



Zion Lutheran Church **NEWSLETTER**

WELCOME TO THE ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH NEWSLETTER
Zion is a member congregation of Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC)

MARCH 2018 5831 GRUNDY ROAD, HUDSON, IA 50643
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This is a story I told during a sermon a few years ago, but in light of recent events bears repeating here. It is a completely true incident that happened to me while I was serving my first call as pastor in Brooklyn, New York. My congregation, the Church of the Holy Redeemer, is in the East New York neighborhood. During the time I was there (1988-1992) East New York was considered a very "bad" place with high crime rates: the 75th Police Precinct consistently led the city with the most murders, crack vials littered the sidewalk directly in front of the church building on Linden Boulevard, prostitutes stood on many street corners day and night, homeless people took over abandoned houses (during the winter months the fire department was busy as fires started by squatters in abandoned buildings got out of control) and it seemed to me like there were generally a lot of people "up to no good." Already back then, I had to pass through metal detectors and be frisked by armed guards if I wanted to visit at one of the schools. Holy Redeemer was part of East Brooklyn Congregations which created the "Nehemiah Project" for building and developing homes for lower income people in the community. Go online and look that up, it's a great story, but only a tangent to this.

The church did not have a parsonage, so when I first came as pastor, the church rented an apartment about three miles away in the Canarsie neighborhood, which was considered a much "safer" place for me and my growing family.

Early in 1990, a home on Milford Avenue, just around the corner and behind Holy Redeemer's building went up for sale. I thought that such a house might be a good asset for my congregation, so I called the realtor listed on the sign out front. She came by with a key and began showing me the home. We had been inside for about five minutes and were upstairs in the kitchen when we heard the front door open and someone yelled, "Who's in here?"

I answered, "We're upstairs." A few seconds later, we heard footsteps bounding up the stairway into the kitchen and I found myself looking into the barrel of a handgun pointing right at me.

Now, I don't know how you might react when someone points a gun at you, but here's what I did: my hands immediately went straight up into the air, and I started talking as fast as I have ever talked in my life, "Don't shoot! I'm pastor of the church just around the corner. Don't shoot! I saw this place is for sale. Don't shoot! This is the realtor showing me around. Please, don't shoot!" It was a very scary situation. Afterward, the realtor said that she had to change her slacks after wetting herself.

He didn't shoot. I was wearing my black shirt and clergy collar, he told me later that helped convince him. He lowered his gun and apologized for startling us. He said he lived across the street and the owner of the house had asked him to keep an eye on the place. Certainly a reasonable request given what had happened in the neighborhood to other empty houses. He was a retired police officer and said he had a license

for his gun. Somewhere in the conversation I invited him to come visit us for worship on Sunday morning. His name was Herman.

Herman would freely admit that the main reason he and his wife showed up for worship at Holy Redeemer the next Sunday was out feelings of guilt for scaring me. But they kept coming back to worship the following weeks because of the gospel message they heard and the warm welcome they received from the church members. Herman had grown up in a family that didn't believe in God. He told me that until he started coming to worship at Holy Redeemer, the only times he'd been inside a church building were for weddings and funerals.

It is one of my great joys as a pastor to recall how Herman accepted Jesus as his savior. A couple months later, at age 63, Herman was baptized. He holds the "record" for being the oldest man I've baptized. Herman and his wife became very active in the church. He became involved in the Nehemiah Project. More than any of that, his life was transformed as his relationship with Christ grew. When I left Holy Redeemer in November of 1992, Herman spoke at my going away party about how much his life had changed after meeting me. He said with a smile and tears, "And to think that the first time we met, I was pointing a gun at you."

That story has a very happy ending.

Sometimes I imagine how different that story might have been if I'd been carrying a gun that day we met. Even with my arthritic fingers, I would have had plenty of time from the moment he entered the house and bounded up the stairs to the second floor to pull my gun and have it out and ready the moment he came into view. It could have been a bloody mess with at least one or perhaps all three of us getting shot. Herman probably never would have become a Christian.

I don't like to imagine that happening. But when my mind goes back to the one event in my life when I thought at the time, maybe for half a second, "I wish I had a gun right now." I am very truly thankful that I did not have a gun at that time.

In Nehemiah 4:17-18, we read: "While they were building on the wall, those who carried burdens were loaded in such a way that each labored on the work

with one hand and held his weapon with the other. And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me"

While Nehemiah and the workers were rebuilding the city of Jerusalem, the workers' safety was threatened. Nehemiah made sure the builders were armed and ready so that if a sudden attack came, they could defend themselves. God had commanded Nehemiah to rebuild the walls so it is not too much of a stretch to see that God wanted Nehemiah to order them to carry a sword with them and that God gave them permission to defend themselves while they kept the work going, no matter who threatened them. Compare that with Romans 12:19: "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

Many times we cannot defend ourselves so we trust law enforcement to take care of it. We are poor vigilantes and it's better to trust God in all this than to try and get revenge ourselves. It is better to focus on our relationship with Christ, like Herman did, than to live lives of fear. Whatever happens to us, we are ultimately in God's hands.

In Christ,
Pastor Mark Decker

Prayers

Each Sunday in worship, we publish a list of people who have requested prayers. To help you remember them in your regular prayer time: Dianne Bascom, Sean Love, Dorothy Juhl Zelle, and Eunice Neil. If you would like another name added to the list, please let Pastor know.

Hospital Visits

If you or a family member are in the hospital, please let Pastor Mark know so he can visit and pray with you during your time there.

Women's Bible Study

We continue to meet on Wednesdays during the time of Confirmation class. We have decided to pursue another Phyllis Shirer Bible study on Gideon. The flyer on the book says:

“Seven session study to encourage us to recognize our weakness as a key that the Lord gives to unlock the full experience of His strength in your life. If you’ve ever felt insufficient, ill-equipped, incompetent, or outnumbered this study is for you. Instead of ignoring, neglecting or trying to escape your weaknesses, learn to see them as gifts given specifically and strategically by God.”

Lenten Worship on Wednesdays

We began our annual trek through Lent this year with our Ash Wednesday service on February 14. On the following Wednesdays we will continue to have special worship services at 6:30 with a meal provided beginning at 5:30. The theme of this year’s Lenten services is “healing.” We use the “Holden Evening Prayer” as music for the service.

Holy Week at Zion

We are planning services for Maundy Thursday (March 29) and Good Friday (March 30). Both services will be held at 6:30 p.m. The Maundy Thursday services focuses on Christ’s Last Supper and concludes with the traditional stripping of the altar while the 22nd Psalm is read. The Good Friday services emphasizes Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross for us. Easter Sunday is April first with a breakfast served by the Sunday School families before worship.

Thank You Notes Received

To Our Zion Church Family:

Thank you for the prayers, cards, memorials, and other expressions of comfort and concern following the unexpected death of my brother Phil Ohrt. It truly means a lot to us to have so many caring people to cushion the shock. Brad & Lynn

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Dear Zion Lutheran Church,

Thank you for the Subway gift card! It was incredibly thoughtful and came right in time to relieve some of the stress of finals and the end of the semester. I would send this thank you as a letter, but I am currently studying abroad in Ireland and won’t have

access to the post until May. I’m doing well and so grateful you thought of me!

Immensely appreciative, Holly Appleton

March Anniversaries

- 9 Ed & Gayle Juhl
- 30 Greg & Tammy Bergman

March Birthdays

- 6 Whitney Laube
- 8 Angie Johnson
- 10 Rorie Volding
- 12 Luke Kilgore
- 13 Bill Gutknecht
- 13 Ryan Johnson
- 16 Doug Wulf
- 17 Connor Simpson
- 20 Austin Appleton
- 21 Allan McCulley
- 23 Bev Wulf
- 26 Dayne Watson
- 28 Karen Wulf
- 31 Jace Brandhorst

March Acolytes

- 4 June Volding
- 11 Tanner Laube
- 18 Zander Young
- 25 Cameron Seible

Ushers

- March 4 Harold & Julie Sorensen
- March 7 (Lent) Harold & Julie Sorensen
- March 11 Harold & Julie Sorensen
- March 14 (Lent) Ed & Gayle Juhl
- March 18 Ed & Gayle Juhl
- March 21 (Lent) Ed & Gayle Juhl
- March 25 Ed & Gayle Juhl
- Mar. 29 (Maundy Th) Steve & Michelle Wright
- Mar. 30 (Good Fr) Steve & Michelle Wright

- April 1 (Easter) Steve & Michelle Wright
- April 8 Steve & Michelle Wright
- April 15 Elwin & Stacy Lee
- April 22 Elwin & Stacy Lee
- April 29 John & Teri Neil
- April 30 Irv & Jennifer Laube

Communion Servers

- March 4 Cindy & Austin Appleton
- March 11 Joel & Jenna Parr

March 18 Bill & Lori Gutknecht
March 25 Bill & Lori Gutknecht
March 29 (Maundy Th) Bill & Lori Gutknecht

April 1 (Easter) Andy & Austin Appleton
April 8 Andy & Austin Appleton
April 15 Chris & Barb McCulley
April 22 Chris & Barb McCulley
April 29 Dan & Jane Miller

Fellowship Servers

March 4 Jan & Gerald Brandhorst
March 11 Marian Grover
March 18 Langley Jensen
March 25 Bergman

Lectors

March 4 Zander Young
March 11 June Volding
March 18 Gayle Juhl
March 25 Teri Neil

Communion Clean-up

March 4 Monica & Amber Laube
March 11 Monica & Amber Laube
March 18 Karen Wulf & Angie Marsh
March 25 (Palm Sun.) Karen Wulf & Angie Marsh
March 29 (Maundy Th.) Elaine Brandhorst & Betty Bergman

April 1 (Easter) Jennifer Laube & Marilu Degener
April 8 Jennifer Laube & Marilu Degener
April 15 Judy Shirley & Jenna Parr
April 22 Judy Shirley & Jenna Parr
April 29 Elaine Brandhorst & Janet Brandhorst

Snow Removal Teams

March 1-15 Paul Knapp
Elwin Lee
March 16-31 Gerald Brandhorst
Jared Gutknecht
April Rod Degener
Ed Juhl

The color of the paraments on March 4, 11, 18 and 25 is purple for Lent.

Our lectionary readings for the Sundays are:

Mar. 4: Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22

Mar. 11: Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 107:1-3,17-22; Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21

Mar. 18: Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 51:1-12; Hebrews 5:5-10; John 12:20-33

Mar. 25: Isaiah 50:4-9; Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11; Mark 15:1-47

The **WEB SITE for LCMC** – Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ, is www.lcmc.net

If you have an announcement, message, quote, picture, or prayer, that you would like to share in the newsletter, contact Pastor Mark, (515-538-2200) by the 25th of the previous month.

Minutes of council meetings which will be included in the newsletters will be from 2 months earlier as they have to be approved at the next monthly meeting before they can be published.