

Shoe rental & 1st
game provided
by the BOE





Because He Lives!!

"I do not envy parents these days!" "I would not want to be raising my kids now adays, the world is just getting out of control." "I can't imagine having to parent a teen in today's culture." "There are so many more things to worry about now-a-days, then when I was raising my children." These are all phrases I have heard in the last few years from so many different people, spoken in so many different circumstances, regarding so many different cultural topics, or wars, or ideas. And trust me I've thought these things from time to time myself.

From gender ideology, to smartphones, pornography, war in Ukraine and Israel, cost of living increasing, the rise in depression and suicides. The list goes on in on. In fact, I often thought that I would be those women in the Bible that was "Woe to those women who are pregnant at the end of times..." and then I got pregnant with our first and the world literally shut down in 2020 due the pandemic. Followed by formula scarcity, fear around sicknesses and group gatherings, and so much more.

Honestly, it's no wonder these words are spoken often by so many of us. It's no wonder we worry about the world we are raising our children in. But God!

Oh! How this is one of my favorite phrases to come upon in scripture! But God! But God's ways are not our ways. But God's timing is not our timing! But

God has a plan for us and all things work to His glory for the good of those who trust in Him.

God knew when you would be born, he knew the parents you would be born to, or the family you would be adopted into. He knew the siblings you would have, the decades you would walk through. And the same is true for your children, and your children's children.

I often think that every generation has these thoughts and sentiments and this morning while perusing one of my books on the history of various hymns I realized that this is true. While the hymn *Because He Lives*, by William Gaither, is not in our LSB it is a rather well-known hymn made popular during the Billy Graham revivals. I fell in love with singing the hymn due to it being on Carrie Underwoods' new Gospel album from a few years back, and I wanted to share what Gloria Gaither wrote regarding why they wrote this hymn.

When Bill and I started our family in the sixties, racial tensions were tearing the country apart. Civil rights activists had suffered and some had been killed. The Vietnam conflict was claiming thousands of live, and tensions boiled over on university campuses. Many young people were growing disillusioned and "dropping out."

In this climate, Bill and I sought to write songs with lasting answers to the turmoil of the human spirit. But in the fall of 1969, several things happened to test the reality of our own convictions. We realized we were expecting another baby. Though we had always intended to have another child, we weren't planning on a baby so soon. My body hadn't quite recovered from the last pregnancy. Making matters worse, Bill contracted mononucleosis, which left him exhausted and depressed.

This combination of national turmoil and personal trouble discouraged us, and we occasionally asked each other, "If the world is like this now, what will it be in fifteen or sixteen years for our baby? What will this child face?"

While pondering and praying about these things, we came to realize anew that our courage doesn't come from a stable world, for the world has never been stable. Jesus Himself was born in the cruelest of times. No, we have babies, raise families, and risk living because the Resurrection is true!

Our baby arrived safe and sound, and we named him Benjamin, which means "most beloved son." A few weeks later "Because He Lives" was born in our hearts and poured from our souls:

*How sweet to hold our newborn baby
And feel the pride and joy he gives;
But greater still, the calm assurance---
This child can face uncertain days because
He lives.*

Over the years this song has reassured us that our Lord's Resurrection is the central truth of life. Because He lives, we can face tomorrow. Many times since, as our children grew, our business-life changed, our fortunes shifted, or our direction clouded, our family has found assurance in this very personal song.

It is "our song," but we're grateful others have loved it, too." –Gloria Gaither

Our world is unstable, and it always has been because of sin. Yet, because He, Jesus, lives we can face tomorrow. Because He lives, we have babies, raise our children, trust in His steadfast unchanging love for us. Because He lives, we can trust that He has called us by name, that we are

His. That we were called to live at this time, to face the lies of this age, the wars, the famine, the turmoil, the fear. And to remember that our God is not dead. Our God was born, lived the perfect life we could not live. Died the death that we desired, and rose again. Our God is alive! And because of that it changes everything.

Therefore, we can rest

This doesn't mean we don't worry or that we should be ashamed when anxiety or fear rise up when the latest news scrolls in front of our eyes. It means that we know in the storms of this life that Our God has won. He is victorious, He calms the storms, He gives us His peace and strength to face today, to face tomorrow.

- DCE Kathryn Schneider

*Because He lives, I can face tomorrow
Because He lives, all fear is gone;
Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living, just because He
lives!*

Morgan, R.J. (2004). *Then Sings My Soul: 150 of the World's Greatest Hymn Stories* (Book 2, Pg. 298-299). Neslon.





Jesus: Intelligent Designer & Remarkable Repair Man

I've written before in these pages on the brilliance of our Lord Jesus Christ on display in the works He has made,² a brilliance that only gets brighter the more we learn about the intricacies of His creation, especially as we come to a deeper understanding of the inconceivably complex specified information in the DNA and throughout the cell. In this article we will again stand amazed before our Lord Jesus because we will see Him not only as the astonishing intelligent Designer He is, but as the remarkable repair man He has revealed Himself to be in the inner workings of the cell.

Journey with me into one of your 30 trillion cells (Yes, 30 trillion!). Inside each is a city of order and purpose. The cell membrane, like a city wall, regulates with astonishing precision what enters and exits the city (efficiently getting the nutrients in and the waste products out). The nucleus houses your DNA, the blueprint for building you and the instructions for synthesizing proteins. Proteins are amazing and essential for life. They provide structural support for cells, act as enzymes to facilitate digestion, metabolism, and DNA replication, serve as Uber drivers to transport molecules like oxygen throughout the body, function as hormones to



regulate physiological processes, work as antibody bodyguards to neutralize threats from viruses and bacteria, operate traffic signals to regulate growth, development, and cell differentiation, and govern muscle movement, and much, much more!

The mitochondria are the powerhouses in the cell that produce its energy (called *ATP*) through a process called *ATP Synthase* (a high-tech micro-molecular power generator that is one of the wonders of the molecular world). And we've said nothing about the ribosomes, the vacuoles, lysosomes, Golgi Apparatus, and so much more!

Jesus designed all of this!

Now recall what we highlighted last month about the cascading challenges engineers face in the design process.³ Last month we detailed the numerous bodily systems, from the respiratory to the GI to the cardiovascular and more that are needed to get oxygen to your cells. Recall what we highlighted: Each of these systems (plus more) are needed simultaneously to overcome the cascading challenges the cell faces to get oxygen (and to keep you alive). A step by step process of evolution won't do. You'd be dead long before all the systems had evolved. In other words, Darwinian evolution is ill-equipped to accomplish this.

The cell faces something similar inside its wall because all of the things the cell needs for life (sunlight, oxygen, and water) are also a threat to it if not regulated properly. And this says nothing of harmful things like ionizing radiation, gamma rays, and more that threaten your cells. Given this reality, the cell needs a way to identify and repair

² Read the article ("God is a Biological Engineer – And He's Brilliant") under the blog tab at www.zionmanning.com.

³ See "A Cascade of Design: Appreciating Your Designed Body" on Zion's blog.

the damage that will be done. Note this: the damage that *will* be done. Further, the cell must have all of these recognition and repair systems in place simultaneously or the cell will die (and so will you).

Process this: Every day in each one of your 30 trillion cells your DNA experiences 10,000 lost single letters in its code.⁴ Every day oxidation causes 10,000 instances of damage in every one of your 30 trillion cells. Every day each cell experiences 55,000 single DNA strand breaks and 10 double strand breaks. If these don't get repaired, your DNA will collapse into an unrecoverable death spiral... and you will die. And, yet, despite these deadly events cascading through your cells at breakneck speed, you're alive. How is this possible? Because the Lord Jesus knows the cascading challenges your cells face and He has planned for it. In fact, the Lord Jesus has specially created precisely calibrated molecular machines in your cells to recognize the damaged DNA, recycle what can be reused, repair what can be repaired, and keep you alive. It's truly astonishing. So just as fast as things are falling apart in your cells, these marvelously designed machines are putting everything back together.

In this article we'll detail only the simplest of the many recycle and repair operations happening in your body at dizzying speed every second of every day. It's called *Base Excision Repair*. Here's how it works (in exceedingly simplified language so we can understand it!). A single letter in your DNA code⁵ gets damaged. One of these wouldn't be a big deal, but if they accumulate (and they will), you will die. But the Lord Jesus knows this so He has equipped your cells with a protein machine (an

enzyme called Uracil DNA Glycosylase) whose job, like a 24/7 security guard in your cell, is to scan the DNA strand in search of these damaged letters. When it finds one, it removes it (like a dentist pulling a diseased tooth) and leaves the rest of the letters intact. That's impressive in itself. How does it know? Molecules don't have brains or eyes and yet it is able to identify and remove damaged single DNA letters so that the next machines can replace it.

After this machine drags the degraded letter away, another protein machine (Endonuclease IV) comes to that precise spot on the DNA strand and delicately slices open the DNA backbone. A third machine (RecJ Exonuclease) arrives and slices the DNA strand again to open the now-missing letter space. A fourth machine (Polymerase A) then arrives with the precise replacement letter and the necessary DNA backbone and inserts them into the opening. (This is amazing! It knows what letter is missing and where to put its replacement!) Finally, a fifth machine (Ligase A) welds the replacement part to the DNA backbone. And this happens every day thousands of times over in every one of your cells!

How do these machines know? And how do they know in what order to do their work? There are five different machines. They not only have to "know" their job, but they have to "know" the order in which they are to do their job. Words escape me! This is microscopic surgery, but it's more: It's microscopic surgery while the cell is running! This is like replacing the timing belt on your SUV while it's running! Are you amazed?

⁴ I'm drawing heavily from an excellent video put out by The Discovery Institute called "Recognition, Recycling, and Repair." It's part 8 in a fantastic series called *Long*

Story Short. I highly recommend you watch this entire series. It's fascinating, but it's witty, too.

⁵ The four base letters are ATGC (Adenine, Thymine, Guanine, and Cytosine).

Are you ready for it to get more amazing? Think about this: The cell needs these micro machines to keep it alive and it needs them right from the get-go. If they aren't up and running immediately, the cell will die due to the DNA death spiral we mentioned earlier that would result from the degradation that happens thousands of times a day. So, to keep the cell from dying the cell has to build these five highly specialized micro machines, but there's no way it can build these machines without having these very machines in place to identify, repair and/or replace the degraded DNA letters that are happening thousands of times a day. In other words, to build the recognition and repair micro machines, the cell needs the recognition and repair micro machines. Do you see the problem?

This is just one of the innumerable paradoxes scientists have discovered inside your cells. And, remember, building them step by step via Darwinian evolution won't work. The cell and the recognition and repair machines must be present and functioning simultaneously. This does not happen on its own. Nature isn't this smart. Nature doesn't have a mind. But Jesus does! And He knew exactly what was required to keep your cells and you alive. And we are privileged to live in an era where we are discovering how He programmed our cells to work.

Ready for one more marvel in your cells? Inside everyone one of your 30 trillion cells are amazingly sophisticated manufacturing machines called ribosomes (each cell has from thousands to millions ribosomes). These mighty machines receive the coded information (the assembly instructions) from the DNA and they run it along an assembly line on and by which proteins are assembled. If you've forgotten all the amazing things proteins do, go back and review the list I detailed at the beginning. To say that ribosomes are important would be the understatement of a

lifetime. Without ribosomes you wouldn't have proteins and without proteins you wouldn't be alive. It's that simple. Quite literally, your life depends on ribosomes.

But I have some bad news. Sometimes they get clogged. When this happens, the protein machine it's building can't be completed. If your cells didn't have some way to fix this problem, you know what would happen: You would die. Fortunately your Lord Jesus created more molecular machines to identify the problem, recycle the parts that got stuck on the assembly line, and get the ribosome running again. This is absolutely mind-boggling! Floating around in your cells are these little demolition and recycling machines. This is amazing! In fact, 1 in 20 of the molecular machines in your body are for destroying the other 19! And this is good! And they know (again, how does a molecule know?!) which ones to recycle and repair.

What's more amazing, they do it through a complicated marking system where one molecular machine comes on the scene and marks the half-finished/defective protein on the ribosome assembly line with a label called a degron. Another machine comes along and cuts it up – like a chainsaw! – and then others take parts for recycling or to an ejection hatch in the cell to dispose of them (and it knows what parts can be recycled and what parts can't!). You've seen city crews mark trees with an orange x for the tree crew to cut and haul away. This is happening in your cells thousands upon thousands of times every day.

How can we not break out into rapturous doxologies of praise to our Lord Jesus Christ?! He not only is The Intelligent Designer; He's the world's most remarkable repair man!

- Pastor Conner



This coming year I'd like to invite you to join me in a few different Christian Educational options. I've been researching a new curriculum called Holy Sexuality. It is a curriculum for parents created by Christopher Yuan. You may recognize the name as Pastor Conner has previously recommended a book of his called *Out of the Far Country*. Yuan has since written a second book entitled *Holy Sexuality* and has created the *Holy Sexuality Project*.

I am still in the middle of reviewing the full curriculum, and I am looking for 6 families who would like to beta test the curriculum with me this spring time. It's a 12 week curriculum meant for parents to walk through with their teens at home. It's video-based with a few easy discussion questions and a parent guide book to use. However, I'd like to purchase the curriculum for 6 families and meet for the first few weeks to walk through the beginning of the curriculum. Then we would meet once in the middle of the curriculum and once more at the end. The curriculum covers identity, attraction, desire, and that as followers of Christ we are all called to Holy Sexuality. If you'd like to learn more please feel free to check out the Holy Sexuality Project's website (holysexuality.com), feel free to email me or set up a time to meet as well. I believe in today's culture we need to be able to have ongoing conversations with our children about identity, gender, sexuality and who they are in Christ Jesus. It is not simply a one and done conversation but a conversation that should be ongoing between parents and their children. Teens have a ton of questions and in today's social media era they get a ton of answers from Tik Tok, which isn't based in God's Truth. This curriculum helps start conversations, and allows open discussion on topics that wouldn't normally be easy to bring up. Fortunately this curriculum opens the conversation and even brings great discussion to the family table. Please let me know if you and your family would be interested in learning more. I'm wanting to start our groups in February and am looking to collect names of families this January. – DCE Kathryn Schneider

This coming New Year I'd also like to see if there are any ladies who might be interested in starting a women's book club. I am an avid reader, yet find it hard to always stay on top of all I'd like to read with two toddlers in the house. I have a long list of theological, apologetic and fantasy books I'd like to read and I'd love to do this with other ladies in the New Year. I would like to meet once a month and we could pick books together. However a few of the books I'd like us to consider reading together are Rosario Butterfields latest books, *Five Lies of Our Anti-Christian Age*. Alisa Childer's new book, *Live Your Truth, and Other Lies*. If you are interested in joining a women's book club please email me at dcekathryn@gmail.com.

Feel free to also share a few ideas for what books we could read together. – DCE Kathryn Schneider

WANT TO JOIN A BOOK CLUB IN THE NEW YEAR?



Iowa District West College Scholarship

Attending a Concordia? IDW has scholarships for church worker and non-church worker students! To apply, contact the IDW office at 515-576-7666 or go to www.idw.org, click on "forms and links," and then the "student financial aid" tab.



Health Care Worker Scholarship Offered

Crawford County for Life is offering a yearly \$1,000.00 scholarship to students from the following High Schools: Denison/Schleswig, ArWeVa, IKM Manning, Boyer Valley and Maple Valley. Students must be a graduating senior in the spring of 2024. The applicant must be enrolled as a fulltime college student going into a medical field and be a pro-life supporter. To learn more speak with Pastor Conner or Pastor Vogel.

Preschool Praises for December

December has come and gone and we had a fun month of learning about and celebrating the Holiday! We talked a lot about the true reason for the season...JESUS! The children heard about the angel coming to tell Mary the good news, Joseph and Mary traveling to Bethlehem where the Innkeeper brought them to the stable where they were blessed with baby Jesus, and how Jesus was the greatest Christmas gift. Christmas isn't all about getting presents but a season to celebrate the birth of Jesus and the spirit of giving! The preschoolers loved sharing what they could give to others at Christmas time whether it be a gift that would be purchased, something that would be made, or a good deed they could do.



The preschoolers had their Christmas program at the beginning of one of the Advent services this past month. They all looked so nice and did such a great job singing and dancing for all! They continue singing those songs randomly in the classroom and it is so fun to hear. We thank Kathryn for all her hard work and taking the time to spend with us as we practice new songs!

We had a lot of fun centers and activities throughout the month. Some of these included a North Pole mailing center, gingerbread cookie bakery, Christmas themed sensory bin, making homemade gingerbread play dough, and much more! It was fun to watch their imaginations and excitement throughout the month of December.

We spent time with Pastor Conner during chapel and they were all excited to see the beautiful Christmas tree where Chrismons hung. Pastor Conner showed us a few and explained the meaning behind each Christian symbol.

So far, we have been lucky enough to have fairly decent weather for December and spent some time outside. Let's hope for a fairly mild winter ahead! In the classroom, we practiced a lot of counting and number recognition, had fun with fingerplays, and continue to enjoy free art, fun crafts, and practicing our scissor skills!

We celebrated Jesus' birthday during our Christmas party right before break started. One of the games we played was following the clues on the stars to find baby Jesus. Each class did such a great job understanding and finding the clues. Once they found baby Jesus laying with the presents we were able to open them up! The kids had a lot of fun taking turns opening up gifts for the classroom and we thank everyone that donated items for the classroom. The children sure appreciated them all and can't wait to come back after break to enjoy them all! We are truly blessed!

Hoping all had a blessed Holiday season with loved ones!

-Ms Amy & Ms Melanie



Thank you,
Zion, for
enabling us to
share Jesus
with children
and families!





Amigos en Cristo

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

Friends in Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church

Pastor Pedro Lopez, Denison, Iowa

January 2024

Greetings to you as we await to celebrate the birth of Jesus. I am excited to share the amazing things that God is helping us to do, as we develop more and stronger points of contact and thank Him that He has put us in touch with new people and possible future leaders of our church.

In Hartley, we finished our third ESL (English as a Second Language) with amazing results! Twelve students were able to learn more English and got to hear the Gospel of Jesus. Who would have thought that we would have a wedding and two baptisms at the closing of the program!

Thanks to the many volunteers and to Pastor Nitzel for the ongoing support of this endeavor. We have a group of people already participating in the English worship service. Some also participate in the Bible studies happening in English and we hope that more will come when we start one in Spanish. Now that the ESL session has ended for the winter months, we will plan things at church to continue the relationships with the students.

In Denison, worship services continue with the same schedule, our Bible study here has been moved to Carroll. We continue to explore ways to outreach the community. Our plan is to prepare for new strategies for this area. We pray and ask you to pray as we work on this and continue to work in this area.

In Carroll, we also had our ESL closing graduating 20 students. One student has visited the worship service in English, and a few are coming to our Bible study that is offered in Spanish on Saturday evenings. On Wednesday, we are having Bible study at 11:45am at a prospect member's house. On Sunday, December 10, we had three baptisms from people of Carroll in Denison too! God is at work my brothers and sisters! New people are coming to the knowledge of God and receiving the sacrament of new life through baptism.

In Storm Lake, our worship services and Bible studies continue to happen. We continue to have confirmation and baptism classes. A couple of new people have joined this group.

In Fort Dodge, we continue our relationship with the people we met through the ESL program. We are planning to restart the ESL and Bible study early in the new year. We know that God is bringing opportunities there also.

We are excited about the work that we have ahead of us in the new year. We are talking and planning together with the Center for Hispanic Studies of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, on having a few people start the program to become future pastors, teachers, and deaconess.

Please remember to keep your Hispanic Ministry in your prayers and support. God is doing great things! Remember that you are always welcome to volunteer and that your donations are appreciated. In the new year, we plan to use these to help train new leaders and expand the outreach to more areas of our District. Gracias and Bendiciones. Pastor Lopez



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





Home and Abroad in Asia

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- *Caleb as he endures his Air Force Basic Training, and for him and his fiancée Katrina Kautz as they plan for their life together.*
- *Lutheran Churches throughout Asia, that they may use this holy time of the year to proclaim the saving Word of forgiveness in Jesus*
- *Peace in our time, so that the church may proclaim the Word in its truth and purity.*

GIVE THANKS FOR:

- *Encouraging conversations with our church partners in Indonesia as we work together in the Word of God*
- *Continued safety and health for the Ferry Family*
- *Leadership in our St. Louis LCMS headquarters as they seek the right man to lead your LCMS International Mission in the years to come*

PRAISE GOD FOR:

- *Churches, partners, and friends who open to us their congregations, homes, and lives.*

The year ended as busily as it began. We had some wonderful opportunities to be present in various places, while also continuing the work at home in Taiwan.

As Advent turns toward Christmas, Epiphany, and the new year, we continue to be grateful for your trust, partnership, and love. God bless you as we prepare for His coming, now and at the end of time.



LCMS Asia joins LCMS Church Relations for some long-overdue conversations with GKLI in Medan, Indonesia toward full church fellowship.



Left: Standing in downtown Tokyo, Japan with the dear Jastram family during a visit to their mission field in late November. They continue to do excellent work bringing together disparate Lutheran partners toward a new and faithful Lutheran body for Japan.



Above Center: Rev. Dr. Jim Banek makes a visit to a congregation of our Taiwan partner church in Hsinchu. Jim is the head of Set Apart to Serve, the LCMS effort to recruit more church workers. He shared from his experience in pastoral ministry with about 20 Taiwanese participants.

Right: Charlotte helps Daddy present to the assembled Asia team in Chiayi during the annual workgroup gathering.





Ferry Family Update



Left: Cheryl and the Ferry girls assist with learning music for Advent and Christmas with LCMS Asia missionary Becky Bartelt at our local Chiayi congregation. Can you find Caylee helping out in this picture?

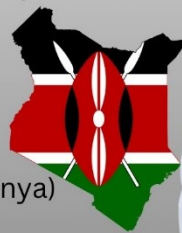


Above: Caitlin and Carissa order from a local food stand at the Chiayi night market, enjoying the benefits of hard work learning the local language!



Left: Just a glimpse into Caleb's world these days as he learns to wear the USAF uniform and to march in formation. This is one of a handful of pictures which have become precious to us in these days of very little communication with our boy.

Thank you, again, for your
prayers and support.
Peace in Christ,
Mark and Megan (LCMS Missionaries in Kenya)



Much love, Tirzah

P.S. Come visit the DR! Our “winter” temps are low 80F.



Zion Children's Missionary:
Ms. Tirzah Krey
Serving in Dominican Republic



Trinity News and Notes – January 2024

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.” Isaiah 60:1

The Light in WORSHIP

The Epiphany season is called the season of LIGHT. The season begins with the visit of the Wise Men (January 6), celebrates the baptism of Jesus, focuses on His ministry of miracles and teaching, and concludes with Jesus' Transfiguration (February 10). Each service of the season will celebrate that the Light of Jesus has come. *“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it,” (John 1:5).* Join us each Saturday as the Light shines in the Trinity sanctuary.



The Light in BIBLE STUDY

The Wednesday morning Bible class will resume on January 10 (10 a.m.). Join us for “Wisdom on Wednesday,” a Bible study on the book of Proverbs. Friends from the community are invited to share in the Wisdom of the Word. The Saturday afternoon pre-service (3 p.m.) study will continue. Join us for one (or both) of the Bible studies.

The Light in SERVICE and FELLOWSHIP

We give thanks for those who have been elected to serve as congregation officers. ALL officers (newly elected and continuing terms) will be installed as part of the worship service on Saturday, January 6 at 4 p.m.

Thanks to all who made the Advent and Christmas season special in worship and fellowship: technology, music, decorations, Advent meals, cookie walk, children's service, ushers and more! Thanks for being “lights” at Trinity.

The Priscilla Guild is asking for volunteers to assist with communion ware clean-up after communion services. You do not need to be a Priscilla Guild member to assist. The task takes only a few minutes after the service. Contact Kathy Segebart for more information.

Lori Ferry welcomes volunteers to assist her with preparing and showing computer “slides” for the worship services. Contact Lori for more information.

Lights in the PARSONAGE

In preparation for a new pastoral candidate this summer (God-willing; keep praying!) major repairs and updates are being done in the parsonage. Thanks to those who have already donated Thrivent cards and made financial gifts. Thanks to the volunteers who have taken out carpet and cupboards. There will be opportunities to assist financially and with labor. A “donation” display will be in the fellowship hall. Adopt a project. Support the improvement with Thrivent cards or other financial donations.

“Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven,” (Matthew 5:16)

Trinity Servants:

President:	Jason Ferry
Vice-President:	Scott Lingle
Secretary:	Lori Ferry
Treasurer:	Bricy Lorenzen
Elders:	Mike Lorenzen, Head Elder; Ian Bornhoft, Marty Bornhoft, Jerry Brus, Nels Olsen, Kenny Steckelberg
Board of Education:	LeAnn Christensen and Stephany Olsen
Stewardship:	Deb Birks
Trustee:	Rob Lueth
Endowment Fund:	Mark Segebart



Priscilla Guild

December 19, 2023

The meeting of the Priscilla Guild was called to order in the name of the Triune God with 6 members and Pastor Riggert present. Pastor Riggert gave a Christmas quiz, and a devotion on the gift that fits perfectly, peace. We had a summary of last year's activities. We served 8 funerals during the year. We updated the bylaws and constitution, hosted two Zone activities, cohosted the Staley's chicken supper, and held a silent to fund a student in Haiti.



We went over the duties that we covered, also, washing communion ware, serving Lenten and Advent suppers, collecting items for missions and Orphan Grain Train, Crawford County TAP, the Manning Food Pantry, contribute mites and a noisy offering, and made 26 quilts for Orphan Grain Train.

We then discussed our annual giving and decided on where our mission gifts will go. We also discussed the work and hostess schedule and finished signing up for that. We also looked at the information going into the 2024 Guild books. Bonnie Lorenzen gave a devotion on David, that as David was a shepherd, protecting and watching over his flock and his country when he was king, so is God a shepherd, protecting and watching over and guiding us through Jesus. We want to thank Pastor Riggert for his good guidance to us as our shepherd during the past year.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: The next meeting is January 16. Susan Mahnke and Gloria Boeck are Co-Chairpersons and hostesses for that meeting. We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Susan Mahnke, Secretary

Zion's Servants

Council

Chair: Jeff Hargens
Vice-chair: Bary Kienast
Secretary: Casie Eischeid
Treasurer: Shannon Walters
Financial Sec: Jean Hargens
CFO: Empty (Andrew Puck filling)

Elders

Paul Christensen (Head Elder)
Dan Stribe
Nate Blackford
Ben Booth
Bob Genzen
Mike Gore
Eric Ramsey

Trustees

Nate Jensen (Head Trustee)
Tyler Bruch
Larry Mahnke
Ben Lorenzen
Justin Mundt

Deacons

Jason Kienast (Head Deacon)
Martin Wanniger
Richard Zinke
John Lorenzen
Jason Opperman
Jim Karsten
Mike Hull

Board of Education

Holly Borkowski (Chair)
Shelly Gruhn (SS super.)
Robin Heaton (SS Asst. sup.)
Kathy Vollstedt
Jessie Blackford
Emma Pryor
DCE Kathryn Schneider
Joni Keinast

Altar Guild

Monica Christensen (Chair)
Connie Ahrendsen
Laurene Meeves
Audrey Roe
Nancy Opperman
Sheryl Zinke
Nancy Muhlbauer
Sonia Nulle
Joelle Puck
Dean Hoffman
Barb Page

Mission Board

Jean Hargens (Chair)
Bev Grundmeier

Gary Schroeder
Lynn Kruse
Warren Puck
Casie Eischeid

Rev. Vogel
Paula Vogel
Barb Page



Safety and Security

Jen Morris (Chair)
Kyle Arp

Shelly Gruhn
Gary Witt
Bob Genzen
Lorenzen

ies Guild
i Ehlers (Chair)

Choir / Praise Team

Dr. Tom Ulrickson (Director)

Preschool Board

Chelsey Jensen (chair)
Courtney Grabil
Rachel Stoberal

Bary Keinast
Cassey Neumann
Kari Ranniger
Nate Blackford
Kimber Oppermann
Janet Smith (Thrivent Consultant)



Taylor Roe signs as the Praise Team sings moving melodies in their Advent Concert



Snapshots of Zion



Preschool students share their songs with the Ladies Guild.



Junior High kids line up for their Christmas program.

Chairman Jeff Hargens leads Zion's celebration voters' meeting



DCE Kathryn leads preschool students in singing their songs for Midweek Advent Worship.

Worshippers sing "Silent Night" in one of Zion's Christmas Eve services.



Please Note! All times and events are subject to change



Sept. - May

Bible Reading Challenge



Sunday Mornings Cold-Case Christianity Bible Study at Zion (after worship)



January 7

Re-Elected & Newly Elected Officers Installed at Zion



January 14

Zion Family & Friends Bowling (1:00-3:00 @ L& M Bowl)

**DISCIPLING
EVENT**

January 17

Confirmation Discipling Event (6:00 – 7:30 p.m.)



January 18

Zion Afternoon Communion Service (1:30 p.m.)



January 21

Generations Sunday



January 21

**Getting Ready to be Ready (2:00-3:30)
For HS Students & Parents**

SPONSOR



Fellowship

AT ZION

SIGN UP IN THE FELLOWSHIP HALL

**Equipping You with a
Biblical Worldview**

Hear Pastor Conner answer questions your kids are asking.
(search for "Kids Have Questions")

issuesetc.org

Issues, Etc.

Online, on-demand, and downloadable
from the app or your computer



January Birthdays and Anniversaries @ Zion &

Birthdays (T = Trinity)

1. Nancy Kremin (T)
Greg Neumann
2. Jennifer Morris
Joel Musfeldt
Alex Ranniger
Ryan Riesberg
3. Joey Eickman
4. Alexis Dawson
Cobie Jahn (T)
Karen Kienast
Caitlin Lahr (T)
5. Kyle Lohrmann
6. Sylvia Bandow (T)
Jeanette Ferry (T)
Dawn Ketchum
Bennett Stribe
7. Cheryl Lahr (T)
8. Leo Ertz (T)
Easton Hass
9. Lori Asmus
Blake Dahlgren (T)
Bode England
11. Amy Benton
Jackson Ramsey
Bev Woebke (T)
12. Ben Lingle (T)
Riley Miller
John Opperman
William Saunders (T)
Terry Segebart (T)
13. Bliss Neumann
14. Kamryn Leslie
15. Emma Corbin
Kari Deal
Kenneth Eischeid
Colene Lohrmann
16. Chase Alexander
Mike Kuchel
Payton Vonnahme
Shona Weitl
17. Kevin Grimm
Harper Potthoff
Jack Sanford
18. Paul Christensen
Sarah Gruhn
Brian Lamp
Sonia Nulle
19. David Bohlmann
Joe Karsten
Maverick Long
Cynthia Ranniger
Jessa Wiig
20. Johnathan Lueth (T)
21. Camden Musfeldt (T)
22. Crystal Dreher
Gary Schroeder
Zadey Schumann (T)
23. Eris Christensen
Charley Lueth (T)
25. Lucas Borkowski
Robin Heaton
Tabitha Kuchel
27. Deb Knueven
28. Riley Adams
Kelly Ceminski
Karen Joens
Eugene Mahnke
Kemper Nelson
29. Mary Greving
Stacie Nelson
Robert Riggert
30. Michael Frank
Robert Riesselman
John Schneider
31. Grant Behrens

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

Anniversaries

1. Kyle & Jill Arp
Stanley & Lori Musfeldt
6. Mike & Judy Jacobsen

Official Acts

Baptism:

Banks Alexander Dean Christensen, son of Grant Christensen & Sloan Simon; December 2, 2023, Pastor Jonathan Conner

Adult Confirmation:

December 17, 2023 By Pastor Jonathan Conner
Casey Putt

In Our Prayers

Cory Ahrendsen (Larry & Connie's son), Kristin Webb, Bruce Rutz, Steve Rutz, Jamie Osterbuhr (Amy Hull's sister-in-law), Audrey Grinhaus (Howard and Audrey Roe's granddaughter), Denny Backhaus, Athena Bess, Larry Mahnke, Kau Jenkins, Carol Peterson, Gary Schroeder, Tawnya Jacobsen (Kristin Backhaus' sister), John Bexten (father of Beth Alexander and Amy Blackwell), Jim Deevers, Rick Spack, Justeen Schwieso, Sherri Steffes, Ron Brus, Shelley Helmich