

A publication for the family of Zion Lutheran Church, 202 Erie Street, Stratford, ON N5A 2M8
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**DURING THIS TIME UNDER ANOTHER LOCK
DOWN & STAY-AT-HOME ORDER
YOU ARE INVITED TO VISIT OUR WEBSITE
www.zionstratford.com
FOR BULLETINS, PASTOR JEFF'S SERMONS BY
VIDEO, HYMNS OF COMFORT AND UPDATES**

PASTOR'S DEVOTIONAL

"And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God." Luke 24:52-53



Ascension
Day

Of all the major festival days of the church year, the Ascension of our Lord always seems to get lost in the shuffle. A major reason for this is that Ascension Day always falls on a Thursday, following the chronology of Luke in which our Lord ascends to heaven forty days after his resurrection. While we acknowledge Christ's ascension in our creeds ("*... he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.*" – Nicene Creed), very few churches have the opportunity to celebrate Christ's Ascension or consider what it means in the lives of Christians who confess Jesus Christ – crucified, risen, and ascended – as Lord.

This year, Ascension Day is on Thursday, May 13. Even if we wanted to schedule a worship service for this day, it would be impossible under the current strict lockdown that is continuing as the rate of COVID-19 infections is greatly increasing across Ontario. We are now in the second year of the pandemic, and we have no idea when conditions will improve, and we will be able to return to some semblance of normality. Making any plans for the

future feels like a futile effort, and it is easy for us to fall into despair and depression as we are still denied the ability to visit with loved ones, go out to dinner or a show, or gather in worship on Sunday mornings. Schools remain closed, meetings continue to be held on Zoom, and we don't leave the house without taking our masks, sanitizers, and other means of protecting ourselves and others from this deadly virus. Even as we rejoice during this Easter season in the good news that *Christ the Lord is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia* we may not feel that our hearts are fully into this rejoicing, that it is hard to celebrate the resurrection of Christ at a time when any celebrations may be the furthest thing from our minds.

As I was looking over the Bible readings for this season, I was drawn to the reaction of the disciples to the appearance of Jesus in Luke's Gospel. When the risen Lord first appears to them with the greeting "*peace be with you,*" the Evangelist reports that "*they were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost.*" (Luke 24:37). But after Jesus shows them the marks of crucifixion in his hands and feet and eats in their presence, their fear is transformed into joy as Jesus commissions them as "*witnesses of these things*" and instructs them to "*stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high*" (24:48-49).

Luke is the only Gospel that offers an account of Jesus' Ascension (there is a second account in the Acts of the Apostles, the second volume of Luke's writings). While Jesus blesses his disciples, "*he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven*" (24:51). The disciples now find themselves in a period of waiting and transition: they are no longer in Christ's physical presence, and the risen Lord did not tell them how long they would have to wait until the promise of the Holy Spirit was bestowed on them. These uncertain times could have been a period of despair and anxiety for the followers of Jesus; how long would they have to wait – if indeed the promise ever did arrive. But even though Christ is no longer with them and they are now in an uncertain time, the disciples "*worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continually in the temple blessing God*" (24:52-53). The disciples were able to worship and rejoice because they trusted that Jesus' promise would be fulfilled, that even though they had no idea when this would occur, they had confidence in God's promise spoken by Isaiah that "*my word that goes out from my mouth ... shall not return to me empty, but shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*" (Isaiah 55:11). They knew that God's Word is "*trustworthy and true*" (Revelation 21:5), and that no matter how long they might have to wait that "*the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ*" (Philippians 1:6). They worshipped and rejoiced because of their faith in

Christ crucified and risen, the faith that blesses God's people with the "*assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen*" (Hebrews 11:1).

- "The disciples are not dejected and downcast by the departure of Christ, nor do they look longingly back to Galilee and the life they knew before he called them to follow him. Instead they look for the power from on high, and in this hope they return to Jerusalem and to the temple, full of joy and blessing God." – Fred Craddock.

It is hard to remain hopeful in these uncertain times, in a pandemic that has dragged on far longer than any of us could have imagined. It is difficult to look to the future with confidence that things will get better, that we will return to life as it was before anyone had ever heard of COVID-19. We will have days of darkness and despair, times when we may feel lost and alone, circumstances that fill us with fear and doubt. In times like these, the message of the Ascension Gospel is a source of strength and hope; as the disciples worshipped and rejoiced not because they knew with certainty when Christ's promises would be fulfilled but that those promises would definitely be accomplished, we can also live in this same blessed assurance. We do not know how long these uncertain times will last, but we *do* know that in the end all that God has promised God's people will be accomplished. We know that Christ the Lord is risen indeed, and that because he lives we shall live also. We are living in times of darkness, but this darkness will one day give way to Christ's own brilliant light. We worship and rejoice with these disciples because "*we have been made whole in him, that we are being made whole in him, that we shall be made whole in him who is 'above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come.'*" (Barbara Brown Taylor).

May we continue to worship and rejoice – not because we know with certainty when these difficult times will end, but because we trust in God's promises and live in the blessed hope of our faith that nothing can or will separate us from the love of God that is ours in our crucified, risen, and ascended Lord Jesus Christ!

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Jeff Laustsen

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE APRIL 2021 CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING



Due to the provincial lockdown the April 21, 2021 Congregational Council Meeting was held via Zoom conference.

As approved at the Annual Congregational meeting, the Agreements have been signed to transfer the Endowment Funds from RBC to ELFEC (Evangelical Lutheran Foundation of Eastern Canada).

A portion of the Church parking lot (across the street from the Church) is currently being rented for 5 weeks by the construction company completing work for Enbridge. We are grateful for the additional income.

The four air conditioning units have been installed and the electrical wiring will be completed shortly.

As the ballasts on the old lights burn out, they are being replaced with LED lights.

Spring cleaning of the paved parking lot beside the Church was completed.

The entrance area off the wheel chair ramp is scheduled to have the plaster repaired and repainted now that the moisture problem appears to have been resolved with the new roof.

The outside broken window over the inside stained-glass window by the altar area has been replaced.

Investigations are being made to see if it would be feasible to provide livestreaming for Sunday services.

In the coming months Congregational Council will be discussing short term and long term planning.

Donations/offerings, 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.

CONGRATULATIONS !

COLE FINLEY CHAD KELLER

Son of

Chad Keller & Lindsay Gropp

was Baptized on Saturday, March 27, 2021



IN LIEU OF SUNDAY SCHOOL



As Sunday School remains cancelled due to COVID-19, I would like to include another "Learning Lookups" Books Of The Old and New Testaments which is from the Book of Exodus and can be found on the next page. The first one was on the Old Testament as well from the Book of Genesis and was introduced in the March, 2021 Newsletter.

Background information on each book is found at the top of each worksheet and is generally one paragraph long and designed for easy reading.

Six to ten Bible Lookup Questions follow on each sheet, and generally cover the most beloved, classic, or well-known scriptures from that book. Children will have to complete lookups to pick the correct answers at the bottom. Parent answers are located at the top of each worksheet upside down.

Please have your children take their time and enjoy the passages and completing the worksheet.

I welcome any feedback you may have while publishing these "Learning Lookups".

Please enjoy!!

LEARNING
LOOKUPS

BOOKS OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT

Exodus
1/Egypt
2/Shiphrah
3/Pharaoh's daughter
4/Zipporah
5/Nile
6/Horeb
7/Aaron
8/Red
9/Sinai
10/Sabbath

EXODUS

Exodus means "departure." The Book of Exodus is about Israel's departure from the south, where they were slaves, back to Canaan, where Father Abraham was originally sent by God 500 years earlier. After Israel came back, they would have to take the land that would become their nation. They thought the journey would last a few months. It lasted 40 years. Why? Because the people needed to become strong and faithful. The first half of the Book of Exodus is their journey. The second half is rules and instructions.

1. Moses led the Exodus from this country. (*Exodus 1:14*)
2. One of the two midwives who refused to kill Hebrew babies, as Pharaoh had decreed. (*Exodus 1:15-17*)
3. This person gave Moses his name. (*Exodus 2:5-10*)
4. This was Moses' wife's name. (*Exodus 2:15-22*)
5. The river where Moses floated as a baby was named this. (*Exodus 2:3*)
6. The mount where Moses saw the burning bush was named this. (*Exodus 3:1*)
7. Moses' older brother and also a prophet went by this name. (*Exodus 4:14*)
8. God used Moses to part a sea by this name. (*Exodus 15:4*)
9. God made a special promise to Israel at the foot of a mountain in this desert, both of which have the same name. (*Exodus 19:1-6*)
10. The Fourth Commandment given to Moses tells us to keep this holy. (*Exodus 20:8*)

Choose from:

Aaron Egypt Horeb Nile Pharaoh's daughter
Red Shiphrah Sabbath Sinai Zipporah



STRATFORD HOUSE OF BLESSING FACT SHEET 2020

423 Erie Street, Stratford, ON N5A 2N3

P: 519-273-3433 F: 519-273-8020 info@shob.org www.shob.org

Charitable Number: 119200020RR0001

BACKGROUND

Began in 1983 as "Operation Blessing"

Incorporated as a charitable organization in 1987 and operating as Stratford House of Blessing.

We do not sell anything; we give everything away to those in need.

GOVERNED BY:

Board of Directors (4 volunteers and 1 non-voting officer)

CO-OPERATING with agencies for Community Service: Probation, Ontario Works, High School Students

AGENCIES that refer clients to us – Children's Aid Society, Canadian Mental Health, Family Services, Public Health, Optimism Place, Emily Murphy Centre, Ontario Works, local churches and other Social Service Organization within the community.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Food Bank – By appointment only – Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday – 10:00 a.m. to Noon and 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Food Bank – Home Delivery – Tuesday A.M. & P.M., Wednesday A.M. & Thursday A.M. & P.M.

Office is open Monday – Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Food Bank can be accessed once a month

VOLUNTEER HOURS – 3,388 volunteer hours by 148 volunteers

TOTAL NUMBER OF NEW FAMILIES USING SERVICES AT SHOB FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2020 - 117

TOTAL PEOPLE PROVIDED WITH FOOD – 3,659 times households were served food

- This represents a total of 6,842 people who were provided meals

- 33% were children

ESTIMATED MEALS GIVEN OUT – 4262 X 12 (3 meals for 4 days) = 51,144 meals

2580 X 24 (3 meals for 8 days) = 61,920 meals

(Made possible with pallets of food from Government Funding)

Total Meals = 113,064

HOME DELIVERIES – 1037

ONSITE VISITS – 2622

HOMELESS & LIVING IN HOTELS - # OF VISITS FROM OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2020 – 180

(ABLE TO COME MORE THAN ONCE A WEEK)

WELCOME TO THE WORLD BASKETS FOR NEWBORNS – 15

CHRISTMAS TOYS DISTRIBUTED in 2020 to 731 children and grandchildren

OFF TO SCHOOL SMILING (FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL KITS/SUPPLIES) – 290 children helped

ESTIMATED VALUE OF GOODS SHARED in 2020 - \$515,186

POUNDS OF FOOD DONATED BY COMMUNITY AND MEMBER AFFILIATIONS – 221,555 lbs

SOURCES OF FUNDING

Generous people of the community 58%

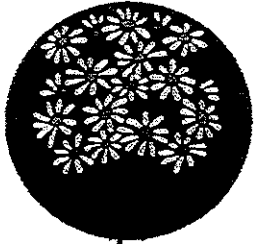
Businesses 15% Churches 11%

Foundations 10%

Other 4% Government 2%

MEMBERS OF: FEED ONTARIO, Food Banks Canada, Canadian Centre for Christian Charities, and Stratford & District Chamber of Commerce.

MOTHER'S DAY PRAYER



Happy Mother's Day

Loving God,

*You wrap your arms around your
people and show your everlasting love
in the same way a Mother loves her children,*

*We are grateful for the love you have taught
us through the Mothers in our lives: our own
Mother who brought us into this world, the
Mothers of friends who have welcomed us
into their homes and families, our
Grandmothers who took time for us, and the
Mothers who have helped us even though we
were not their children.*

*Bless all the Mothers of this world today.
May they know the fullness of love they have
shared and be blessed every day of their
lives.*

Amen

*We want to wish all Mothers & Grandmothers a
Happy & Safe
Mother's Day!*

*In all that you give to others may you
have the joy of knowing that you too are children,
held in the love and care of God.*