

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

Website: [www.zionstratford.com](http://www.zionstratford.com)

Email: [zionlc@golden.net](mailto:zionlc@golden.net)

## PASTOR'S DEVOTIONAL



*“For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.” – Ephesians 2:14*

Throughout my life I have been involved in rivalries that pitted either the school I was attending or my favourite sports team against our traditional opponent. In high school, the rivalry between my school, North Plainfield High School, and South Plainfield High School included the climactic Thanksgiving Day game that packed the fields at both schools and defined the success or failure of each school’s season. When I went to university, my school had a traditional rivalry with Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, two schools with similar origins and academic strengths. Being a lifelong fan of the New York Yankees has placed me at the center of debates with Boston Red Sox fans (and more than a few Blue Jays fans!), and as a fan of the New York Giants there are a few teams whose games I watch merely to watch them lose. While I am not fanatical in my support of these teams and schools (I do not go into mourning when the Giants fail to win the Super Bowl), it is a defining aspect of my life story.

You might think that such rivalries would not include Lutheran seminaries, since all these schools exist to train pastors, deacons, and leaders for ministry and service in our church – but there was a bitter rivalry that existed between the two Lutheran seminaries in Pennsylvania for many years. The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg is the oldest Lutheran seminary in North America, founded in 1826 by the Rev. Samuel S. Schmucker of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The seminary campus is located on Seminary Ridge and was at the center of the Battle of Gettysburg during the American Civil War. In 1864, another seminary was founded in Pennsylvania: The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia was established by the Rev. Charles Porterfield Krauth of the General Council of

the Lutheran Church. This second seminary was established because the General Council believed that the General Synod was not “Lutheran enough” in its theology. While I will not go into the details here, the two schools remained bitter rivals for many generations of seminarians. As a graduate of the Philadelphia Seminary, I still maintain some animosity towards that “other” seminary, who were our rivals in the annual Luther Bowl football game and in many other areas of church life.

So, you can imagine my surprise when it was announced in 2017 that the two seminaries were merging, to be known as United Lutheran Seminary. The seminary maintains its campuses in Philadelphia and Gettysburg but is now governed by one Board of Directors and led by a president who commutes between the two campuses. At first, I could not imagine how this would work: would the Canadiens merge with the Maple Leafs, or the Giants with the Cowboys? I was even more skeptical when it was announced that the two seminaries’ alumni associations were merging into what would be known as The United Lutheran Seminary Alumni Association (TULSAA). I resisted getting involved in this new school and its alumni group (after all, I was a graduate of the Philadelphia Seminary, *not* this new school!). But two years ago, I received a message from a classmate asking me to consider joining the TULSAA Board. The executive was looking to expand its representation geographically, and since I am one of the few alumni who live in Canada, they felt I was a perfect fit. I accepted this invitation with some trepidation, believing that if it did not work out that I could always step away. But to my surprise and delight, I soon came to know some wonderful people from both schools (as well as ULS), and the experience has made me question my former attitude toward the seminary that I had only looked upon as a rival.

As we rejoice in this Easter season in the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and the blessed hope that is ours through our baptism into Christ’s death and resurrection, we are reminded that one of the central messages of the Gospel is reconciliation, that in Christ we are reconciled to God and to one another. Paul speaks of the “*dividing all of hostility*” (Ephesians 2:14) that Christ has broken down so that there might now be “*one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace.*” In 2 Corinthians, Paul proclaims that God has “*reconciled himself to us through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation*” (2 Corinthians 5:18). When Peter reluctantly accepts the invitation of the Roman centurion Cornelius to share the Gospel in his home, it is a transforming moment for the apostle who now proclaims that “*I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.*” (Acts 10:34-35). As the curtain in the Temple was torn in two at the moment of Jesus’ death, so has he eliminated all barriers that would separate us from God and to look upon other people as bitter rivals rather than beloved children of God.

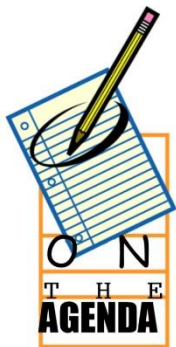
- “We must come to the point of seeing that our ultimate aim is to live with all men as brothers and sisters under God, and not be their enemies or anything that goes with that type of relationship.” – Martin Luther King, Jr., “Birth of a New Nation”

As we rejoice in the gift of reconciliation that is ours through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, this Easter season is a time for us to look at those relationships in our lives that are fractured, at the ways we look upon “other” people who we may see as rivals rather than as beloved children of God. It may be relationships in our personal lives, or relationships with our neighbours; it may be longstanding rivalries that we have inherited, or deep-seated prejudices against people who have been taught to hate and fear. Reconciliation is the will of God who desires that all people should live together in the Beloved Community that is possible when we take seriously Paul’s message that *“there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus”* (Galatians 3:28).

This month, Susan and I will be traveling to Gettysburg for the spring alumni convocation at United Lutheran Seminary. As I was making plans for this trip, I caught myself telling a friend that we were going to “my seminary” – something I never would have said about this school that was the “other seminary” for all my life. As the reconciliation between two Lutheran seminaries has been a blessing to many, may we experience the blessing of reconciliation that is ours through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, he who is “Lord of all.”

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Jeff Laustsen

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE “MARCH” CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING



The March 20, 2024 Congregational Council Meeting was held in-person in the Parlour.

Pastor Jeff welcomed new members, Irene Ehgoetz, Murray Scholl, Cheryl Cade and Irene West and those members who continue to serve, Gerald Cook, Jan Bennewitz, Mary-Lou Drown, Carmen Beck, Janet Chandler, Bill Hoffard, Tim Iredale and Audrey Miller.

As the first Congregational Council meeting following the Annual Meeting

is the organizing meeting with the election of officers and designation of Committee Assignments, Pastor Jeff was Chairperson of the meeting.

Pastor Jeff and Congregational Council reviewed the Congregational Council Member Charter which states the Duties of the Congregational Council and its Officers.

The following responsibilities have been assigned to Congregational Council Members by election and appointment:

Mary-Lou Drown	Chairperson	Christian Education
Bill Hoffard	Vice Chairperson	Finance Committee
Gerald Cook	Treasurer	Finance Committee
Audrey Miller	Secretary	Finance Committee
Tim Iredale		Accessibility Advisory Committee, Visioning Committee
Janet Chandler		Worship and Music Committee
Jan Bennewitz		Congregational Life Committee
Carmen Beck		Congregational Life Committee
Murray Scholl		Property Committee
Irene Ehgoetz		Congregational Life Committee
Cheryl Cade		Worship and Music Committee
Irene West		Worship and Music Committee

Gerald Cook was appointed Treasurer and will remain on the Finance Committee.

Installation of Council members and officers will be on Sunday, March 24, 2024.

Saturday, May 4, 2024 was chosen as the date for the Town Hall Gathering that was postponed from March 2.

Gerald Cook was appointed to be our lay delegate at the Eastern Synod Assembly which is meeting June 20-22 at the Delta Hotels Toronto Airport & Conference Centre. We are entitled to one lay delegate in addition to Pastor Jeff.

Donations/offerings, can continue to be completed via our Church website, including additional options for QR Code and 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.

## CHURCH OFFERINGS



As we are all aware, there are many different ways in which we as members make our offerings to our church. The traditional way for many years was an Offering Envelope and of course, this method continues to be used today. For the last several years, the option of Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR) has been offered to our members along with e-transfer as well as making your offerings on our church website.

We as a congregation have been well served by the members who have decided to make their offerings via the Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR), however, it would be more beneficial, if we had more members using this method. Currently, we receive monthly PAR offerings from 53 households. In 2023 PAR offerings accounted for approximately 40% of our overall offerings. The best way this method of offering can be summed up is that it provides our church with a steady and predictable revenue stream to fund our ministry and mission.

To combat the inflationary increases we are being subjected to as far as our expenses, we are asking at this time, for our members to prayerfully consider increasing the amount of your offering in 2024 to coincide with these inflationary increases. This request is being asked of our members that choose either the Envelope, PAR or any other option. In addition, if you have never considered changing your method of offering to the Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR), we really would appreciate you considering this option. The Envelope method has become increasingly more costly for our church, due to the increased costs associated with the boxes of envelopes. From a fee point of view, the charges under the PAR program are definitely more economical. To make this change or to increase the amount of your monthly offering using the PAR option, all you will need to do is to contact Jane Kelly, our Parish Administrator, and she will step through the procedure with you.

Whatever method you choose to make your offering, we do respect your decision. We just wanted to make you aware of our thoughts in this regard as it relates to the Finance Committee, who oversee the finances of our church.

In closing, the Lord Jesus himself said: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Acts 20:35

Gerald Cook, Treasurer

On behalf of the Finance Committee & the Congregational Council

# SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS



A reminder to all that we are a nut-free Sunday School. We have a student in our Sunday School who is allergic to nuts.

Please remember that Sunday School ends at 11:15 A.M. We ask that parents/guardians wait until that time before coming for your children.

The children will be singing in church on Sunday, April 14, 2024 during the 10:00 A.M. service.

In order to organize classes and arrange for teachers, we are reaching out to all parents wishing to enroll their child(ren) in the Sunday School program. If you could please email me the child(ren)'s name(s), current grade(s) as of September, 2024, and whether or not they would be participating in Sunday School to Paula at [pauley\\_mcnaughton@hotmail.com](mailto:pauley_mcnaughton@hotmail.com).

Please note that any child turning four (4) years of age in 2024 is eligible to start Sunday School in September, 2024.

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

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your assistance and co-operation!

Paula McNaughton  
Sunday School Coordinator

## **CUPPA CANDLES**



**ROTARY HOSPICE** has a volunteer that makes lightly scented candles using tea cups and saucers which hold the wax. They are looking for donations of tea cups and saucers to use in the making of these candles. If you are house cleaning, downsizing or cleaning out your china cabinet and have some that you can donate they would be greatly appreciated. For drop offs: Rotary Hospice is staffed 24/7 so teacups and saucers can be dropped off anytime. Their address is 80 Greenwood Drive. They are located behind Greenwood Court (you have to pull in their driveway at 90 Greenwood and follow it all the way around back to find them). Ring the intercom at the front door and leave the teacups and saucers with reception.

The **CUPPA CANDLES** are for sale at reception but they are also incorporated into their “*Care Bundles*”. A “*Care Bundle*” is given to family after their loved one has died, as they are leaving the hospice. The bundle also includes information from their social workers on grief and bereavement and resources to support this next step of their journey.

**Rotary Hospice** is very grateful for any donations you may be able to offer.



# MARK YOUR APRIL CALENDAR



**GOD IN THE FOG:** Join the Nith Valley Ministry Area for conversation regarding the **Election Process of the Synodical Bishop** and what that means for congregations and the Wider Synod:

**April 20, 2024**

**9:30 A.M. Coffee**

**10:00 A.M. – Noon Conversation**

**Zion Lutheran Church, Stratford**

We will explore the Electoral Process and provide information about the people who have been nominated for positions of leadership.

-----



**MARCO BURAK IN CONCERT:** You are invited to Marco Burak's Spring Concert

Being held in the Sanctuary on **Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 P.M.**

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

-----

**STRATFORD SYMPHONY YOUTH ORCHESTRA (SSYO):** presents it's 3<sup>rd</sup> Spring Recital at Zion on **Monday, April 29<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 P.M.**



The program includes music by Bizet, Holst, Shostakovich, Strauss & more. Whether you are a music lover or a young musician wanting to join the ensemble, join maestro Éric Charbonneau in celebrating the hardwork of the SSYO musicians.

Admission by donation

For more information on SSYO visit [stratfordsymphony.ca/ssyo](http://stratfordsymphony.ca/ssyo)

-----



# EARTH DAY

## WORDSEARCH



W	W	A	T	E	R	P	B	O	T
A	P	R	I	L	R	L	I	W	R
S	E	E	D	S	E	A	R	P	E
S	A	I	R	F	C	N	D	L	E
L	I	G	H	T	Y	T	S	A	S
B	R	E	D	U	C	E	Q	S	E
G	R	E	E	N	L	X	K	T	A
R	E	U	S	E	E	N	Z	I	R
A	R	H	C	L	E	A	N	C	T
B	M	Q	P	A	P	E	R	X	H

AIR	EARTH	PLANT	REUSE
APRIL	GREEN	PLASTIC	SEEDS
BIRDS	LIGHT	RECYCLE	TREES
CLEAN	PAPER	REDUCE	WATER

**MONDAY, APRIL 22<sup>ND</sup> IS EARTH DAY !!**

# april



## 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. A new “Counting Captains” Schedule will be put together after the new Council members are installed on Sunday, March 24<sup>th</sup>.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Greeters</b>	<b>Readers</b>	<b>Usher Captains</b>	<b>Altar Guild</b>	<b>Counting Captains</b>
April 7	Paul & Janet Jeffery	Aline Kouhi-Klemencic	Tom Cosstick	Ellen Wolfe	Carmen Beck
April 14	Darrell & Judy Renecker	Murray Scholl	Darrell Renecker	Sister Jean Widmeyer	Carmen Beck
April 21	Bob & Marilyn Wells	Marilyn Wells	Brian Coe	Carmen Beck	Jan Bennewitz
April 28	Brad & Sherri Beatty	Stephen Fisher	Jerry Terhaardt	Shirley Whittaker	Jan Bennewitz

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

