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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)

APRIL 2021

5831 GRUNDY ROAD, HUDSON, IA 50643

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

A year ago, we offered worship during Holy Week solely in an online format. While we continue to offer the opportunity for people to worship online with Facebook Live, we have also opened up our Zion sanctuary for in-person worship. It is a fine line between honoring the choice that some people make to stay away because of their concerns for the ongoing danger of infection with the COVID virus, while at the same time there are at least as many who are clamoring for more open worship practices. So, we try to straddle a middle ground, aware that in doing so, neither side is getting all that they want.

Dealing with differing opinions regarding our worship practices is nothing new. Without going into the specific details, suffice to say, it is probably a miracle of the Holy Spirit that we have as many active members as we do.

The Bible, of course, has something to say about this. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-26, we read: "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where

would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the

feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are



the body of Christ and individually members of it."

Putting this attitude into action – accepting our variety of gifts and interconnectedness (including our differences) as a strength – has had a freeing effect on my role as your pastor. Yes, I am careful in planning the details of our worship. I sincerely hope that as many people as possible will "like" the way we worship, but my goal is not to get people to like what I do. My goal is for people to hear the gospel message of God's love for us in Jesus Christ. Of course, if people are liking how we worship and enjoying themselves, they are more open to hearing that message, but sometimes we need to wrestle with tough issues in ways we don't like. When Jacob wrestled with God in Genesis 32, the struggle wasn't

something he enjoyed, but it was a necessary step in his journey toward reconciliation with God and his family.

For me, the events of Holy Week, as we traditionally observe them, are not something that I particularly enjoy. Because we take these things seriously, recounting Jesus' betrayal, innocent suffering, mockery and tortured death are painful to reflect upon. Yet it is necessary. As we read in Matthew 26:42, "Again, for the second time, Jesus went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."

So, we have plans for worship. The services will be live on Facebook as has been our practice for the past year, but we are also welcoming those who wish to join us in the sanctuary for in-person worship.

Maundy Thursday, April 1, 6:30 p.m., Return to the Lord, Return to the Table

The ends with the stripping of the altar while Psalm 22 is read.

Good Friday, April 2, 6:30 p.m., Return to the Lord, Return to the Truth

The service ends with the "adoration of the cross."

Easter Sunday, April 4, 9:00 a.m., Return to See and Believe

The altar is redressed and we celebrate the resurrection with shouts of "Alleluia!" and "He is risen!"

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, Dan Bern, Sherrie Decker, Gayle Juhl, Whitney Laube, Sean Love, Mary Mommer, Eunice Neil, Holly Paar, Shirley Dufel Petersen, Sheila Petry, and Eleanor Wettengel. Prayer requests can be submitted to Pastor Mark. We also continue to pray for the family and friends of Beverly Wulf as we grieve her passing.

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. Even though some facilities may not allow the pastor 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.

One bright spot regarding hospital visits is that some hospitals are now allowing pastors to visit church members!

Reflection on Returning, by Pastor Mark

During Lent, we have been reflecting on how we have strayed from the Lord. We have noted the various ways in which God has called us to return. We have focused on various aspects of "Return to the Lord" throughout this season. When I was in college I received a gift from a girlfriend, a book of poetic reflections on scripture called "Come Away My Beloved" by Frances J. Roberts. Over the years, I read it so frequently, underlined and wrote in the margins that the book literally fell apart at the seams. Last month, while visiting in a hospital, I came across a newly republished edition of "Come Away My Beloved" that I have been using as my daily devotional book for prayer and meditation. I heartily recommend this book to you all. I read the following passage and connected it with our Lenten theme of Return to the Lord. It is a reflection on Matthew 20:11-14 = "They grumbled at the master of the house, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. ... I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you.'"

Reflecting on that passage, Frances J. Roberts wrote:

"I love My people, My chosen and elect; and My heart grieves over them, because they are turned aside. They have known My love; yes, they have tasted of My goodness and entered into My grace, and I have given them My salvation; but their love has grown cold, their desires have turned to others, and their ways are the paths of self-seeking and folly.

For I am a jealous God, and I will not share My glory with another. Yes, I will pour out My goodness without restraint upon every open heart; and to all who cry out to Me, I will be gracious.

But My people have not cried; they have not called. They have been satisfied with the husks of this present world, and in our hour of indifference, they have allowed the pleasures of this life to fill that place which belongs to Me. Yes, it has displaced My Spirit, but it does not satisfy.

O that they might return to Me, for as the father awaited the return of the prodigal, so I long for My people. My heart is lifted up with grief, and My tears flow as a fountain. For I love them. My soul is drawn out to them.

Return to Me, and I will return to you. Put away the idols, and give Me your heart. Lay your heart open before Me, and I will purge away the dross. I will cleanse it and fill it with My glory. You will no longer crave the leaks and garlic of Egypt. You will no longer feed upon the chaff; but I will satisfy your soul with manna from heaven, and with milk and honey you shall be nourished.

And your health will return to you, and your vigor, and you will serve Me with fresh energy. You shall go forth with new power, and My joy shall be your constant porttion. Though you labor in the last hour before the sunset, you shall be rewarded the same as those who preceded you.”

Online and In-person Worship at the Same Time

With the resumption of in person worship in the sanctuary, we continue to use the camera and post the Sunday worship service with Facebook Live. Those who prefer watching the service on Facebook worship, 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 leveled off to about 20-30 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). We are requiring masks be worn as you enter and are with groups other than your immediate family. Online Facebook Live views have been between 100 and 380 per Sunday.

From the Church Council

Although we have restrictions for gathering together, the expenses of being a congregation continue. We are grateful that many of our church members regularly give through electronic means. 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!

April Anniversaries

- 6 Bruce & Dianne Bascom
- 14 Jim & Marion Grover
- 19 Doug & Karen Wulf

April Birthdays

- 3 Andy Appleton
- 3 Julie Sorensen
- 4 Dianne Bascom
- 4 Tammy Bern
- 5 Joanne Nicklaus
- 5 June Volding
- 6 Carrie McCalley
- 12 Cindy Appleton
- 15 Harold Sorensen
- 19 Jamisen Weitzell
- 26 Danielle Bascom
- 26 Ryan Ohrt
- 26. Marian Grover
- 28 Kevin Simpson

The color of the paraments for all the Sundays of April is white for Easter.

Our readings for the Sundays are:

- April 4 – Matthew 28:1-10
- April 11 – John 20:19-31
- April 18 – Luke 24:36-48
- April 25 – John 10:11-18

Calendar:

Sundays at 9:00 a.m. Worship in the Sanctuary and Facebook Live streaming

Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. Devotional time on Facebook Live

Sundays at 10:00 a.m. Sunday School, youth and adults

Sunday, April 11 – 10:30 a.m. Church Council meets

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.