



lcmc

Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ

Zion Lutheran Church NEWSLETTER

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

AUGUST 2020

5831 GRUNDY ROAD, HUDSON, IA 50643

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I've heard the phrase, "We've never been through anything like this before" over and over in my conversations these past few months. While I agree with that sentiment, I also have to wonder what will be the outcome of all this? Because this is my article for the church newsletter, I especially wonder – how all this will affect the life of our church?

Even if a vaccine or cure to the virus is found quickly, we wonder if those who have regularly attended our worship have gotten out of the habit and will no longer attend as often. There are scientific studies that show how many weeks it takes to establish a new habit or break an old habit. We have certainly passed that time period by now.

In my own lifetime, I have seen the definition of a "regular" worship attender change. In my youth, someone was considered a regular worship attender if they were in worship every week. My parents grew up in North Dakota and the "rule" was that they went every Sunday unless it was colder than 20 below zero. This meant there might be two or three times a year when it was too cold to attend worship. When I was nine, we moved to California, so I asked my mother if this rule would change now that we would never see a Sunday morning that was below freezing, forget about anything below zero. She said that it was still the same – unless it was colder than 20 below zero, we had to go to church. So, we never missed a Sunday.

By the time I was first serving as a pastor, I had to accept the reality that if a family could be in church twice a month, they were considered to be good and regular attenders. If you are keeping track of statistics, this means that in a church the size of Zion – which has about 100 "regular"

worship attenders – the average Sunday attendance is not 100, but about 50. Coming out of this virus, with habits changing, if a regular attender becomes someone who is in worship about once a month, the result is an average attendance of about 25 – even though we still have about 100 people who consider themselves to be "regular" in their attendance. That seems like an awfully low number. The challenge becomes: How can we get out of this spiral of lower numbers and re-establish the habits of frequent worship attendance?

I believe that what draws people to attend in person – instead of simply watching online with all its convenience – is the blessing that only comes by being there in person and participating in the fellowship conversations and interactions with our brothers and sisters in Christ. These interactions happen during the worship service itself, with our listening, praying, and singing together, as well as in times of fellowship with shared goodies to eat and conversations in the church basement. This is our responsibility as a whole church: to make these fellowship opportunities as joyful and done as well as possible. It will take all of us working together for it to happen. It will take intentional focus on the positive things going on in the life of our church rather than



dwelling on the negative problems that so easily distract us. With God's help, we can do this!

In Christ's Love, Pastor Mark Decker

Please Join Us in Prayer

Each month, we publish a list of people who have requested prayers. To help you remember them in your regular prayer time Dianne Bascom, Mike Dufel, Whitney Laube, Sean Love, Maurita Lubbers, Eunice Neil, Holly Paar, and Jim Reid. Prayer requests can be submitted to Pastor Mark.

Hospital Visits

If you or a family member are in the hospital, please let Pastor Mark know so he can 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. Although, during this time of quarantine, the pastor is not allowed to visit in person, we are nonetheless able to connect via the phone and pray in that manner. Let us appreciate the blessings we have, as few and far between as they may seem to be.

Outdoor Service and Semi-annual Meeting

On Sunday, August 23, Zion will hold our semi-annual meeting following a special outdoor worship service held at the Zion Lutheran Cemetery. The worship will take place at our regular time of 9:00 a.m. Please bring your own lawn chairs to set up where you feel most comfortable, whether in the shade or sunshine, keeping a safe distance from other families. The congregational meeting will focus on the finances so far in the first half of the year. There will also be a report on possible changes to the drive-ways and parking configurations as we are working with Black Hawk and Grundy counties' plan to put in a hard surface on Grundy Road in 2022.

Semi-annual Reports Due

Those committees and organizations of the church who will be making a financial report at the semi-annual meeting please have your reports in to our church secretary, Marilu Degener, by Sunday, August 9. We would like to have the reports ready

for distribution on Sunday, August 16, so they can be perused ahead the meeting on August 23.

Sunday School Classes Online

Sunday School classes have not met since the middle of March. I've mailed Sunday School materials to the elementary and younger students. We are going to try to finish up the classes online. I'm continuing my Wednesday evening at 6:30 Facebook Live devotional time focusing on the lesson for them each week. Even if you don't have the materials (or are an adult) you are welcome to watch these devotionals and classes. You can watch anytime as it stays available on Facebook once it is posted.

Online and In-person Worship at the Same Time

Beginning with the first Sunday in July the Zion council decided to move into a "gradual resumption" of in person worship in the sanctuary. How has it gone so far? We continue to use the camera and post the Sunday worship service with Facebook Live. Those who prefer watching the service on Facebook have done so, from the comfort of their home. Those who prefer to be in the Zion sanctuary have been welcome to attend the service in person. The in person attendance has been about 14 people per Sunday – plenty of room to spread out and keep a safe distance. Those attending in person are able to share in Holy Communion, receiving the bread and wine on their way out of the sanctuary (after the Facebook Live camera is turned off). Although masks are recommended, not required, so far the vast majority of those in attendance in person have been wearing masks. Online Facebook Live views have been between 80 and 150 per Sunday. In the news and social media, I've seen too many complaints by fellow Christians about mask requirements or restrictions on church practices like gathering size or no singing. Even if there were no ban or restriction, selfless humility is exactly what a faithful church that follows Jesus' call to love their neighbor would do. As Paul says, even though Christian freedom makes all things permissible, not all things are useful. In Galatians 5, he argues that our freedom is to be used to love the neighbor. The demands of Christians that their rights be heeded sound more like Paul's list of

works of the flesh than the fruit of the Spirit. We Christians need to remember that, when we're feeling persecuted, acting like Jesus did, picking up our cross and following him, is what we are called to do.

Hymnals Available

Some of those watching online have requested a way to follow along with the singing during worship. If you would like a hymnal from the church, please ask Pastor Mark, and he can bring one or more to your home for your family to use. Of course, not every song we sing during worship is in the hymnal. If you would like to be on a list of people getting the words of all the songs sent to you in an email the day before worship, please let us know at pastormark@myomnitel.com and we will make sure that information is sent to you in a timely manner.

From the Church Council

During this time of suspension of gathering for worship, the expenses of being a congregation continue. Although, many of our church members regularly give through electronic means, we cannot collect offerings as we usually do during worship. Please consider sending your offering checks through the U.S. mail to the church: 5831 Grundy Road, Hudson, IA 50643. Many thanks to those of you who continue to give during this "down" time. Your gifts are greatly appreciated!

August Anniversaries

- 3 John & Teri Neil
- 9 Jared & Heather Gutknecht
- 12 Bill & Lori Gutknecht

August Birthdays

- 3 Miranda Johnson
- 6 Elaine Brandhorst
- 6 Garry Dufel
- 6 Sam Kilgore
- 7 Tanner Laube
- 8 Sharon Dufel
- 10 Molly Volding
- 11 Sheila Petry
- 14 Kari Finley
- 14 Cameron Seible
- 16 Pat Gutknecht

- 16 Reese Seible
- 17 Kyle Degener
- 18 Chelsea Miller
- 21 Shirley Dufel Petersen
- 22 Rodney Degener
- 22 Zachary Young
- 24 Sandy Pedersen
- 24 Taylor Bern

The color of the paraments during August is green for the season of Penetecost

Our lectionary readings for the Sundays are:

- August 2: Matthew 6:25-34
- August 9: Genesis 37:1-28
- August 16: Matthew 15:21-28
- August 23: Romans 12:1-8
- August 30: Matthew 16:21-28

Calendar:

Sundays at 9:00 a.m.

Worship and Facebook Live streaming

Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m.

Pastor Mark's Devotional time with Sunday School lesson

Sunday, August 16 - 10:30

Church Council meeting

Sunday, August 23 - 9:00 a.m.

Outdoor service at Zion Cemetery, followed by semi-annual meeting.

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.