

A publication for the family of Zion Lutheran Church
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PASTOR'S DEVOTIONAL

“Then [Jesus] led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continually in the temple blessing God.” – Luke 24:50-53



Of the four worship services that I lead in local long-term care facilities every month, three of these services are held on Thursdays. While this day works out well for the people and staff in these locations, it is not a day in which we usually gather for worship. In fact, throughout the year there are only two Thursdays when Christians gather to remember important events in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ: Maundy Thursday, the night when our Lord gathers for his Last Supper with his disciples and institutes the Sacrament of Holy Communion hours before he is betrayed; and the Day of Ascension, when forty days after his resurrection our Lord *“ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father”* (Nicene Creed). While worship on Maundy Thursday is a regular aspect of our worship life during Holy Week, it is rare for churches to gather for worship on the day of Christ’s ascension, even though this day is important both in the life and ministry of our Risen Lord and in our ongoing proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

While Christ speaks of his ascension in his appearance to Mary Magdalene on the first Easter morning (*“Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father”* – John 20:17) we are indebted to Luke for our understanding of the importance of the ascension of our Lord. It is so central to Luke’s proclamation of the Gospel that he includes accounts of it in both volumes of his writings: the Gospel According to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles:

- *“While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven.”*
– Luke 24:51.

- “While he has said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.” – Acts 1:9.

In both accounts, Jesus’ ascension takes place in the presence of his disciples, who as eyewitnesses to his resurrection and ascension will be the ones who will be sent out as apostles to carry this gospel message to all peoples. In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus “*opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and rise on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to these things.’*” (Luke 24:46-48). Jesus restates this commission when he proclaims to the disciples that “*you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*” (Acts 1:8). While this commissioning is followed by his ascension, the work of our Lord continues as they are empowered by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and begin the apostolic mission to share the Gospel message with people of all nations.

The Ascension of our Lord was necessary because Jesus Christ is Lord not only of the people who were present with him during his earthly ministry, those who have been eyewitnesses to his death, resurrection, and ascension. He ascends so that he might be Lord and Saviour of all people in all times and places, that all people may know that our Lord is with them and blessing them with the fullness of God’s gracious love. As Martin Luther teaches us, our ascended Lord “*comforts us, makes us clean, and intercedes for us. On the last day all Christians will rule in unity with him, and they will be seated at the right hand of God.*” Our Lord ascends to heaven so that he might fulfill the promise he made to his disciples in his Farewell Discourse in the Fourth Gospel:

- “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.” – John 14:1-3.

While we may not gather for worship on the Day of Ascension, the good news of Christ’s ascension into heaven reminds us that the same Lord who blessed his people in the first generation of the Christian Church blesses us in our generation with the good news that Christ is with us always. It is also a message that calls us to continue the work of the first apostles in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with all people as we look to that day when, in the words the angels proclaimed in the aftermath of the ascension, “*this Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.*” (Acts 1:11).

- “Ascension Day is not simply an essay about the future. It is not simply *bon voyage* to Jesus. It is not simply upward in focus. It has a downward, an earthly dimension as well, and that is where we come in, just as did the poor old disciples, to collect their wits about them once again and set about the dreary task of living until the kingdom comes.” – Peter Gomes.

On Thursday, May 18, let us pause for a moment to consider the Ascension of our Lord: what it means that Christ ascended into heaven so that he might be Lord of all; what it means for us to continue his work of sharing God’s love with all people; and how we live in the comfort of a holy and certain hope as we look to that day when our crucified, risen, and ascended Lord will come again to gather us together into our heavenly home. As we “*see him now, ascending high up to the portals of the sky ... hereafter Jesus you shall see returning in great majesty. Alleluia!*” (ELW Hymn 393).

Yours in our Ascended Lord,
Pastor Jeff Laustsen

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE APRIL 19, 2023 CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

Congregational
Council Highlights



The April 19, 2023 Congregational Council Meeting was held in-person in the Fellowship Hall and via Zoom conference.

We have received a preliminary report and cost estimate for providing livestreaming for Zion services and events. The cost is reasonable. Managing the system would require three volunteers for each service. A request for volunteers will be made once again. In order to proceed with this project, we do require confirmation of volunteers to operate the system.

The Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church Congregational Council Member Charter was reviewed. Some of the wording will be updated. The Committees and members on each Committee were also reviewed. Some Committees will need to appoint a Chair.

Congregational Life Committee will be hosting a coffee hour following the Sunday Services on May 7 and June 4.

June 15, 2023 will be the 40th Anniversary of Pastor Jeff's Ordination. A celebration is being planned for Sunday, June 11. Please make special note of this important date in Pastor Jeff's ministry and in the life of our congregation.

Sunday September 10, 2023 has been reserved for our annual Rally Sunday and picnic in the park. The Service will be at 11:00 am and it will be a brown bag lunch similar to last year.

The LED light bulbs in the Sanctuary will be upgraded to stronger bulbs to provide improved lighting.

The community meals being offered by Bethel Church in our Fellowship Hall are going well.

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.

LIVESTREAMING AT ZION



Volunteers are an essential part of any church, and their contributions are crucial to fulfilling its mission.

Livestreaming has, once again, been the topic of discussion at the last Congregational Council Meeting on April 19, 2023.

As previously mentioned, in order to make Livestreaming possible, we do require volunteers to operate the system. We have reached out to our members on several occasions in both the weekly Bulletin and the monthly Newsletter requesting volunteers to operate the system. We did not receive any volunteers in the past.

Due to the importance of this program, we are, once again, looking for volunteers who can help operate the system. There are so many people we could reach out to if this program was in place.

The more volunteers we have, the fewer Sundays you will have to commit to. So, please, if you can assist us, please call Pastor Jeff at 519-271-8527 or via email at laustsen311@gmail.com.

Thank you!

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS



The children of the Sunday School continue to learn songs with Susan Laustsen. They have a surprise for the Mothers on Sunday, May 14th, Mother's Day.

**The last day of Sunday School until the fall is Sunday, May 14th, 2023.
We will resume Sunday School on Sunday, September 17th, 2023.**

In order to organize classes and arrange for teachers, we are reaching out to all parents wishing to enroll your child(ren) in the Sunday School program. If you could please email me the child(ren)'s name(s), current grade(s), and whether or not they would be participating in Sunday School to Paula at pauley_mcnaughton@hotmail.com.

Please note that any child turning four (4) years of age in 2023 is eligible to start Sunday School.

Once we have our students registered, we will be in a better position to arrange for teachers.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your assistance and co-operation!

Paula McNaughton
Sunday School Coordinator

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE



The Congregational Life Committee is very happy to announce that we will be hosting **coffee hour after the Sunday Service on May 7th and June 4th**. Drinks and light snacks will be served. Please come and join us!

SAVE THE DATE – SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10TH AT 11:00 A.M.



REFORMATION
Sunday

Reformation Sunday will be held on September 10th this year. There will be an outside Sunday Service at Upper Queens Park bandshell at 11:00 A.M. There will be a brown bag lunch afterwards. More details to follow!

WOMEN OF FAITH NEWS



We are excited to let you know that we will be having a speaker at our **next general meeting on May 29, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.** The speaker is from “**Stratford Connections Center**” which is located in the basement of St. Paul’s Anglican Church.

The Center offers a warm place out of the cold as well as an opportunity to connect with trained staff and community supports. Support is given to those who are homeless; suffer with addiction issues; and mental health issues.

More information will be published in the weekly Bulletin as it becomes available.

Hope to see you there!

Ellen Wolfe, President

BETHEL COMMUNITY MEALS



Community Meal

Bethel Community Meals continue to go well with an average attendance of approximately 35 people.

The next community meals are planned to take place on:

Wednesday, May 10th, 2023 and

Wednesday, June 14th, 2023.

Each meal will commence at 5:00 p.m.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE WILL NOT BE A COMMUNITY MEAL DURING JULY AND AUGUST, 2023.

If you know any one who would enjoy coming out to these meals, please pass on this information to them.

ZION CHOIR NEWS



April was a busy month for the choir as we prepared and performed for the services on Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Easter Sunday was an especially notable service as we performed an original anthem composed by our choir director Paul. That day we also welcomed guest accompanist Kelly Walker and trumpeter Jennifer Peace.

The small but dedicated group of singers we have now continues to improve and develop a beautiful blend as you, no doubt, have heard. We rehearse every Thursday evening and are always looking for new members. Singing has long been known to be a way to improve one's sense of well being; so, if anyone would like to give the choir a try, please get in touch with Jane in the church office at 519-271-8527 or Paul at parkvilla36@gmail.com.

A Mother's Prayer for Wisdom

By Emily Rose Massey

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him" ([James 1:5](#), ESV).



Motherhood: a time in my life in which it became apparent to me that I had no idea what I was doing. Babies don't come with a user manual; at times it feels like learning how to be a parent is mainly trial and error. As a new mom, it's easy to become overwhelmed and anxious, feeling like questions outweigh answers, especially when your baby has sleeping issues or colic. And don't forget when they get their first cold! Instead of letting overwhelm overtake us, we must remember the access we have to the wisdom of God; all we have to do is ask.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him" ([James 1:5](#), ESV).

We receive wisdom through the Word of God and the counsel of godly mentors and friends. God's wisdom isn't anything like what the world offers us; ultimately, it is full of peace and brings about good fruit. James wrote, *"But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere"* ([James 3:17](#), ESV).

When we approach God with humility asking Him for guidance and direction, He is faithful to give us wisdom from above. We have been given the gift of leaders in the church to help us understand and apply the wisdom in God's Word. Church leaders are charged to care for our souls, help us through difficult times, equip and encourage us. Do you fall into the ditch of [pride](#), thinking you have it all figured out? Are you unteachable? Often, when we face challenges, the Lord is using the situation to sanctify, humble, and build our trust in Him. When we humble ourselves before the Lord, He gives us the grace which strengthens us in our trials and difficult seasons. Grace is always available to the humble ([1 Peter 5:5](#)). In a culture (yes, even within the visible church) where positive affirmations and self-empowered declarations are the norms, admitting weakness, limitedness, and failure is seen as negative and perhaps even harmful to your soul.

The Bible reveals that we are not enough in and of ourselves, our abilities, or wisdom; we are dust ([Psalm 103:14-16](#)). The Lord is the One who gives us the breath, ability, and wisdom to accomplish anything, walk through a difficult situation, or make major life decisions. Admitting our "not enough-ness" provides an opportunity to look to God because He is more than enough and His grace is sufficient ([2 Corinthians 12](#)). Ultimately, the Lord is glorified in my weakness and my feeling of emptiness and "not-enough-ness." When we have reached our limit and don't know where to turn, let us run to the One who holds all wisdom and grace!

Let's pray:

Father God,

I am weighed down with the cares of this life. I run to You in humility knowing I do not have the answers for everything I am facing, but I know You do. I trust that Your Word tells me if I lack wisdom I can come to You and ask for it. You are such a faithful and generous Father, and Your abundant wisdom is what I need when I don't know where to turn. I trust You will guide me and strengthen me with Your grace when I am overwhelmed. Thank You for placing godly leaders in my life to help me when I'm faced with difficult decisions. I trust You equip them to care for my soul and teach me more about You and Your ways. I repent for worrying; help me trust You more as I learn to walk in Your perfect wisdom. In Jesus' name,

Amen.

MAY VOLUNTEERS

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

Date	Greeters	Readers	Usher Captains	Altar Guild	Counting Captains
May 7	Gerald & Isabel Cook	Mary-Lou Drown	Darrell Renecker	Sister Jean	Tom Cosstick
May 14	Paul & Janet Jeffery	Carmen Beck	Brian Coe	Ellen Wolfe	Tom Cosstick
May 21	Bob & Marilyn Wells	Glenn Rittinger	Steve Lamont	Carmen Beck	Bill Hoffard
May 28	Brad & Sherri Beatty	Isabel Cook	Jerry Terhaerd	Shirley Whittaker	Bill Hoffard



“THANK YOU” to our Volunteers for giving of your time!
Worship would not be the same without you!!



TO ALL MOTHERS & GRANDMOTHERS

FROM:

***PASTOR JEFF, SISTER JEAN,
PAUL, LAURA, SANDRA,
JANE & SUE***