

Zion Lutheran Church & Preschool
3401 E. River Road
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Christ The King Lutheran Chapel
1401 South Washington
(989)773-5050

December 2023

Jonathon J. Bakker and Garrick "Ricky" Beckett, Pastors

Volume 59, No.12

*"Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory!"
Psalm 24:9-10*

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, In the month of December when I was growing up, conversation often turned to Santa Claus and if we had been a good enough boy or girl to get gifts or if you would get coal. My father always seemed to think I would be getting coal for Christmas, but I'm not sure why. There was a bit of fear that you hadn't been good enough. Recently, the shift has turned from the question of "Will you get coal for Christmas?" to the watchful eye of the elf on the shelf. The fear that a child isn't good enough seems to be increasing. But Christians need not be concerned about Santa Claus or an elf on a shelf. Since elves aren't real, their opinions don't matter; and since St. Nicholas is has been with the Lord for over 1500 years, he only desires the Lord's will be done. And the Lord God has called that you be ready for his return. This has nothing to do with coal or gifts, but has everything to do with his faithfulness and grace for you.

As the Church enters the season of Advent, we are waiting and watching for the return of Christ. Scripture is clear that Christ comes to judge the world. Jesus has words of preparation for His Church in Matthew 25, and that chapter was read over 3 weeks in November in our church services. But when Jesus returns, what does that mean for the church? Should we fear his return, or should we eagerly anticipate it? As we live by faith, we look forward to the return of Christ. For Christians, this is the coming of our King. The readings of the Advent season look forward to the presence of Jesus with joy. We pray along with Psalm 24 that the gates be opened and lifted up as Jesus comes for our salvation. There is comfort for God's people.

This season of Advent is titled with the Latin word ("Advent") that means "coming." Each year, the church celebrates the coming of Jesus, not only in the manger at Christmas, but when he comes at the end of time in glory. Instead of the church warning children about coal in their Christmas stockings or looking at the ever-watchful elf on the shelf, the church speaks to Christians and non-Christians alike, saying "Jesus is coming. This is the time to repent and believe."

Repent and believe. Don't merely do this to avoid judgement or punishment; do this to receive the gifts of Christ. Your Lord loves you so much that he took on flesh to be born for you. God in the flesh died for you and rose from the dead for you and he is coming again, not to judge you, but to receive all those who believe in him into his kingdom to live with him forever. This is the love of Jesus for all people, and he wants that to include you. Don't be afraid of judgement, but believe in the promises of God for you.

As the radio plays songs about getting ready for Christmas and ready for Santa, it is most important that you turn your attention to the return of Christ. He is coming for you, not in a sleigh or with presents under a tree, but with the gift of eternal life with him. Be ready for Jesus, because he is coming for you; you are the people he loves. See you in church!

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Bakker



Early Childhood Center News

"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:10-11k

What joyous news the angels shared that first Christmas night. The children of Zion ECC are preparing to share that same joyous message with family and friends. The children have begun working on songs, fingerplays, and memory verses for their Christmas services.

The four-year-old preschool class has again been asked to join our Zion Children's Christmas service on Sunday, December 10. We ask the children to arrive for one final joint practice at 9:30 a.m. and the service will begin at 11:00 a.m. There will be a short fellowship time following the service to enjoy Jesus' birthday cake.

The three-year-old preschool class has begun practicing for their Children's Service on Tuesday, December 19 at 10:30 a.m. Children who do not attend on Tuesday normally are encouraged to join us on that day. Parents, we would like to hold a short fellowship time following the children's service. We are looking for volunteers to provide treats, set-up, and clean-up. There will be a Google document signup sheet sent with our December calendar and school newsletter. If you would like to assist with this gathering, we would greatly appreciate your help.

Preschool will enjoy their Christmas break from December 20 to January 2. Our Preschool childcare and toddler care will be open December 20-22 (7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.). The center will be closed December 25 - January 2 for the Christmas and New Year holidays.

The early childhood center staff would like to send one final thank you to all of our families, friends, and church members for a very successful pizza fundraiser. The final profit received was \$940. We had three top sellers that we would like to acknowledge: 1. Ethan King 2. Everly Bahlke 3. Maryn Acker

MERRY
CHRISTMAS

Creation! The entire word of our Lord is concerned with His creation and the redemption from our fallen state. From the initial installment of space, time and matter (in Genesis 15:1-11) to the new heavens and earth in Revelation, the love of His creation shines through. Our children love to create. Building castles out of blocks. Playing make-believe with dolls and "action figures". Painting, coloring and drawing pictures. All reflect our desire to emulate what God has done in His wonderful world, fallen as it is.

The trouble begins when we credit ourselves for what we have accomplished. All we have, every beat of our heart, is a gift from our creator.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow! This is important for a child to understand: All we do is to be returned to God with prayers and thanks. Any talent is a portion of our creator, a personal gift added to our personality, as it were. That everyone may find satisfaction in their efforts - this is a gift from God (Ecclesiastes 3:13).

Watch your children. How do they use God's gifts? It may surprise you! Whether it is running a marathon or coloring inside the lines, give them praise, by all means. But make sure they know how God grants us to be what we are, and can be.

Praise the Lord in all things!

Our Sunday School children are working hard on their Christmas Program celebration!!

Plan to join us!

Brad Coulson

Sunday School Superintendent



Christmas Program
Jesus - God's Greatest Gift
Sunday, December 10
11:00 a.m. at Zion

Practices for the program will be
Sunday, December 3, following Sunday School until 12:00 p.m. (a snack will be provided before practice), and on Sunday, December 10 at 9:30 a.m. until the service begins at 11:00 a.m.

There will also be Sunday School on December 17. Sunday School will resume on January 7 following Christmas and New Year's.

STEWARDSHIP CORNER

Monthly Income & Expense Report
through October 31, 2023

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
YTD Budgeted Expenses	\$ 540,050.80	\$ 438,745.20
YTD Actual Expenses	<u>\$ 629,414.62</u>	<u>\$ 551,707.97</u>
YTD Balance	\$ (89,363.82)	\$ (112,962.77)
YTD General Fund Income	\$ 601,411.34	\$ 505,532.85
YTD Actual Expenses	<u>\$ 629,414.62</u>	<u>\$ 551,707.97</u>
YTD Income Less Expense	\$ (28,003.28)	\$ (46,175.12)

The Measure of Our Generosity

If you open up the Small Catechism, you'll find a shortened version of the Third Commandment: "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." But if you look up the list of the Ten Commandments in Exodus, you'll find the full version:

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Ex. 20:8-11)

Why did Luther shorten this commandment for the Small Catechism? Was it so that the kids wouldn't have so much to memorize? No, it was because Luther knew that all the details of the Third Commandment were part of the "shadow" of the Old Testament (Col. 2:16). Or as St. Paul puts it, there is "letter" in the Old Testament law and "spirit" (2 Cor. 3:6). The details of not working on Saturday were fulfilled by Christ. That part of the Sabbath regulation no longer applies. But the spirit of the law does remain: We need to dedicate sufficient time each week to hearing God's Word and giving it honor and respect. Or as Luther sums it up in the Small Catechism's explanation to the Third Commandment: "We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it."

The same sort of analysis applies to our giving. In the Old Testament, God commanded the Israelites to give a tenth of their income to the Levites so that those men could dedicate their lives to serving in God's house, teaching the people, conducting

worship, etc. In the New Testament, there is no rigid requirement listed about handing in your tax forms to church to make sure you've given enough. But the mandate to have a full-time ministry, which is the spirit of that law concerning tithing to the Levites, is right there in 1 Corinthians 9:14: "The Lord has ordained that those who preach the Gospel should make their living from the Gospel." The New Testament church's job is significantly larger than the job of Old Testament Israel. We are commanded to preach the Gospel to all nations. There was only the temple to maintain in the Old Testament, but we have churches, schools, universities and seminaries, plus missionaries everywhere. So you tell me: Can we really undertake the work of the ministry if our giving doesn't even measure up to Old Testament levels of generosity?

HEAR YEA! HEAR YEA! HEAR YEA! MEN--SAVE THE DATES! March 1 and 2

No, this is not a wedding, anniversary, birthday or anything else. It's a **RETREAT for ALL MEN**. This means all men in our congregation from confirmation age up including college men. What happens at a men's retreat? Come and see.

Starting Friday evening and ending Saturday afternoon, we will meet in Zion's Fellowship Hall. It is not a sleep over. You may be greatly surprised at what is planned. A guest speaker? Yes, and he will certainly provide you with an uplifting message.

And, you will be well nourished with surprise meals. Who knows! What do you like? Venison, steak, home-made brats or sausage, wild duck, fresh fish, or whatever. We guarantee you will certainly enjoy the retreat. And most importantly, we all get to join in fellowship with one another, young and old. How many people do you know in our church? Five, ten, twenty? We have a congregation of great men with talents in a variety of areas and people with different interests. A Sunday morning is not enough time to meet and greet all and really get to know one another.

Please mark March 1 & 2 on your calendars for this most exciting and exhilarating event that will certainly expand your thinking about the Christian men that make up our congregation.

(Contact Dale Gust for questions)



A big thank you to all of our volunteer ushers and greeters at church! With many extra services in the coming month; please know that your help and leadership is a real gift to your church family, and we thank you. Thanks also to the teams of student ushers who have been serving us faithfully this year at Christ The King Lutheran Chapel.

Thanks also, to all who serve Zion as our treasurers, financial secretaries, and also to our counters – you render very important services to the congregation and rarely receive any recognition. Know that your work is not in vain and that you are all appreciated!

Special Voters' Meeting

December 3, 2023

9:45 a.m. at Zion

We will meet to consider nominating Rev. Dr. Todd Peperkorn to be president of Concordia Theological Seminary.

Christmas Worship Opportunities

The Nativity of our Lord is a special time at Zion, one where many of our members make an extra effort to come to church. Please make plans to join us for the extra services celebrating the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Advent Services will be Wednesdays, December 6, 13, and 20 at 5:30 p.m.



Christmas Eve Services

4:30 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

Christmas Day Service

10:00 a.m.

New Year's Eve Service

7:30 p.m.

Epiphany Service

Saturday, January 6 at 5:30 p.m.

Please note: Sunday morning December 24 and December 31, there will be just one service at 10:00 a.m.

ALL SERVICES AT ZION

Lifelight returns January 4

What is Lifelight? Lifelight is a Bible study series from Concordia Publishing House (our LCMS publisher) that focuses on a topic or a selection of Holy Scripture. Each study has 9 sessions, includes some background material, and often involves reading and studying some or all of a chapter of the Bible every weekday if you want to prepare ahead of time (don't worry if you don't do the "homework" – we will discuss all the questions when we meet). It is one of the most in-depth Bible studies we have at Zion, but it is also a great time to ask questions, get to know your pastor and fellow church members, and of course to grow in your knowledge and faith in God's Word! Please plan to join us on Thursdays for our Lifelight Bible study beginning January 4.

The same session is offered at 10:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. every Thursday for 9 weeks. Come to whichever session is most convenient for you. Our topic this time will be Selected Psalms – watch for copies of the study materials in the office when they come in!

Learn it by Heart

Sorry to have missed this segment last month, but here's a hope-filled verse of one of our Christmas Day hymns. Indeed this hymn is special not only because of the text, but also the tune. I sometimes call it "the family hymn" since the tune in our hymnal was composed by my father-in-law. It's a beautiful setting for these words, and you can find them in our hymnal, Lutheran Service Book, hymn #372. This is the fourth verse:

*Thou Christian heart, Whoe'er thou art,
Be of good cheer and let no sorrow move thee!
For God's own Child, In mercy mild,
Joins thee to Him; how greatly God must love thee!*

New Year's Eve Worship

During the worship service on New Year's Eve, our tradition is to read the names of members who have passed away during the year. Also read are names of members' relatives who have passed away during the year. Contact the church office if you would like to verify that we are aware of your relative's name.

Holy Scripture: Guided Reading

Esther, Lamentations, and Christmas: As we reach the end of this year, we read a few smaller books and then some Christmas texts as we prepare for the incarnation of our Lord! Esther is an account of courage in the face of danger and the triumph of good in the face of evil. God's name is not mentioned in Esther, but his divine providence is evident throughout. Lamentations is a collection of laments – cries to the Lord for mercy and hope in the face of despair. It reminds that God's faithfulness is forever. The final readings will prepare you further for the celebration of Jesus' birth on Christmas!



Esther 1 – Vashti's Refusal to Obey
Esther 2 – Esther Chosen Queen
Esther 3 – Haman Plots against the Jews
Esther 4 – Esther Helps the Jews
Esther 5 – Esther Prepares a Banquet
Esther 6 – Mordecai Honored
Esther 7 – Haman's Plot Revealed
Esther 8 – Esther Saves the Jews
Esther 9 – The Jews Destroy their Enemies
Esther 10 – The Greatness of Mordecai
Lamentations 1 – The Lonely City
Lamentations 2 – The Lord has Destroyed Without Pity
Lamentations 3 – Great is Your Faithfulness
Lamentations 4 – Holy Stones Lie Scattered
Lamentations 5 – Restore Us to Yourself, O Lord
Matthew 1:1-17 – Genealogy of Jesus
Matthew 1:18-25 – The Birth of Jesus
Matthew 2 – Magi, Egypt, Herod, Nazareth
Luke 1:1-38 – Annunciation
Luke 1:39-80 – Magnificat, John the Baptist
Luke 2:1-21 – Jesus' Birth, Shepherds
Luke 2:22-52 – Presentation of Jesus and his Youth
John 1:1-18 – The Word Became Flesh

Campus Ministry

The International Women's Club will meet at CTK on Saturday, December 9, from 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. All women and children are invited, and this month, men are invited, too! Join us for a Christmas party and white elephant gift exchange. If you want to bring a gift, please bring a wrapped used or new gift under \$10. Can't bring anything? Don't worry! We will have extra gifts available for the exchange. Please contact Anne Bakker with any questions.

Youth & Family Life

Dicken's Parade

Float decorating will be at 6:00 p.m. on Friday, December 1, at Coyne's Warehouse. All youth, and others are welcome! On Saturday, December 2, everyone is welcome to join youth and children to walk with our float in the parade. Meet at 5:45 p.m. at the Methodist Church to line up for the 6:00 p.m. start of the parade.

Caroling

On **Sunday, December 17**, after the 11:00 a.m. service at Zion, everyone is welcome to join us to do some caroling for some of our shut-ins. Youth are especially encouraged to participate. It will be a fun and rewarding experience for all. See Mr. Epple if you have any questions.



Youth and college students!!!

Saturday, December 9
4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Pizza and "off topic" discussion
at Zion

Subscribe to The Lutheran Witness

It is time to order your subscription to The Lutheran Witness for 2024. It is the official periodical of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, published 11 times a year, providing stories and information that complements congregational life, fosters personal growth in faith, and helps interpret the contemporary world from a Lutheran Christian perspective. A Michigan District Supplement will be included in each issue. This supplement will contain stories, news, and events along with content that awakens, connects, challenges, and inspires through stories of hope. The new subscription year begins March 2024. Contact the church office by Wednesday, December 13, to take advantage of the discounted rate of \$19.00 a year. Place your money in the offering plate with a note clearly marked "Lutheran Witness" or drop it off in the office.

Strategic Planning Re-Direction

About a year ago, you all were asked to participate in an on-line survey called **CADD** which stands for **Congregational Assessment of Development and Decline Status**. The survey measured where we stood based on 10 factors—Adaptability, Community, Family, Hospitality, Inactives, Incorporation, Outreach, Viability, and Vision. The results were presented at the Voter's Assembly meeting. One area that stood out as a decline for Zion was adaptability. It meant that Zion was not willing to adapt to changes. We seem to be complacent with ourselves. If you look at our last 10 years within our church, not much has happened other than the addition of our early childhood center. Why haven't we focused on adding a kindergarten or even grades 1 & 2? Or perhaps there are other areas for change which we have not planned for or pursued. The LCMS (Lutheran Church Missouri Synod) has committed to developing resource materials to assist congregations in many ways built around the **Making Disciples for Life (MDFL)** emphasis. Thus, as a suggestion for congregations who scored low in adaptability, they recommend a set of materials called "**Serving in Gods Mission (SGM)**". It focuses on "Strategic Planning for Congregations". The expected outcomes of SGM include:

1. A working knowledge of the strategic planning process and its supporting tools
2. Achieving consensus in the congregation at each stage of strategic planning
3. A realistic, meaningful and useful Strategic Ministry Plan

The first part calls for a nine-session Bible Study that will prepare us for the second part which is a Workshop. Pastor Bakker will lead the Bible Study beginning in the new year and will use the Sunday morning hour to present the lesson. We encourage as many of our members as possible to attend. Details as to the workshop sessions will appear in the January newsletter. For questions, contact Dale Gust.

CHRIST
THE SAVIOR
IS BORN!

NURSE'S NOTE

By switching out this recipe for green bean casserole you will reduce calories, fat and sodium intake. This is just one recipe to try during the holidays. It is possible to eat more healthy and still enjoy the season.

Isaiah 43:18-19 "Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old, Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth: Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness And rivers in the desert.

Give this website a try! There are more, just look for them.

<https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/holidays/christmas-ideas/g1875/healthy-diet-christmas-recipes/>

May God bless you with love, joy and peace this Christmas!

Phillis Daws RN, BSN

989.621.8583 or zionparishnurse@gmail.com

INGREDIENTS

- 2 lb. green beans
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tsp. chopped fresh rosemary
- 1/2 c. roasted almonds, roughly chopped
- 1 tsp. orange zest
- 1/2 c. flat leaf parsley, chopped

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1: Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Fill a large bowl with ice water. Add 1 tablespoon salt to boiling water, then in batches, cook green beans until just tender, 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer green beans to the ice water to cool; drain and set aside.

STEP 2: In a small skillet, heat oil, garlic, and rosemary on medium heat until garlic sizzles around the edges and begins to turn golden, about 2 minutes. Remove from heat and toss with almonds and orange zest, then parsley.

STEP 3: Serve over warm or room temperature green beans.

PER SERVING: 125 CALORIES, 8.5 G FAT (1 G SATURATED), 4 G PROTEIN, 270 MG SODIUM, 11 G CARB, 5 G COST PER SERVING 26¢



Mustard Seed Devotion

Our lives fit into His master plan. Right now the assembly line of our lives is in process. The Master Planner is watching closely and is making sure everything fits together perfectly, piece by piece and step by step. If we compare our lives to an assembly line, we see that the final outcome won't be completely known to us until we enter heaven. By grace through faith, however, we know that God is molding us into the people He wants us to be. What a truly remarkable and loving God we have! Walking with my Lord O Lord, strengthen my faith so that I accept Your plan for my life. Forgive my sins and guide me through each step of life. I pray in my Redeemer's name. Amen

Mustard Seed: The Word: Wisdom for Living. Authors: Marcia Gomulka and Myrna Lou Meyer. 20/32 ©2015 Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 801 Seminary Place Ste. L010, St. Louis, MO 63105. Code: #40198 Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations were taken from ESV Bible® (The Holy Bible English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Calendar of Events

NOTE: Our group is trying to generate different activities and speakers, but we need your input. If you have ideas, please contact Kathy Nims at 989-294-1373.

MITES, MITES. MITES: Do you have pockets of change? Remember our mite box is looking for loose change. Dig in those pockets and pull out that extra change. Our new goal for the next biennium is over \$386,000. Wow! We can DO it!

Christmas Party – Saturday, December 9

We will begin with brunch at 9:30 a.m. and wrap up about 11:30 a.m. We will also have a gift exchange of \$20 (note change in time so people can attend the Women's International Christmas Party).

Craft Fridays

December 15, January 5 & 19
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. at Zion

Chili Potluck

Sunday, January 21 at 12:00 p.m.
Bring your favorite chili!

Cookie Walk and Bazaar

Saturday, December 2
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Decorating and setup will be Friday, December 1, at 5:30 p.m. Cards have been sent as a reminder regarding the kinds of decorated Christmas cookies to make. Call Kathy Nims (989- 294-1373) with questions.

There is NO Women's Bible study in December. We will meet next on Saturday, January 13, at 9:30 a.m to study Nahum. Thanks, Anne Bakker

Quilting Group Every Tuesday at Zion 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 Noon; 12:00 – 1:00 (lunch) and 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. come as you wish !

Orphan Grain Train - Continue to place clothing that is clean and in good condition in the containers at Zion. Please put items in small bags or garbage bags. However do not overfill large bags.

THANK YOU – to the Fall Rally ladies who made 54 Prayer Shawls and 120 dozen cookies. These were delivered to: Hope Assisted Living; Isabella County Medical Center; Green Acres; Pioneer Assisted Living in Clare; and Rosebush Assisted Living

If there are any young women in our congregation interested in becoming a YWR (Young Woman Representative), please let either Kathy Nims or JoAnn Gust know soon. The deadline to get application in to our Zone President is January 31.

Who We Are

Have you often wondered who we are and what do we stand for? In the following months, there will be little inserts about LWML. Did you know that because we are an auxiliary of LCMS, you are a member? That means that for this group to function, we invite you to come to our meetings and events. We need you! We want to hear your input.

*“Serve the Lord with Gladness-”
Psalm 100:2*

