

Zion Lutheran Church & Preschool
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Jonathon J. Bakker and Benjamin J. Ulledalen, Pastors

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*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.
The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” – 2 Corinthians 5:17*

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, maybe you didn't think it would ever arrive, but it's finally here! By the time you get this in the mail, the number of days remaining in 2020 will be down to single digits. At long last, 2020 can be over! The old? Behind you. The past? In the past. The mathematicians will (rightly) declare that THIS is the new decade we've all been anticipating. The letdown that has been 2020 can fade into history.

But...will the change in years make things better than before? In the past, a new year was closely associated with new hope and determination. Going from December to January functioned as a time to rededicate our lives to improvement. Resolutions would be made to exercise, read more books, eat healthier, and spend more time with family. Christians do this, too, and have committed to being in church every Sunday, reading their Bible every day, and giving more of their time, talents, and treasure.

Last year in this space, I wrote about how ideas such as, "New Year; New You" can be fraught with disappointment. As long as they are anchored in temporal things, they will always fail to deliver on their vaunted promises. And likewise, putting the past behind us is no guarantee of a sunnier future. The facts about our life in this world remain, even after everything that has happened so far in 2020. There is still sin, there is still sickness, and there is still death. Many are congratulating themselves for surviving this year, but continued existence offers no real solace.

Indeed, the hope for people is not that we have made it through a tough year; our hope is in the promises of God and their fulfillment in Christ.

As St. Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." And that, my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, is the real basis for our hope. Baptized into Christ Jesus, you are a new creation. Not a reset, not a turning back of the clock, but by the Holy Spirit working through the Word and the Sacraments, you are made anew.

Being a new creation in Christ means we do not look to this world or even to this life as the be-all-end-all of our existence; we are already promised deliverance through the forgiveness of our sins. That's not to say that this world or life doesn't matter; it does. We have been given everything in this life to serve the Lord and serve our neighbor. We shall love the Lord our God with all our heart and all our soul and all our might, and we shall love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We are made anew, in fact, to live anew. To fight against the devil, the world, and our own sinful nature, and to live by everything that comes from the Lord.

So in this New Year, dear Christians, hold on to the promise. We don't know what will happen as each day comes and goes, but we know what is in store for us with the Lord, and with that we will weather every storm, disease, failure, and loss that comes along. We do so without fear, because the victory is already ours. The old will pass away, and the new will come. Jesus already defeated the devil, death, and sin by his own death on the cross, and he rose from the dead three days later and lives forever. Thanks be to God for all his gifts, especially the forgiveness of our sins and everlasting life.

Yours in Christ, Pastor Bakker

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWS

The preschool and early childhood center continues to grow! Praise God! As we begin 2021 we will soon be registering children for the 2021-22 school year. In addition, soon we will also be registering children for our new "Summer Camp" program. Stay tuned and contact Tina or Tim in the church office with any questions.



A Note from Your Elders

Christ is Born! Halleluia! The twelve days of Christmas brings us to our Epiphany Service. As elders, we invite you all to attend this service. The Epiphany season lasts until Ash Wednesday. We enjoyed seeing our members and friends at one of the three Christmas Eve Candlelight services where we welcomed the birth of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of the World. Thanks to all who chose to attend in person and to those who watched on video. We all look forward to Christmas 2021 when we, God willing, once again as in the past "pack" the church for our services. Why wait, consider attending now in person. The November elder message called for you, our members, to consider serving your Lord and Savior by considering a position on one of our boards. We need our new members, our young members, and our seasoned members to accept the challenge to make a difference. We will provide training, information, whatever you need to serve. Just call the church office and speak to Tim, our Executive Director, or Dale Gust, the Elder Director. We will be glad to walk you through the responsibilities. Also, our Bylaws lay out the same by referring to them on Zion's web site at www.zionchristtheking.org For any concerns you want to share, questions to ask, or other matters, call one of the elders or discuss it with one of our pastors. 2021 is going to be a super-charged year. You can be a part of those experiences. Dale Gust



Sunday School classes will resume on January 10. All children are welcome!

Evangelism Update

Since last March the Evangelism Board has maintained its outreach to the Zion community through the web site, www.zionchristtheking.org and via email sent to members who have subscribed to "Zion News." We haven't had any formal gatherings since March to limit exposure and respect to those board members who do not want to participate in face to face meetings. Linda Coyne, and John Schimmelmann have attended the PPC meetings. On the home page of the web page is a link to Missouri Synods KFUE Radio, <https://www.kfuo.org> which daily offers devotions and up to date information on synodical activities including the LWML. We pray that in 2021 we get back to some semblances of normalcy to better address our mission of outreach to Zion members. We look forward to officially welcoming the new members we have received this year in the near future. Lastly, we are looking into a new church directory in 2021.

Epiphany Service

Wednesday, January 6

5:30 p.m. - Zion



Join us for an Epiphany service this year at Zion! The word 'epiphany' means *manifestation*, and in the church we celebrate on Epiphany the manifestation of Jesus as the divine Son of God. If we celebrate that the Father has *given* us the gift of his Son at Christmas, then we celebrate all the more at Epiphany that this gift is *unwrapped* before us as Jesus is revealed to be our Savior, the Holy One of Israel, promised of old.

Quarterly Voters' Meeting at CTK

Sunday, January 24

12:15 p.m.

STEWARDSHIP CORNER

Monthly Income & Expense Report
through November 30, 2020

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
YTD Budgeted Expenses	\$ 413,931.36	\$ 410,588.77
YTD Actual Expenses	<u>\$ 387,493.84</u>	<u>\$ 393,176.32</u>
YTD Balance	\$ 26,437.52	\$ 17,412.45
YTD General Fund Income	\$ 353,525.91	\$ 352,441.32
YTD Actual Expenses	<u>\$ 387,493.84</u>	<u>\$ 393,176.32</u>
YTD Income Less Expense	\$ (33,967.93)	\$ (40,735.00)

It's a new year. It's a time when we take stock of the year past in order to improve the year to come. It's a time when we sit down to plan and implement what we want to accomplish and even change. Part of that is planning our stewardship for the coming year.

Often, we find this difficult and daunting and even joyless, but it doesn't have to be. In fact, it is really quite simple and full of joy. So, here are some tips to make that planning less stressful. You begin by answering these three questions:

Who are you?

To whom do I give?

And how much?

So, who are you? The Table of Duties in the *Luther's Small Catechism* informs us. Are you a hearer of God's Word? Are you a citizen of society? Are you a member of a family? Stewardship covers these three estates: church, society, and family. We don't particularly struggle to give to society or family. Our struggles, our difficulties, and our questions arise in giving to the Church.

So, what is our duty as members of the Church with regard to giving? Again, the Table of Duties, gives us a guide. If you are a hearer – a member of the Church who receives instruction – St. Paul taught: "Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches" (Gal. 6:6). This means the local congregation is primary.

Your pastor is the one called to preach the Gospel to you and administer the Lord's blessed sacraments to you. Your congregation is the

place where those things happen. Thus, when God calls us to give to the Church, He has the local congregation in mind. For "the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:14).

How much do we give to the local congregation? Our only instructions are to give:

Regularly (1 Cor. 6:1–2);

Proportionally (1 Cor. 16:1–2; 2 Cor. 8:12);

Generously (2 Cor. 8:20);

Of our first fruits (Gen. 4:4; Prov. 3:9; Lev. 27:30); and With a spirit of eagerness (2 Cor. 9:2), earnestness (2 Cor. 8:7), cheerfulness (2 Cor. 9:7), and love (2 Cor. 8:23).

In other words, giving to the Church is not to be an afterthought, given after everything else is spent. In this way, it is deliberate. We give regularly – weekly, biweekly, monthly, quarterly, or yearly – keeping in mind our own strengths, weaknesses, and limitations. We set it aside beforehand – before anything else is spent. From those first fruits, we set aside a proportionate and generous amount. Ten percent was the standard for the Israelites. This was a command for the ancient Israelites. We can give as much as we want, but ask yourself: Do we really want to be less generous than was commanded of the Israelites? Is the job of the New Testament Church bigger or smaller than the job given to Israel?

And how are we to give it? We give it with eagerness and earnestness. We give it cheerfully and with love, not out of compulsion. For through the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments, God has made us His children, forgiven us all our sins, given us grace upon grace, promised us life everlasting with Him in His kingdom, and filled us with His own Spirit, the Holy Spirit. This makes giving a joy, as Jesus said, "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

It's that easy. And it is joyful. For in stewardship, our gracious and giving Lord invites us to take part in the work that He accomplishes here on earth, providing for the ongoing preaching of the Gospel as well as those who are in need. Taking part in that makes all our work holy – work that is done in service to the Lord as priestly members of His kingdom.



Mission of the Month

Life Choices of Central Michigan



Life Sunday is January 17

Thank you all so very much for the kindnesses shown to both of your pastors and their families at Christmas! Thank you, also, for all of the cards and gifts given to us. We are blessed by our church family. In Christ, Pastor Ulledalen and Pastor Bakker

Thanks to all of our elders and ushers for all of the work they do to ensure the services happen smoothly throughout the year, but especially in the Advent and Christmas seasons, when there are so many extra services. Thank you also to everyone who has assisted with recording the services this year for our members watching online.

Thank you to all of you for the kind cards, gifts, and memorials you gave at the occasion of my grandfather's death. I thank God for all of you showing me such loving Christian support. Alleluia, Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed; Alleluia!



In memory of Marilyn Johnson

Yvonne Fitzgerald
Wayne & Karyn Kiefer
Patty Pickler

In memory of Janice Vogel

Wayne & Karyn Kiefer

In memory of John Bakker

Yvonne Fitzgerald
Patty Pickler

In memory of Mae Tohm

Pat Babcock
Adella Bergey
Darwin & Monica Brown
Dave & Linda Coyne
Tom & Linda Emery
Yvonne Fitzgerald
Ruth Giffin
Ken & Doris Johnson
Wayne & Karyn Kiefer
Lynn & Audrey Laskowski
Dan & Sharon Milan
Jim & Delores Morford
Patty Pickler

Lifelight Bible Study begins January 14



In our winter sessions of Lifelight, we will be continuing our study of the book of Isaiah. New people are always welcome to attend and participate in this in-depth 9 week Bible study. The readings for each week have been compiled and are available for download on the church website under the 'Bible studies' link. The class will be offered at 10:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. each Thursday (come at whichever time is most convenient for you) beginning January 14. Please check the calendar each month closely as there will be an occasional Thursday where Pastor Bakker will be out of town, and we'll simply pick up where we left off. Speak with Pastor Bakker or Tim Narr if you have any questions about Lifelight or need the study materials.

Men's Breakfast Bible Study



*Saturday, January 16
8:00 a.m. at Zion*

Zion Lutheran Women's Group



In the Word

“And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” Micah 6:8b.

Of the Word

“What do you want for Christmas?” A child may answer with the name of the latest game or toy. Each of us might answer the question with a list of things we've had our eye on as well. It's a common question asked during the holidays, but rarely is the question addressed to God. Why not? After all, He has an answer for us!

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Old Testament prophet Micah spoke of the gifts God wants from us, His beloved people. He asks us for gifts of the heart, given to Him when we do what is right: showing kindness in word and action; living lives of humility and service. These gifts require no money, no ribbons, and no wrapping, only a Spirit-filled longing to bring Him what He desires most.

What does God want for Christmas? He wants our worship and prayers, our time and abilities, our compassion for others. Those are the gifts He receives with a warm smile and an outstretched hand — and not just at Christmas, but all year long.

Walking with my Lord

Lord, help me to walk humbly with You and to live as Your child. Amen.

Women's Bible Study will meet on Saturday, January 9 at CTK at 9:30 a.m. We are continuing our Bible Study on “One Christ, Many Creeds: A Study of Denominations from a Lutheran Perspective.” Every woman in the congregation is welcome!

Our Cookie Walk was a huge success! Thank you to all the ladies who baked the cookies, the workers, and everyone who purchased cookies. We took in \$1,250, and after expenses, made a profit of \$1,065. Praise the Lord!

February 13 – Women's Bible Study, Saturday, 9:30 a.m., at CTK, We will continue are study on “One Christ, Many Creeds: A Study of Denominations from a Lutheran Perspective.” Every woman in the congregation is welcome!

February 14 – Pie tasting after both services. Bring a pie to share. Whatever service you are attending is where you drop off your pies. This is always a fun time as everyone gets a small piece to taste and a chance to bring your favorite pie.

February 20 – Painting class at Zion Lutheran at 10:00 a.m. More details forthcoming.



“Serve the Lord with Gladness” Psalm 100:2

NURSE'S NOTE:

2020 is behind us and what a year it has been for everyone! So much has changed and so many are stressed. Here are a few suggestions to help you start out 2021. As always the new year brings anticipation and hope for a better year.

Phillis Daws RN, BSN

The plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of His heart through all generations.
Psalm 33:11

Be kind and patient to anyone experiencing stress - including yourself.

Seize your memorable moments before they depart unappreciated while you were busy with other things. Moments may come during phone calls, video chats and other non face to face means.

Look at the world as you want the world to look at your children and other loved ones, be less critical.

Adversity becomes a learning opportunity when you learn to find meaning in it.

Acknowledge and thank God for your blessings

Gain insight into the practice of acceptance and love as God loves us.

Decrease stress and increase energy with daily exercise.