

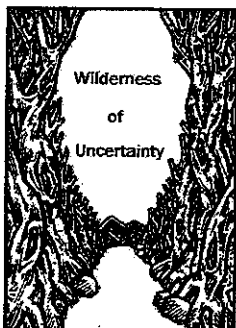
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PASTOR'S DEVOTIONAL



“And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.” – Mark 1:12-13.

One of my most memorable summer jobs was when I served as chaplain at the Sabattis Scout Reservation in the Adirondack Mountains of New York State. This is a wilderness camp located far from civilization; the scout troops would set up camp in sites with no electricity, running water, or other basic necessities. Scouts from suburban New Jersey were given a lecture upon arrival to prepare them for the realities of wilderness camping, including never wandering off alone and being aware of the presence of bears and other wild creatures. While the Adirondack wilderness is beautiful, it is also a place that is unfamiliar and filled with peril.

Throughout the Bible, God’s people often found themselves in the wilderness. The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years after their liberation from slavery in Egypt, and wilderness was often viewed as the dwelling place of forces hostile to God. A wilderness transformed into paradise formed a part of the hope for salvation predicted by the prophets (*“The wolf shall lie down with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.” – Isaiah 11:6*), and the people of God were blessed with the knowledge that God was with them amid the perils of the wilderness (*“Surely the LORD your God has blessed you in all your undertakings; he knows your going through this great wilderness.” – Deuteronomy 2:7*).

The three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) each contain accounts of Jesus’ ordeal in the wilderness following his baptism. These forty days are the basis of our annual observance of Lent, a time when we are called to *“return to the LORD your God, who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love”* (Joel 2:13). The call to “return” is a call to repentance, to turn away from all the paths and forces that draw us away from God and

return to the true source of light and life. Jesus resisted the temptations of the devil, so are we invited to turn to him to give us strength to resist all that would draw us away from God by heeding Jesus' call to "*come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest*" (Matthew 11:28).

Our Lenten observances have usually included more frequent gatherings for worship, beginning on Ash Wednesday as we receive the ashes of repentance as we pray that God would "*create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me*" (Psalm 51:10) and continuing with our Lenten Midweek Services. We would gather for Sunday worship, Sunday school classes, Bible Studies, lunches, and dinners as people of God who were committed to renewing our walk as children of light. But as the COVID-19 pandemic has continued into this new year (as I write this, we are in the midst of another provincial lockdown that prevents us from gathering together in-person), the experience of Lent may feel more like the wilderness ordeal of our Lord Jesus Christ. We may feel that we have all been driven out from all that was safe and familiar to a wilderness that is dark, unfamiliar, and filled with peril. We may feel that we have been separated from all the people we love, all our sources of love and strength, all that gave us comfort and hope.

As we enter the wilderness of uncertainty that is our reality in this year's Lenten observance, our Gospel lesson reminds us that our Lord Jesus was not alone even in this arduous ordeal; even as he was tempted by Satan for forty days, Christ was "*with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.*" Although he lacked human company, he had the assurance that God was with him, that even in his moments of greatest despair he was blessed with the confidence of God's gracious presence and steadfast love. In moments of deepest darkness, when he was tormented by hunger and thirst as well as the temptations of Satan, Jesus drew on the blessed hope that "*the steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*" (Lamentations 3:22-23). This experience of God's presence in the wilderness gave our Saviour strength even as he cried out on the cross "*my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" (Matthew 27:46) knowing that the words of this lament include the blessed hope that God "*did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him.*" (Psalm 22:24). Jesus' ordeal in the wilderness reminds us that as we find ourselves in a wilderness filled with uncertainty and fear that there is no darkness that can destroy God's light nor is there any place of desolation where God's presence is absent. As Jesus came out of the wilderness to begin his ministry of hope and liberation, our time in the wilderness will one day come to its end so that we might one day walk together in newness of life.

"As Jesus prepared himself for the discipline of his ministry by his time in the wilderness, we prepare ourselves once again for that ultimate renewal that comes to us and to the earth at

Easter. There are many routes to Easter, but none of them escapes the shadow of the cross, that point where our time and God's eternity converge; and at the center point where time and eternity meet is the Christ who makes it all possible." – Peter Gomes.

May God give us the strength and courage to endure this wilderness period in our lives, knowing that God will bless us in these uncertain times even as one day God will lead us out of this place of darkness and uncertainty into God's own brilliant light!

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Jeff Laustsen

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR TREASURER

As you read this message, the 2020 Financial Year-End for our Church has come to a close.



A Message From Your Treasurer

On behalf of the Finance Committee and the Congregational Council, I extend a sincere "thank you" to our members for your generosity in helping to reduce our deficit in 2020. Of course, more financial details will be shared with you once the statements are finalized.

Your continuing faithfulness to the ministry here at Zion Lutheran Church, through these most challenging times, is greatly appreciated.

Gerald Cook, Treasurer

On behalf of the Congregational Council & Finance Committee

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE DECEMBER 2020 CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING



Council Highlights

The December 16, 2020 Congregational Council Meeting was held in the Fellowship Hall with some members joining by Zoom Conference.

There is one position to fill on the Congregational Council for

2021.

The Synod has published guidelines for holding Annual Congregation Meetings during the pandemic. Once we have more current status on COVID conditions a decision will be made as to how to conduct our Annual Meeting.

Congregational Council accepted the recommendation of the Endowment Fund Committee for disbursement of the net 2020 income. The recommendation will be presented to the Congregation members at the Annual Congregational Meeting.

Congregational Council accepted the recommendations of the Finance Committee for the 2021 Budgets. The budgets will be presented to the Congregation members at the Annual Congregational Meeting.

Karen Bjerland, Congregational Redevelopment Services Advisor, from the Synod Office, has been contacted and we have confirmed that we would like the Synod office to assist with the initial need's assessment.

One quote has been received for repairing the eavestroughs and adding covers to prevent leaves collecting in the troughs. An attempt is being made to obtain more quotes.

Paul Shilton's contract has been extended for a 3-year term commencing January 1, 2021.

Due to the current status of the pandemic, the photo directory which we had postponed to 2021 will now be reviewed in December 2021 for possible publishing in 2022.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE JANUARY 2021 CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING



Due to the provincial lockdown the January 20, 2021 Congregational Council Meeting was held via Zoom conference.

Marco Burak completed his time with us as of the end of December. He was presented with a gift from the congregation in honour of his service with us and he has agreed to return when in-person services resume so that we can publicly thank him.

Laura Burton has accepted our offer as organist commencing January 1, 2021.

The automatic door opener for the door at the back of the Church has been installed.

Due to the pandemic, it will not be possible to hold an in-person Annual Congregational Meeting. With guidance from Synod, Congregational Council is proposing to hold the Annual Meeting by distributing the annual reports by mail accompanied by mail-in ballots. The date and details will be confirmed as soon as possible.

A request was received from the owners of BeaverTails to renew the parking lot rental agreement for 2021. Following discussion, it was decided to renew the parking lot rental agreement with the same terms for 2021.

A donation has been received from the Whitemine & Carl Pauli Foundation Fund with the request to use some of the funds to install air conditioning in the sanctuary. Following discussion, it was decided to use some of the funds from the donation for installing air conditioning in the sanctuary at some future date.

The Canada Recovery Benefit Program which offers financial assistance for self-employed employees (non-salaried employees) was brought up for discussion. Following discussion, it was unanimously decided to retain the self-employed employees at the current level and to review the Program once again in June.

As in 2020, donations/offering, can continue to be completed via our Church website, including an option for E-Transfer, in addition to the PAR program, mailing cheques or dropping off donations at the Church in the locked mailbox at your convenience. Due to the provincial lockdown, the Church doors are now locked throughout the week. However, if you desire to leave your donation/offering at the office, just press the buzzer on the brick wall to the left of the door and Jane will come and accept your donation/offering.

NOMINATIONS FOR CHURCH COUNCIL



Nominations are now open for Congregational Church Council. Please submit your nomination to Kevin Tuer by email at kevintuer@gmail.com or by phone at 519-273-6205.

Nominations may also be submitted to any other Church Council Member.

ANNUAL MEETING



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are unable to have our traditional "in-person" meeting this year.

Pastor Jeff and your Congregational Council are in the planning stage of an alternative way to hold this year's Annual Meeting.

Details will be published once they have been finalized.

2020 OFFICIAL RECEIPTS FOR INCOME TAX



Your 2020 Official Receipts for Income Tax are completed and included with the February issue of ZIONEWS. For those of you who receive the Newsletter via email, your Official Receipts will also be mailed out to you on January 29th, 2021.

THANK YOU



My heartfelt "thanks" to the congregation for your generous gift of the gift certificate for the Stratford Festival. This gift is especially thoughtful and meaningful to me, not only because I love live theatre, but because you have also chosen, through this gift, to give much needed support to an industry that continues to be hit so hard by this pandemic. Thank you!

My "thanks" also to the congregation for your patient and warm support over the years as I strove to attain some fluency at playing the pipe organ. I am now looking forward to spending more time composing music!

Marco

FEBRUARY - THE MONTH OF LOVE



As February is the month most associated with love, and since we are in the midst of another “lockdown” and under a “stay at home” order, I was searching for a poem that would be suitable for what we are going through and what may reinforce that there really is LOVE all around us and I came across this poem.

A PANDEMIC OF HOPE

Poetry by George Payne

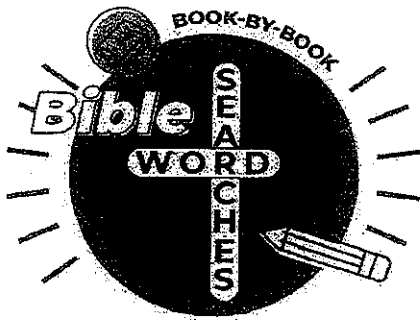
March 30, 2020

As fast as the virus and then some,
Love is spreading. In the hands of doctors
and nurses, it spreads.
Through the central nervous system
of the species like an electric shock,
Love grows with invisible power.

Love is spreading. Everywhere,
in more places than the virus could ever be,
Love is taking over. We are on lockdown and
Love is our warden. A national guard is needed
to keep it from getting too big. A pandemic of hope.

Love is spreading. For the sick and the healthy.
For the lost and the saved. For the living and the dead.
For any being that has ever contributed to the project of Life.
There is Love and it is spreading. Infecting the cell with truth.





GENESIS



ORDER IN THE BIBLE
#1



WRITTEN BY:
Moses



TIME PERIOD COVERED:
4000 BC to 1800 BC

OVERVIEW

Genesis is the first book in the Bible and covers the longest span of time—over 2,000 years! It also covers more famous Bible stories than any other book, save the Gospels of Christ. Chapters 1–11 cover the period of Creation through the Great Flood, ending with the Tower of Babel. The rest of the book covers the four generations of Abraham and his primary offspring: Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. With 50 chapters, Genesis is one of the longest books in the Bible.



Circle the **BOLD** words in the puzzle.

In the beginning God made the **HEAVENS** and the earth (1:1)

Human beings were made in God's image or **LIKENESS** (1:26)

God put **ENMITY** between **SATAN** and the woman (a word that means fighting or strife) (3:15)

Cain killed his brother **ABEL** (4:8)

God gave Noah the sign of the **RAINBOW** of his promise that the earth would not be flooded again (9:12)

Noah's sons were named Shem, Ham, and **JAPHETH** (7:13)

God mixed up the **LANGUAGES** at the Tower of **BABEL** so that people could not understand each other (11:6)

Abram's name was changed to **ABRAHAM** and God promised that he would become a father of nations (12:3)

Abraham and Sarah had a son **ISAAC** (21:2)

Isaac's son **JACOB** received the birthright instead of Esau (25:31-32).

Gomorrah God rained down fire on two sinful cities: Sodom and **GOMORRAH** (19:28)

Jacob's name was changed to **ISRAEL** (35:9)

Joseph was sold by his brothers and taken to **EGYPT** (37:28)

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