A Year To Become…

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" When you were a child, you undoubtedly heard that question. Now that you're grown up, have you become what you wanted to be?

I haven't. As a child, I dreamed of being a firefighter and a police officer. I dreamed of hitting homeruns in the big leagues and scoring touchdowns on the gridiron. Being a pastor was the last thing on my mind.

Unfortunately, professional sports demanded quantities of practice beyond my willingness (and physical ability) and firefighting and law enforcement required extensive training beyond my interest. As a child, I imagined I could simply go to sleep an ordinary person and wake up a professional athlete or an extraordinary public servant.

Life doesn't work that way. To become who you want to be, you must be who you want to become. In other words, becoming X requires acting like X.

If you want to master Spanish, you need learn the rules of Spanish grammar, the vocabulary, and practice, practice, practice. If you want to learn to cook, you need to spend a lot of time in the kitchen watching other cooks, studying recipes, and practicing. If you want to get out of debt, you need to stick to a budget, live within your means, and practice being disciplined and self-controlled.

The same holds true in the Christian faith. If you want to become better at prayer, you need to study the prayers of Scripture, the God of Scripture, a faithful pray-er, and then pray – a lot. If you want to be better versed in Truth, you need to study Truth – extensively.

In fact, according to the Bible, we are to be constantly growing and maturing in our Christian walk. St. Peter encourages us to "add" to our faith. St. Paul prays that our "love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight…" And the author of Hebrews exhorts us to move from the "milk" of "elementary truths of God's word" to "solid food" and then he says, "solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity…"

Despite what some Christians seem to think, no one simply wakes up a knowledgeable and mature Christian. Every mature Christian you have ever known has intentionally worked to get to that point. He or she has read, listened, prayed, and studied a lot. At some point, he decided he wanted to grow in his faith and knowledge of Jesus and he made a choice to become who he wanted to be by being who he wanted to become. In other words, he realized he wanted to become more mature in his faith so he did what mature Christians do, he practiced.

So what do you want to be when you grow up in your faith? Why not make 2014 the year you become who you want to be? Start practicing today!

Oh, in case you were curious: I got over not wanting to be a pastor and now can hardly imagine being anything else. But while I am a pastor, I'm still becoming the Christian God has called me to be. Join me in 2014 in becoming the Christians God has called us to be. – Pastor Conner

Ministry "apps"—Zion Lutheran

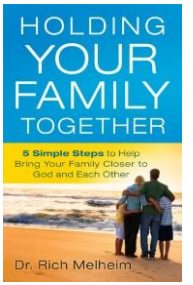
Christian Education Apps
Applying the Truth of Scripture
to Children and Families

Zion January 2014 Newsletter

Prayers for Families

Families face many challenges in nurturing the baptismal faith of their children. Zion Lutheran Church supports them by offering family-friendly worship services and various Christian education programs.

The Zion Prayer Ministry invites us to return to the basics of our support for families by being and offering "Prayers for Families." Volunteers will have the opportunity to choose a family whom they will routinely pray for. An orientation to the prayer ministry will be held during the Bible class hour on Sunday, January 5. This is a short-term (annual) commitment and involves no financial commitment. We invite you to be a prayer volunteer and if possible attend the orientation on January 5. Prayer partners will be selected after the orientation. A more detailed explanation is given on the "sign-up" sheet. Contact Susie Ulrickson, Jean Hargens, or the pastors for additional information.



Holding Your Family Together

Have you ever wondered "How are we going to hold this family together?" The question is asked by all generations—new parents and grandparents. Based upon his book *Holding Your Family Together*: *Five Simple Steps to Help Bring Your Family Closer to God and Each Other*, author Dr. Rich Melheim teaches families the FAITH5. Parents set aside 5 minutes a day to SHARE, READ, TALK, PRAY, and BLESS. Pastor Bob Riggert will facilitate the parent enrichment class each Wednesday evening, beginning on January 15. The sessions will begin at 6:15 p.m. and conclude by approximately 7:15. Five sessions are planned. Families of the congregation, preschool, and community are invited. There is no charge. The purchase of a course book is optional. Invite your friends and neighbors.

Parents as Sunday School and Midweek Partners

Thank you to Susie Ulrickson, Jill Arp, and the Sunday school staff for their special efforts in preparing for and presenting the children's Christmas service on December 22. We all are blessed to be part of the DBAB (Don't Be Afraid Brigade). Now it's back to the routine (routines are good!) of weekly Sunday school worship and lessons. Lessons for the winter quarter focus on the ministry of Jesus: What happened after His birth? PARENTS—your support in bringing your child to church and Sunday school is important!

Zion Midweek classes resume on Wednesday, January 8!

Stewardship Apps—Zion Lutheran Church
Applying the Truth of Scripture in Sharing and Caring

HOPE: Helping Other People Eat:
Every 6 seconds a child dies of hunger. One in 7 people in the world will go to bed hungry tonight. Manning's C-3 (Celebration + Christ+ Community) initiative is hosting the second annual food packaging event on Saturday, January 11 at the VFW hall (sign up for a work shift in the fellowship hall). Financial support is needed to buy the food items (rice, soy, dried beans, dried vegetables, seasoning and vitamins) to be packaged. Checks can be directed to "C3" and given in the offering plate or church office; bills and coins can be deposited in the "gizmo" in the fellowship hall. The Midweek (grades 5-8) students are hosting a spaghetti supper on Sunday evening, January 5 from 4-6 p.m. Spaghetti, garlic bread, and desserts will be served. Donations for the meal will support the HOPE event.

"Generations":
A highlight of 2013 at Zion Lutheran was the "Generations" campaign. Praise God and "thank you" for your generous response. A full financial update will be shared early in the new year. Well over $500,000 has already been shared and pledged! This is a three-year campaign. Gifts toward the commitment or additional gifts of thanksgiving can be given at any time. Please note "Generations" on the check or share your gifts in a special "Generations" envelope.

The Building Committee has met with the architect and anticipates receiving final drawings in January. A construction plan will be developed and presented to the congregation at a special Voter's Assembly meeting. The Building Committee has also met with representatives from Labors for Christ and anticipates this ministry to assist us in the construction process. Building Committee co-chairs are Dennis Backhaus and Bob Genzen.

First-fruits Giving:
While we celebrate the generosity of Zion members to the "Generations" campaign, we remember that the day to day work of the congregation goes on. We celebrate the staff that provides pastoral leadership, administrative assistance and custodial care. Facilities continue to be maintained. Educational materials are needed. The broader mission of the church in District and synod depends on our support. Our weekly gifts support God's work at Zion and beyond. Members are encouraged to set aside a consistent percentage (2%, 5%, 10%) of their weekly or monthly income and to dedicate it to kingdom work. First fruits giving can be facilitated with direct electronic deposits. Financial secretary Amber Neumann or Comptroller Jeff Hargens can assist you with the electronic giving process.

Young Investors Club:
It's important that children learn how to save. The Lutheran Church Extension Fund "Young Investors Club" not only teaches the importance of sharing and saving but offers children stewardship lessons. Zion's "club" meets the 3rd Sunday of each month as children purchase saving stamps. Contact Warren Puck for more information on the benefits of belonging to the "Young Investors Club."

Stewardship Committee:
After a year's "vacancy" the stewardship life of Zion is chaired by Rick Lohrmann. If you have a desire to be part of a new and growing Zion stewardship team, contact Rick or Pastor Riggert.

"Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31

White Rose Ceremony

Since *Roe v. Wade* (1973), nearly 57,000,000 unborn babies have been killed (one every 23 seconds). They could have been your co-worker, your brother, your friend. Millions of post-abortive women suffer silently because of their choice. They experience depression, self-hatred, sleep difficulties, and worse. They are your neighbor, your sister, your daughter. We can be silent no more. The lives lost demand our open expression of grief. The lives living with the after-effects of abortion need Christ's grace. On Saturday, January 18 at 7:00 p.m., we will do both. During the course of the service, one white rose will be placed in a cradle for every one million babies aborted. Volunteers from Zion and the Manning community are needed. To volunteer, call Pastor Conner (655-2352) or email him: revconner@mmctsu.com.

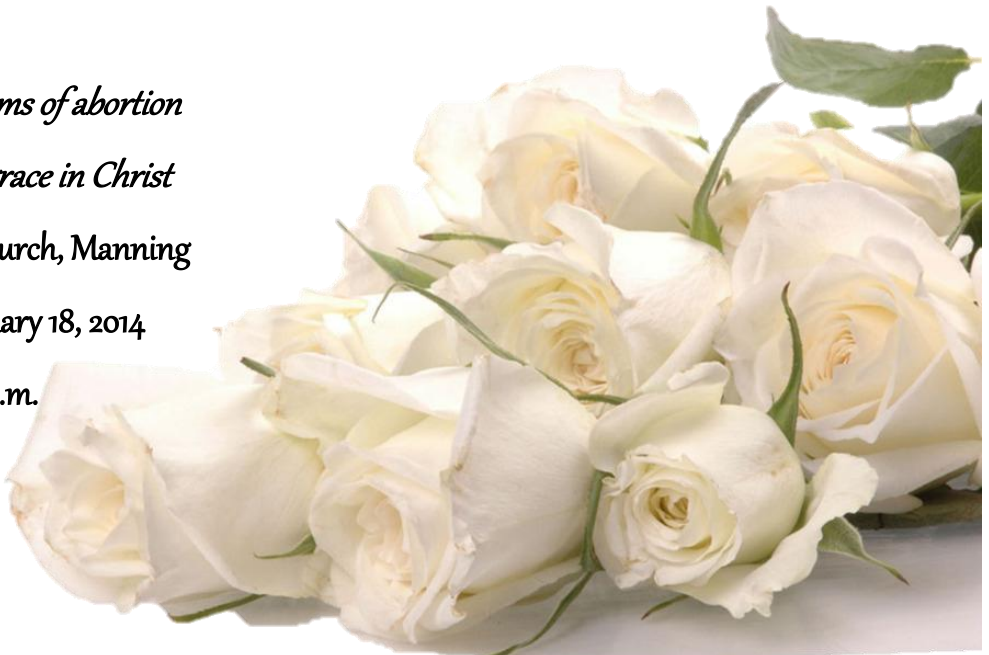
Grieving the victims of abortion

Offering God's grace in Christ

Zion Lutheran Church, Manning

Saturday, January 18, 2014

7:00 p.m.



Q: ***I have a friend who has cancer and I'm not sure what to say to her when I visit? Do you have any suggestions?***

You've asked a question I think all of us have struggled with at some time or another. What do you say to the woman diagnosed with terminal cancer or the man who has just suffered a debilitating stroke? What do you say to the parent whose child just died? What do we say to the suffering?

In his helpful little book, *Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart: How to Relate to Those Who are Suffering*, Kenneth Haugk shares several helpful thoughts on what to say and on what not to say.[1] So before we discuss what is helpful to say, we'll first describe what is NOT helpful to say.

"I know how you feel."

At all costs, avoid saying this! As Haugk says, "You may think you know, you may guess how someone else feels, you may suppose you know how someone else feels, but it's all speculation. And in speculating, you rob the other of his or her unique identity" (104).

In all likelihood, people say "I know how you feel" to empathize with someone who is suffering. Unfortunately, those words do exactly the opposite. Empathizing means "feeling with" someone. In other words, empathizing requires entering into another's suffering and suffering with them. "I know how you feel" robs the other person of their personal feelings. Remember, another person's suffering is *not about you*! It is not your opportunity to talk about yourself and your trials and tribulations. It's just not about you.

Far better would be to ask, "How are you feeling?" and then listen to their answer. In time it may be appropriate to say something like, "You know, I went through something similar to that a while back and here's how I felt…" This is drastically different than "I know how you feel" because when you share your feelings, you aren't speculating; you truly know how you felt.

"It's for the best."

People often offer this comment or others like it to people who are mourning the death of someone close to them.[2] Resist the temptation!

As Haugk points out, the problem with statements like this is that "instead of viewing the situation from the suffering person's perspective, these statements admonish him or her to see the situation from the caregiver's point of view. Even when such a view might be true, 'It's for the best' statements are better left unsaid until the hurting person arrives at that conclusion independently" (106). If the suffering individual arrives at this conclusion, you can agree, but don't make this conclusion for them. Remember it's not about you.

"Keep a stiff upper lip."

People often offer some variation to this statement to people going through a difficult life situation. To the woman mourning a miscarriage: "Look on the bright side, you already have three children and another one would have been more than your house could hold." To the man who lost his job: "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." And to the newly divorced: "Go on, let yourself go and have a good time."

Don't say these words! You might think they're helpful… they're not. Think about what you're really saying, "You're not handling this the right way.

[1] Haugk, the founder of Stephen Ministries, lost his wife to ovarian cancer. His book is a mixture of personal experience and extensive research with over 4,200 participants (some caregivers, most sufferers) who shared their experiences. Pastor Riggert led a group through this book last January.

[2] Other similar no-no's are "He's at peace now." "She's in a better place." "He's with Jesus now." "It's really a blessing."

You're weak. Do it my way and you'll be fine." That doesn't help the suffering person at all.

"At least…"

People often offer "At least…" statements to help the sufferer see positive in the midst of negative. "At least he didn't suffer long." "At least you had 50 good years of marriage." "At least she's only paralyzed on one side." Avoid these statements.

As Haugk explains, "The problem with 'at least' statements is that they tend to minimize the pain of the suffering person by saying that it's not as bad as it could be or that other people have experienced worse. Most hurting people react negatively to having the significance of their pain diminished, and that's why at-least statements are so hurtful" (108)

As Haugk suggests, "a good principle is: It's all right to *think* at-least thoughts; it's not all right to *say* them" (108).

"God doesn't give you more than you can handle."

Unfortunately, well-meaning Christians offer these as Biblical words of comfort, but as Haugk asks, "Where in the Bible does it say, 'God doesn't give you more than you can handle'? Nowhere. It simply doesn't." 1 Corinthians 10:13 talks about God not letting us be *tempted* "beyond what you can bear," but it says nothing about suffering.

Besides, vague platitudes like "God doesn't give you more than you can bear" assume the sufferer is strong enough to bear his or her suffering alone. Scripture assumes otherwise. Galatians 6 encourages us to "carry each other's burdens…" Common clichés won't do; sufferers need genuine compassion and empathy.

"It's God's will."

As Haugk explains, "The purpose here is not to debate the various theological… positions about what the true will of God is, but to assert that theological wrangling… (has) little place in caregiving" (113).

Despite what some might think "It's God's will" isn't comforting to hear. As one man shared, "These are not helpful words. To me, they convey, 'I don't know what the heck to say, so just don't cry on me,' or 'Hurry up and accept it, so I don't have to hear or see your pain" (113). So don't use these words!

Perhaps the most important thing to remember is: other people's suffering is <u>not about you</u>! As Haugk says, "Remember from the beginning that your conversation with a suffering person is not about 'us' – meaning not about you and the other person… It is strictly about the one who is suffering" (57).

With these no-no's in mind, what should we say? What do suffering people find helpful? Perhaps a sample conversation would be helpful:

"Hello."
"It's good to see you."
Possibly a compassionate touch.
"Fill me in on what's been happening."

This might not seem like much, but these simple words are more helpful than many people realize. These simple words assure the hurting person you are there to listen and, when someone who is suffering believes you truly hear them, he feels more comfortable talking about his life situation.

It's important to keep in mind that your goal when visiting a suffering soul is, as Haugk says, "simply to get them to talk about what is concerning them right at that moment. That will be enough if you allow that to happen. You don't have to think up perfect formula answers to questions. You don't have to theologize or psychologize or sing away the other's heavy heart. You couldn't do it anyway" (55).

Too often, people come with an agenda or try to give a pep talk. Suffering people don't need a pep talk; they need someone to listen and simply be with them.

The desire to cheer people up comes from the innate desire we have to fix things, but as Haugk explains, "Fixing things can be okay, as long as it's dinner or the other person's car. But trying to fix a person is not an appropriate or even attainable goal. Here's a good rule of thumb: Fix things; relate to people" (81).

It's exceedingly difficult to watch someone suffer and know that we can't fix it. That's why it's helpful not to concern yourself with what you bring to the hurting person, but who you bring.

As Haugk says, "Your job is to be Jesus right then and there to them" (74). In other words, you are called to incarnate the care of Jesus to the hurting person. You can't fix what is broken; only Jesus can.

Jesus – only Jesus – can forever fix what is broken, and Scripture assures us He will do it, but in His time. The suffering person may never be "all better" in this life and any attempt on our part to assure them of this is nothing more than an empty promise. Suffering people don't need empty promises; they need Jesus. As a caregiver you have the unique opportunity to share the compassion of Jesus and His promised-filled Word. Knowing the Scriptures, then, proves very helpful in sharing Jesus with someone who is suffering.

As we noted above, in order to display genuine care to the hurting soul, we absolutely must remember it's not about us! Perhaps this little prayer would be helpful for all caregivers to pray regularly, "O Lord, please keep your arm around my shoulder and your hand over my mouth" (64).

In summary, our job is not to fix things; it's to incarnate the care of Christ by listening and, as Haugk shares, "when suffering people realize that you are hearing and believing them, they experience great comfort" (67).

If you found these tips helpful, you'd truly appreciate Haugk's book. If you want to talk more about this, stop in and visit with me sometime.
-- Pastor Conner

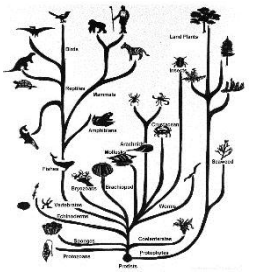
Other helpful tips:

- If you call on the telephone, ask whether it's a good time to talk and then don't talk, listen!
- Curb your curiosity. Don't ask probing questions. Ask yourself, "Will knowing the answer to this question help me to be a better caregiver?"
- Ask open-ended questions such as, "How do you feel?" and "How can I help?"
- If you promise to pray for a person; do it!

Offers suffering individuals found most helpful:

1. Providing or preparing meals
2. Caring for children
3. Doing household chores
4. Providing transportation
5. Shopping or running errands
6. Caring for pets and other animals
7. Making phone calls
8. Staying with an ill family member so the primary caregiver can attend to other business

Evidential Axe Falls Darwin's Tree

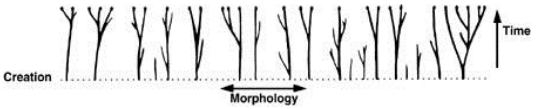


Darwin's tree of life has been an icon in textbooks and classrooms for generations. According to the theory, all living things share a common ancestor. Thus, when you trace the branches back, you should find a common trunk from which all living things ultimately sprang. Before scientists knew much about genetics, these branches were traced through similar physical traits between organisms (called "morphology"). So long as they didn't take the fossil record into consideration, the theory looked great. When they honestly examined the fossils, however, a disturbing picture emerged. Darwinian evolutionists had expected to find a "bottom-up" pattern in the fossil record with lower levels in the biological hierarchy appearing before the higher levels. The evidence, thanks in large part to a fossil find termed "the Cambrian Explosion," showed precisely the opposite. According to the evidence, it seems as if animals appeared fully formed and have diversified/adapted from there in a "top-down" fashion. Jonathan Wells, author of *Icons of Evolution*, observed, "the Cambrian explosion stands Darwin's tree of life on its head."

False theories, however, aren't abandoned easily. So, rather than admit that the evidential axe had felled Darwin's tree, scientists turned in hope to the emerging field of molecular biology. By examining gene sequencing in living organisms they hoped to find the evidence needed to save Darwin's tree. The evidence, however, has not been kind to the iconic tree. Each new discovery fell like an axe at its roots. One scientist famously lamented, "Molecular phylogenists will have failed to find the 'true tree,' not because their methods are inadequate or because they have chosen the wrong genes, but because the history of life cannot properly be represented as a tree."[3] And just this year a paper in *Trends in Genetics* observed that "the more we learn about genomes the less tree-like we find their evolutionary history to be." Another researcher minced no words when he wrote, "the holy grail was to build the tree of life…" but "today that project lies in tatters, torn to pieces by an onslaught of negative evidence." He went on to say, "many biologists now argue that the tree concept is obsolete and needs to be discarded."[4]

After an extensive study of genetic evidence another researcher bluntly concluded, "We've just annihilated the tree of life. It's not a tree any more, it's a different topology entirely."[5]

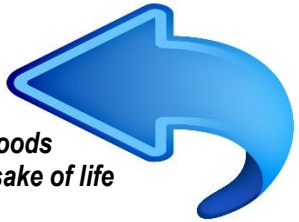
The evidential axe has not been kind to Darwin's tree. Each new genetic find sent fresh splinters flying until it has finally dropped it entirely. And yet the iconic tree continues to stand in textbooks. Are we to believe the authors unaware of the latest evidence or has the icon proved too useful in promoting a troubled theory?



For those willing to evaluate the evidence honestly, a startling image begins to emerge. Instead of a singular tree, an orchard of life stands. In other words, the branches trace back not to one common ancestral trunk, but to a great number of original kinds. What we see, then, is diversification within kinds, but not change across kinds. And this is precisely what the Biblical account would predict: original created kinds imbued with great genetic flexibility and adaptability to maximize survivability. Perhaps it's time to insist upon a new icon.

[3] *Scientific America*, 2000.
[4] *New Scientist*, 2009.
[5] *New Scientist,* 2009.

Counterpoint



Countering falsehoods with facts for the sake of life

Last month we started a new article series designed to equip you to evaluate and respond to the ceaselessly streaming anti-life rhetoric in our world. This month we feature another popular claim as we hold it up to the light of reason and Scripture.

Claim:

"Every child should be a wanted child. Therefore, unwanted children shouldn't be brought into the world."

What's really being said

Planned Parenthood, along with numerous other anti-life voices, has long defended abortion with the seemingly moral platitude "Every child a wanted child." It's a carefully chosen statement because it appears to claim a moral high ground and make anyone who disagrees with it sound heartless because it makes the person who disagrees sound like he's claiming that children shouldn't be wanted.

But what's really being said? Remember, anti-life voices claim every child should be wanted not to encourage parents to want their children or to highlight the possibility of adoption, but to defend the killing of unborn children. What they're really saying, then, is "Every unwanted child should be a dead child."

But consider where such logic would lead. Are we free to dispose of unwanted children like unwanted cats or mice? If parents are free to dispose of their unborn child because they don't want him, should they be free to dispose of him after he's born? Most would be rightly revolted by such a thought, but what's the difference?[6] Is an unborn baby any less human, is he any less valuable than a born baby? A child is a child from the moment of conception. Smaller, yes, but size doesn't diminish value. The needs of the newly conceived child are no different from the born child: nutrition and protection.

If we find it morally revolting to consider killing born children who parents no longer want, why are we not revolted by killing unborn babies parents don't want? The statement "Every child a wanted child" is a deceptive moral platitude to justify killing unwanted children.

Counterpoint:

"Every child a wanted child" is a smokescreen to conceal the true claim: Every unwanted child a dead child. This is not a moral platitude; it's lie to justify killing unborn babies. A child's value is not determined by his wanted-ness; his value is determined by His Creator – God.

The problem of "unwanted children"

Pro-abortion voices are quick to highlight the problem of unwanted children, which is a problem that should concern everyone. But consider their solution. They see the phrase "unwanted children" and insist the solution is found in eliminating the children. Wouldn't it be far more compassionate to try to save the children and eliminate the "unwanted"? Instead of killing unborn babies, wouldn't it be better to dedicate our cultural efforts to teaching personal responsibility, virtue, and the inherent value and worth of children? And isn't that precisely what we do in church? Isn't that precisely what the Bible teaches?

Counterpoint:

The problem of "unwanted children" isn't resolved by eliminating children, but by eliminating our "unwanting" of them.

[6] A growing number of anti-life voices are arguing precisely this today. They claim parents should be free to terminate their child's life for a period of time after birth!

The myth of unwanted children

Planned Parenthood, along with other anti-life voices, has perpetuated the myth that some children are unwanted by everyone, and therefore better off dead, but that's simply not true. Millions of adoptive parents want to adopt babies. Unfortunately, babies are aborted 12 to 23 times more often than they are adopted to couples who want them.[7] Planned Parenthood exacerbates the problem by aborting 391 babies for every 1 adoption *referral*.[8] Apparently, even suggesting a child is wanted is taboo for Planned Parenthood. Scores of couples are even waiting to adopt babies with handicaps and health difficulties.

Counterpoint:

"Unwanted children" is a myth and should never be used to justifying killing unborn children. Millions of adoptive parents want to provide a loving home for the children being aborted in our nation.

Underlying the anti-life rhetoric is the belief that abortion is in the best interest of unwanted babies, but take half a moment to consider such a belief. Abortion involves tearing the limbs from babies, vacuuming sucking them from their mothers' wombs, and disposing of them in medical waste. How is that in the best interest of babies? It's true that children may be born into difficult situations. They may enter a world that will inflict great suffering upon them. Does any of this justify killing them in the womb? Does it not, instead, make certain moral requirements of us by challenging us to provide safe and loving environments for children? And does it not call us, the church, to a renewed urgency in bringing the Gospel of Jesus and the compassion of Christ to a lost and broken world? The need to speak up is great. When you hear such anti-life rhetoric, for the sake of life speak up and lovingly offer the counterpoint of truth.

epiphany explained

Mention "Epiphany" to most people today and, if they have any knowledge of its celebration in the church, you're likely to hear about camels, kings, and wise men. It may come as a surprise, but Epiphany involves none of them! The word "epiphany" simply means "manifest" or "to make known" and it marks the season of the church where the appointed texts zero in on the Christ child's identity that is made known to us. The lead off text is from Matthew 2 with Magi from the east. Over time these men have been molded into three "wise men" or "kings" riding on camels. The Bible, however, doesn't name the number of Magi (only three gifts), mentions no camels (although they could have ridden them), and doesn't call them "wise" or "kings." The Bible calls them "magi," from which we get "magic." They weren't pulling rabbits out of their hats, but they were reading the stars to discern the future. To be kind, they were pagans of the worst sort, certainly not wise by any biblical understanding.

The great surprise is that God revealed Himself to pagan star-gazers! God "epiphanied" Himself to ignorant Magi. This child Jesus (the Magi didn't see the newborn Jesus in the stable; they arrived over a year later) isn't just for Jews; He's for everyone – even pagans of the worst variety. This is good news! God is for sinners! God is for us. The Christ child was born to be our Savior. And that's just the beginning of Epiphany! Wait until you hear the rest!

[7] lifenews.com/2012/07/09/thirty-six-couples-wait-for-every-one-baby-who-is-adopted/

[8] http://bdfund.org/uploads/file_607.pdf

2014 Planning

Jesus turned to the crowds who were following Him and challenged them to consider the cost of discipleship and then He used this everyday example to illustrate His point: "which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost?" His point is clear: "Wise people count their costs before they begin a project. How much more so should we consider the cost of discipleship before we begin to follow Jesus?"

As we enter a new year, we would do well to "count our costs" for 2014. We would also be wise to ask whether our Christian faith will affect the way we do our counting. The world plans by counting projected income, evaluating projected expenses (spending and saving), and then considering what's left for giving. Because we acknowledge that our daily bread comes from God, we count differently. Instead of counting income, expense, and then giving, we evaluate our income then set our giving and then plan for our expenses. Anything left after that is available for further charitable giving.

Let's make sure we understand. The Scriptures speak of firstfruits giving. That means our giving is based on our income. A portion of what we bring in is returned in thankfulness to God. A helpful place to begin our firstfruits giving is the tithe (a tithe = 10% of one's income). It's not a law, but is a pattern of giving that permeates the Bible. Further, God exhorts us to "excel in the grace of giving" (2 Cor. 8:7) and to give to where we want our hearts to be (Mat. 6:19-21). We are not required to tithe; we are free to tithe.

Once we have set our firstfruits giving, then we can evaluate our expenses. Some of them may need to be cut. Our tithing may prevent us from affording cable TV or a smartphone or a new car payment or a big family vacation and that is precisely what the world needs to see. They need to see Christians more in love with God and His eternal Kingdom than with the things of this world which won't endure. They need to see our willingness to go without certain luxuries, our willingness to deny ourselves certain earthly pleasures in the name of following Christ.

After we have evaluated our projected income, our firstfruits giving, and our projected expenses, we will be ready to consider our charitable giving. To the world this is a strange way of counting, but shouldn't followers of Christ look "not normal" to the world? Shouldn't our confession of Christ influence our financial decisions? For disciples of Jesus, charitable giving is the giving above and beyond the firstfruits giving. Let's put it in a formula:

The world: Projected income → projected expense, leftover giving

Christians: Projected income → firstfruit giving, projected expense, charitable giving

As you sit down to "count the costs" of 2014, consider how those costs fit into the joyful cost of discipleship.

January Highlights

Zion Ladies Guild Highlights

Zion Guild met on December 11th for its regular meeting, hosted by Susan Schilling and Barb Anderson with 12 members in attendance.

Pastor Conner provided devotions and prayer. Margaret Backhaus provided our Christian Life message. President Susan Schilling led the business meeting.

Circle Reports were as follows:

Circle 2 will serve December Fellowship Coffees (5th Sunday is congregation Cookie Sunday.)
Circle 3 will serve January Fellowship Coffees
Circle 1 served Karie Graham funeral lunch to 56.
Circle 3 served Frank Wegner funeral lunch to 74.
Circle 2 will serve the next funeral lunch.

Audrey Roe, Human Care Chairman reported that 73 quilts have been made by our quilting group, 8 were sent to Adopt a Family in Manning and quilts will be given to Quakerdale Campus residents in Manning.

Advent by Candlelight was again a successful Fund Raiser with 160 men and women in attendance.

We continue to collect stamps, Campbell's labels, fronts of Christmas and Birthday cards, ink cartridges, cell phones with batteries and box tops for education. Our January 1 PM meeting will be on the 8th at 1 PM with hostesses Delores Kuhn and Janet Gruhn.

Cheral Buhr, Secretary

Preschool Highlights of December

First, our state licensing consultant, Mr. Nate Knepper, conducted his off year surprise licensing visit on December 17th. Mr. Knepper had many positive things to say about our program and was extremely impressed with the continuation of the congregation to make physical/structural improvements to the classroom and classroom area remodeling of our room and the new faucets. In other words, the preschool is in full compliance! YEAH

Second, I saved the best for last! The preschool children were awesome singing during the Advent service on December 18. Their excitement and twinkle in their eyes was shared by all who heard them sing.

Again, the preschool children and teachers say "Happy New Year"!

In January, we will be celebrating "Dads" …Dad's Night is scheduled for January 23.

Blessings,
Deb Fink and Janice Nemitz

December 2013 Issue #5

Selamat Hari Natal! (Indonesian for "Merry Christmas!")

During this time of Advent and Christmas, the Ferry family is reflecting upon all the gifts we've been able to give and receive as we've pursued the work to which Christ has called us through His Church. We've been able to give gifts to our Lutheran brothers and sisters in the GKLI during my trip over there this year. We've been able to receive gifts from them in the form of friendship and hospitality. We've been able to rejoice in the partnership our Lord has created between us and so many of you through your generous donations and gracious prayers. This is most likely the last Christmas we will have in the United States for a long time. And for that, we're grateful to you! For that means we're on track to deploy within the next few months according to our Lord's will. We thank you for your continued support, your ongoing prayers, and your willingness to tell others about the opportunities we have to serve in Indonesia.

Family Update

We're homeless and loving it! On the day we left for our recent month-long road trip to the Western United States, we officially put our house on the market. A mere *three days* later, we were accepting an offer on it! Thanks be to God for His continued providence. With the house sold, there's one fewer obstacle in our way as we prepare to deploy to Indonesia permanently. In the meantime, we've taken up residence in the home of some gracious people who are spending the winter elsewhere. We're so grateful to have brothers and sisters in Christ who are supporting us in this way!

The kids have begun to take very seriously their learning of the Indonesian language as our deployment comes closer:

Caleb (8 years old) regularly jumps in when Dad's presenting on our work in Indonesia, answering the questions and helping people pronounce the Indonesian words.

Caitlin (4 years old) is heard regularly counting in Indonesian rather than in English. As she's playing games with her stuffed animals, you can hear her saying "*Satu, dua, tiga*…" (one, two, three…).

Carissa (1 year old) is learning Bahasa Indonesia right along with the English words. She responds to *tidak* the same way she responds to the English "no." She'll be our first true bi-lingual in the family!

C____?? (Due in Feb.) will be tired of Daddy practicing his Indonesian before he/she can even voice an objection.

A Parting Word

The angel said to [the shepherds], "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of 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. — St. Luke 2:11 ESV

Prayers, Praises, and Thanksgiving

* Thanksgiving for the incredible number of people who are stepping forward to support us in a myriad of ways
* Thanksgiving for safe travels during our recent trek out to the Western United States (and back!)
* For a safe and healthy pregnancy for Cheryl and the new baby
* Thanksgiving for the pending sale of our Michigan house
* For the people of our former parish, St. Mark's, West Bloomfield, as they call their new pastor
* For *ongoing* pledged support, that we might serve overseas according to our Lord's will

To subscribe to the Ferry's newsletter with photos log onto www.cferry.com.

Annual Thanksgiving Worship & Fellowship: For 5 years we have met at Trinity in Odebolt with our 3 northern Hispanic missions for our annual Thanksgiving worship and fellowship dinner. We had a beautiful worship with Holy Communion. This service is a combination Reformation, Unity and Thanksgiving service. We appreciate so much the hospitality of Trinity Lutheran Church in Odebolt and their pastor, Glenn Hanson. He not only came to help us set up but stayed for the service and the fellowship dinner. Over these many years Trinity has been allowing us to use their sanctuary and fellowship hall as it is conveniently located about 30 minutes from each church.

This joint service is one of 3 special events we do annually with our Hispanic missions. In the summer we have a family retreat at Camp Okoboji. In the spring we have a Mission Sunday at Mission Central near Mapleton. It is a special time for our members to get to know other Hispanic Lutherans and also a wonderful opportunity to bring friends for a special event and to get to know the Lutheran church. At this service Ricardo came with his family. Ricardo told me that he was very nervous as he had never been in a church. Thankfully he came to our church service in Storm Lake a few weeks later. What a gospel blessing!

The Blessing of The Medoza Family: On Sunday December 1st Marcia Mendoza was confirmed into the Christian faith and her 3 children (Moises, Jasmin & Laura) were baptized at our Mission in Denison. Marcia came to us from a Pentecostal religious background and has served as a leader in various churches in California and in Denison. She was attracted to our church because of our Lutheran school. Her twins Moises and Jasmin now attend Zion and are in the 8th grade. We look forward to the blessings that Marcia and her family will bring to our church. +

My Tyson Chaplaincy at the Beef Plant in Denison: As winter approaches the plant has had to hire more workers. In both October and November we hired more than 40 new workers. This gives me a wonderful opportunity to provide pastoral care to many new faces. As usual we have received new 'team members' from all over the world. But the universal truth with all of them is that they all are weak sinners who make mistakes and bad decisions and have problems at times in their lives. Most are amazed that a company would provide spiritual counseling for the workers. But almost all are friendly and happy to talk with me. Like Arturo, who worked at the plant before and had to leave because of problems. He told me how happy he was to be back, that he had changed his life and wanted to be a more faithful worker and a better person. He has also learned to trust in Jesus as His Savior. Or Juan who has never gotten over seeing his father kidnapped from home when he was a child. It still haunts him and causes deep depression. But now through his faith he is learning how to move forward trusting the Lord.

Please Pray For: +New member Marcia and her 3 children in Denison. +Jose and Ingrid in Storm Lake, studying to become adult members. +Our Call process and plans for interview with 3 Hispanic mission pastors at our mission in Des Moines. +The blessings of our annual Unity and Thanksgiving joint service in Odebolt in November. +New Hispanic families in our Lutheran school in Denison. +Advent and Christmas activities in all of our missions. +Plans to charter our mission in Denison. + ***In thanksgiving for the mission hearts of the many individuals and congregations of the Iowa District West who monthly support the Lord's work among Hispanic immigrants. +++***

TO CONTACT ME:
Rev. Daniel Vogel
32678 Aspen Ave. Manning, Iowa, 51455
1-712-653-2354 or Cell: 712-309-1292 or E-mail me at: Dan.Vogel@idwlcms.org

January Birthdays and Anniversaries @ Zion

1Greg Neumann
2. Jennifer Morris
Joel Musfeldt
Alex Ranniger
Rachel Winter
4. Alexis Dawson
Karen Kienast
5. Kenneth Knudson
Kyle Lohrmann
6. Dawn Ketchum
Betty Maasen
8. Amy Hansen
9. Bode England
10. Eli Rood
11. Glen Kusel
12. Charles Fielweber
Daniel Grove
John Opperman
14. Kamryn Lesle
David Page
15. Kari Deal
Kenneth Eischeid
Jaclyn Garrison
Colene Lohrmann
16. Mike Kuchel
Jenna Soll
Shona Weitl
17. Kevin Grimm
18. Paul Christensen
Sarah Gruhn
Sara Kobus
Brian Lamp
Sonia Nulle
19. David Bohlmann
Joe Karsten
Cynthia Ranniger

22. Crystal Dreher
Bryce Mohr
Gary Schroeder
Stephanie Winter
23. Donna Forman
25. Lucas Borkowski
Tabitha Kuchel
William Weitl
27. Marshall Hansen
Deb Knueven
28. Riley Adams
Kelly Ceminski
Karen Joens
Kemper Nelson
Lowell Schroeder
29. Mary Greving
Stacie Nelson
Robert Riggert
30. Michael Frank
31. Grant Behrens
Barbara Rood
Philip Vogel

1. Kyle & Jill Arp
Stanley & Lori Musfeldt
6. Mike & Judy Jacobsen
8. Rodney & Kristin Backhaus
9. Curits & Nancy Grimm
14. Curt & Rexanne Struve
20. Charles & Marlyn Fielweber
22. Kenneth & Dorothy Knudson

If we missed or misspelled your name, please inform the church office.

Congregational Servants

Council:
Curt Struve, President
Sam Musfeldt, Vice President
Donna Forman, Record. Sec.
Amber Neumann, Fin. Sec.
Karen Kienast, Treasurer
Jeff Hargens, CFO

Board of Elders:
LaVern Bald, head elder
Stan Baack, Stan Musfeldt
Dave Grundmeier
Tim Kienast, Lynn Kruse
Craig Musfeldt,

Board of Deacons:
David Bohlman, Bruce Grimm,
Ryan Crawford, Eric Ramsey
Paul Christensen, Richard Zinke,
Don Lamb

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Kent Vollstedt,
Jason Kienast,
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Frank Mohr, Lynn Kruse,
Gary Schroeder, Warren Puck

Board of Education:
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Trisha Beck, Shelly Gruhn
Joni Kienast, Laurene Meeves,
Kari Ranniger, Kathy Vollstedt

Preschool Board:
Dianne Riggert, Chair
Jean Ferneding, Diane Riggert,
Sandra Sextro, Heather Kusel,
Jen Morris
Elder: LaVern Bald

Altar Guild:
Monica Christensen, Director

Stewardship Board:
Rick Lohrmann, Chair

Ladies Guild:
Susie Schilling, President

Fellowship Club:
Russ Mohr, President

Choir:
Dr. Tom Ulrickson, director

Children's Choir:
Susie Ulrickson, Jill Arp

Quakerdale Christmas Report

On Sunday, December 15th, several Zion family members welcomed 13 residents and 3 staff of Quakerdale to a Christmas feast here at Zion. In addition to enjoying a delicious feast, each child received multiple gifts from Zion members including gloves, hats, goodies, and a quilt from our sewing ladies. And then when the feast was finished, the kids volunteered to do the dishes! Thank you to the many Zion members who brought in gifts or food to make the evening special for these kids. Special thanks to Sandra Vahl for having the idea and bringing it fruition!