

Looking Up | Reaching Out



ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Even as I write this article in the early part of November, and a full two weeks before Thanksgiving, the Christmas holiday season is in full swing. Currently I'm sitting in a holiday decorated coffee shop eating a "sugar plum" danish (it is delicious!), drinking coffee from a red and green "holiday" cup, and looking at a cardboard "Christmas tree" adorned with holiday themed gift cards that make "the perfect gift."

Looking closely at the decorations and holiday themes in this store, there's no mention of Christmas at all. There are snowmen and trees and winter scenes with barns and dogs and even penguins, but the word "Christmas" isn't to be found. It's enough for Charlie Brown to say, "Aaugh!"

No, this isn't "cranky pastor goes on a rant because the corporate world won't say 'Merry Christmas.'" Rather, this reminds me that each of us we be intentional in making Christmas about Christ.

December is busy with parties, concerts, gatherings and celebrations, all are wonderful things, but they can distract us from what really matters. We have a choice to make as to how to celebrate Christmas. As God's people, we need to be intentional in balancing out the festivities with the things that speak to our faith, faith in the Christ child.

I'm amazed when I've walked through stores and heard explicitly Christian songs like "O Holy Night" mixed in with holiday songs like "Santa Baby." Those moments when the Good News of Jesus is being sung in a place like Walmart have given me the opportunity to say to the person working at the register, "Do you hear that song? It's one of my favorites."

Of course, we ought to be careful not to use our holiday cheer as a weapon. You may want to declare "Merry Christmas" to an employee just because the store itself doesn't use the phrase and thus prove some point about "keeping Christ in Christmas." Yet rather than being confrontational, be intentional. Be like Jesus when you're out and about. Bear the fruit of the Spirit during a season that most certainly isn't the most wonderful time of the year for many people. Show kindness, give compliments, tip generously.

And feed your soul with the greatness of God's love. Be intentional with Advent and Christmas worship, with daily devotions, with fervent prayer, with time together with family and friends.

I wish each one of you an intentional Christmas, a Christmas centered on Jesus and the gift that He is for us and for all.
Pastor Mike



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Advent and Christmas

Advent is the prelude to Christmas! This season gently leads us into Christmas, to remind us Christmas is more than just a cultural tradition. We are getting ready for a special birth!

Retailers introduce Christmas merchandise earlier each year. Generosity in gift giving often causes us to spend lavishly, and even out of guilt. Maybe we should allow Christmas to bring a change to our culture rather than the other way around!

What a neat gift Advent can be (if is noticed, practiced, and embraced!) Advent begins December 3rd and ends on Christmas Eve.

Our Advent midweek services will be based on themes from the children's classic, "The Little Engine That Could." It is our way to keep this season creative, inventive, and more than just an obligation. Advent prepares the manger!

Waiting is one of the most difficult things to do! Advent remembers the faithful waiting for millions who would not be alive for the first Christmas. All wait a lifetime in anticipation of our own heavenly home. Every year we wait for this holiday (holy day) of Christ's birth so we can celebrate again as if this were the first time! Waiting is difficult, but anything worth having is worth waiting for!

Advent means to come into. We wait as others waited, to be certain we are ready to celebrate what this moment in time means. It is why we hold off on Christmas carols as long as possible, as the holy day hasn't yet come! That is the reason, my grandparents, and many of yours, never put a tree up until Christmas Eve, so the joy of the Christ birth would come as it did on that first holy night! It is difficult to wait and yet waiting always make what we wait for more precious.

We wait, less patiently than our grandparents, but we can still try! Without waiting, we might forget what we are waiting for. Rather than being lulled asleep by carols, massive sales, decorations and parties, why not wait?

Our ministry staff has written devotions for Advent and Christmas that you can pick up here at Zion. The theme for these devotions is "A Light in the Darkness." They will be available the week before Advent begins so you have daily help at

home in your Advent preparations.

Advent worship Wednesdays beginning Dec. 6 Noon and 6:30 pm

This is an opportunity to take a time out from the world's impatience, busy-ness, and unwillingness to wait. Such a respite offers a place for peace, quiet, and preparing our hearts for the holy birth of Christmas. The services are brief, with music, dramatic readings, and brief messages that seek to relate Advent to real life daily events.

Along with devotions, advent wreaths and your own traditions at home, we are setting the table for a Christmas festival that is more than any retailer can offer. Christmas comes from the phrase Christ Mass. Mass is a Latin word that means to send and refers to the blessing and benediction at the end of worship. Christmas truly is centered around worship and we are sent from the celebration of this gift as gifts to the world!

This is our opportunity to teach grandchildren, children, and friends what the joy of this holiday (holy day) is all about!

WORSHIP SCHEDULE Dec. 24 and Dec. 25

Sunday 12/24 Last Sunday of Advent.

One worship service at 10 am

(no classes will be held Dec. 24 or 31)

Sunday 12/24 Christmas Eve

Worship 4 pm and 8 pm.

Monday 12/25 Christmas Day

Worship 10 am

Always remember, anything worth waiting for is worth the wait. Don't just go through the motions and miss the true joy of this season.

Remember to invite family, neighbors, and friends to join us in waiting and in celebrating on Christmas! This is the easiest time of year to invite those with no church home, or to bring back those who have gotten out of practice. What better time to gather at the manger than when the manger is full?

Catechism Review: Holy Communion (Part 3)

“Celebrating Communion Today “

Jesus didn't have First Communion Class, but did a wonderful job instructing what this meal means. He did so by washing feet and heading to a cross as he shared the power and passion of His Love with us! In this meal we participate in this great mystery of the Word-become-Flesh!

On the same night that Jesus would be handed over for death, the disciples celebrated Passover by remembering the past. The ancient pass-over by the angel of death was like our modern fly byes of jets at a football stadium. The plague of death flew over, but did not land on the first born of Israel. They were literally passed over!

This meal was part of that night and was Israel's nourishment to prepare them to escape bondage and begin a long journey into the desert of Sinai. The blood shed by the slaughter of lambs was spread over their doorpost as a sign. The angel of death avoided those homes! This meal was their first step on the journey to a new life, and began their escape from slavery. Every time they celebrated this meal they remembered this past.

We remember as well. *“Take and eat! Take and drink! Every time you do this, it is to remember Me!”* For the Jewish people, to remember meant to include oneself in the moment that is revisited and renewed. So, if asked how many escaped from Egypt, the correct answer would be “all of us!” In remembering his Last Supper we believe it has become our special meal with Jesus. Bread and wine. Body and Blood. A sacrifice of blood that is shed that continues to set us free today.

The power in the meal is not in what color wine is used, whether we stand or kneel, or whether we have wafers or bread. It is a moment in which visible elements and actions are touched by the risen Jesus himself. He is one with us, as we are one with each other. We are nourished to head out on our journey of new life!

In Luther's day, with so many corrupt priests, he correctly taught the Sacrament was valid even if the priest officiating was a rascal or scoundrel. It is not what we do that makes the meal special. What God has done, and does still, is what makes this his gift to us! This meal is holy, not because

of how we prepare or partake, but because God Himself is present as he promised. Unfortunately, our preparation has sometimes been influenced by fear of doing it wrong, because of words St. Paul used to correct some issues at Corinth.

For instance, in that early congregation, the poor were being denied access to the community meal until the rich had eaten. Factions had formed and class envy had developed. Paul taught unless they approached the table as one, they didn't understand the true Body of Christ and what that means. He said that unity at one table involved acting like they were one family. Instead of focusing on what their differences were, they were to celebrate how Jesus brought them together as his family. Accepting the gift of forgiveness calls us to live in a new way. Paul wanted the Church to practice what Christ preached through humble, servant, foot-washing love!

We prepare by remembering we are invited to a table with God who loves us so much! Fear of unforgiven sins, or not being able to explain how God works such a miracle, are never a reason to stay away! Jesus' track record was to invite the outcasts, the broken, and the sinful. That is the gift of this meal! To celebrate grace. To humbly allow Jesus to wash our feet so we have the courage to do the same in our daily lives!

We prepare through confession, admitting our brokenness and need for forgiveness. Absolved of guilt, in the announcement of grace, we are able to approach the meal with our hands washed clean. We are ready to dine with Jesus. In the Sharing of Peace we celebrate the unity Christ brings and then we approach the table. As we eat and drink, Jesus is physically one with us.

Faith accepts what we cannot explain, and celebrates God's gifts which are more than we deserve. We are forgiven. We are renewed. We are guests at that banquet of a heavenly feast to come! This is Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, birthdays, wedding receptions, anniversaries and other similar celebrations all wrapped into one, but more perfect than anything on earth.

How can we not smile as we approach the altar? How can we not be thankful as we return from this meal? This is an incredibly miraculous moment as we are nourished by the blood of the Lamb and set free from an empty tomb! — tws

NOTICE

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The board of directors voted to convene a special meeting of the congregation. It will be held on

December 10th at 11:30,

with the following agenda:

- Vote to approve Pastor Tim's call to Assistant Pastor (administrative formality required by the Synod).
- Vote to approve language changes to the bylaws proposed by the board (to permit more flexibility to future boards and call committees in filling vacancies).
- Vote to determine whether the congregation will commit to supporting the vicarage (internship) of two future ministers. We have a very exciting and unique opportunity to share our faith and gifts in way that will touch many lives for many years to come.

The board will share a detailed proposal at the meeting, please hold your questions until then.

ART MINISTRY in BLENDS

PHILIP J. KUNZE presents...

IMAGES OF TIME AND PLACE

The Farmers Market Season and Season of our Faith

During Lent and Eastertide this year I thought about how our local growing seasons are metaphors for: the life and ministry of Christ; the life of the Christian Church; and our individual faith lives. I thought about seasons of anticipation, planting, growth, fulfillment, harvest, and dormancy, followed by anticipation of the cycle repeating.

Up until a few generations ago, growing seasons weren't metaphors - they were ways of life for most people. Thus over millennia, it was natural for people to think about cycles of life. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3: / planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. And Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15: What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.

I looked over my photos from the Kalamazoo Farmers Market season in 2001, and read what I had written about them in a book that I designed and printed at the time. The Farmers Market then, was different from the "festival marketplace" environment today on Bank Street. Twenty years ago at the market (with mostly fruits, vegetables, and flowers), the seasons were more apparent than they are today. (Maybe it's like that in our lives today too?)

As you read the center column of copy below each of the images from Asparagus through November, think about how the months of the market season may be analogous to the life of Christ, His Church, and the seasons of our lives.

Philip J. Kunze

June 2019

Family Life

Family Ministry News

Upcoming Schedule

December 6, 13, 20: Advent Worship Services (dinner 5:15pm, worship 6:30pm)

December 17: Kid's Presentation (10:30am) & Christmas Party (11:30am-1:30pm)

December 24 & 31: NO Sunday School

Review: The Art of Family Faith Conversations

I recently watched one lesson of "The Art of Family Faith Conversations" by Natasha Crain on RightNow Media.

60% of kids who grow up in a Christian home walk away from their faith in their 20s. Let that sink in. Roughly 2 out of 3 kids who grow up in Christian homes walk away from their faith. We're not talking taking a pause, we're talking completely abandoning their faith journey. The study argues that the remaining 40% of kids regularly had faith conversations in their homes.

Here are my reactions/suggestions connected to this tragic statistic:

- Make time. If your family has become so busy that you don't have time for this, stop. Say no to something. It might be difficult, but you will value this decision in the future.
- Feed yourself. If you are not regularly in God's Word, why would you expect your kids to be?
- Watch. God sightings are more reliant on YOU actually noticing them. He is always working, so pay attention!

Zion Women's Book Group

The book group meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 2:00p

Upcoming books are listed below and the group welcomes new interested participants.

12/19/23	Charlotte's Web-E. B. White
01/16/24	Still Life-Louise Penny
02/20/24	Up Home: One Girl's Journey
03/19/24	The Gown-Jennifer Robson
04/16/24	Lessons in Chemistry-Bonnie Garmus
05/21/24	Horse-Geraldine Brooks
06/18/24	The Only Woman in the Room-Marie Benedict
07/16/24	The Island of the Sea Women-Lisa See

When they had seen Him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

Find these words below

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

Friends of Jesus Preschool

The excitement and joy at this special time of year can be seen and heard on a daily basis in the preschool. Between practicing Christmas songs to working on projects for family, the children are eagerly anticipating the holidays. The staff at Friends of Jesus are looking forward to sharing with students the real reason for excitement and joy, the birth of Jesus.

We have many exciting events happening over the next few weeks and into the new year. The preschool students along with Sunday School and Midweek children will be performing Christmas songs during the

**10:30 AM service on
Sunday, December 17th**

Afterwards, the children and their families will be invited to join us for a Christmas party!

The new year also brings with it summer camp registration and registering for the 2024-2025 school year.

Please continue to spread the word about what Friends of Jesus Preschool is offering!

Merry Christmas!

Jen LaPorte

Youth News

We will continue to meet as a combined Middle School/High School Youth Group. Any student entering 6th-12th grades is invited to attend unless specifically noted! Friends are also invited!

Confirmation Class (6th-8th)

Wednesdays from 6-6:30pm

No Class December 27 or January 3

Bible Study

Sundays, at 9:15am in the High School Youth Room

No Class December 24 or 31

Youth Christmas Party

Saturday, December 16th from 3-5pm
Details TBD

Winter Retreat

Winter Retreat to Springhill Camps up in Ewart, MI will be February 2-4, 2024. Cost is \$75/person and any student 6th-12th is invited to attend. (please let me know if cost is preventing you from going!) Deadline to sign up is December 17th!! We currently have 10 spots but possibly can get a few more.

Echoes

God IS at work through people in our congregation...here is their story:

Have you heard of the Warm Kids Project? This group, made up mainly of retired school personnel (including one of our own members), has been “investing in Kalamazoo area communities by providing new winter clothing to children in need” since 1986! In 2022 this organization was able to serve up 1620 coats and 1651 pairs of boots across 53 schools and agency partner sites. That translates to 18% of children counted as “economically disadvantaged” in this area. Not only does the Warm Kids Project serve the community, they also allow service opportunities. In 2022 they had eight organizations, businesses, and churches help on boxing days.

God commands us to love others. In doing so we show love to Him. God is at work through an organization such as this. They are not only providing a need for the children they serve but also an opportunity for people to be generous and show love.

www.warmkids.org



Christmas Poinsettia

(These poinsettias are used to decorate the church sanctuary)

Anyone interested in contributing to the “**CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA**” may do so by sending their gift to the church office or putting it in the offering plate along with this form. Please note on your check “**CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA.**”

We will take checks through Sunday, December 10.

All contributions will be acknowledged in the bulletin.

In Loving Memory of:

In Thanksgiving of:

In Honor Of:

Given By:

Envelope # _____

Amount _____

Christmas WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Advent Services

at NOON & 6:30 pm
Wed, December 6, 13, 20
(Soup Supper at 5:15pm)

Christmas Eve Services

Sunday, December 24
10:00a 4th Sunday of Advent

4:00p Family Worship
(Especially for families with young children wanting an earlier time to worship filled with carols & the Christmas story)

8:00p Candlelight Worship & Communion

Christmas Day Service

Monday, December 25
Worship 10:00 am

Worship Helps for Parents and Children

“The Biblical Roots of Liturgy”

Liturgy comes from Greek words meaning “the duty of the people.” Martin Luther helped get everyone (not just priests) participate in Sunday worship. The reputation and pattern of the liturgy helps us grow in a faithful pattern of living.

Our liturgies are not arbitrary collections. We sing what has been sung for centuries. Much of the liturgy comes from Biblical texts, which allows us to sing what we believe! As we understand the Biblical roots, of some of our liturgical songs worship is truly enhanced!

“**Lord Have Mercy**” (Mark 10:47) we approach God as imperfect people seeking his mercy.

“**Glory to God in the highest**” (Luke 2:14) the song of angels at Bethlehem. It sets the tone for worship. Our response to God’s grace is joy!

“**This is the Feast**” (Revelation 5, 15, and 19) from John’s vision of the heavenly court with the Lamb who was slain ruling over all! How fitting to begin worship at the manger and the heavenly throne, from earth to heaven, the response is Joy!

“**Alleluia, to whom shall we go**” (John 6:68) and **Return to the Lord your God**” (Joel 2:13) are responses that prepare us to hear the Gospel.

“**Let the Vineyards be fruitful**” (Isaiah 5:1-7) or “**What shall I Render**” (Psalm 116:12-19) having shared the Peace of the Lord, we pledge our lives as gifts to God as we approach the altar.

“**Holy, Holy, Holy**” (Isaiah 6:3) God’s majesty “**Hosanna in the highest**” (Mark 11:9) Jesus’ triumphant arrival in Jerusalem. As we prepare for Communion, we reflect on the sacrifice that brings heaven to earth in the sacrifice of Jesus.

“**Lamb of God**” (John 1:29) is John the Baptist’s confession of Jesus’ identity and ministry. It is the sacrificial Lamb, God’s own Son who gathers faithful people around the Lord’s table which truly is a foretaste of the feast to come.

“**Let the Vineyards be fruitful**” (Isaiah 5:1-7) celebrates the blessings of God and remembers our own work in the vineyard.

“**Thank the Lord**” (Psalm 7:17) we rejoice in the meal of the kingdom that nourished us for life.

“**Let your servant depart in peace**” (Luke 2:20) The song of Simeon who was blessed to hold the infant Jesus. These are the words that send us out into our daily lives, changed by the Messiah!

Liturgical churches (like Lutherans) also follow a pattern of readings, seasons, and a structured form for worship that helps us grow into the gift of faith. Hymns are chosen to match the theme of the readings. Every year we move through the Bible to remember the promises, celebrate the life of Jesus, and grow as his disciples.

For parents (and grandparents too)

Did you sing when you rocked your “baby?”

Do you and your kids have favorite songs you sing at bath time or when traveling in the car? Or your favorite songs from preschool or a TV show. Songs bring us to a familiar place.

Remind your children how they feel when we sing songs they know — and they can sing too! Remind them of songs you sing at home, and how they bring familiar feelings back again and again.

When we sing in church, we are singing Bible stories. We sing about Jesus’ birth! We sing to remember heaven is a happy place and Jesus loves us very much. When they are old enough, you could take one part of the liturgy and tell them the story that these words are about. Maybe that is your theme for the next few times you are in worship. Have them wait for that song from the story you have shared.

Once you have done that over and over for a month or so, pick the next one. Tell the story and get them ready when the song is sung in worship. See if that helps them to better listen, and understand, and sing!

Parenting takes work, but what better way to show our kids our love! Just like other songs, these familiar tunes help us to remember a familiar place in the arms of a loving God.

We are a singing, joyful people, and these familiar texts, set to music, assist in our worship.



12/1	Mary Bernhardt
12/3	Paul Leitz, Kasey McGill, Karen Sarver,
12/4	Brian Bauer, Matthew Huberty, Taylor Hurry, Benno Rosin
12/5	Landon Bauer, Riley Eastman Andrew Leitz, Anna Schierbeek Anna Schuppel
12/6	Richard Griffith,
12/7	Lorraine Hanna, Richard Wordell
12/8	Angela Parente, Michael Schlack, Charlotte Toy, Cathy Hof
12/9	Caila Chapman, Jen Pesch, Audrey Hamilton,
12/10	Sara Bussey, Amy Fill
12/11	Tiffany Bierlein, Nicole Villanueva
12/12	Ian Carlson, Karla Morgan, Michelle Rollen, Loretta Rose
12/15	Ayden Emig, Ron Masek, Marirose Meimers, Luke Skuratowicz
12/17	Angelo Waterlander,
12/18	Sharon Dean, Dylan Scheffers
12/20	Lucas Adlam
12/21	Kayla Laurin,
12/22	Charlotte Fill
12/24	Jason Curtiss, John Devine, Mary VandenBerg
12/26	Carol Cory, Marta Kellam, Jay Linebaugh, Walter Mutz,
12/27	Megan Bowers, Tammy Parat
12/28	Joni LaPointe, Annaliese Ream,
12/30	Isabella Frazier
12/31	Alix Allen, Beatrice Mayer Alex Parat, Leona Van Antwerp

Parish Report

Deaths

Pete Wilkins 11/07/2023

Baptism

Winonna Sinclair Wollberg 10/29/2023



Ministry Team Volunteer Opportunities

Maybe your New Year's Resolution is to become more involved and looking for new ways to serve?

It's a great way to get to know people better ...

Take a minute to explore opportunities right here at Zion. Below are areas where Zion could really use additional help along with our many other programs.

Altar Guild

Choir

Communion Assistants

Lector

Kitchen

Sewing

Usher

Email or call the office if you'd like to learn more or are ready to sign-up!

KALAMAZOO LOAVES & FISHES

December wish list item: **Cooking Oil**

Please place donations in the Gray tubs under the office windows in the Lobby

Book Review: “An Altar in the World; A Geography of Faith.” Barbara Brown Taylor. Harper One. 2008.

I enjoy the insights of Christians from a different background than my own. Rather than looking for theological statements I might not agree with, I am searching for insights and perspectives I have never thought of. Scripture is very clear in stating that God speaks to us in many and various ways.

It is like being willing to try different foods or hobbies, or traveling to places we have never been before. Sometimes we find surprises we would have missed had we not been open to something new.

Barbara Brown Taylor is an Episcopal priest, professor of theology, and prolific writer. She has been on the New York Times bestseller list often, and it quite easy to read. In this book she deals with the common issue that many of us have bumped into in our own spiritual journey — the difference between spirituality and religion. There is a longing to be close to God, but often the boundaries and definitions so necessary for religion can become like fences. Here are the first words from her introduction:

“If I had a dollar for every time I heard someone say, “I am spiritual but not religious,” than I might not be any wiser about what that means — but I would be richer ... In that context, people are trying to tell me that they have a sense of the divine depths of things but are not churchgoers. They want to grow closer to God, but not at the cost of creeds, confessions, and religious wars large or small.” [p. xv]

We have all heard such sentiments and even at times felt them ourselves. It can be an honest reflection or an excuse not to make commitments. My sense is her goal in this book is to assist those who want to get closer to God but don't know how, and are intimidated by denominational life, or too selfish to make such a commitment, to start small. She offers an easy place to begin.

The story of Jacob's flight away from home, after he and his mother conspired to steal the birthright from his brother Esau, provides an example for the pattern this book sets up for those wanting to find God in the places where they live.

She recalls Jacob's dream of a ladder to heaven, during his lonely escape. He realized God was with him in that place, and so took the rock he had used as a pillow and used it as an altar for that place that had become sacred to him. That place was named Beth-el, or house of God.

Each chapter outlines a daily practice for the ordinary places of life, that can become centers of spiritual growth. Such efforts can result in a sacred place, if we are open to seeing God's presence and allowing his voice and vision to become intertwined with our reality. That is how she uses the term spirituality.

Our understanding of the Church is that God breathes his spirit into our hearts and lives, and we are part of his body, his Church. That spirit-filled life is something that sometimes we can forget or fail to feel, even as we go through the motions and routines of being religious people. Our creeds and catechisms are important in helping us to understand how to put into words what we believe, but it is the Spirit of God in our hearts and living that is the life which we call faith.

Each chapter of this book takes a normal routine of life, such as how we wake up, encounter others, carry water, or even become lost. Each can become a holy place if we see God in those moments and allow his voice and guidance to change who we are.

Her chapter on getting lost is wonderfully practical. She lives on a farm and writes about how she follows the tracks of her cows, and seeing why they create the paths they create. By following such paths, they go in the right places and avoid the dangerous places. She equates this to normal human behavior, as we are more comfortable with what we know and have tired. But sometimes, getting lost allows for new experiences and insights, and maybe even finding God where we never expected, or hearing his voice which we had too often neglected.

Each chapter of this book is worthy of a few days of consideration. She writes well, is easy to read, and very practical in thing faith to life. This is but one of many books she has written but is a good introduction to her style and faith.

- - Pastor Seeber

Hymnals are Prayerbooks Set to Music

(did you ever think about it that way?)

The Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW) is a hymnal. It is not a holy book. It is not the only book of hymns and liturgies. It simply is the one sitting in our pews. It was the hymnal of a majority of Lutherans in the U.S. for many years.

LBW (as is the case with most hymnals) was produced not only for congregational worship, but also as a personal and family devotional aid. It contains hymns and liturgies, the readings for Sundays of the year, and prayers for special seasons and times of our lives.

The index in the rear lists the composers of hymns, the authors of hymn texts, and arranges hymns by themes for the church year or issues in our daily living.

As a youth, I didn't understand why hymnals were the standard gift at confirmation. (My problem was that it seemed wasted on me, as I couldn't sing very well (as my music teachers often reminded me!) But it makes sense as we consider what the purpose of the hymnal is.

The texts are just as important as the music, and maybe even more so, as music styles change but the scriptural basis for our liturgy and hymns remains the same. We would do well to think of the hymnal as a personal prayer book.

Most of the liturgies are based on scriptural texts, and our liturgies have been used for over a thousand years. They can just as easily be used as prayers or devotional guides at home.

Early Christians adopted the format of the synagogues and home worship they had grown up with. Scripture lessons, the singing of psalms and the recitation of prayers were and continue to be the basis for our worship.

Our hymns are much like the Psalms which are really prayers to be sung. That means you can read the text at home as a prayer as well.

The LBW was a joint project of all the major Lutheran church bodies in our country, and developed over a series of years as an effort to restore the traditional liturgy while maintaining the distinctive theological understandings of the

Reformation. Over the years there have been supplements that have made additional hymns available, that would not all fit in one hymnal, and we continue additional ways of supplementing what we do in worship.

Gradually, the national Lutheran denominations began to drift from the oneness our creed assumes, and new hymnals were developed that were a little different from each other, but still based on the historic liturgy and hymns.

There has been a growing trend in many Christian churches for more new music, less liturgy, bands (rather than organs and pianos), and large screens with lyrics and visuals instead of hymnals. As long as worship is focused on praise of God, the manner and method should not be as important an issue as the theology of the Apostles Creed or the teachings of Jesus.

It is the substance and not the style of worship that is key. Hymnals offer the continuity of substance while allowing for differences in style to be available and supportive of our worship.

We continue to seek to offer various styles and settings in our worship without changing the nature and historic substance which has served the Church so well for hundreds and hundreds of years.

We will continue to seek to do all we do in worship within the framework of the scriptural and sacramental historic liturgy, the church year, and the scriptural basis of what it means to be Christian, flavored by the reforming efforts of Luther and so many others.

The third commandment, (for Lutherans and Roman Catholics) is "Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. That has to do with a time of resting in the God's presence differently than in the rest of the week. We do so that we remember whose we are and are nurtured and strengthened for our daily lives of worship and servant love.

The hymnal is one way, out of many, that can be a resource at home for remembering, praising, and praying. Word and Sacrament are the bywords of what it means to be Lutherans. Bibles and hymnals are the background for such efforts.



Join Zion Children's Ministry and Friends
of Jesus Preschool for a

Christmas Party

Zion Lutheran Church
Sunday, December 17th
11:30 AM-1 PM

Preschool and Sunday School students will be performing during the 10:30 AM church service. Afterwards, we invite the children and families from preschool through grade 5 to join us for a Christmas party including food, activities, and games.



December 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2 8:00 Mens Bible Study 5:30 Worship
3 8:00 Worship 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	4 6:30 Personnel	5 10:00 P. Brejje Bible St	6 Advent 1 Noon - Worship 5:15 Dinner 6:30 Worship	7 Pearl Harbor	8	9 5:30 Worship
10 8:00 Worship 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship 11:30 Congregational Meeting	11	12 10:00 P. Brejje Bible St	13 Advent 2 Noon - Worship 5:15 Dinner 6:30 Worship	14 Noon Finance	15	16 2:00p Prayer Shawl 3 - 5 All Youth Christmas Party 5:30 Worship
17 8:00 Worship 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship 11:30 - 1 Children's Christmas Party	18 6:30 BOD	19 10:00 P. Brejje Bible St	20 Advent 3 Noon - Worship 5:15 Dinner 6:30 Worship	21	22 Dec. Solstice (GMT)	23 5:30 Worship
24 Christmas Eve 10:00a 4th Advent 4:00p Family Service 8:00p Candlelight & Communion Svc	25 Christmas Day Office Closed 10:00 Worship	26 Office Closed	27 F O J CLOSED	28	29	30
31 New Year's Eve 10:00 Worship (Curoff for Grant Requests)						

DECEMBER 2023 WORSHIP LEADERS

	December 3	December 10	December 17	Dec 24 Christmas Eve (10:00, 4:00, 8:00)	Dec 25 Christmas Day (10:00)	December 31 New Years Eve (10:00)
Head Ushers 8:00am	Matt Simmons Walter Kohnke	Steve Weber Mark Schoonbeck	Brian Bauer Stan Leitz	10:00a Fred Bierlein Walter Kohnke	Fred Bierlein Rich Rakow (10:00)	
Head Ushers 10:30am	Joe Zerbel Garr Gast	Ken Lundquist Dave Borak	Steve Nuyen Dennis O'Brien	4p Ken Lundquist, Dave Borak 8:00p Steve Nuyen Dennis O'Brien		Ken Lundquist, Dave Borak (10:00)
Communion Assistants Saturday 5:30pm	Joanne Bowes	Kathleen Jordan	Judy Adlam	n/a		
Communion Assistants 8:00am	Matt Simmons	Jim Mayer	Greg Gerfen	10a Jon Tomer		
Communion Assistants 10:30am	Ryan Bickel	Sue Bickel	Steve Nuyen	8p Dee Wentzel	10:00 Janis Dinda	10:00 Kathleen Jordan Vicki Holt
Cantors	8:00 Linda Stieve	8:00 Karen Stokes Chapo 10:30 Karen Stokes Chapo	8:00 Dennis O'Brien	10:00 Dennis O'Brien		
Acolytes 8:00am	Nikko Quezada	Sydney Woods	Noah Bentz	4p David Hampshire 8:00p Mark Skuratowicz		
Acolytes 10:30am	Sarah Skuratowicz	Eli Frazier	Mark Skuratowicz	8p Dave & Gabe Hampshire	10a Emma Hendricks	10a Grayson Field
Lectors 8:00am	Dave Mayer	Andrew Niedbala	John Buetow	10:00a TBD (Aaron)		
Lectors 10:30am	Erin Hampshire	Greg Gerfen	Jill Hamilton	4:00p TBD (Aaron) 8:00p TBD (Aaron)	10a Pastor	10a Pastor
Altar Ministry Saturday 5:30pm				n/a		
Altar Ministry 8:00am		Linda Mayer Jayne Mayer	Nicki Klein	10a Linda Mayer Jayne Mayer		
Altar Ministry 10:30am	Dee Wentzel Carrie Chapman	Diane Alsvig		8p	10a Janis Dinda Carol Rosin	10a Linda Mayer Jayne Mayer

Monthly Publication of

Zion Lutheran Church

December

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Christmas Worship Schedule

Sunday, Dec 24th 10:00am 4th Sunday of Advent Service

Christmas Eve

4:00p.m. Family Worship Service

8:00 p.m. Candlelight Worship Service and Communion

Christmas Day

10:00 a.m. Worship Service



Wise Men and Women Still Seek Him