Some articles are subtle. This isn't one of those articles. I have one simple, and hopefully blunt, point: READ. Put the TV remote down, hide your cell phone, unplug your computer, and READ! The virtual world of the screen is shriveling your mind.[1]

The virtual world of the screen is shriveling your mind.

I know that after a hard day of work, you just want to vegetate mindlessly before the almighty screen. But ask yourself, do you really want to become a mindless vegetable? REALLY? Is Mr. Lunt (Veggie Tales' bottom-bloated, mind-starved gourd) really your hero?

But the screen is sooooo captivating – pretty colors, moving figures, hypnotizing drama. It calls to us like C.S. Lewis' Underworld Queen hypnotically called to Prince Rilian, Puddleglum, and his fellow rescue party, hoping to entrance them as eternal prisioners in her substitute reality.[2] It took Puddleglum doing a very brave thing to save the prince – he stamped his unshod, marshwiggle foot on the queen's enchanted fire. With the fire out, Rilian, Puddleglum, and company were able to see the queen for what she was – an imposter pushing a counterfeit reality.

Our situation is similarly dire. To break the screen's enchantment and escape its mind-shriveling counterfeit reality, you must do a very brave thing: turn it off and replace the habit with something new and mind-strengthening –reading! Don't tell yourself, "I'm not a reader." No one is born a reader any more than people are born able to ride a bike or multiply 7x9. You become a reader the same way you became a bike-rider and a math whiz: you practice.

What should I read?

Great question! First, the Word of God. Second, books that make you think.

The Word

The psalmist put it this way, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105) and Paul this way, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). And Jesus tells us that the Word "bear[s] witness about me" (Jn 5:39). You gain wisdom, righteousness, and Christ in the Word. The screen won't give you that.

Books that make you think

A.W. Tozer once wrote, "One of the acid tests of a really fine book is that while you are reading it you put it down and start to think." Need help knowing where to start? Check out our church library. We just added several new, thought-provoking books on a wide range of subjects: marriage, apologetics, Heaven, Islam, anxiety, stewardship, Lutheranism, and more. Looking for something in particular? Ask me. "Reading on wise and virtuous subjects is," as William Law put it, "next to the Bible and prayer, the best improvement of our hearts. It enlightens us, calms us, it collects our thoughts and prompts us to better efforts."

Stop becoming Mr. Lunt, learn from Puddleglum's brave thing, and start READING. – Pastor Conner

[1] I know it's stimulating and there are some fascinating edutational programs that actually convey relevant and accurate information. In moderation (true moderation!) these can be fine.

[2] Not familiar with the story? You can read it in Lewis' *The Silver Chair*.

MINISTRY APPS—Zion Lutheran – February 2015

Applying the Gospel in the Manning Community

It is not accidental or incidental that God placed Zion Lutheran Church in the Manning community. We have something special to offer: the Good News of Jesus as our Savior. While Zion offers quality education programs, charitable activities and caring actions, a comfortable and convenient meeting place, and a variety of other services to the community, God has placed us in Manning to tell every generation about the Savior who went to the cross. We invite the community to meet with us in weekly worship and to participate in our Lenten journey to the cross.

Community Food Pantry

Members of Zion continue to be active leaders in the C-3 initiatives. After several years of exploration, a community food pantry is now a reality. The Manning Pantry is a branch of the New Opportunities Carroll County Family Development Center. To be eligible for the food and other items, families should call the Carroll office at 712-792-9266, ext. 720 to determine eligibility. Applicants are asked basic information including SS number, family income, etc. If there is an emergency situation, any of the community churches can be contacted and immediate assistance will be provided. Please share this special opportunity with your friends and neighbors. Appointments for food pickup are made for Saturday mornings between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. Food can be picked up at the Carroll office at other times. Typically families can utilize the food pantry every 30 days. The panty is located in back of the State Farm insurance building and the pantry is accessed from the alley behind the building.

Thank you to the many Zion members who have already donated food items. Collection carts will remain in the fellowship hall. Items especially needed include: boxed cereal, instant oatmeal, boxed meals (pasta, hamburger helper, etc.), tuna, baking products, toilet paper and other paper products, dish soap and laundry detergent, canned soups, peanut butter

Other C-3 Events

"Wolf Pack for Hunger" is a community food packaging event that will take place at the Manning High School gymnasium on Wednesday, April 8 from 3:30 to 7:30. Individuals of all ages (families too) will have the opportunity sign up to package meals. The immediate need is donations to help reach the $12,500 goal which would provide supplies to feed 50,000 hungry individuals around the world. Checks can be made out to "C-3" and left in the church office.

Another summer concert is scheduled for Sunday evening, June 7 at the Heritage Park. More information will be shared soon.

Vacation Bible School—A Community Outreach

VBS 2015 will have a camping theme. Children of the congregation and community will "camp" at the Zion facility to learn about the Savior who came to camp among us. VBS dates are June 1-5. Put it on the calendar. We will need many volunteers again.

"Generations"—A blessing to the Community

The Zion facility is a blessing to the community as we welcome others to our preschool, fellowship events, special family events, community meetings, and other opportunities. A safe, inviting, and convenient facility is important to members and community. Thank you for your continuing donations to the "Generations" campaign. The building committee continues to develop a plan for next phases. – Pastor Riggert

Defeating Fear and Becoming Manly Men

Over the past several months we have studied, with the guidance of Dr. Larry Crabb's book *The Silence of Adam,* what is means for men to be manly. We learned that men are wired to be doers, to move into life with a released masculine energy. This strong urge to do, however, is often stifled by fear and uncertainty when men face situations and relationships with no clear path forward. Men want to know what to do. When they don't, they too often resort to unmanly behaviors.

Men are wired to be doers, to move into life with a released masculine energy.

Some men try to compensate for their deep-seated feelings of impotence by aggressively seeking to control something in their life. Some are driven by rage at perceived injustices which they use to justify their vengeful and abusive behaviors. Some are owned by the fear of being exposed as incompetent and so turn to addictive behaviors for relief. Men who choose these behaviors are unmanly. They choose the easy road. The road to true manliness is steeper and it begins by appreciating God's unique calling for men.

With Dr. Crabb's help we learned that men are uniquely called to be God-rememberers who "remember God by faithfully telling others who he is and what he has done." As such, men are manly when they tell God's story with their lives. This doesn't mean men will always know what to do in every situation – the truth is that life doesn't have an instruction manual. God doesn't give us step-by-step instructions for life. Instead, as Dr. Crabb told us,

> God calls a man to speak into darkness, to remember who God is and what he has revealed about life, and – with that memory uppermost in his mind – to move into his relationships and responsibilities with the imaginative strength of Christ.

Unmanly men choose to forget God.

Unmanly men choose to forget God in their behavior, in their relationships, and in their daily lives. They choose to repeat the silence of Adam who, while standing next to his wife Eve, chose to forget God while she was deceived by Satan in the Garden of Eden.

Dr. Crabb also reminded us that unmanly men often fall into one of two relational patterns:

> Either they are controlled by the *passion of neediness*, which says, 'Come through for me! Fill me – I'm empty!' or they operate according to the *passion of toughness*, where the message is 'I can handle things without you. Believe in me from a distance, and don't give me any hassles.'

Unmanly men controlled by the *passion of neediness* learned early on that "internal pain is most reliably relieved when someone does something for them." As such they try to "get others to respond to [their] needs without requiring good movement from [themselves]." By so doing, they don't "have to confront [their] own terror of darkness and [their] real need for God…"

Unmanly men ruled by the *passion of toughness* at some point lost their hope for a close and healthy relationship. They found that "it was easier to kill their yearnings for intimacy and get on with life than to embrace their longings and hurt." As such, they guard their hearts from hurt by keeping a safe distance between themselves and others.

Manly men, however, find their fullness in Christ. And, by so doing, they release others, especially their wife, from the burden of filling their personal emptiness. When wives are freed from doing what only God can do, they are freed from an unattainable

expectation and then appreciated not for what needs they can meet, but for who they are as women of God.

Then Dr. Crabb proposed a path forward for men found through Godly fathers, who walk and have walked before us, and Godly brothers who walk alongside us. As he shared, Godly fathers demonstrate at least three distinctive marks to their sons:

1. He walks a good path in sight of his son, to let him know, 'It can be done.'
2. He occasionally turns around and looks at his son to let him know, 'You're not alone.'
3. He resumes his walk toward God, trusting God to lead his son to follow, thus saying, 'I believe in you.'

Godly fathers are in short supply, however. For those without the benefit of a Godly father, Dr. Crabb counseled,

> Face the reality of your relationship with your father. Face it honestly. Hurt over what is missing. Feel the anger provoked by the pain and neglect. Rejoice over whatever is good. Hear the message that your father's life has conveyed. Then cling to your heavenly Father. Watch his Son perfectly walk a narrow path, and know his life is in you, enabling you to grow in obedience and to never quit.

And then look for Godly father figures in your life. Perhaps an older man at church or an uncle or friend. Perhaps you may find that father figure in the men of Scripture. See what they did well and be encouraged by it. Godly men have walked the path of faith before you. Then, resolve to become a godly man who communicates these needed messages of encouragement to younger men on the path behind you.

Then, last month, we discussed the value of Godly brothers. We learned that "brothers encourage by sharing our struggles, by walking *with* us." Dr. Crabb taught us that men benefit from a peer "with whom they [feel] no shame," someone they feel comfortable sharing deep struggles and painful secrets. Godly brothers encourage one another with three messages:

1. *Together we will look into the dark, terrifying confusion of life.*
2. *Together we will seek to know God and to realize the vision he has for our lives.*
3. *Until Christ returns, together we will speak into the dark reality of this world, on his behalf.*

This month we conclude our study as Dr. Crabb encourages us to become the fathers and brothers God has called us to be. Heeding this call, however, will exact a cost on us. Dr. Crabb explains, "Men… who set their sights on becoming fathers and brothers… must be willing to pay a price so enormous that only a clear glimpse of Christ will keep them going."

Dr. Crabb details the price: First, manly men must be willing "to fight lifelong battles: battles against lust… battles against friction in relationships… battles against discouragement." Second, heeding the call to manhood "requires a willingness to cling to what God has said, during long seasons when there is no evidence to visibly demonstrate this truth." In other words, manly men will remember God's Word. Third, being a manly man requires a humility that recognizes that we may not know the way forward, that we may need to acknowledge our powerlessness and allow others to pray for us.

Men desiring to be Godly will be where Christ is: His Church.

The strength to persevere and the courage to be God-rememberers will ultimately be found in Christ. As such, men desiring to be Godly will be where Christ is: His Church. Men desiring to be Godly will faithfully hear Christ's Word and receive His Sacraments. And then they will confidently move into life in the strength of a well-remembered God. – Pastor Conner

If you haven't yet asked this question, you should. The problem of evil and suffering remains the greatest stumbling block to faith in the God of the Bible and the most frequently named reason for the rejection of faith in this God. This is not simply *a* problem for us to address; it may be *the* problem that we can't not address.

If the Christian faith is unable to handle this question, it's not a faith worth having or keeping. In fact, the same holds true for every worldview. If a worldview cannot bear up under the weight of evil and suffering, it should be abandoned. Over the next several months, therefore, we will put Christianity to the test. Can it bear up under the enormity of this question? Is it a faith worth having, a faith worth keeping?

Initial Observations: How do other worldviews respond?

As mentioned above, ALL worldviews must offer a response to evil and suffering. Our world of political correctness and tolerance exhorts us to accept all worldviews as equally true, but even a cursory look at their responses to evil and suffering reveals stark and irreconcilable differences.

Buddhism

Buddhism sees suffering as basic to human existence. In other words, evil and suffering are of the essence of human existence. The problem, therefore, is existence itself. The solution to evil and suffering, then, is to escape existence through the extinguishing of all desires and the absorption of the self into the non-personal infinite. This is achieved through an arduous, self-driven effort that involves accepting the classic "Four Noble Truths" and adhering to "The Eightfold Path."

Hinduism

Hinduism is an incredibly diverse religion, but most Hindus assert that their divine being, Brahman, is everything. In other words, Brahman is not distinct from the universe, but inhabits every portion of reality in every inch of the universe. This includes mankind and it means that mankind is divine. Hinduism asserts that Atman (the self) is one with Brahman (the non-personal divine).

Mankind, however, is beset by the illusion of individuality, from whence evil and suffering spring. In other words, individuals believe they are individuals – you believe you exist – and that's an illusion! This illusion of existence independent from the non-personal, non-conscious Brahman must be escaped and risen above through the ever increasing realization of the self's non-existence (You read that right, you have to realize that you don't exist!).

This process may take thousands of re-incarnations, which, along with karma, is another key teaching of Hinduism. According to Hinduism, every birth is a re-birth. In other words, every new birth is a reincarnation from a previous life. Each re-birth, however, does not constitute a new start, but is haunted by the deeds done in the previous life. A traditional Hindu proverb captures the belief: "Just as a calf will find its mother among a thousand cows, so your sins will find you out among a thousand rebirths." An individual's suffering, therefore, is attributed to his sins from a previous life.

This is why the caste system can persist in India. The lower castes are suffering due to their sins from their

previous lives and the upper castes are being rewarded for their virtuous former lives. Offering compassion and help to the lower castes would prevent them from receiving their karma. Over the course of thousands of reincarnations (that's right, thousands!) Hindus hope to escape this wheel of suffering so they can melt their individuality into the great non-personal, all-pervading Brahman.

Atheism

Atheism observes evil and suffering in the world, but lacks the moral scaffolding to define it and the moral fortitude to offer a solution to it. David Hume, the 18th century Scottish skeptic and atheist, spoke of mankind's suffering with these words: "The first entrance into life gives anguish to the new-born infant and to its wretched parent: weakness, impotence, distress attend each stage of that life, and it is, at last, finished in agony and horror."

What hope might atheism offer to such a gloomy condition? Bertrand Russell, the great 19th century atheist thinker, offer atheism's only response: "There is darkness without, and when I die there will be darkness within. There is no splendor, no vastness anywhere; only triviality for a moment, and then nothing." Atheism cannot objectively define evil nor can it offer any hope for its defeat. Instead, evil and suffering can only be endured until we die and our existence ceases.

Islam

In Islam Allah is supreme. Nothing is greater than Allah and nothing happens outside his will. These two confessions are popularly articulated through the common Islamic expressions "As Allah wills" and "Allahu Akbar!" (meaning "Allah is greater"). These strong emphases cause Islam to accentuate Allah's omnipotence even to the point of ascribing what many would consider evil to Allah. As such, Islam is focused less on any solution to evil and more on the will of Allah. Evil simply may be the will of Allah. The faithful Muslim is expected to endure evil and suffering as a test to his faith. At the end of time, a Muslim's deeds will be placed on Allah's scale and if his good outweighs his bad and/or if Allah wills it, he will be saved. Islam's solution to evil, therefore, seems to be, "It's Allah's will."

Christianity

Christianity stands in stark contrast to these worldviews. Unlike Buddhism which sees suffering as being of the essence of human existence, Christianity recognizes that evil and suffering are foreign invaders. The book of Genesis not only reveals God to be the Creator of the universe, and therefore separate from it (unlike pantheistic worldviews that confess their god to be indistinguishable from nature), but throughout creation week God repeatedly calls His work "good," even "very good." Evil and suffering were not a part of God's original good creation. They are invaders and, as such, Christianity confesses that God will eventually banish them from His creation.

Christianity recognizes that evil and suffering are foreign invaders.

In stark contrast with Hinduism, Christianity does not believe that the evil and suffering individuals endure is a result of their sins from a previous life. Reincarnation and karma are detestable doctrines that the Bible roundly rejects. People may suffer as a result of their sinful choices in this life, but Christianity acknowledges that some suffering simply lies beyond human explanations. It's too easy to blame it on a previous life.

Instead, Christianity yields before the sovereignty of God. God may choose to permit evil and suffering to befall a person; He may even choose to bring calamity upon a person, but Christianity acknowledges that God has a morally sufficient

reason for doing so (even if we don't know that reason).

On the surface this appears to be a similarity between Christianity and Islam, but it's only a surface similarity, for in Islam evil and suffering are simply to be endured according to the cold will of a distant god, a god whose greatness prevents him from coming near to the sufferer. Further, a Muslim must live with the fear that his performance in suffering may disqualify him from eternal life.

Christians worship a God who does not remain aloof to the sufferer. He has come near in Christ. He has suffered and endured evil, too. He knows our suffering. He has been the victim of human evil. And His resurrection from the dead is the announcement to the world that death has been defeated and that evil and suffering will end. A Christian doesn't live with the weight of uncertainty regarding eternal life because it doesn't depend upon how well he held up in suffering. Eternal life was won through the suffering of Christ.

[Christ's] resurrection… is the announcement to the world that death has been defeated and that evil and suffering will end.

Finally, in stark contrast to atheism, which can't even define evil (without stealing the moral scaffolding from Christianity) and has no solution beyond death and eternal non-existence, Christianity can objectively define evil as anything that violates God's purposes or His moral will. Evil is the corruption of God's good. Christianity recognizes that evil and suffering are legitimate problems that our worldview MUST address, but before we can even begin to address the problem, we have to be able to define it.

Atheists can complain of unpleasant experiences and of things they don't like, but they cannot call anything truly and objectively evil. Think about it: in order to call a line crooked, you first have to know what a straight line is, but Atheism rejects the existence of the straight line. By rejecting the existence of the straight line (God), atheism is left with no standard (no objective moral law) against which to judge crooked lines (evil). When they reject God because of evil in the world, they cut off the branch on which they were standing to deny God.

Because Christianity uncompromisingly confesses not only the existence of God, but also His absolute power and goodness, we are able to objectively identify and define evil. Anything that corrupts God's moral will or violates God's purposes is evil. Period.

Of course, that raises another question: if God is truly good and absolutely powerful, why does evil persist and why do we continue to suffer? Those are BIG questions. And they have BIG answers, answers that may prove to be bigger than us, answers that may force us to rethink our beliefs about God. That's why it will take several months to address these questions. What we thought we knew about God may turn out to be wrong. What we thought was true about ourselves and our lives may be wrong.

Over the next months we will wade into deep waters as we struggle not only with the logical problem of evil, but with the personal and emotional problem of evil. These are BIG problems. They need BIG answers or we will be left with a weak and little faith that will not sustain us when evil and suffering come. The faith of nominal Christians will not survive evil and suffering. So please come along for the journey.

If you'd like resources to help you go deeper in your understanding of God and the persistence of evil and suffering, I recommend Randy Alcorn's *If God is Good: Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil* (in our church library), Joni Eareckson Tada's *When God Weeps*, C.S. Lewis' *The Problem of Pain*, and Ravi Zacharias' *Cries of the Heart: Bringing God Near When He Feels so Far.* And if you'd like to visit about this personally, please give me a call, email, or drop in and visit. – Pastor Conner

Your Vocations Prioritized

Americans love lists. To do lists. Grocery lists. Prayer lists. Wish lists. Bucket lists. "Best of" lists. "Top Ten" lists. We even have lists of lists. In this article we're adding another: your vocation list. We add this list to help you prioritize your vocations.

A vocation, as you recall, is a channel or conduit through which God funnels His love to His creation. In his classic study on vocation, Gustaf Wingren wrote,

> With persons as his 'hands' or 'coworkers,' God gives his gifts through the earthly vocations, toward man's life on earth (food through farmers, fishermen and hunters; external peace through princes, judges, and orderly powers; knowledge and education through teachers and parents, etc.)… Thus love comes down from God, flowing down to human beings on earth through all vocations…[3]

But it becomes immediately obvious how quickly our vocations can multiply: Christian, church member, spouse, parent, child, sibling, employer, employee, neighbor, citizen, volunteer, and on and on. How do we get them in order? How do we prioritize them? We make a list![4] As Christians our list looks like this:

1. ***Baptized child of God***
2. ***Member of a Family***
3. ***Work***
4. ***Everything Else***

Obviously we need to discuss each in turn, but the first thing to highlight is that our vocations make a claim on us. They call for our time, our resources, and our other-focused service. Further, they may place a cross on us that God calls us to carry.

[3] *Luther on Vocation* by Gustaf Wingren 27.

Our vocations make a claim on us

Wingren explains "the cross of vocation,"

> "To understand what is meant by the cross of vocation, we need only remember that vocation is ordained by God to benefit, not him who fulfills the vocation, but the neighbor…. Under this cross are included even the most trivial of difficulties, such as: in marriage, the care of babes, which interferes with sleep and enjoyment; in government, unruly subjects and promoters of revolt; in the ministry, the whole resistance of reformation; in heavy labor, shabbiness, uncleanness, and the contempt of the proud.[5]

In order to appreciate the cross that our vocations place on us, the claim they make of us, it's critical that we understand that our vocations are not intended for our benefit, but for the benefit of the neighbors to whom we funnel God's love.

With that said, let's take a look at each of the broad vocational categories on our priority list.

1. *Baptized child of God*

Through the waters of Holy Baptism God's Spirit incorporates us into the Body of Christ. As God's baptized children, it is our privilege and calling to receive the gifts God desires to give us. He gives those gifts through His Word and Sacraments. Our vocation as a baptized child of God, then, includes hearing His Word read and preached and receiving His grace in Holy Communion even as we daily praise Him for our baptism. If we aren't faithfully hearing the Word and receiving the Sacrament, we aren't heeding the call of our vocation.

[4] Many thanks to Pastor Paul Cain for providing the idea in "article name." Available here: www.lcms.org/stewardship.

[5] *Wingren, 29.*

Further, because we are baptized into the Body of Christ, we are joined to the members of the Body of Christ. We have vocational responsibilities toward the fellow members of the Body of Christ. Finally, we are called to support the Ministry of the Word through our firstfruits giving. Tithing is a great place to begin.

2. *Member of a family*

As we mentioned above, our vocations are designed by God to benefit others. That means they're not about us! Being a member of a family provides nearly limitless opportunities to learn this. God calls spouses to keep their wedding vows in sickness and in health, for better, for worse. He calls parents to care for their children and to raise them in the fear and instruction of the Lord. He calls children to honor, serve and obey, love and cherish their parents.

3. *Work*

Work grows out of the family and is intended by God to benefit the family. Farmer, garbage truck driver, lawyer, grocer, teacher, accountant, mechanic, congressman, shop owner, soldier, and so on are all given by God to be channels through which He funnels His love to the family. Here's what this means: our work isn't about us. It's not about our fame, our importance, our upward mobility, our success, or our wealth. Work exists as a means through which God blesses the family (and not just our family, but the institution of family, and the families we serve through our work). If we find our identity in our work before our family, our priorities are out of order.[6]

4. *Everything Else*

At first this may seem like too broad of a category, but 1) we're trying to keep this simple, and 2) it really is this simple. Hobbies, leisure, community involvement, sports, even church boards and committees belong here. They come *after* hearing God's Word and receiving His Sacraments, the family, and work.

Too often, however, we misprioritize our list. We end up elevating hobbies, sports, clubs, even church committees above the call to hear God's Word, to serve our families, and to work for the benefit of the family. We tell ourselves we're too busy to attend church because something from category four has claimed our time. We tell ourselves we can't afford to tithe because something from category four has claimed our money. We tell ourselves we don't have time to lead our family in devotions because something from category four has captured our imagination. And the people who God intends to bless through our vocations suffer.

What should we do? The Biblical answer is straightforward: Repent, receive God's forgiveness, and then reprioritize our list. Again, this might seem too simple, but it is this simple. Certainly, we may find it difficult to follow through with our reprioritization, but making the list isn't hard. How will we find the strength to get it right? Go back to priority 1. We are baptized children of God who live daily in His grace, mercy, and love. And when we live in that grace, mercy, and love, faithfully hearing God's Word, and regularly receiving His Sacrament, God strengthens us to live with our vocations rightly prioritized. – Pastor Conner

[6] Singles are not excluded from this. Their work is still infused with the sacred purpose of benefiting the institution of the family and the families they serve. But, as St. Paul points out in 1 Corinthians 7, singles have greater freedom to dedicate themselves to their primary vocation as baptized children of God. They will have greater freedom to be funnels of God's love in other contexts, which married people will be unable to do because of their vocational responsibilities.

The Overlooked

In the Name of Adult Desires, Have We Overlooked Children's Rights?

Warning: by reading this article you are engaging in a controversial act. The gestopo of political correctness and tolerance have instructed us not to question the adult desires now being enshrined in same-sex marriage rulings across our country. And while I have done precisely this in numerous newsletter articles, arguing that we are not defined by our desires and that some desires must be warred against, the question I'm about to raise is perhaps even more taboo by the enforcers of PC and tolerance. Simply by raising it I will be labeled a bigot, a homophobe, a religious fundamentalist, and a hater. Ironic, isn't it, how those who supposedly espouse tolerance are so intolerant of those who hold different views?

But on to the controversy: In the name of the adult desires that many in the LBGQT (lesbian, bi, gay, questioning, transgender) are insisting everyone affirm, are we overlooking the desires of children for a dad and a mom? In the name of the adult desires that our courts and legislatures are legitimizing in same-sex marriage, are we overlooking the legitimate need children have for their dad and mom? Should our laws or our societal norms *force* children to give up their father or mother?

Research has already decisively shown that same-sex parents are not interchangeable with a child's father and mother. In fact, in his landmark study, Mark Regnerus found the following: compared with children raised by their married biological parents, children of homosexual parents[7]:

- Are *much* more likely to have received welfare
- Have lower educational attainment
- Report less safety and security in their family of origin
- Report more ongoing "negative impact" from their family of origin
- Are more likely to suffer from depression
- Have been arrested more often
- If they are female, have had more sexual partners--both male *and* female

But now adults who were raised in same-sex parental arrangements are starting to speak out and their words are worth hearing. We will hear from one in the following paragraphs.

Katy's Insights[8]

Katy relates, "I was raised by two lesbian parents… [who] continue to be a loving and supportive fixture in my family," but she adds, "I oppose gay marriage." Why? She says her opposition is centered "in the rights and well-being of children." She argues that for generations governments understood that their primary interest in marriage was children. She cites DOMA (the Defense of Marriage Act), which our government has chosen to ignore:

> At bottom, civil society has an interest in maintaining and protecting the institution of heterosexual marriage because it has a deep and abiding interest in encouraging responsible procreation and child-rearing.

Katy asks us to consider a newborn baby, specifically what we know to be absolutely true about that child simply by looking at him or her. She answers,

> What you know as you gaze at that wondrous and precious child is that she IS. What did that require? It required that nine months earlier a man and a woman came together to provide the ingredients for her existence. That is all.

She therefore argues that children have two rights simply by existing: "First, the right to live. Second, the right to have a relationship with his/her father and mother." Abortion denies the first and the

[7] www.frc.org/issuebrief/new-study-on-homosexual-parents-tops-all-previous-research

[8] www.scribd.com/doc/240312274/Katy-Faust-Amicus-Briefs

institutionalizing of same-sex marriage denies the second. Katy observes,

> When we institutionalize same-sex marriage… we move from permitting citizens the freedom to live as they choose, to *promoting* same-sex headed households… Now we are normalizing a family structure where a child *will always* be deprived daily of one gender influence and the relationship with at least one natural parent. Our cultural narrative becomes one that, in essence, tells children that they have no right to the natural family structure or their biological parents, but that children simply exist for the satisfaction of adult desires.

When we institutionalize same-sex marriage… we normaliz[e] a family structure where a child will always be deprived daily of… the relationship with at least one natural parent.

Kay continues,

> If marriage is a child-centric institution, then, we do right by children when public policy reflects this biological reality. Children are made by a man and a woman. In the optimal scenario, they are also raised by them. As a society, we should make policy to reflect that reality. The ideal.

"But," some object, "two caring men is certainly better than an abusive father or drugged-out mother." Katy's response is again perceptive:

> Brokenness finds children and the people in their lives do their best to pick up the pieces. However, we do not institutionalize, incentivize or promote the grandparent-headed household, the aunt-and-uncle-headed household or the single-parent headed household. Why? Because public policy should not encourage or endorse the breaking of the parent/child relationship because a couple… wants to have a family. Children are entitled to parents. Not the other way around.

Others reply, "But marriage is about an emotional bond between adults, not children." Katy simply asks, "If marriage is for adults, then what institution is for children?" Some reply that "public education is for children," but she observes,

> If you get the family right, then you get a higher likelihood of academic health thrown in with the deal. In fact, a married 'intact' home is the single greatest weapon that society has in the fight to lower incarceration rates, to reduce the number of children living in poverty, curtail child trafficking, promote mental and physical child wellness, and so on.

Katy continues by asking some insightful questions:

> If society's interest in marriage is children, then why are we promoting a family structure where a child would have to be denied a relationship with their mother or father so the adults can have the 'family' they desire? Why, if some believe that they are 'born gay,' do many in the gay lobby seek to legally sever the much more self-evident truth that children are 'born' to both a mother and a father? Why, if one popular gay-marriage mantra is that they do not want the government to tell them 'who to love,' would they tell children that being loved by one of their natural parents is unnecessary?

"When gay couples have 'equal access' to the institution of marriage," Kay concludes, "it means that children will not have 'equal access' to parents influencing and raising them the way nature intended. You must either side with adult desires or side with children's rights. You cannot do both."

Space prevents a full treatment of Katy's words, so I will simply point out that Katy never cited the Bible in her defense of marriage. She argued from what's called "natural law," which are basically self-evident truths. One doesn't have to know a single Bible verse to argue for true marriage from natural law. Obviously, in church we argue from Scripture – and the Bible is clear on God's design for marriage – but in secular society it is also very useful to know how to reason from natural law. We would do well to learn from Katy's approach as we turn the conversation away from adult desires to the needs and rights of children. – Pastor Conner

China Lutheran Seminary
Our Missionary in Taiwan
Dr. Stephen and Maggie Oliver

Today (February 3), 1000 days before October 31, 2017, the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, I stood looking at the series of lectures prepared by China Lutheran Seminary teachers to spread the Word abroad in churches throughout Taiwan this Spring (see photos, each poster representing lectures by a CLS teacher). Most of the lectures deal with the treasures of that Reformation theology of God's Word, which we pray will be revived and spread abroad during this great opportunity.

Dear Congregational Family,

WOW!!! Another month has slipped by us and on to March. Will March greet us as a lion or a lamb? The children enjoyed sharing Valentines with their friends and the highlight was singing in church on Sunday, February 15.

Dad's night was postponed and a new date has not yet been announced.

Upcoming events:
Parent/Teacher conferences will be held on March 19th and 24th.
No Preschool those two days.

Sincerely,
Deb Fink

ZION
Lutheran Preschool
Manning, Iowa
Christ Centered... Child Focused... Family Connecting

February Highlights

President Cheral Buhr led the Guild in the LWML Pledge and called on Cynthia Genzen to give the Christian Life devotion. She began by asking what the group thought of when considering something overflowing. She and Susie Schilling led us to see how overflowing the love of God is for us in Christ Jesus.

Pastor Conner then talked about the fact that Sunday, the 14th of February, is the day we note Jesus' transfiguration. As Jesus' godhead is once again revealed we are reminded to listen to Him. Pastor Riggert followed with an update on Zion's partnering with C-3, which is providing a Manning based food pantry. He handed each member a list of nonperishable items needed. As soon as a freezer is available on site meat products can also be donated.

The business meeting was called to order and President Buhr led us in the mite box prayer as the mite box was passed. She called on the secretary to call the roll which was answered by each member answering with her favorite hymn. The minutes were then read and approved as read. Correspondence included thank you notes from Susan and Don Lamb and from the family of Arlene Musfeldt. Included also was correspondence from Mission Executive Gary Thies for our donations to the Olivers in Taiwan, the Ferrys in Indonesia and to Pastor Perry. Barb Anderson, treasurer gave her report. Human Care Chairman, Audrey Roe, showed blankets that had been given from the Carrollton Inn and talked about sheets that had also been given and would be used in quilts for world relief. She said 20 quilts had been tied in January. She suggested members might want to seek Thrivent dollars to purchase items for a personal care kit or for layettes. Sunshine Chairman, Bev Grundmeier, said that she had sent 9 cards since last month's meeting. Kitchen Chairman, Darlene Vollstedt, said that the kitchen had been cleaned by a group on the 10th of February. Circle # 3 will have the next funeral. Circle #3 is also serving the February coffees after church and will be followed by Circle #1 in March.

Old business garnered discussion on Guilds willingness to serve as transportation providers for Sunday services when needed or as errand helpers for shut-ins. Charlene Hickman moved that Guild not be responsible as a group for such endeavors. The motion was seconded and passed. Members that would be willing to run errands when asked are to leave their names with the church secretary.

New business brought up a discussion of the LWML National Convention to be held in Des Moines on June 25th-28th, 2015. Members were told they could register on-line at www.lwml.org/conventions by March 14th for a lower cost for attending, but could not register after May 15th.

We are still collecting postage stamps, Campbell's soup labels, bars of soap and computer ink cartridges. Box tops will only be collected until July 1st. Plaza Bingo will be on February 27th with Connie Ahrendsen serving as Chairman with added workers Audrey Roe, Judy Bald and Carol Kahl.

Day of Prayer will be held in Glidden on March 6th. Coon Rapids will host. Registration begins at 9:00 A.M. and the service will begin at 10:00 A.M. The March meeting of Guild will be held on the 11th. Bev Grundmeier and Barb Anderson will serve as hostesses. The meeting was adjourned with the Lord's Prayer. Lunch was served by Carol Kahl and Susie Schilling. - Respectively submitted, Sue Puck, secretary

Winter 2015

SELAMAT

Membantu di Singapura juga! (Indonesian for "Also helping in Singapore")

The work continues in Indonesia, and it is a joy. As of this moment, we have several projects all being pursued to help the Lutheran Christians here, answering requests they themselves have made: getting the *Book of Concord* reprinted in Bahasa Indonesia for pastors, teachers, and lay people; getting an edition of the *Small Catechism* published and printed that's portable and easy to hand out; working toward a Lutheran hymn/service book in Indonesian; organizing theological workshops for pastors and other church workers; and others! All of this is supporting the Word and Sacrament ministry that the Indonesian Christians are doing and will do with our support.

But what do you do when you have Lutheran Christians a short distance away who have no one to provide pastoral care, or to feed them with Word and Sacrament? You go to them quickly, and take care of them!

For nearly two years, my colleague Pastor Tom Chryst worked to plant a faithful Lutheran congregation in Singapore. Despite visa troubles, the Word of God did wonderful things and there's been a congregation emerging there. Now Pastor Chryst has been called to do other church planting in the States, and we are lacking a pastor to immediately take his place in Singapore.

Until the Lord of the Church calls another man to take Pastor Chryst's place, I've been asked to "pinch hit" in Singapore in addition to my service in Indonesia. From my home in Jakarta, Singapore is only a short plane ride, just over an hour away.

I'm closer to our brothers and sisters in Singapore than any other LCMS pastor, so it only makes sense for me to travel there regularly to do Word and Sacrament ministry at this time.

And what a joy this is! Because the Lord's Supper is a public confession, there are some faithful Lutherans in Singapore who are unable to partake in the Sacrament of the Altar at any other church there. But at this point, I am able to come and host a Divine Service so they can commune, and be in fellowship with other faithful Lutherans.

But fear not, faithful friends of Indonesia… The work with the Indonesian Lutherans continues even while we have new opportunities to help serve in Singapore as well. There is still much work to be done in both places. This very newsletter is being written in North Sumatra, in between planning sessions with the Bishop of the GKLI.

We are so grateful for your continued prayers, partnership, and love. Through two countries now, your support is reaching out to those in need, allowing me to go to places where others simply cannot. But like this, we go together to serve people with the life---changing Word of God in Christ.

Prayers, Praises, and Thanksgiving

- Thanksgiving for all our partners who shower us with generous support so we can continue working in this land!
- Thanksgiving for health enjoyed by all the Ferry family… very important in this land where medical care is rare and rudimentary
- For Chuck's mom in Milwaukee, whose health and weight loss have been troubling
- For *ongoing* pledged support, that we might continue serving overseas according to our Lord's will;
- That our gracious Lord Jesus would grant His wisdom and grace, so many would be blessed by the work we're doing in Indonesia *and in Singapore*.

!Amigos En Cristo!
News from IDW Hispanic Ministry
Missionary/Pastor Daniel Vogel

Iowa District West, LCMS
Year 11, Issue 3, March 2015

Celebrating Our New Church (and Pastor): On Sunday January 18 President Paul Sieveking visited our Hispanic mission for a special meeting with our members. With member Marcia Mendoza translating, he congratulated our congregation on being accepted by the Iowa District West Board of Directors as an official District church. I then left the room as President Sieveking began a Call meeting with the members in which I was called to serve as their first pastor. I have accepted the Call. We now have 27 communicant members and 50 baptized members. On February 8, on the Sunday of the Presentation of the Lord, I was installed as pastor of this new IDW church. While I have served the mission since 2004 as a District missionary I have now been blessed to become the first permanent Hispanic pastor of the new congregation. Pastor Merle Mahnken, the Circuit Visitor and Zion Pastors Kaiser and Sewing with Pastor Henry Witte (translating) officiated for the Installation ceremony. Other pastors present to support our ministry were Pastors David Loeschen, Pastor Adam Peck and Pastor Tim Frank who played the organ. Following the service all enjoyed a special fellowship meal of tamales, the traditional festival meal for the Sunday of the Presentation of the Lord.

Our Hispanic Church: This picture (of our installation service on February 8) is of our members from Denison who were present for the service, 52 in all. At the service I also installed our 4 new leaders: Domingo Mendoza as President; his daughter Adriana Mendoza as Financial Secretary; Paula Vogel as Secretary and Marcia Mendoza as Treasurer (not related to Domingo and Adriana). Our ministry focus is found in the name of our church: Amigos en Cristo, Friends in Christ. We seek to be a spiritual refuge in the name of Jesus by making spiritual friends and connections in the community. We ask for your prayers. Also let me know if I can come to your church or group to share the story of this special ministry in our mission walk together throughout the Iowa District West.

My Tyson Chaplaincy: The winter time is a tough time at the plant. With dirtier animals, nasty weather conditions for both 'man and beast' and many new workers our management staff has a real challenge each day. Safety is the theme of the plant, keeping workers safe from accident or injury. We have a very complete in-plant clinic with two experienced RN nurses to serve the medical needs of the workers. Part of my work is to work with them and Management to visit with the workers who have health issues. It gives me a great opportunity to minister to our worker when they are on 'light duty' or recovering in some way from injuries or accidents. Thankfully most are not major. I work to encourage them that with patience and with their faith this health challenge can even be a positive event.

Please Pray: +In thanksgiving for District support and President Sieveking's recent visit and especially for my Installation and the Installation of the new leaders. +For my work as a Chaplain at Tyson and for opportunities to share the Gospel in the workplace. +For our new visitors that they will see the joy of regular worship and membership in our church. + For opportunities to recruit Hispanic children for Zion Lutheran School. + ***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 in Denison and in our other 3 Hispanic missions. +++***

Please Continue to Support our new church: For our mission friends financial support checks should now be sent to: Amigos en Cristo Lutheran Church: 1004 S. 1 Ave., Denison, Iowa, 51442

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

March Birthdays and Anniversaries @ Zion

1. LaVern Bald
2. Jennifer Behrens
3. Lori Genzen
   Fern Jensen
4. Katelyn Crawford
   Marion Ream
6. Camden Alexander
   Josiah Conner
   Mathew Gore
   Paige Hinners
7. Larry Lesle
   Errol Wegner
8. John Anderson
   Lenus Borkowski
   Beverly Bruhn
9. Lynna Miller
   Craig Musfeldt
10. Stan Baack
    Randahl Peters
11. Cynthia Grau
    CurtisGrimm
    Jeff
    Jargens

12. Floyd Forman
13. Shannon Walters
15. Dean Grau
    Tyler Saunders
16. Julie Lamp
    Chad Morrow
    Kelly Nissen

18. Lyle Bald
    Betty Stoelk
19. Anna Belle Wegner

20. Barbara Grove
    Cynthia Karsten
    Virgene Kroeger
    Abby Lapel
    Chloe Otto
    Ella Stammer
21. Dustin Petersen
    Russell Ranniger
23. Robert Nissen
    Linda Vinke
24. Jonathon Asmus
    Travis Borkowski
    Nathanael Conner
    Claire Gore
    Alix Puck
25. Carla Backhaus
    Danielle Hargens
26. Lucas Kluver
27. Noah Gore
    Dwight Gruhn
    Ashley Lage
    Aaron Rutz
    David Tibben
28. Michael Alexander
    Rebecca Conner
    Rachel Stoberl
29. Beth Booth
    Judy Borkowski
    Brenda Ehlers
30. Lacey Hinners
31. Joelle Puck

4. Thomas & Susie Ulrickson
8. William & Shona Weitl
29. Chad & Kelli Morrow
    Kenneth & Joelle Puck
30. Scott & Terri Rosener
31. Lorrell & Judy Borkowski

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