

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

www.zionstratford.com

Phone: 519-271-8527

email: zionlc@golden.net

PASTOR'S DEVOTIONAL

“[Jesus said to the apostles], ‘Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.’” – Mark 6:31.

REMEMBER THE
SABBATH DAY
BY KEEPING IT HOLY.
EXODUS 20:8

I have often shared the story of my experience with a certain elevator during a hospital visit on Long Island. It was a Saturday afternoon when I drove to Winthrop University Hospital in Mineola to visit one of our parishioners. I learned that he was in a room on the third floor, so I lined up and entered a crowded elevator that stopped on both the second and third floors. I had a nice visit, and after praying together I returned to the elevator and pressed the down button. When the elevator arrived, I entered on my own and pressed the button for the first floor; but when the door closed, the elevator went up to the fourth floor. I assumed that someone had called to the elevator on that floor; but when the door opened, no one was there. Once again, I pressed the button for the first floor; but the elevator continued to the fifth floor – and again, no one was there. I was beginning to get confused, but since this was the top floor, I assumed that I would catch an “express” to the first floor. But again, the elevator stopped on the fourth floor – and every other floor – with no one waiting on the other side. When I finally arrived at my destination, I was both confused and annoyed; I thought that I might be on the old Candid Camera program with someone playing a trick on me. But when I looked around, I noticed a sign by the elevator I had exited that identified it as a “Sabbath Elevator” that is programmed to automatically stop on every floor so that observant Jews could visit in the hospital without violating the Sabbath commandments. I learned two lessons that day: the importance of the Sabbath for my Jewish neighbours, and to always look for signs before I take an elevator on a Saturday!

Observance of the sabbath is a central commandment for observant Jews; rabbinic teaching states that *“those who observe the Sabbath observe all the other commandments.”* The command to observe the Sabbath as a day of rest is rooted in the creation story, when God *“rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.”*

(Genesis 2:2-3). The command to observe the Sabbath is enshrined in the Ten Commandments, God’s teaching to the newly liberated people of Israel to *“remember that sabbath day, and keep it holy”* (Exodus 20:8). This teaching is in remembrance of God’s resting on the seventh day of creation, a commandment for God’s people to rest from their labours as they focused their attention on God’s Word and God’s blessings. As Martin Luther teaches us in the *Small Catechism*, *“We are to fear and love God so that we do not despise God’s Word and the preaching of it, but gladly hear and learn it.”*

Looking on my Jewish friends and neighbours’ practice of Sabbath observance from the outside, I sometimes felt that it appeared very harsh and restrictive. It not only meant that no work was to be done on the Sabbath (stretching from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday), but it also meant that one was not to drive a car, watch television, cook meals, turn on a light switch – or push an elevator button. But my perspective changed when I had a conversation with a rabbi friend about his feelings on Sabbath restrictions. To him, Sabbath was not a burden but a gift; God was giving God’s people permission to rest one day a week, and no human being could force them to violate God’s Will by demanding they work on the Sabbath. He took Sabbath observance to mean that no synagogue business was to be discussed on the Sabbath; if someone asked him a question about administration or finance, he would instruct them that they have six days to discuss such business matters, but the Sabbath day was a day when they rested from all work and focused on God’s Word and God’s blessings for all people.

While we observe Sunday as the Lord’s Day in remembrance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is important for Christians to observance God’s commandment to keep the sabbath. We need a day of rest, a day to put aside the busyness and worries of everyday life so that we can be refreshed and renewed to enter a new week. We need a day when we can shut out the voices and noise of the world so that we might focus on God’s Word, which is *“a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path”* (Psalm 119:105). While our sabbath observe might not include leaving our cars in the driveway and setting timers for our lights, it is a day to take seriously the invitation Jesus offers his apostles to come away from the cares of the world so that they might be renewed by God’s presence to begin a new week renewed and refreshed to continue to serve our Lord in our everyday lives.

In her book *An Altar in the World*, Barbara Brown Taylor defines Sabbath observance as being an aspect of the “practice of saying no” to anything that would distract us from focusing on God’s Word and God’s Will for our lives:

1. “The ancient wisdom of the Sabbath commandment – and of the Christian gospel as well – is that there is no saying yes to God without saying no to God’s rivals. No, I will not earn my way today. No, I will not make anyone else work either. No, I will not worry about my life, what I will eat or what I will drink, or about my body, what I will

wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? And there was evening and there was morning, the seventh day.”

While it is impossible for me to observe the Sabbath on a Sunday in my service as a minister of Word and Sacrament, I strive to take a day of Sabbath rest every week. This month, I will be going away to attend the Bishops’ Spiritual Retreat for Rostered Persons in Niagara Falls, a time of rest, worship, and reflection as we prepare to lead our congregations in the season of Lent. I have learned that when I ignore the Sabbath commandment, it affects my physical and spiritual health, for we were not created to work every day. Observing the Sabbath may not involve programming a hospital elevator, but it does mean that we heed our Lord’s invitation to come away and rest, so that renewed by God’s presence we may go into the world to love and serve our Lord.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Jeff Laustsen

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR TREASURER

Thank You!

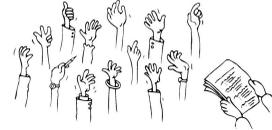
As the year-end has now come and gone once again, on behalf of the Finance Committee and the Congregational Council, I extend a “sincere thank you” to our members who responded to our request to assist us financially in reducing the deficit in 2022. It is very much appreciated. The amount of funds from Internal Ministry (income from our Endowment Fund) to cover the shortfall in the Current Fund, that was approved at the Annual Meeting last year, was less than what we had budgeted. This was due to the increased offerings during November and especially December. Of course, more details in this regard will be supplied at our upcoming Annual Meeting in March.

We continue to be in challenging times financially, due to escalating expenses coupled with offerings not increasing at the same pace, but even though this is our reality, we, the Finance team continue to be inspired at your continuing faithfulness to the ministry here at Zion Lutheran Church.

Gerald Cook, Treasurer
On behalf of the Congregational Council & Finance Committee

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE DECEMBER 14, 2022 CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

Congregational Council Meeting



The December 14, 2022 Congregational Council Meeting was held in person in the Parlour.

Our COVID policy will remain the same. Masks are strongly recommended.

Congregational Council continues to discuss the future direction of ministry at Zion and in the community. A special Congregational Council meeting will be held on Saturday, January 28, 2023.

Installing the automatic door opener for the south parking lot door is a work in progress.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee met with an audiologist and there is nothing that can be done with our system. The individual person will need to adjust their hearing aids.

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 either at the Church office weekday mornings or in the locked mailbox at your convenience.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE JANUARY 18, 2023 CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

The January 18, 2023 Congregational Council Meeting was held in person in the Parlour and via Zoom.

Our COVID policy will remain the same. Masks are strongly recommended.

Congregational Council continue to discuss the future direction of ministry at Zion and in the community. A special Congregational Council meeting will be held on Saturday, January 28, 2023.

Bat proofing and replacing the light bulbs in the sanctuary is continuing.

The Annual Congregational Meeting will be held either March 12, 2023 or March 19.

Five Council member terms are up this year. Liz Bomasuit, Lois Lemon and Tim Gropp have completed two full terms and are not eligible for re-election. Audrey Miller and Tim Iredale have completed one full term and are eligible for re-election, if they so agree. There is still one vacancy which was not filled last year. The Executive Committee will be contacting potential Congregation Members. Nominations from the Congregation are also encouraged.

In addition, two Endowment member terms are up this year. Bill Hoffard has completed two full terms and is not eligible for re-election. Ed Illman has completed one full term and is eligible for re-election, if he so agrees. A representative of the Endowment Fund Committee

will be contacting potential Congregational Members. Nominations from the Congregation are also encouraged.

NOMINATIONS FOR CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL & ENDOWMENT FUND



Nominations are now open for five (5) positions on Congregational Council and two (2) positions on the Endowment Fund. Your nominations can be submitted in advance of or in person at the Annual Meeting, which is tentatively slated for Sunday, March 12, 2023. Please send nominations to Marilyn Wells at bobmarwells@rogers.com or 519-273-0931 or to any other church council member.

2022 OFFICIAL RECEIPTS FOR INCOME TAX



Your 2022 Official Receipts for Income Tax are completed and included with this issue of ZIONEWS. For those of you who receive the Newsletter via email, your Official Receipts will be mailed out to you on February 3rd, 2023.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR ZION MEALS ON WHEELS DELIVERY TEAM !



We are currently seeking more volunteers for our amazing and very dedicated Zion Meals on Wheels Team. Our team has become a little smaller and our current volunteers keep themselves busy with many things! We have had difficulties fulfilling our commitment to this Through “One Care, Home and Community Support Services” Zion’s team delivers meals to clients four times per year. This wonderful and very much needed service helps individuals to remain in their own homes. Clients are most appreciative of our help and our volunteers love delivering and putting smiles on their faces as a warm meal is delivered to them.

It is not a huge time commitment on delivery days and very enjoyable. Approximately 1 ½ hours of your time, working with a partner, on a day or two that will suit your schedule during the weeks we deliver. Delivery days are Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

If you would like more information, and would love to be a part of Zion’s Team, please contact me at 519-902-9126 or jane@terhaerd.ca.

Blessings,
Jane Terhaerd
Co-Ordinator Zion Meals on Wheels

6 REASONS AGING IS A BEAUTIFUL BLESSING

By: Mary Southerland
Journey Ministry, Inc



I stared at the photo. Who was that woman? Twenty years ago, Dan performed the wedding of some dear friends. The bride sent me a wedding picture she had taken the day they were married to celebrate their anniversary. I had to admit it was a great picture of Dan and me standing beside the bride and groom. However, celebration was not on my mind as I stared at the photo.

It was like an exclamation point to the fact that I am old! My first reaction was depression, so I took a nap and hoped it would pass. However, when I woke up, I was still old. Time for a major attitude check.

I knew the drawbacks of growing older – wrinkles, pain, and soreness in almost every joint, slowing metabolism - ugh. My husband woke up one morning, sat on the edge of the bed, and said, “I would love to wake up one day without any pain.” I could relate. But I was daily learning the profound and often painful truths of growing older. With a sigh of resignation, I responded, “Honey, that ship has sailed.”

The reality is that growing old is unavoidable. I know I need to stop whining about every passing day and cherish every moment God gives me on this side of Heaven. So, I headed to Google for articles about the perks of growing older to prime the pump. The problem was that a lot of those articles were written by people in their 30's and 40's. That is NOT old!

I am 72. That is old. I can write this article from personal experience and the perspective of someone who has traveled many roads, met so many wonderful and not-so-wonderful people and lived to talk about it all. I set my mind on gratitude as I began to think back over the years, and the perks of growing older began to rise to the surface slowly. I share them with you from a heart that is thankful for this day, this moment, and a heart holding a smidgeon of celebration.

1. Growing Older Is a Gift

I was recently getting ready to meet a friend for lunch. When I looked in the mirror, I saw my mother staring back at me. How did that happen? Wasn't it only yesterday that there were no wrinkles, fewer pounds, and thicker hair? It was a shock! My mom died when she was my age – 72 – after years of battling cancer.

My next thought was that growing older is a gift. I decided right then and there to no longer fight the battle of aging by buying every beauty product that promises to wipe ten years off your face in ten days. I no longer would beat myself up for being a little messier, sleeping later, keeping a lighter schedule, eating a few things I shouldn't eat - the list is growing.

Growing older is a gift.

2. Growing Older Allows Me to Be Comfortable with Who I Am

I cannot tell you how many hours, and even years, I spent playing the comparison game in just about every area of life – appearance, accomplishments, success in ministry, and being seen as someone powerful and important. It took a lot of energy to keep all those irons in the fires of significance—too much energy.

One day, my Father said, “That’s enough, child.” He shut the door on opportunities and turned out the light in my life so I could no longer see and compare and struggle to discover who I am in the eyes of God. Some things cannot be learned in the light. I had to learn them while sitting at the bottom of a deep, dark, slimy pit of depression.

It took me two years – no teaching, leading women’s ministries, community Bible studies, and no traveling to speak for conferences. I was paralyzed. Looking back, it was one of the most profound spiritual markers in my life. That experience made me comfortable with who I am – chosen, bought, and loved by God Himself.

I wrote my first book when I was 50 and have since written 16 books, 15 Bible Studies, and hundreds of devotions and articles for Christian websites like Crosswalk.com. All because as

the years have passed, I have discovered who I am, what my purpose is, and gotten comfortable in my own skin.

3. Growing Older Allows Me to Sometimes Be an Expert

I have a prayer team of women who have faithfully prayed for me for over twenty years. One team member once said to me, “Mary, you really should do a reality television show because no one would believe the things that happen to you and your family. You just can’t make this stuff up!” In the life of a Southerland, there is always a helicopter landing!

I have come to realize that this roller-coaster life is the one for which I was created. I have survived so many storms. An alcoholic father, sexual abuse, poverty, infertility, clinical depression, dealing with a bipolar child, you get the idea. And in each storm, God has helped me emerge stronger and wiser, ready to share what I have learned with those who come behind me. I am learning and growing and becoming more of an expert on surviving and thriving in the midst of storms.

My husband has taught me the valuable lesson of leveraging my age and experience instead of moaning and groaning about it. He has done this beautifully. Dan was a youth pastor and then a senior pastor who worked with Rick Warren to help existing churches transition to purpose-driven purposes. After pastoring churches for many years, he began to plant churches. Dan’s heart passion is now to train younger church planters and empower them to do what Dan has been doing for many years. Dan is notably a well-known expert in church planting.

Growing older allows me to become an expert.

4. Growing Older Helps Me Make Fewer Mistakes

Proverbs 22:15 says, “*Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.*”

As I’ve experienced God’s discipline in my life, I’ve grown up in many ways. Spiritual maturity protects me as I seek to depend on the Holy Spirit as I make decisions rather than operating out of my own sin and issues. While I’m far from perfect, I don’t make the same “rookie mistakes” I did when I was younger.

I was rummaging through a box of old books and discovered several journals. I had forgotten entirely I kept those journals, but they were a roadmap of where I had been and how God had

brought me through some pretty amazing times of struggle and joy, along with pain and purpose. And I realized an important truth.

I don't make many of those mistakes anymore. I took a moment to celebrate the passing years that have held so many lessons learned and truths understood, then practiced. Words I spoke in haste many years ago I now pause and think about before saying them.

Growing older helps me make fewer mistakes.

5. Growing Older Gets Me One Day Closer to Heaven

I have a friend named Grace Chavis who is holding a spot for me beside her in Heaven. An author and Bible teacher, Grace embodied her name more than any woman I have ever known. When I learned that Grace had just been diagnosed with terminal cancer and doctors said there was nothing more they could do, my heart broke.

I took a few minutes to get my act together before calling Grace. I had rehearsed what I would say to her and had the Scriptures I needed to comfort her in mind. "Hello?" Grace said in an extraordinarily cheerful voice. I was stunned. How could this joyful woman have just received a diagnosis of terminal cancer?

"Grace, this is Mary Southerland. I just heard you are having some medical problems and just wanted to encourage you, friend." Laughter came through the phone as Grace said, "Oh, Mary! I'm so glad you called! I just got home from the doctor, put on some praise music, and have been dancing around my living room singing, 'Soon, and very soon, I am going to see my King!'"

I could barely speak. I had just been schooled in how to face death on Earth and eternal life in Heaven. Growing older gets me one day closer to Heaven than I have ever been.

Psalm 90:12 contains an important truth: "*Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.*" This wisdom flows out of our realization that we will not live forever. Each of us has been put on this Earth for a specific number of days that only God knows.

I am sometimes painfully aware that my days on this Earth are numbered. I need to make the most of every minute of every day. I need to view what I do as eternal investments in my family, friends, ministry, and whatever God gives me to do.

Eleanor Roosevelt said: "*Today is the oldest you've ever been, and the youngest you'll ever be again.*" While that truth can be a little unsettling, remember that every day you have on this Earth gets you one day closer to seeing Jesus face-to-face. That means your best days are definitely yet to come.

Growing older gets me one day closer to Heaven.

6. Growing Older Makes Me Royalty

When it comes to growing older, our culture is obsessed with products and procedures to erase all signs of aging. The Word of God tells us that aging is sacred and old age is wonderful.

Proverbs 16:1 tells us, "*Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life.*" *The Bible actually mentions several "advantages"* of being older, such as wisdom and understanding.

Job 12:12 "*Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?*"

Now think about those words for a moment and remember who wrote them – Job. Job had been through a lot, to say the least. I am sure he gained much understanding and wisdom because of the tough circumstances he endured. I need to do the same. And when I do, I want to wear that crown of glory as a testament to all God has done in, and through me, all God has allowed me to enjoy and endure, all God has left for me to do.

I know that growing older holds a plethora of emotions, thoughts, fears, questions, and the stark realities of life. I also know that growing older is not a surprise to the God who has seen me through every single moment of my life and will continue to walk with me, go before me, and make level every mountain. I am also confident he will fill each day with His presence, power, and purpose. If I am breathing, I am not done. And for that truth alone, I can celebrate each and every moment of growing older.

FAMILY DAY - FEBRUARY 20, 2023



Wishing everyone a
Safe & Happy Family Day!