On Tuesday, December 8, 2015, Zion's Stewardship Team sat down to map out a stewardship emphasis for 2016. As you recall, in 2014 we celebrated God's varied gifts under the banner of *Gifted Generations*. In 2015, we celebrated our holy callings under the banner of *Generations in Vocation*. In 2016, we will be celebrating our stewardship of the Great Commission under the banner of *Generations in Mission*.

In 2016, we anticipate celebrating the completion of our building renovations – and how beautiful our building is! But, we didn't remodel simply for aesthetics. We didn't remodel simply so we could enjoy a beautiful building by ourselves. We remodeled to facilitate our mission as Christ's church. And as members of the church, we are called to be stewards of that mission.

How do we do that?

In 2016 we'll answer that question with the help of Lutheran pastor Greg Finke's resource, *Joining Jesus on His Mission*. Pastor Finke heads the non-profit organization Dwelling 1:14 (based on John 1:14, which celebrates Jesus' dwelling among us) and has written *Joining Jesus on His Mission* to emphasize our calling as neighborhood missionaries. But! as Pastor Finke points out, we are not simply sent out on a mission *for* Jesus; we are invited to *join* Jesus on His mission to redeem our community. Finke rightly observes that Jesus is already at work in our community, already working in people's lives. His redemptive reign is spreading (often like ripples through a pond or yeast through dough). We don't have to go *for* Him; we're invited to go *with* Him.

dwelling 1:14
The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

As Pastor Finke points out,

> Our job isn't to try and do Jesus' work *for* him. Our job is to watch for, recognize and then respond to the work Jesus is already doing in the lives of people around us and *join* Him.

Because, as Finke emphasizes,

> Only Jesus can do Jesus-work. Only Jesus could die on the cross and rise again to take away our sins. Only Jesus can ripen a person for this good news. Only Jesus can know the timing of a person's seasons and what's stirring around in the deep places of their heart. Only Jesus can continue to wrestle with someone in their head even when there is no one else around. Only Jesus can cause the seed we sow of kind-attention, gentle-truth or longed-for-grace to germinate at just the right moment.

Currently the elders of Zion are working their way through Pastor's Finke's book in our monthly meeting. On the first Sundays of the month in 2016, the entire congregation will join the journey as we incorporate Finke's video curriculum into our worship services and begin to discover how we can be everyday missionaries. As we emphasize our stewardship of the Great Commission, we will adopt a new missional mindset at Zion. Pastor Finke captures it with these words:

> We know Jesus is already out there in our 'neighborhoods' doing the heavy lifting of ripening people for their next step towards the Father's redemption. So every morning, as we head out for a new day of mission-adventure with Jesus, we can ask ourselves these simple questions:
>
> What's Jesus already up to?
> Who are these people around me?
> And what are they almost ready for?
>
> Let the mission adventure begin.

January Ministry Apps—Zion Lutheran Church

Applying the Gospel to Hearts and Homes: "*The Lord my God lightens my darkness." Psalm 18:28*

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a condition where the darkness of winter affects the mental health of an individual. Among the "treatments" for the disorder is exposure to light. Each of us is affected by the incurable darkness of sin. January brings the Good News of the season of Epiphany—the season of light. We celebrate that our Savior Jesus is "the light of the world." (John 8:12) The light of Jesus has taken away the darkness of our sin. We rejoice to live in His light as His family.

"LIGHT in our Darkness" Dialog

Zion members (and community friends) are invited to a new Biblically based dialog which identifies areas of personal and spiritual darkness and brings the LIGHT of God's Word to those areas. Dialog areas may include: Depression, Devil, Death, Division, Dysfunction, Drugs. Pastor Riggert will facilitate the dialogs. Two sessions will be offered each Monday, beginning January 11. A morning session will meet from 9:45 to 11:00 a.m. An evening session will meet from 6:45 to 8:00 p.m. The Gospel of John announced, "The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:5) We are freed in Christ to overcome our darkness. Everyone welcome! Bring a friend!

Zion Children—Messenger of the LIGHT

Thanks to the children of Zion who were blessed to use the gift of song and drama to share the Good News of Jesus' birth at this year's children's service. Thanks to Jill Arp, Susie Ulrickson, and the Sunday school teachers for their leadership. Zion is blessed to have so many gifted children and leaders.

The preparation for the special service leads to higher than average Sunday school attendance in December. Parents, please keep the Light on! Make weekly worship and Sunday school attendance a family priority.

LIGHT to our Community

Zion is an active partner in the Manning Food Pantry. Thank you for your generous food and cash donations during the holiday season. The needs of community families continue throughout the year, and your ongoing support is needed. The Manning churches take turns hosting the Saturday morning food distribution. Zion is scheduled every 5th week. If you'd like to assist on Saturday morning, please share your interest with Rhonda Grimm or Pastor Riggert. Continue to refer those who may be in need to this community resource.

EnLIGHTening Children to Share and Save

Did your children get any money for Christmas? Rather than buying another toy or sweatshirt, invest the money in a Young Investor Club account. This Lutheran Church Extension Fund program for children (ages birth to eighteen) earns a generous 3.5% interest while building churches and schools to grow God's kingdom. Y.I. Club members can also receive dollars for good grades and volunteer service. Warren Puck facilities the "club" every 3rd Sunday of the month (January 17). See Warren for more information.

A LIGHT to the "Generations"

The Zion logo features a lighted cross on the top of our facility. Your support of the "Generations" campaign celebrates the Light that shines in our sanctuary and classrooms. Our remodeled and updated facility also is a source of Light to our community. Thank you for your support.

The Tip and The Tithe

In my high school and college days, in order to earn some spending cash, I worked as a server in a couple restaurants. Over my years in food service I realized something: Christians are bad tippers. I'm not sure why this is, but it is. And it isn't good.

Quite honestly, it left me embarrassed on many occasions. My fellow servers knew I was a Christian and they watched the people they were serving pray before their meal. They watched them thank God for providing their meal and the resources to afford it. And then they wouldn't acknowledge that God had brought that food to their table in the hands of their server. In fact, by leaving a weak tip, they cheapened the server's vocation. It made my witnessing to my fellow servers a lot harder.

Perhaps this was just a pet peeve of mine, but I think it runs deeper than that. Convention says that a weak tip is 10%, a healthy tip is 15%, and a generous tip is 20%. You may quibble with convention, but we'll simply accept it as a reasonable gauge for our purposes in this article.

Why does weak tipping bother me? It bothers me because, as I alluded to above, it's a weak witness. Think about it. We are the recipients of God's extreme generosity (forgiveness, life, and salvation, to name but a few gifts of God!). We confess that money is temporary, that it really belongs to God, and that we can't take it with us. We confess that we are called to imitate God's generosity in our worship, in our vocations, and in our giving. Weak tips fall short of that. Further, as I mentioned above, weak tips devalue servers' vocations.

Further, and this comes from conversations with fellow servers, it lends credence to the false belief that Christians (and the church) care more about money than they do about people. That's a zinger, but it's a conclusion that servers regularly draw from Christians who are weak tippers. You might not like that they draw that conclusion, but if you considered the view from their perspective, you might see it their way. And, if you want them to think otherwise, give them a generous tip.

Even more, if you want to make a positive witness (and be consistent with the confession you make every Sunday), give generously. Show servers that you care about them, that you appreciate their service, that you value their holy vocation. Show them that they matter more to you than money.

IF YOU WANT TO MAKE A POSITIVE WITNESS… GIVER GENEROUSLY.

I no longer wait tables. For the past 11 years, I've had the privilege to serve as a pastor. And I've realized something else: Christians are bad givers. There, I said it. Yes, some give generously (and many Zion members are generous givers), just like some tip generously, but statistically speaking, Christians are not good givers. And that isn't good.

If the statistics are right, Christians show their appreciation for the gifts they've received from God by giving a paltry 2.5% of their income. That's a smaller percentage than Christians gave during the Great Depression! Yes, Christians have bills and limited incomes, but this is not new to humanity. What's new is the luxuries that we consider necessities. We may need to admit that our giving has been hindered by our living (living beyond our means).

I sometimes wonder how God receives our offering. We consider a 10% tip weak. And that's

only for someone who delivered food to the table. I wonder how He regards 2.5% when He regularly brings heavenly food to our altar for the forgiveness of sins?

One of my fellow servers, who was known for her gentle demeanor and quality service, once received a pile of change amounting to less than a dollar for a tip. In frustration, she scooped it up, marched out of the restaurant after the customers, and threw the coins at them, yelling, "You can keep your tip!" She was applauded by her fellow servers (even if management didn't approve!) because they felt the insult with her. They all took the weak tip personally. They saw the weak tip as a devaluing of their vocation – and it was.

Something similar happens in weak giving. Christians are the recipients of Heaven's great generosity. Our weak giving devalues our vocations as Christians and church members. It makes them seem less important – to one another and to the world. Our offering is not only our opportunity to show our appreciation for the gifts we have freely received from the God who became man to serve us, but it is also our opportunity to demonstrate the dignity and importance of our vocation as the redeemed of God.

OUR OFFERING IS NOT ONLY OUR OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW OUR APPRECIATION FOR THE GIFTS WE HAVE FREELY RECEIVED FROM THE GOD WHO BECAME MAN TO SERVE US, BUT IT IS ALSO OUR OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE THE DIGNITY AND IMPORTANCE OF OUR VOCATION AS THE REDEEMED OF GOD.

Where does generosity begin in our giving? There's no law for Christians and no required minimum, but we would be wise to ask if anything less than the tithe is generous? Would anything less than the tithe demonstrate our great thankfulness for God's generosity in Christ toward us?

Will tithing require us to change our lifestyle? Probably. We might have to give up Netflix or cable. We might have to go without takeout. We might have to cut back on our vacation. We might not be able to buy our child an iPhone. Or we might have to settle for a used car. But then, no one ever said gratitude didn't have a cost, did they? The call to follow Christ has a cost. His grace is free, but the call has a cost. Part of that cost comes in the form of our gratitude. But when we consider the grace we've received, it makes the cost a joy and a privilege to bear.

Talking about money is hard. I struggle with it, but it's usually the hard things that are the most important things, precisely the things we should be talking about. As you begin a new year, you may benefit from some somber introspection into your motives for giving (or not giving). You will certainly benefit from a deep study of the gifts God generously gives to you in Christ. Consider what He has done for you and what He continues to do for you, and then consider how you can best show your gratitude and make a positive witness for Christ (and reorient your life to the call to follow Christ) in your giving.

Want to talk more about this? Want to disagree? Want to learn more? Come talk to me. Email me (revconner@mmctsu.com), call (655-2352), or stop in. In 2016, celebrate God's generosity in Christ and give deep thought to your tips and your tithe. – Pastor Conner

Pop Quiz: Epiphany 101

Epiphany is one of the church's oldest and most sacred holidays, second only to Easter. Unfortunately, fewer and fewer Christians know why the church celebrates it today or why the visitation of the magi was such a big deal. How confident are you in the details? Let's find out.

Complete this Epiphany quiz:

T/F The Bible tells us there were three magi who came from the east.

T/F The magi were kings.

T/F The magi saw the baby Jesus in the manger.

T/F *Epiphany* is a Greek word that means "Aha!"

If you answered "false" to all four, you got them right.

First, the Bible doesn't name the number of magi; it names the gifts they brought – gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matthew 2:11), which is why Christian art typically depicts three magi – but we don't, in fact, know how many magi there were. Further, we don't know their names, even though the names Gaspar, Balthasar, and Melchior were assigned to them later in history. As a side note, it staggers the mind when one considers how helpful their gifts would be in funding the holy family's flight to Egypt when Herod sought to kill the Christ child! God moved mysterious magi from the far east to supply the funds to pay for His son's escape from a jealous king.

Second, even though the famous Christian hymn sings "We three kings of orient are…", the Bible nowhere calls them kings. In fact, the Bible never even calls them "wise men." Yes, some translations of the Bible say "wise men," but that's not a good translation. Better translations simply transliterate the Greek word into English: *Magi*. But what does that mean? What are magi? Well, we get the English word "magic" from it, but magi weren't magic men as we understand magicians today. Instead, they were star readers, astrologers. So these wouldn't be guys pulling rabbits out of their hats. They would be guys publishing horoscopes, the kind of thing no serious follower of Jesus would ever put any stock in.

To be as kind as possible, the magi were pagans. They were lost in the lies of false religion, doing things God told people not to do. This is why Matthew writes, "Behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him'" (Matthew 2:1-2). It was surprising, even shocking to see pagans coming to worship Jesus! That's why Matthew writes "Behold!"

Third, the magi didn't see the baby Jesus in the manger. They didn't cross paths with the shepherds or see the animals around the manger. Pay close attention to what Matthew says, "And going into the *house* they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him" (2:11). Joseph and Mary had moved from a stable to a house. Scripture doesn't specify the precise time of the magi's arrival, but it seems it was at least some months after Jesus' birth.

Fourth, English tends to use the word *epiphany* as an "aha!" moment, but in Greek it had more to do with revealing or making something manifest or clear. The coming of the magi makes it clear that Jesus' birth had implications for more than just the Jews. It was important even for Gentiles. Jesus would be king not only of the Jews, but of all people. Further, He would be worshiped by more than Jews; He would be worshiped by all people. In Epiphany we celebrate the revealing of our king even as we join with believers worldwide in worshiping Him.

Ladies Guild

December Highlights
Ladies Guild of Zion
December 9, 2015

A noon potluck was held with Susan Schilling and Bev Grundmeier serving as hostesses. Fifteen members, Shannon Walters, and Pastor Conner and family signed the attendance sheet.

The regular meeting was opened with the LWML pledge. Susan Schilling had four members read parts of the second chapter of Luke and followed with a devotion that called our attention to the reality of baby Jesus being born in humble circumstances. Pastor Conner then led us through thoughts on advent, which means coming, and followed with prayer. The mite box was passed as we prayed a mite box prayer.

President Buhr called the business meeting to order in the name of the Trinity. Roll call was answered by each with where we would spend Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. The secretary read the minutes of the previous meeting. The name of Gloria Ewoldt was added as a new member and her name was put on Circle two's list for 2016. The minutes were approved as amended. Treasurer, Barb Anderson, sent her report and kitchen treasurer, Darlene Vollstedt, also gave her report. Committee reports included Audrey Roe announcing that quilting will begin again on January 7th at 1:00 P.M. On December 17th a quilt top that Marion Reem had sewn together will be quilted and given to her as a Christmas gift. She also announced that Sandra Vahl had used her Thrivent money to purchase and put together 50 school kits. Sandra also had enough money to buy the larger items for health kits and guild members will be asked to complete these kits by next spring. Sunshine Chair, Bev Grundmeier sent 8 cards for the month and a total of 73 cards during the year of 2015.

Old Business: The holiday mission project for New Hope members in Manning was completed. Darlene Vollstedt and Mary Grimm will deliver the packages to the homes for Christmas. Advent by Candlelight was discussed at length. Suggestions were given and taken under advisement. Bev Grundmeier said that $725.00 was raised for missions by the event.

New Business: Officers will meet on Tuesday, the 29th of December at 10:30 A.M. to disperse the mission funds. Cynthia Genzen moved that a new flat level cart be purchased from the kitchen fund. The motion was seconded and passed. Darlene Vollstedt said the new cabinet and fixtures for the kitchen bathroom were being covered by the Generations campaign so we would not have to stand that expense.

Dates to remember: Next funeral lunch will be circle #3. There will be no Plaza bingo this month. Christmas day will be covered by circle #1—making coffee and setting tables for the congregational brunch. The next meeting will be on January 13th at 1 P.M. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Puck, secretary

In preschool this month we talked a lot about candy canes and all the symbolism connected to them. I am convinced each preschooler knows that a candy cane is an upside down "J" for Jesus! We also concentrated on the nativity of Jesus. It was so neat to see the children pick out baby Jesus in the activities we did.

The kids did a great job singing at the Advent service. I rejoice to see God working through them. We celebrated Jesus' birthday during class and did a small gift exchange and the kids got to frost and decorate sugar cookies. The children made ornaments in class to give to their parents for Christmas. They had so much fun gluing buttons onto the ornaments they created.

I asked for donations of extra boxes and wrapping paper for a gift wrapping station and I got them. The kids had a blast with the wrapping paper! Janice and I hope you had a joyful Christmas and we wish you a happy new year. Preschool will resume January 4th.

God's Blessings in Christ,
Mrs. Riesberg and Mrs. Nemitz

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

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

Charles, Cheryl, Caleb, Caitlin, Carissa, and Cassie Ferry

Missionaries to Indonesia

Dua dunia bersama - sama! (Indonesian for "Two worlds together")

For over two years now, I've had the privilege of working with Bishop Aladin Sitio, the leader of the Indonesian Christian Lutheran Church. During that time, I've also been getting to know Bishop Solomon Rajah, the leader of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia. But these have been two parallel friendships in different places.

This month, these two relationships came together as the Indonesian bishop traveled to Malaysia with me so the two of them could have a planning meeting and find ways they can work together. They speak similar languages, and come from similar backgrounds. And of course, they stand together where we stand: on the Word of God as the only source and norm of what we believe, teach, and confess.

It was a good, productive meeting, and we look forward to seeing the fruits of this meeting already in the next few months. Stay tuned to this newsletter for more, and pray that the Lord would bless these relationships for the glory of His holy kingdom and work.

There were also worlds coming together on a more personal front this month, as we had the incredible opportunity to have some of our family come over to Asia for a visit. Cheryl's mom and dad, as well as her younger sister, took their first trip to Asia to spend some time with us and help us celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday. Mom, Dad, and Rachel met us in Singapore and spent a few days getting adjusted, and then entered Indonesia with us. It was fun to watch their faces as they experienced things that are now part of our daily lives.

SELAMAT

This was the first time we'd seen any of them since we left the US in May of 2014, so it was a very joyful reunion, and the time went altogether too quickly. But we made the most of it: they got to meet many of the Singapore parishioners, and a good number of our friends in Jakarta. As our home service is still over half a year away, this was a most welcome time of family reconnection for us and for the kids.

The Thanksgiving holiday and the coming of a new Church Year have given us lots of chances to reflect upon our blessings. Just the fact that we're able to continue living here and working among the people of Indonesia and Southeast Asia is a blessing we have directly from Christ, through you. Thank you for your ongoing friendship and support, and your all - important prayers. We rejoice with you that the Lord has come to His people no matter where they are, and that He continues to seek the lost through the proclamation of His Word.

Yet another "C" kid?!?

Cheryl hadn't been feeling well, so we had her head to the clinic here in Jakarta. As it turns out, it wasn't a virus: Cheryl's pregnant with our fifth kiddo!! At her latest checkup she was 12 weeks along, and the doctor is extremely happy with the progress of our latest little one. The kids have decided they want a little brother, so we'll have to see if they get their wish or not. Once we move to Medan we'll be looking for medical facilities and doctors. This will most likely be our first kiddo born abroad.

This newest little one is due at the end of May, 2016, so there will be lots of news and adjustments to be made in the coming months. Prayers would be most appreciated, especially for this new "Baby C."

To support our work financially, send a tax-deductible gift to: The LCMS, P.O. Box 790089, St. Louis, MO 63179

Or:
Mission Central, 40718 Highway E-16, Mapleton, IA 51034
Make checks payable to **The LCMS**, and mark them "Support of Charles Ferry." Gifts can also be given securely online through our online giving page at *www.lcms.org/ferry*.

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

Iowa District West, LCMS
Year 12, Issue 1, December 2016

United in Ministry: On Sunday Nov. 29 Grace in Storm Lake and the Hispanic ministry meeting at Grace took a big step together as they became partners in ministry. In a special bilingual service the Hispanic members were received into membership at Grace. The photo at left includes Pastor Ketcham and myself as we led the service, the Hispanic members, and some of the leaders from Grace. The Hispanic ministry is now working on calling a pastor and sharing their story with the District churches that may be looking to support a special mission.

Advent/Christmas Preparations: In Storm Lake in Denison we prepare for Christmas with weekly 'Posadas'. These home devotionals are traditional Advent events in Mexico and Central America. "Posada" means "Inn" and they are symbolic of Jose and Mary's search for an 'Inn' to spend the night in Bethlehem. The evening is a wonderful opportunity to tell the true Christmas story. It is also a wonderful time to meet new families as those who host the Posada in their home invite family and friends as well as members from church. It is a popular time of song, Bible Study, children time, and of course, lots of good food. It is a wonderful preparation for Nochebuena, Christmas Eve.

Our Talented Youth: Two of our Hispanic youth, Matthew Marroquin and Kevin Duque attended the National Hispanic Institute's Celebracion in Dallas, Texas. They, along with the rest of their team from Storm Lake High School, qualified at the regional conference in Rock Island, Ill. In Dallas they competed in small groups "*with a directive to create a social entrepreneurship project, study the positives and negatives their project might face, consider how to fund the project and present their project in a competition against other groups."* Matthew and his group took 2nd place. Good job kids.

Choice Dollars from Thrivent: Thrivent Financial for Lutherans has accepted our church to receive "CHOICE" dollars for our ministry. If you have any questions on how to do this contact your local Thrivent Financial for Lutherans representative or call at 800-847-4836.

In December I gave a presentation on Hispanic mission work to the Confirmation classes in 5-8th grades at Peace Lutheran Church in Wall Lake. Thank you to Pastor Roger Carlisle and his kids for the special afternoon together. The kids had great questions and comments about our mission together to share the faith.

Please Pray: +For our Advent/Christmas preparations in Denison and Storm Lake. +For the Hispanic church in Storm Lake as they celebrate their partnership with Grace and as they consider options for calling a pastor. +For our new visiting families that they would become a regular part of our ministry. +For our Spanish speaking missionaries overseas under stressful conditions, especially Rev. Ricardo Schuller recovering from an accident in Puerto Rico. +For our partnership with the African ministry at Zion, Denison and beyond, especially with Pastor Gabriel and his goal of becoming a LCMS pastor. +*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 & in our other 3 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

E-MAIL: daniel.vogel@ ziondenison.org

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

Harrison, Day speak to history and future of BSA–LCMS relationship
Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2015
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

First, we apologize for the slow nature of this letter, realizing that congregations and individuals have been waiting for word from the Synod on this issue. However, the recent Boy Scouts of America (BSA) adult leadership standards change — effected by the BSA National Executive Board July 10, 2015, that lifted the BSA's ban on openly gay Scout leaders — caused great concern and has led us formally to dissolve the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the BSA. As of Dec. 1, 2015, the LCMS no longer has an official relationship with the BSA.

Second, while we understand the legal concerns that led to this new BSA direction, it is simply a place the church is not willing to go. At our summer 2013 meeting with the BSA, we were assured that changes concerning adult leadership would not be on the table, but that was not the case. We are now being told that the LGBT agenda, even with the most recent change, won't affect the content of Scouting or the BSA experience, but we do not believe that will be the case.

Third, it is important to know that the LCMS has never "endorsed" Scouting formally. Past Synod conventions determined that participating in Scouting was not a matter of fellowship and did not undermine our theological convictions or violate our position on unionism and syncretism. Therefore, the matter of Scouting was "left to the individual congregation to decide," with each congregation having the responsibility to "establish its own policy as pastoral wisdom on the part of both the congregation and the ministry in its own particular situation dictates." "Synod thus neither encourages nor discourages Scoutism in any congregation" (1953 Convention Proceedings, pp. 555–556). Unless the Synod in convention issues a change, this is still the case.

We have had an MOU with the BSA for some time that was based on mutual trust between the LCMS and the BSA. The memorandum was renewed periodically through the years by different LCMS presidents. The BSA's recent inconsistent direction on human sexuality and its policy changes, however, have led our office to conclude that such an MOU is, regretfully, no longer tenable, and thus our decision formally to dissolve the MOU between the LCMS and the BSA.

As congregations now consider their continued involvement with the BSA, we thought it important to share something of this past and recent history of the LCMS–BSA relationship. We also need to share potential legal concerns that chartering LCMS congregations should consider. Recent federal rulings, including the Supreme Court ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, are shaping decisions by organizations such as the BSA. Previous rulings, including the *Boy Scouts of America v. Dale* decision, seem likely to no longer hold in court.

For instance, a recent BSA memorandum cites cases demonstrating that the BSA has been held to be a place of public accommodation in some states and not in others, noting there is no national determination of the issue. Interestingly, the memorandum readily acknowledges that cases that previously held that the BSA was not a place of accommodation were decided long ago when "the courts viewed homosexuals and the BSA in different lights," and it ends the discussion by candidly saying, "A court could conclude that the BSA is a place of public accommodation based on the size and inclusiveness of the Scouting program." Based on these comments, it appears that the law is growing stronger for those who might be in a position to file suit for discrimination against the BSA and, by extension, against chartered organizations, including LCMS congregations.

While legal speculation is just that, we are concerned that the legal boundaries are still being drawn with each court case, and we are concerned that LCMS congregations could be pulled into such a legal battle. **Congregations who continue their BSA charters after the Dec. 1, 2015, dissolution of the LCMS MOU should seek local legal counsel and guidance on how best to safeguard themselves legally.**

To that end, we are calling for the establishment of a task force to consider Scouting and the involvement of the LCMS going forward. The landscape and intersection of church and world — including Scouting — has drastically changed since our Synod's decisions on Scouting matters in the 1950s. We recognize that the BSA and other Scouting programs have a positive impact on the lives of many Lutherans and LCMS congregations and schools. However, the times demand we ask important questions. How should the church engage and be involved going forward? How does the church participate in a faithful way so that our children are able to be involved and the church's confession remains unhampered?

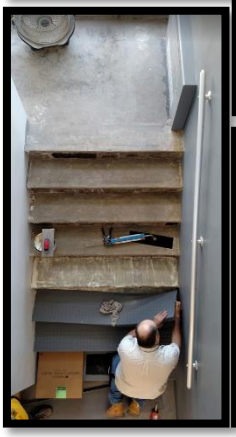
Again, we appreciate the patience of the church as we have been considering these issues over the past several months. We lament the fact that an MOU between the LCMS and the BSA is no longer possible. We pray that the Lord of the church will bless congregations and individuals as they consider the information shared here and chart a faithful course forward.

Peace,
Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison,
President The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Rev. Bart Day,
Executive Director
LCMS Office of National Mission

Generations Update

As you can see from the pictures below, progress continues on our Generations project. Over the last month, a section of floor has been poured in the new east entrance as brick has been laid and electrical work has done. Dave Gore continues to be an important worker. Below he is pictured installing our new library shelving and (along with Duane Monson, Bob Genzen, and Bruce Grimm – other important volunteers!) installing more coat racks in our coat room. In the pictures below you can also see Doug Weitl installing floor treads for the steps in the north entrance while Sam Musfeldt, Denny Grimm, and Warren Puck install new sun shades in the kitchen. Also pictured is McLaughlin construction working on the east entrance and digging a trench for a retaining wall. In the bottom row of pictures you can see the progress on the education wing bathrooms as sheetrock was installed, moving us one step closer to updated bathrooms! Thank you to everyone who continues to volunteer and give generously toward our goal.

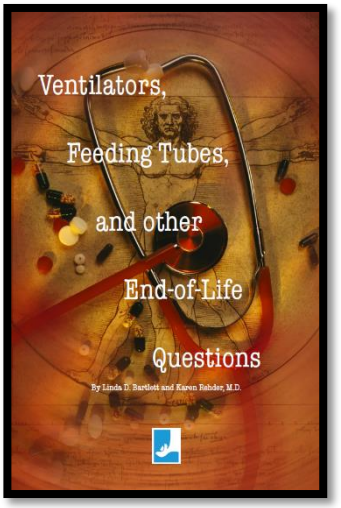


NEW Resources Available in Zion's **Resource Center**

A terrifying thunderstorm, a kidnapping, a castle hideout, a knightly disguise . . . these are the ingredients of a remarkable story. The life of the German monk whose teachings set in motion the events of the Reformation has all of that and the discovery of a treasure—the good news of God's free gift of forgiveness through faith in Jesus. The world-changing events in 16th-century Europe, events that came to be called the "Reformation," happened during a time of change. Many people longed for the reform of the Roman Catholic Church and protested against the wealth and greed of church leaders. Scholars studied Hebrew and Greek, discovering and examining ancient manuscripts. Printing presses, the newest social media technology of the day, published the latest ideas. A young law student named Martin Luther changed his career path from law school to a monastery to a position lecturing on the Bible in a university. His study of the Bible would lead him to life-changing discoveries about the treasured good news of God's love and forgiveness.

The Mormon Church (aka The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) is an intriguing--and perplexing--religious movement. From its feel-good, family-oriented TV commercials to its Grammy- and Emmy-winning Mormon Tabernacle Choir to its earnest bicycling missionaries, the Mormon Church is high profile all the way. Founded in the early 19th century, this religious group boasts more than 15 million members and 85,000 missionaries, ranking it in the top five of "Christian denominations" in the U.S., according to the National Council of Churches. What makes this group distinctive and how does it differ from other churches? Questions like these and more are addressed in this informative booklet.

Dealing with illness and dying has never been easy. But in the 21st century, we face medical dilemmas that our grandparents never had to consider. Modern technology with its many options has presented us with choices that most of us feel unqualified to make. This booklet will guide you through many of these tough questions as it provides solid, biblical answers.



Congregational Servants

Council:
Curt Struve, President
Eric Ramsey, Vice President
Jean Ferniding, Record. Sec.
Amber Neumann, Fin. Sec.
Shannon Walters, Treasurer
Jeff Hargens, CFO

Board of Elders:
Stan Baack, head elder
Don Lamb, Paul Christiansen
Gary Witt, Floyd Forman
Tim Kienast, Lynn Kruse

Board of Deacons:
David Bohlman, Bruce Grimm,
Ryan Crawford, Dan Dawson
Richard Zinke, Chris Greving

Ladies Guild:
Cheral Buhr, President

Board of Trustees:
Bob Genzen, Dan Behrens,
Kent Vollstedt,
Kevin Grimm,
Rodney Backhaus
Sam Musfeldt

Board of Missions:
Arlene Mohr, Chair
Dave & Bev Grundmeier,
Frank Mohr, Lynn Kruse,
Gary Schroeder, Warren Puck,
Jean Hargens

Board of Education:
Shelly Gruhn, Chair
Margaret Backhaus,
Joni Kienast, Dan Dawson,
Kari Ranniger, Kathy Vollstedt

Preschool Board:
Dianne Riggert, Chair
Heather Kusel, Jen Morris,
Janet Smith

Stewardship Board:
Rick Lohrmann, Chair

Altar Guild:
Monica Christensen, Director

Choir:
Dr. Tom Ulrickson, director

Children's Choir:
Susie Ulrickson, Jill Arp

January Birthdays and Anniversaries @ Zion

1 Greg Neumann
2. Jennifer Morris
Joel Musfeldt
Alex Ranniger
Ryan Riesberg
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. Amy Benton
12. Charles Fielweber
Daniel Grove
Jacki Nusbaum
John Opperman
14. Kamryn Lesle
David Page
15. Kari Deal
Kenneth Eischeid
Jaclyn Garrison
Colene Lohrmann
16. Chase Alexander
Mike Kuchel
Jenna Soll
Shona Weitl
17. Kevin Grimm
18. Paul Christensen
Sarah Gruhn
Sara Kobus
Brian Lamp
Noah Martin
Sonia Nulle
Blake Nusbaum

19. David Bohlmann
Joe Karsten
Cynthia Ranniger
Jessa Wiig
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
12. Steve & Erin Renze
14. Curt & Rexanne Struve
20. Charles & Marlyn Fielweber
22. Kenneth & Dorothy Knudson

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

In Our Prayers

Athena Bess, Franklin Mohr, Walt Noelck, Mandi Sandage, Dave Grundmeier, Heather Kusel, Sherri Steffes, Steve Rutz (Karl Rutz's Brother), Arlene Mohr, Ora Weston (David & Joene Bohlmann's son), Larry Genzen, Bev Rix, Georgia Lohrmann