



Zion Lutheran Church NEWSLETTER

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

JANUARY 2020 **5831 GRUNDY ROAD, HUDSON, IA 50643**
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Being a Christian in the America today can be deeply uncomfortable.

Prior to Christmas, many Christians were objecting to a play being performed in Belfast that depicted Jesus as the transgender Queen of heaven. The play was described as a re-imagining of Gospel stories, from the perspective of Jesus as a transgender woman. As far as I could discern from reports, the objections from those who found this offensive were ridiculed and belittled, and largely equated with bigotry.

At the same time, an Episcopal Church sponsored commercial featuring the Lord's Prayer was banned from movie theaters, on the pretext that it might offend those of other faiths or none. The 56-second ad depicts schoolchildren, a farmer and a policeman speaking lines from the Lord's Prayer, and ends with the message "Prayer is for everyone". The intention was to have the ad screened prior to the new Star Wars movie, as a lead-up to Christmas. Wonderfully, because of the publicity surrounding its banning, hundreds of thousands watched it online anyway. It can be seen at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dx1ud-3fXC8>

Being a Christian in the America these days can be deeply uncomfortable.

Some church leaders say that the decline of churchgoing and the rise of Islam and other faiths mean that a "new settlement" is needed for religion in the America, giving more official influence to non-religious voices and those of non-Christian faiths.

Being a Christian anywhere is not without its struggles and disappointments. We live in a society that can seem increasingly hostile and surrounded by churches that are increasingly confused (think of certain denominations' contradictory stance on matters related to sexuality and marriage)

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Why are we surprised? Many of the New Testament letters were written to Christians who were under pressure, feeling the heat of discrimination, the pain of misrepresentation or the horror of persecution, and at the same time needing to be doctrinally corrected, lest they fall into believing the wrong things or behaving inconsistently with the Gospel. Engagement with the world around them could be uncomfortable and church life was messy. It has always been this way!

Another example from the Old Testament. The Book of 1 Kings traces a sad decline in the people of God, from the glory days of David to the paganism of the time of King Ahab. This decline took about a century, which is all it takes in our own day. One generation has the Gospel but does not pass it on completely. The next generation has some form of the Gospel but not the heart for the Gospel and the next generation despises what they see as hypocrisy and rejects the Gospel altogether.

When the Gospel has been present, and is then despised, people turn to paganism. Instead of people made in the image of God and worshipping the God who made them, they turn away from the Creator and to the created. They live for things. They exist for the material. They seek a religion which is convenient and comes with no moral challenge. You end up with the absurdity of people marching to save the planet but also marching for the right to abort babies in their hundreds of thousands.

This demonstrates the truth of Psalm 23: 'You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.'

Being a Christian in the America today can be deeply uncomfortable. But we were never promised comfort. We are promised that God is with His people and often He calls us to be His witnesses

in the midst of the discomfort. He remains Lord of all! Even in America. Even in the Lutheran Church! Don't expect discipleship to be a luxury cruise! Don't waste time and energy moaning about the ills of society or the failures of the church. Buckle up!

There is a Gospel to share, and opportunities to share it and demonstrate its power. Let's not miss or squander those opportunities whilst we have them.

In Christ's Love,
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, Whitney Laube, Sean Love, Eunice Neil, Holly Paar, Fred Tessmer 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. Unlike in years past, hospital staff does not call the pastor to notify him when a church member has been hospitalized.

Sign-up to Read or Serve Fellowship Treats

There are still some open days on the sign-up pages on the wall of the church entryway for those interested in taking a turn to serve as a reader or bringing fellowship treats or help with the sound and PowerPoint display on Sunday mornings. Please take advantage these opportunities to use your talent.

Annual Congregational Meeting

On Sunday, January 19, Zion will hold our annual meeting to approve the budget. If you have a report to submit for the annual report, please have those into the church office by Sunday, January 12. Thank you. The annual budget proposed by the church council will be available for review on January 12, for those interested in previewing that information before the meeting.

Thank You!

The Sorensen Family has prepared Christmas treat sacks for our youth and shut-ins. Thanks to your family for continuing this Christmas tradition.

Thank You!

Thanks to the Women of the Church for the

beautiful poinsettia and the container of treats. I really appreciate your being so kind.

---Martha Watson

Thank You!

Thanks to the people of Zion for the generous gift presented on Christmas. ---Pastor Mark and Sherrie

New Adult Sunday Bible Study

We invite everyone to a new adult Bible study. "Bible Basics" is a DVD presented by former Christian Crusaders speaker, Rev. Homer Larsen and discussion during fellowship time resuming again in January.

Pastor Mark Away

Pastor Mark and Sherrie will be attending the Abundant Life Summit (formerly called the Spiritual Life Conference) at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, in Fountain Hills, Arizona, from January 21-28. The featured speaker this year is Dr. David Stoop a psychologist and pastoral counselor. This will be the fourth year in a row that they will be attending this conference.

Our annual Harvest Ingathering Drive

The goal this year was \$15,000.00. May we have a sense that God blesses those working the harvest season. We have received \$16,679.80. Many thanks to all who have contributed!

The Invitation to 3 Days of Prayer January 7-8-9

God is listening. He really is. God says, "You will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you" (Jeremiah 29:12). This is His promise to each of us. For three days in January, join thousands of others around the world from our network of churches (Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ) for intentional prayer for ourselves, our churches, and our world.

Each day there is a theme and items to pray for each hour from 8am—8pm.

Day One: January 7

This is a day focused on confession. We have made our lives, our relationships—and even the church—in our own image. We confess that the church belongs to Jesus and not to us. We gather to lay down our pride, our sin and our agenda and ask the Lord of the church for forgiveness, which He gives freely and with mercy.

Day Two: January 8

This is a day of petition. Pray for your congregation, for the pastor, for the leaders, for those who carry out ministries, for the Sunday School teachers, for the Confirmation leaders, for those leading adult Bible studies and for those leading small groups. Pray for those in hospital and nursing home ministries. Pray for all those connected to your church that they might know God's redeeming love for all in Christ.

Day Three: January 9

This is a day for vision. Pray that the Holy Spirit will again move through the hearts and minds of leaders and pastors that God's vision for His church might be revealed and fulfilled. This is a time of prayer for renewal, revival and encouragement. Pray for God's vision.

Take the invitation. God is listening.

Zion Cookbook

Our Zion Cookbook is available. The cookbook is for purchase during fellowship time. The price is \$20 and contains 615 recipes. Cookbooks make great gifts! Our last cookbook was printed in 1987. Thank you to all that submitted recipes and asked others for recipes. Each recipe makes our book special. Our cookbook also contains many recipes from those we hold in our memory. Thank you to everyone for your support and encouragement. We have a great cookbook and we hope you enjoy it!

January Anniversaries

4 Pastor Mark & Sherrie Decker
29 Jeff & Angie Marsh

January Birthdays

4 Jenna Parr
7 Judy Shirley
11 Lori Gutknecht
12 Stacy Lee
12 Jamie Miller
14 Josh Shirley
16 Hayden Gutknecht
24 Bob Petersen
25 Casey Bonwell
30 Madeline Brandhorst

Acolytes

5 Hayden Gutknecht
12 Zack Young
19 Aubrey Wulf
26 Carson Laube

Ushers

January 5 Jim & Marian Grover
January 12 Jim & Marian Grover
January 19 Gerald & Janet Brandhorst
January 26 Gerald & Janet Brandhorst

Communion Servers

January 5 Gerald & Janet Brandhorst
January 12 Gerald & Janet Brandhorst
January 19 Cindy & Austin Appleton
January 26 (No Communion)

Communion Clean-up

January 5 Gayle Juhl & Elaine Brandhorst
January 12 Gayle Juhl & Elaine Brandhorst
January 19 Andy & Cindy Appleton
January 26 (No Communion)

Snow Removal

January 1-15 Ben Volding
Chris McCulley
January 16-31 Chris Brandhorst
Elwin Lee

The color of the paraments for January 5 is white for the season of Christmas. The color for the rest of the month is Green for the season of Epiphany.

Our lectionary readings for the Sundays are:

Jan. 5: Jeremiah 31:7-14; Psalm 147:12-20;
Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:1-18

Jan. 12: Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 29; Acts 10:34-43;
Matthew 3:13-17

Jan. 19: Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 40:1-11;
1 Corinthians 1:1-9; John 1:29-42

Jan. 26: Isaiah 9:1-4; Psalm 27:1,4-9;
1 Corinthians 1:10-18; Matthew 4:12-23

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.