

A publication for the family of Zion Lutheran Church, 202 Erie St., Stratford, ON N5A 2M8

www.zionstratford.com

Phone: 271-8527

email: zionlc@golden.net

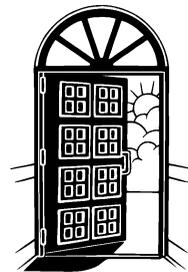
Fax: 271-8536

PASTOR'S DEVOTIONAL

"Yet he commanded the skies above, and opened the doors of heaven ..." – Psalm 78:23

Driving an old car can result in some unique challenges, from having to turn on the fan with a pair of pliers to retracting the seat belts manually because the springs have worn out. One new challenge I faced this winter was coming out one Monday morning to discover that all of the doors of the car were frozen shut, leaving me unable to get to work. After a great deal of struggle, I was finally able to free one door (which then wouldn't close), but it made me realize how dependent I am on this vehicle and how one closed door could have affected my entire day.

When we encounter such obstacles, we realize how they can impact our lives and how we often need the assistance of others to help us regain access to important areas of our lives. It may be the CAA or a locksmith to open a locked car door, or a snowplow to remove the drifts that are blocking our street, or a doctor to get the wax out of our ears that is blocking our ability to hear clearly. We often find ourselves unable to open that which we need to live our lives fully and abundantly; we need others to come to our aid to reopen what has been closed.



As we enter into the season of Lent this month (and yes, Lent is early this year, because Easter Sunday will be celebrated on Sunday, March 27), we are called to realize the many ways in which we are unable to open what has been closed in our lives, that we cannot by our own understanding or strength open the doors that will lead us into God's loving presence. Some of these closed doors are of our own making, decisions we have made that has blocked our ability to receive God's blessings; other closings are not of our making but still result in our inability to receive the grace that God desires for us. Whatever the cause of such closings, not even our best efforts can open these doors; we need to call upon God to open the doors so that once again we might come into the Lord's presence and receive all of the blessings that were never meant to be denied to us.

This year's theme for our Lenten Midweek Worship Services is **"Open My Life, Lord."** On Wednesdays from February 17 – March 16, we will gather for worship at 7:30 p.m. to call upon God to use this season of renewal to open that which has been closed so that we might be blessed by all of God's gracious gifts:

- February 17: "Open My Eyes, Lord"

- February 24: "Open My Hands, Lord"
- March 2: "Open My Ears, Lord"
- March 9: "Open My Heart, Lord"
- March 16: "Open My Life, Lord"

Toward the end of his life, Martin Luther reflected on the moment when his understanding of the Christian faith was completely transformed. As he reflected on Paul's words in Romans 1:17 (*"For in [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'The one who is righteous will live by faith.'"*) and realized that *"the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith,"* Luther had an experience in which *"I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates."* (Preface to Latin Writings, 1545). It is through the Gospel that the gates of paradise, the doors that open us to experience God's presence and God's steadfast love, are realized. By ourselves, we cannot overcome such obstacles; but the good news in all seasons is that while *"for mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible."* (Matthew 19:26).

I'm hanging on to my old car because in spite of its quirks it still runs well, and keeps me from having to face years of car payments. But I'm sure I'll face more challenges with it and other obstacles that keep me closed off from what I need in my life and in my work. There may be times when I can open these closed doors, but on most occasions I cannot do it on my own. But thanks be to God, who opens our eyes, hands, ears, heart, and lives to receive all of the blessings that desires us to receive, calling us to *"not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."* (Luke 12:32).

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Jeff Laustsen

VICAR'S DEVOTIONAL "A WALK IN THE SNOW"

I went for a late-night walk the other day – what turned out to be more than a usual walk. It was dark out already as I prepared to leave, and very cold, blustery, and snowy; blizzard-like conditions. It was one of those nights where one would usually decide to stay indoors, warmed by the fire, or a blanket, while sipping on a cup of hot cocoa. Yet I prepared to go out none-the-less, eagerly putting on layer upon layer of clothing to protect against the cold – snow pants, two hats, long johns.



And it was not an easy walk. I had to be careful not to slip on the ice which was dangerously close under-foot, inconspicuously hidden under the few inches of freshly fallen snow. I also had to really look where I was going as the winds whipped the snow directly into my eyes as I walked, temporarily blinding me. And then there was the drifting snow which made it very difficult to walk quickly, it was more akin to plodding than walking.

Even with these difficulties though, there was something deeply sacred to this late-night *pilgrimage*. The

presence of God in this storm seemed somehow close, palpable: each snow flake proclaimed the mystery of God's distinctiveness; the rhythmic sounds of my boots crunching against the ice and snow echoed into the liminal space between the sounds; and the wind all but howled its own kerygma, "You are not alone," it said.

Hear this, you are not alone.

It was a wonderful walk. I did not want it to end so I kept veering down side streets to extend my time in this sacred space, to continue this "prayer". I was exhausted from the exertion when I finally returned home...but filled with a profound peace.

A few days later I was reading through a book by Parker Palmer and came across the following quote. He too must enjoy walking in the snow:

Winter is a demanding season – and not everyone appreciates its discipline. It is a season when death's victory can seem supreme: few creatures stir, plants do not visibly grow, and nature feels like our enemy. And yet the rigors of winter, like the diminishments of autumn, are accompanied by many gifts. One is beauty, different from the beauty of autumn but somehow lovelier still. I am not sure that any sight or sound on earth is as exquisite as the hushed descent of a sky full of snow?" (Parker Palmer)

Yours in Christ,
Vicar Albert

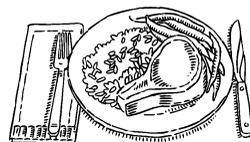
ANNUAL MEETING: FEBRUARY 21



We are at the time of the year when our congregation holds its annual meeting. This year our meeting will be held on Sunday, February 21 beginning at 11:45 AM. This meeting is important as it allows all members to review the year that was and to plan for the future. An annual meeting is always essential as it allows us to work out together how we can best be the church of Jesus Christ. Please exercise your privilege as a member of Zion Church and plan to attend the meeting. All confirmed members have voice and vote... **P.S. Annual reports will be available a week before the meeting, so please pick one up and read it to prepare for the meeting.**

ZION TABLE FOR SENIORS

The next gathering of Zion Table For Seniors, our ministry which promotes fun, food, and friendship is Tuesday, February 23 at 12 noon. Please let Doris Bartlett (519-271-9622) or Beryl Horst (519-276-3501) know by Tuesday, February 16, 10 AM, if you will be attending. Lunch cost is only \$12. Program: Constable David Stewart will be speaking on "Senior's Safety."



In Memoriam

Marjorie Stock, November 28.
Harvey Fleischauer, December 23.
Anny Wessel, December 28.
Darlene Haynes, December 29.

ZION'S FRIENDSHIP MEAL



Zion will host the Friendship Meal on Friday, February 26 at 5 PM. At that meal we will host guests from the Stratford area who are in need of fellowship or a good home-cooked meal. In order to serve our guests well, volunteers are needed who can serve for the event or for an hour or two to prepare for the meal. Help is appreciated to set tables, prepare the food, serve tables or help

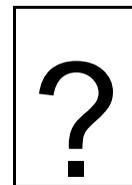
with clean up. Please contact Sister Jean Widmeyer (273-6810) if you can help.

WORSHIP MINISTRY AT ANNE HATHAWAY SENIORS RESIDENCE

Pastor Robert Hutchison has accepted an invitation from Anne Hathaway Seniors Residence to lead a half hour worship time at 10 AM the second Sunday of each month, with the hope that people from Zion would join this ministry. Needed are musicians who would play hymns. The chapel has an organ (only one manual is playable) but other instruments would be welcome: keyboard, recorder, guitar, violin, etc. Any students wishing to get some experience? Occasionally there would also be the need for a worship leader. To join with Pastor Robert in this ministry, please call him at 519-271-5808.



GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER



To enhance our life together at Zion, the Congregational Life Committee urges you to participate in 'Guess Who's Coming To Dinner' at 5:30 PM on Saturday, February 20.

Here's how it works:

> It is hoped that at 5:30 PM, February 20, many families and/or individuals will get together for dinner either as guests or hosts.

> Sign up as a GUEST or HOST before or after worship January 24, January 31, February 7 or 14.

> GUESTS will bring themselves and a salad, casserole or dessert to the meal at the hosts home.

> HOSTS will open their home to their guests for the get together and provide the remaining essentials for the meal.

> February 16, the Congregational Life Committee will meet to match up guests and hosts and inform them.

> 5:30 PM, February 20 will begin a time of enjoyment and deeper fellowship for the people of Zion.

Your Congregational Life Committee: Linda Weitzel, Kurt Gough, Liz Bomasuit, Brian Gropp, Bob Hutchison

THANK YOU ARE IN ORDER



We would like to thank the following people who donated towards the purchase of flowers which decorated our sanctuary over the Christmas season. They were beautiful! We thank, as well, the WOF who helped to organize it and Elaine Steed and Ellen Wolfe who worked with the flowers. Those who donated are:

Bill & Ruth Lindner, Bruce Mitchell & Ellen Wolfe, Bill & Irene Ehgoetz, Brian & Barb Gropp, Judith Hammond, Bob & Heather Wickenheiser, Bea Huras, Carl & Gwen Marklevitz, Brian & Pauline Schade, Richard & Anne Gaul, Wayne & Lynette McLeod, Elfrieda Zimmermann, Ruth Illmann, Jean Weir, Noreen Wilker, Elsie Dahm, Tim & Darlene Gropp, Wayne Faulhafer Family, Hilde Grobbecke, Wayne & Joanne Young.

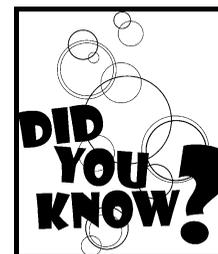
FEBRUARY 2016 VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers assist with our Sunday morning worship services. Listed below are those who serve in February as a reminder and as a thank you for serving.

Date	Communion Assistants	Greeters	Readers	Usher Captains	Counting Captains
Feb. 7	Darlene Illman & Rob Leifso	Bob & Heather Wickenser	Anne Cooper	Brian Wilker	Audrey Miller
Feb. 10	Vicar Albert	Mervyn & Joyce Dietz	Stephen Fischer	Fritz Steigmeier	N/A
Feb. 14	N/A	Tom & Joanne Cosstick	Susan Iredale	Fritz Steigmeier	Nancy White
Feb. 21	Loralee McNaughton & Linda Springer	Rudy & Bea Deighton	Loralee McNaughton	Steve Lamont	Nancy White
Feb. 28	N/A	Wayne & Linda Faulhafer	Marilyn Wells	Steve Lamont	Gerald Cook

ENDOWMENT FUND 101

This is the second submission from the Endowment Fund Committee. As stated in the December issue of ZIONEWS, the purpose is to help educate us all in understanding the purpose of Endowment Funds.



Bequests to an Endowment Fund are given according to the wishes of a donor. It is the responsibility of the Endowment Fund Committee to carefully manage these Bequests as per stated wishes. We, at Zion Church, have been truly blessed with the generosity of two families, namely the Bequest from the Harold E. Pauli Estate in memory of his mother Sophia Pauli in 1986 and the more recent Bequest from the Estates of Wilhemine U. Pauli and Carl R. Pauli.

The contribution to our Endowment Fund from the first Bequest has enabled us through their gift to provide vital funding to many worthwhile charities over the years. These donations from the interest generated on this Bequest have supported the guidelines established by our congregation for the Harold E. Pauli Bequest and in addition confirms our purpose as a church, which states "In Mission For Others." The donations from inception up to and including 2014 from this Bequest have totaled \$1,272,754.00 of which \$656,984.00 has directly benefited Zion Church. The local charities have received \$190,887.00, National charities \$219,775.00 and International charities \$205,108.00. Within the National Charities, it is important to note that Synodical Benevolence has received \$64,345.00 from the Endowment Fund over the years, which is above the contributions from our members.

In our next submission, we will share detailed information as to the charities that have benefited from this first Bequest.