Behold, Magi!

The magi were unexpected. Jewish guests for a Jewish child, surely. But Gentiles? And Gentiles following a star, at that. Matthew captures the surprise with the expressive "Behold!" "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, *behold*, wise men (magi)[1] from the east came to Jerusalem…"

Whether from Persia, Babylon, or Arabia, their journey was considerable. T.S. Eliot surely came close to the truth in his famous poem "The Journey of the Magi":

> A hard time we had of it.
> At the end we preferred to travel all night,
> Sleeping in snatches,
> With the voices singing in our ears, saying
> That this was all folly.

But press on they did, arriving in Jerusalem with this road-weary, hopeful question, "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."

We have come

> The ways deep and the weather sharp,
> The very dead of winter.

We have come

> The night-fires going out, and the
> lack of shelters,
> And the cities hostile and the towns
> unfriendly
> And the villages dirty and charging high
> prices…

We have come to worship him. A more surprising statement could hardly have come from their mouths. We, Gentiles, have come to worship the Jewish King. No wonder Matthew says, "Behold!"

What does it all mean? Quite simply, if Jesus is for Gentiles, Jesus is for you, too. The Jewish Jesus is a King for all people. The Jewish Jesus is a Savior for all people. Throughout the season of Epiphany we celebrate this joyful reality in Scripture and song as Jesus is revealed (ephiphanied) as the world's Savior King.

> As with gladness men of old
> Did the guiding star behold;
> As with joy they hailed its light,
> Leading onward, beaming bright;
> So, most gracious Lord, may we
> Evermore be led by Thee.
>
> As with joyful steps they sped,
> Savior, to Thy lowly bed,
> There to bend the knee before
> Thee, whom heav'n and earth adore;
> So may we with willing feet
> Ever seek Thy mercy seat.
>
> As they offered gifts most rare
> At Thy cradle, rude and bare,
> So may we with holy joy,
> Pure and free from sin's alloy,
> All our costliest treasures bring,
> Christ, to Thee, our heav'nly King.

[1] Despite the popular carol "We Three Kings," there is no evidence that the magi were kings (nor that there were, in fact, three). Further, the translation "wise men," may be stretching the truth, for the Greek term *magoi* refers to people enamored with dreams, astrology, and magic, the word *magic* actually coming from *magoi*. These men may have been wise by their cultural standards, but not by Biblical criteria. This makes their arrival in Jerusalem all the more startling.

To Fulfill All Righteousness

In the days of Herod the Great, John the Baptizer appeared in the Judean wilderness with this exhortation: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 3:1). And people responded! "Jerusalem, and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, and they were baptized in the river Jordan, confessing their sins" (Mt. 3:5-6).

"Then Jesus came…" Jesus came "to be baptized by [John]" (Mt. 3:13)! The sinless Son of God came to be baptized by John. Understandably, John tried to deter him: "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" (Mt. 3:14). "But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness'" (Mt. 3:15). At this, John consented.

But what does it all mean? How was Jesus' baptism fitting to fulfill all righteousness? Why does the Church celebrate it? And what difference does it make in our lives? Let's find out.

Let it be so now…

The "now" is important. It means there's something significant about the time. Something significant was happening in that "now." The "now" marked a change in history. But what? John told us: "The kingdom of God is at hand!" This kingdom, ushered in by Jesus, signified a change in times. It marked the beginning of the end, the initiation of the end times. God was getting involved in a significant way. God was coming for His people, to rescue them from their sin. So Jesus was saying, "My baptism has eschatological (end times) significance."

To fulfill all righteousness

This is an important phrase. Jesus was saying that His baptism was integral in bringing about the Scriptural plan for righteousness. Fleshing out His words even more, Jesus was saying that His baptism was necessary to enact the Scriptural plan for God's saving deeds, it was necessary in God's plan of salvation. So putting the two phrases together Jesus was saying, "I need to be baptized now because my baptism has end times significance, because it's integral in bringing about the Scriptural plan for salvation."

But how?

Remember the point of John's baptism? Repentance for the forgiveness of sins. John's baptism was for sinners. So, Jesus is essentially saying, "I need to stand where sinners stand. I need to take the place of sinners. That's the way God's Kingdom is coming. That's the way He's enacting His salvation."

This is hugely important in understanding Jesus' message and mission; it was about standing where sinners stood – from His baptism all the way to His cross. More specifically, it was about taking the place of sinners, about being the substitute for sinners.

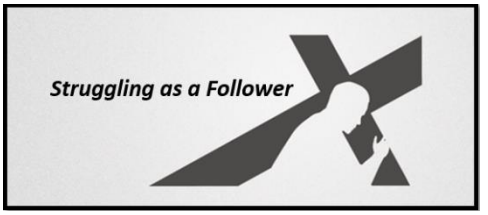
Our hymnody beautifully captures this. Consider these verses of "To Jordan's River Came Our Lord":

> The Savior came to be baptized—
> The Son of God in flesh disguised—
> To stand beneath the Father's will
> And all His righteousness fulfill.

The Son of God disguised in flesh stood beneath the Father's will to fulfill God's righteous deeds of salvation, deeds that started by standing where sinners stood, by identifying Himself as their substitute. So the hymn concludes:

> Now rise, faint hearts, be resolute;
> This man is Christ, our substitute!
> He was baptized in Jordan's stream,
> Proclaimed Redeemer, Lord supreme.

The baptism of Jesus reminds us that the Savior has come in these end times to stand in our place, to be our substitute, to fulfill God's plan to rescue us from our sin. And that's something worth celebrating! – Pastor Conner



Struggling as a Follower Part III: …he has made him known…

We're continuing our journey into what it means to suffer and struggle as a follower of Jesus. Our desire is to remain faithful to God as well as to acknowledge in an honest and humble manner the hurt and the pain that we encounter (whether we're experiencing the pain firsthand or seeing it in those we love).

Last time we looked at Job. He expresses a deep problem: God seems to be far off. As a result we're left wondering things like: What does God think about me? Does He care about me? Is He even really there? Without someone there to speak on God's behalf, God remains quiet when we most desperately need Him to say something.

This problem slingshots us onward into the Gospels. All four Gospels highlight the solution to the problem, but John's account does so the best. John offers insight in the first chapter what the Son, the second person of the Trinity became, and that's where the solution lies. There was the Word who existed alongside God the Father (*In the beginning was the word, and the word <u>was</u> with God, and the word <u>was</u> God*). John goes on to affirm that the word was responsible for making stuff in the beginning.

On top of creating though the word is the true light. When you have light you avoid hurting yourself. Light saves you from a great deal of pain at night because it *enlightens* you to see obstacles, doors, or kids' toys while you're heading to the bathroom. The same goes for the *true light, which enlightens everyone* (John 1:9). The Son – who's called the word and the light – brings to light something spectacular!

But before we jump to the spectacular, something extraordinary occurred. John says, "*And the word became flesh and dwelt among us…*" (1:14). Jesus arrived. True man and true God – Merry Christmas!

God actually assumed a human body. He had a human brain and, more importantly for our purposes, a voice and a mouth. And here's the something spectacular brought to light. It is God Himself, or as John puts it, "*No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known*" (1:18).

Jesus speaks on behalf of God. Not only because He is God but also because He knows the Father. They're tight being Son and Father and all. So Jesus has the authority and the preexisting relationship to speak for His Father.

The implication for your moments of trial is that through Jesus you know what God thinks about you because Jesus brings to light God's thoughts and words. You know He cares for you through the words and actions of Jesus. Jesus serves as God's loudspeaker. You see Jesus, you see God. You listen to Jesus, you hear from God too.

So in Jesus the relational problem Job highlights goes away. Jesus doesn't necessarily answer every question (the big one – why is this happening to me?). But Jesus answers enough. And it is during your time of struggling that it is the most crucial to be in the places where Jesus promises to be in order to hear from God. – Pastor Johnson

Ministry Apps

Applying the Gospel to Hearts and Homes (January 2018): Zion and Trinity Lutheran

We're transitioning from the "to do" list of December to the "I will" list of January. The resolutions composed for the New Year propose, "I will diet, organize my life, attend church, and a variety of other intentions. I am suggesting another statement: "Live God's will."

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:2

God's Will and God's Word

God's will is centered in Christ Jesus. God's will is that all are saved. God's will is that our relationship with Him is restored. Restored relationships is a major theme of the book of JEREMIAH. God calls a teenage boy as His voice to Israel. The dynamics of Jeremiah's call and message will be explored in the MONDAY morning Bible study at Zion. The study will begin on Monday, January 15, and continue through January and early February. Join us. Bring a friend! Class begins at 9:30 a.m.

God's Will and Our Work

The vocations of God's people continue to be the focus of the Zion Fellowship Club. Whatever our role or task we are to walk in God's will and serve Him. Special guest for the January 8 meeting will be Burke Johnson. Burke will share his journey to mortuary science and share helpful insights on funeral preparations and grief response. GUESTS are always welcome. The Fellowship Club gathers at 7 p.m.

God's Will and His Children

It is God's will that children of all ages praise Him. We thank the MANY children of Zion for sharing their praises during the Advent season. Thanks to Mrs. Kari Ranniger and the midweek students for the hand bell selections before each service. Thanks to children's Christmas service directors Jill Arp, Susie Ulrickson, and Kristen Backhaus for coordinating a special worship event. Thanks to Sunday school teachers for their special efforts in sharing the message of Jesus with the children and assisting with the special services. Thanks for Bridget Gore, Janice Nemitz, and Marlene Borkowski for coordinating the praises of our preschool children at the Advent service.

God's Will and His Family

Lutheran Family Service (LFS) of Iowa continues to provide support for mother and child in an unplanned pregnancy. Adoption services are still coordinated by LFS. Many families also receive the support of Christian counseling services through LFS. Zion will be blessed as LFS provides a marriage enrichment experience on February 3 and a parenting seminar on February 25. More information will be coming soon.

Families of Zion are invited to a Bowling event on Sunday afternoon, January 28 at the Manning bowling alley from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. One game, shoes and light snacks are provided by the Zion Christian Education Committee. Join us!

God's Will and our Walk

I've appreciated the kind observations, "Pastor, you're walking with a limp!" Unlike Jacob, I was not injured in a divine wrestling match (Genesis 32). However, I have been struck with arthritis and will have hip replacement surgery on January 16. Thanks for your prayers. I anticipate skipping down the church aisle soon. In the meantime we walk together in the Epiphany Light. Pastor Bob

ON THAT NOTE

Treasuring our Musical Treasure

Little is known about the author of this month's featured hymn, "The Star Proclaims the King is Here." His name was Coelius Sedulius and we know he lived in the 5th century in Italy. We also know that he was converted to Christ later in life. He wrote poems and prose recounting the Gospel story along with several hymns. It's apparent from reading "The Star Proclaims the King is Here" that he had a firm grasp not only on Christ's identity, but also a strong appreciation for the epiphany texts throughout the Gospels.

"Epiphany," as indicated earlier, means "to make manifest" or "to reveal." As such, the appointed texts for the Epiphany season focus on the revelation of Christ's identity. To use a mental picture, if God gave the gift of Christ at Christmas, Epiphany is the season when He invites us to unwrap His gift. This little hymn does a magnificent job of journeying through the usual Epiphany texts and helping us to appreciate what God is revealing to us about His Christmas gift to us.

The star proclaims the King is here;
But, Herod, why this senseless fear?
For He who offers heav'nly birth
Seeks not the kingdoms of this earth.

The eastern sages saw from far
And followed on His guiding star;
And, led by light, to light they trod
And by their gifts confessed their God.

Our hymn opens by placing us as observers in Herod's palace as magi from the east ask him, "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." Herod is deeply troubled. Fear of a rival king overwhelms him. But it's senseless fear because this newborn King has not come to claim earthly thrones; He has come to give new life and entrance into Heaven's Kingdom.

From distant eastern reaches, sagacious star gazers saw a significant star in the sky, so significant they were willing to journey hundreds of miles on foot to see its meaning. Historians speculate over what exactly they saw. Some suggest a miraculous light; some a rare convergence of significant planets. Either way, the hymn masterfully captures the scene: "led by light, to light they trod…" This mysterious heavenly light led them to *the* light, God's Son, Jesus Christ. And then, with their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh they worshiped this Light, thereby confessing Him to be God Himself.

Within the Jordan's sacred flood
The heav'nly Lamb in meekness stood
That He, of whom no sin was known,
Might cleanse His people from their own.

Leaving the magi, the hymn turns us to the next Epiphany narrative: the baptism of Jesus. There in the Jordan, Jesus was revealed to be man's substitute, the lamb who would die in our place. This substitutionary Lamb, who had no sin of His own, entered the Jordan to stand where sinners were standing so that He might begin His journey to the cross to die the death sinners deserved to die. From baptism to cross and empty tomb, Jesus was our substitute, the very substitutionary Lamb of God who was sent to take away the sin of the world.

And oh, what miracle divine,
When water reddened into wine!
He spoke the word, and forth it flowed
In streams that nature ne'er bestowed.

Emerging from the Jordan, our hymn journeys with Jesus to a wedding feast at Cana, where, as John indicates in his Gospel, Jesus performed the first of His miraculous signs. "Fill the jars with water," Jesus instructed the servants, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." Then John simply narrates, "the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine…" At His Word water had reddened into fine wine, leaving the master unaware "where it came from." John concludes, "Jesus… manifested (epiphanied) His glory. And his disciples believed in him."

For this Thy glad epiphany
All glory, Jesus, be to Thee,
Whom with the Father we adore,
And Holy Spirit evermore.

In thanksgiving for revealing Christ's identity as the world's King, the substitutional Lamb of God, and the authoritative Word of God, the hymn concludes with a doxology of praise to the Triune God. Because God has revealed the true identity of His Christmas gift of Christ to us, we are able to have a truly glad epiphany.

A Church Named Rachel

On December 21, the Christian Church solemnly remembered the innocent babies of Bethlehem slaughtered at King Herod's fear-driven command. The Gospel writer Matthew reached deep into the Old Testament, into the very words of the weeping prophet, Jeremiah, to capture the depth of the people's grief:

> "A voice was heard in Ramah,
> weeping and loud lamentation,
> Rachel weeping for her children;
> she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."[2]

These are powerful, sobering words. "Weeping and loud lamentation… her children… are no more."

A 19th century poet poignantly captured the mood:

> Oh, who shall tell what fearful pangs
> That mother's heart are rending,
> As o'er her infant's little grave
> Her wasted form is bending;
> From many an eye that weeps today
> Delight may beam tomorrow;
> But she, -- her precious babe is not!
> And what remains but sorrow?

As the Church we grieve for each child deprived of life by Herod's sinful sword. Tragically, the Christian Church is moved to grief and lamentation still today as innocents continue to be slaughtered legally in our country. Under the banners of "health care," "choice," "privacy," and "rights," abortion takes the life of an innocent child every 35 seconds. Compounding the tragedy is the unthinkable fact that women are hiring Herod to slaughter these innocents.

Many of these women later regret their abortions and are left with deep and lasting grief as they realize too late that their children are no more. If not for God's grace in Christ, available to all who repent, their lament would be absolute and eternal.

The Church stands beside them in their sorrow. Together we grieve. Yet in our grief we hope. In our grief we pray. And in our grief we act. We hope in the God who raises the dead and heals the broken. We hope in His Second Advent when He will make all things new and liberate our hearts from their sorrow.

We pray to the God of life to change hearts and minds through His Gospel so that the slaughter of the innocents will cease. We pray for husbands and wives to welcome the gift of life into their families and to celebrate it above financial gain or career aspirations. We pray for governments to defend the defenseless and rightly to see the humanity and dignity of the unborn.

And we act through word and deed on behalf of the unborn and the men and women grieving their deadly choice. We act as the Church by embracing the repentant. We act as a Church by confessing life to be sacred from the womb to the tomb. We act as a Church by encouraging adoption. We act as members of the Church by speaking in the public square in defense of life, by advocating for laws that defend life from conception to natural death.

But one of the most important things we do for the world is lament. As the Church, we are Rachel to the world, rightly lamenting life's loss. The lives lost to abortion cannot be ignored or forgotten. Our tears must flow for them. Our lamentation must echo for them, lest we let them be no more in our memory.

Until Christ returns to bind up our festering wounds and to heal our broken hearts, we are a Church named Rachel. – Pastor Conner

[1] Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob, had died in childbirth and was buried in Ramah. Years later, the prophet Jeremiah depicted Rachel weeping for the Israelites in exile.

Ladies Guild of Zion
December 13, 2017

Sixteen members, nine guests, Pastor Conner and family and Pastor and Diane Riggert joined together in a Christmas potluck at noon.

Following the meal, President Buhr led the group in the LWML Pledge. Joene Bohlmann read "Twelve Days of Christmas Reminders" that did remind us that every good and perfect gift comes down from above. The mite box prayer was read and the offering taken.

The business meeting was called to order in the name of the Triune God. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and amended by replacing the name of Connie Ahrendsen with the name of Sandra Vahl as hostess of the December meeting. Treasurer Mary Grimm reported a balance on hand of $4,209.01. The executive committee will meet and disperse the funds before the end of the year. Her books will be audited before the January meeting. Human Care chairman Audrey Roe said 83 quilts have been tied to date. Twelve quilts will be given to the Adopt a Family drive. Audrey was not able to reach anyone at the former Quakerdale property to inquire if they had need of any quilts.

Old business included a final report on the Advent by Candlelight event. Twenty three tables were decorated and $1000.00 was raised for missions.

New business: Sandra Vahl suggested that Guild might consider purchasing the paper products used by the youth group when they serve meals to enhance their fund raising capabilities. Kitchen Treasurer, Darlene Vollstedt will check on the costs and the group will make a decision at the next meeting.

Plaza Bingo will be held on December 22nd with Carol Kahl as chairman, and Darlene Vollstedt, Susan Schilling, and Connie Ahrendsen as helpers. The January 10, 2018 meeting will be hosted by Sandra Vahl and Becki Ehlers or if Becki is unavailable Sue Puck will take her place.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned and a game of Christmas Bingo was played until 2:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Puck, secretary

Have spare yarn? Donate it and it will be transformed it into warm hats that will be shared with those in need.

Preschool Praises for December 2017

December was a wonderful month and we and the children had such a great time! What a wonderful month to talk to the children about Jesus and who he was and remind them of why we celebrate Christmas and give gifts and who our greatest gift is!

The first week in December we concluded our two week study of the 5 senses as we talked about touch and taste. The children enjoyed using their sense of touch to guess what was inside of a balloon. Objects differed from water to syrup to salt and beans. They also got to use their sense of taste to discover 4 different tastes and chart if they liked it or not. Salt, baking cocoa, sugar and a lemon were the 4 different tastes and I did them in that order so that the children could dip their lemon in the sugar once they had tried it and enjoy eating the rest of it. It was fun to have them smell the cocoa before they tasted it since they were expecting sweet chocolate but instead it was bitter! Some still claimed that they liked it, but their faces said otherwise! Already we started making the presents that the children would give to their parents; starting with cinnamon dough, we cut out different shapes to make ornaments. We also studied the letter F and the sound it makes. Mary and the visit from the angel was our Bible topic for the week.

The second week we studied snow and how every flake is different. The children were able to play with fake snow inside in our sensory table and watch how it turned from a small amount of powder to a large amount of "snow" just by adding water! Library Linda and the Crawford County Naturalist came to share stories and activities with the children. We worked on the letter E and painted with Q-tips to practice our small motor skills. We also talked about the circle and square and differentiating between the two. This week we also painted our ornaments for the parents and glued our pictures onto them. Our Bible study for the week was about Joseph and his dream with the angel and how he was to wed Mary and care for her and Jesus.

The third week was all about Christmas and Jesus. We read 3 books: The Legend of the Candy Cane, The Legend of the Christmas Tree and The Legend of Saint Nicholas. All of the books were great because they all pointed back to Jesus as the reason for Christmas. We studied the letter J for Jesus and painted a candy cane J as well as send home a candy cane with each child. We made a nativity using different shapes and they really turned out beautifully. The children also made cute cards for their parents for Christmas with their fingerprints being the lights on a Christmas tree which we then wrapped up with their ornaments. Our Jesus Birthday Party was wonderful as the children were able to frost and decorate their own cookie. You can imagine how high the sprinkles were piled on! After snack we opened presents - we had asked each family to provide one small present for a gift exchange - and they were so excited! Then we played different games and danced until it was time to go home. Each child then received a gift from the preschool, thanks to the help of a Thrivent Action Team, which included an activity book, stickers, crayons, Christmas Nativity book and a winter hat.

Now we are on break until January 4th and using this time to plan ahead as well as enjoy time with our families. We pray that you had a wonderful Christmas and thank you for all of your support during 2017! Happy New Year!

Blessings,
Mrs. Gore and Mrs. Nemitz

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

The Zion Preschool Board would like to thank Diane Riggert for her years of service on the Preschool Board and her role as the Chairperson. Diane's passion for education and ministry were demonstrated in her leadership and commitment to the Preschool. We are so thankful for her expertise and thoughtful guidance in the time she devoted to her position. Thank you Diane!!

The Zion Preschool Board

SERVING THE LORD IN
PANAMA
NEWS FROM THE GAUTHIER FAMILY

Nov/Dec 2017
Vol. 2 Issue XI

Blessed Advent greetings! Due to the countless holidays and the odd scheduling of November and December, this newsletter will provide a summary of both months and will serve as the 2017 year-end news from Panamá.

The big news recently is a result of our fall FORO meeting in the middle of November. The national church is moving forward with its plan to plant a new church in the province of Colon. IELPA already owns a beautiful piece of property and building that will serve as the church building and parsonage. This two story building has two classrooms, an office, and two bathrooms downstairs. Outside is a large covered area which will be great for gatherings or space for Sunday school. Behind the building are two other classrooms that can be utilized for whatever needs may arise. Upstairs, the house has three rooms and a bathroom that will serve as the home for the missionary pastor and a kitchen and large open room that will serve as the sanctuary for the church.

Del Redentor Lutheran (Balboa) has issued a called to a Colombian Lutheran pastor to plant this church. He has the call documents in hand and is deliberating. We anxiously await his decision and ask for your prayers in this matter. It is our hope that he accepts and arrives in March to begin working in the community of Sabanitas.

To assist, Cristo Para Todas Las Naciones (Lutheran Hour) has volunteered to offer programs in the locals schools and provide any materials that might assist with the church plant. We have also been working with a mission society in Texas that is interested in offering an eye glass clinic (sometime in fall of 2018) in that community to further connect the pastor with the community and the community with the church.

Much work remains as I volunteer, with other members of the congregations, to paint and further prepare the building for this church plant. But we are excited about the future and very grateful for the Lord's guidance and grace as we seek to plant this new congregation. Thank you for your prayers and support throughout 2017, this church plant is also a product of your dedication to support Lutheran mission around the world!

As 2017 winds down, we have much for which we are able to give thanks. Our presence in Panamá and the support we give to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Panamá is a result of the Lord's faithfulness to His Church. It is also your faithful "YES!" to the Lord's call for you to support Lutheran mission around the world.

We humbly ask you again to prayerfully consider partnering with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to support the ongoing church planting and theological education in Panamá in 2018 and beyond. Your support of mission work in Panamá will help provide weekly Bible studies in each congregation, assistance with weekly preaching, pre-seminary courses, deaconess courses, mentoring for seminary students, theology courses for pastors, deacons and deaconesses, weekly textual studies to help with preaching, support in planting a new church, and much more.

From our family (Brian, Amanda, and Ezra) and all the pastors, deacons, deaconesses, and members of the Lutheran Church here in Panamá: Thank you and God Bless you (Philippians 1:3)!

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

Missionaries to Indonesia

While we don't celebrate Thanksgiving Day in Asia, it doesn't mean we aren't thankful for a great many things. One of the things for which we are thankful is the work that the Lord Jesus continues to do in the lives of our church partners throughout Asia. We got to see one example of this firsthand with a recent event of the Indonesian Christian Lutheran Church (GKLI) in North Sumatra. We received a special invitation from the Bishop of this church, and the whole family was afforded places of honor in the front of the nave.

The GKLI was ordaining four new pastors who had just completed their seminary training and vicarage formation. These four young men would then be assigned parishes in different places in Indonesia, usually consisting of at least two congregations (and usually three or even four!). The pastors gathered from all over to give their recognition and support to these ordinations; the atmosphere was joyous and grateful. This was despite the temperature in the church, which was not air-conditioned even in the tropical atmosphere. The church service included special music by the Medan children, and from a choir of local GKLI members. There were guests from the Norwegian Lutheran Mission (NLM), and accompanying me was Rev. Brent Kuhlman from Nebraska who was in town for teaching that week.

The pastors heard from the Word of God, there was much singing and prayer, and I was able to bring words of encouragement and greeting on your behalf. We even had a traditional Indonesian meal with rice and spicy chicken when the Service was over. From start to finish, the event lasted over four hours! But what an opportunity to be with our dear brothers and sisters during a joyous day.

SELAMAT

Read more online at:
http://ferrys.asia

Thank you for giving us the support and trust in order to be here and do this work on your behalf. We pray the Thanksgiving weekend was joyous and happy for all of you. We give thanks for this partnership, and for the good that our Lord is doing through each of us for the sake of the lost.

A newly ordained pastor receives a Bible and a copy of the Lutheran Confessions that you sponsored!

Cheryl has been plenty busy with home-school lessons and the daily drop-off and pick-up of the littler girls, which gives her opportunities to interact with the other mothers who are all fascinated that she has her kids in this school, speaks their language, and actually walks to pick them up. The new baby is treating her well, and the kids all rub mom's belly as they say goodnight to their newest little brother or sister.

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 ***La Iglesia Evangelica Luterana Amigos en Cristo:*** *Friends in Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church:* **Pastor Daniel Vogel**, Denison, Iowa

Iowa District West, LCMS
Year 14, Issue 1, January 2018

Early Christmas Party: On December 17 we celebrated Christmas a little early with a meal and traditional Mexican traditions. We incorporated a Latino Advent custom "Las Posadas" into our celebration. We had a good crowd and most attendees were also present for Divine Service! At the end of the day, that is the focus of our mission, to gather around and unite in Word and Sacrament.

Pastor Vogel leads the Posada. Las Posadas is Spanish for lodging, or accommodation, which in this case refers to the inn in the story of the nativity of Jesus. This Advent tradition reenacts the story of Mary and Joseph just before the Nativity. Traditionally held in homes, we adapted the custom to the church.

Upcoming Events: By the time this issue publishes we will have had our Christmas services and will be preparing for Three Kings Day. This day is celebrated widely in the Latino community. Like our Christmas Party we plan to use the Three Kings Divine Service as a community outreach and event. More about Christmas and Three Kings to come in the next issues! May God bless you all this season!

***Please Continue to Support* our church**: For our mission friends financial support checks should now be sent to: Amigos en Cristo Lutheran Church, 1004 1st Avenue South, Denison, Iowa, 51442

CONTACT:
Pastor Willie Grills
1004 1st Ave. South Denison, Iowa 51442
Church: 712-263-2235 Pastor's Cell: 606-225-2122
pastorgrills@gmail.com

UPCOMING EVENTS @ ZION & TRINITY

January 8	**Fellowship Club (Zion)** **7:00 p.m.**
January 15, 22, & 29 (continues into February)	**Jeremiah Bible Study (Zion)** **9:30 a.m.** Join Pastor Riggert for a journey through Prophet Jeremiah's writings.
January 21	**A Celebration of Generations (Life Sunday)** Celebrate Life Sunday at Zion with the generations of the faith. 9:00 a.m.
January 28	**Zion and Trinity Family Bowling** 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. Zion's Board of Education pays for one game, shoes, and a soda. Enjoy an afternoon of fellowship and fun at L & M Bowl in Manning with your church family!
February 3	**Strengthening Marriages (at Zion) with Lutheran Family Services** **9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**
February 14	**Ash Wednesday** **Midweek Lenten Services begin** **5:45 service; 6:30 meal (Zion)**
February 25	**Lutheran Family Services Guest Preacher and special Bible class on Physician Directed Suicide**
February 25	**Strengthening Parents (at Zion)** **Lutheran Family Services** **Afternoon Workshop**

Children's Christmas Programs 2017

More than 70 children joyfully proclaimed our Savior's birth to over 300 guests on December 17! Special thanks to Jill Arp (and helpers) and Susie Ulrickson and Kristin Backhaus (and helpers) for their hours of service to coordinate the event! Thanks also to the host of volunteers who coordinated the birthday party for Jesus following the program!

Thanks for a joyful Advent! Many thanks to the individuals and families for making our midweek Advent services a joyful, family-friendly experience. Pictured below are our weekly youth bell choir, directed by Mrs. Kari Ranniger, and Zion's preschool children, who sang on December 21st. Not pictured are the high school youth and families, our faithful and tireless youth leaders Bary and Karen Kienast, our eighth grade readers, our organists and audio/visual team, and our Advent preacher, Pastor Riggert. Thanks for making Zion a place of joy!

Find more photos on Zion's Facebook page!

ADVENT Joy

Spread the word!
Benefit for Rick Spack!
February 3rd from 4:30-7:00 p.m. at the Aspinwall Community Center!

The event will include a soup, sandwich, and bar meal and a silent auction. Auction donations are being coordinated through Soll's Service. Much more information will be shared with church and community in days ahead. Those unable to attend the benefit but wishing to make a financial donation can leave their donation at Soll's Service in Manning or the Aspinwall Coop. Mark your calendar. Rick continues his rehabilitation at the Madonna Rehabilitation Center in Lincoln, Nebraska. Well wishes can be sent to Rick at (Madonna Rehab Hospital, 5401 South St, Room #314, Lincoln, NE 68506)

Christmas Hymn Sing and Brunch, 2017

While Paula and Pastor Vogel's granddaughter enjoyed her chocolate cupcake, over 70 people celebrated Christ's birth with a delicious brunch and a festive re-telling Jesus' birth in word and song. Special thanks to Sandra Vahl for spearheading the brunch efforts!

Zion's Congregational Servants

Council:
Bruce Grimm, Chairman
Jeff Hargens, Vice Chairman
Jean Ferneding, Record. Sec.
Barb Page, Financial Secretary
Shannon Walters, Treasurer
Drew Puck, CFO

Board of Elders:
Stan Baack, Lynn Kruse
Don Lamb, Paul Christensen
Mike Gore, Eric Ramsey
Stan Musfeldt

Board of Deacons:
David Bohlman, Chris Greving
Ryan Crawford, Larry Mahnke
Richard Zinke, Dan Dawson,

Ladies Guild:
Cheral Buhr, President

Board of Trustees:
Dan Behrens, Bob Genzen,
Sam Musfeldt, Kevin Grimm,
Kyle Arp, Isaac Grabil

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

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

Preschool Board:
Jen Morris, Chair
Jean Ferneding,
Heather Kusel, Jamie England
Janet Smith

Stewardship Board:
Rick Lohrmann, Chair

Altar Guild:
Monica Christensen, Director

Choir:
Dr. Tom Ulrickson, director

Children's Choir:
Susie Ulrickson, Jill Arp

Trinity's Congregational Servants

Council:
Mark Segebart, President
Nyle Gruhn, Vice President
Gloria Boeck, Treasurer
Sylvia Bandow, Secretary

Board of Elders:
Jason Ferry, head elder
Scott Lingle, Mike Lorenzen,
Stan Spies, Wyatt Bandow

Priscilla Guild:
Cathie Segebart, President

Weavers
Bricy Lorenzen, President

Stewardship:
Deb Birks
Gloria Boeck, Lori Ferry,
Keith Boyens, Joleen Spies,
Marian Drake

Evangelism:
Loretta Arnold

Trustees:
Harold and Marjorie Jurgensen

Choir:
Susan Mahnke

The Zion App Coming Soon!

Watch/listen to sermons.

Receive notifications. And more!

Give securely through your smartphone any time.

Read newsletters.

THE CHURCH APP by Subsplash

Watch for details in January!

FPU Graduates:
Classes have ended, but the support hasn't! Join Pastor and Rebecca Conner for an FPU Reunion. Bring your questions. Share your successes. Get advice on your sticking points. We'll gather at 6:00 p.m. at Zion. Childcare available. See you there!

January Birthdays and Anniversaries @ Zion & Trinity

Birthdays (T = Trinity)

1 Greg Neumann
2. Jennifer Morris
Joel Musfeldt
Alex Ranniger
Ryan Riesberg
Rachel Winter
3. Robert Hansen
Violet Schroeder (T)
4. Alexis Dawson
Karen Kienast
Caitlin Lahr (T)
5. Kenneth Knudson
Kyle Lohrmann
6. Dawn Ketchum
Betty Maasen
Jeanette Ferry (T)
7. Sandra Hanson (T)
Chery Lahr (T)
8. Amy Hansen
9. Bode England
11. Amy Benton
Beverly Woebke (T)
12. Charles Fielweber
Daniel Grove
Jacki Nusbaum
John Opperman
Benjamin Lingle (T)
Terry Segebart (T)
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
Elijah Riessen (T)
19. David Bohlmann
Joe Karsten
Cynthia Ranniger
Jessa Wiig
20. Jonathan Lueth (T)
22. Crystal Dreher
Bryce Mohr
Gary Schroeder
Stephanie Winter
23. Donna Forman
Charles Lueth (T)
25. Lucas Borkowski
Robin Heaton
Tabitha Kuchel
William Weitl
27. Marshall Hansen
Deb Knueven
28. Riley Adams
Kelly Ceminski
Karen Joens
Eugene Mahnke
Kemper Nelson
Lowell Schroeder
29. Mary Greving
Stacie Nelson
Robert Riggert
30. Michael Frank
31. Grant Behrens
Philip Vogel

Anniversaries

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.

New Members (Zion):

- Dan, Wendy, Julianna, Adalyn, Merrick, Weston, Bennett, and Callan Stribe (transferred in)
- Luke, Taylor, and Harper Potthoff,

Transfers Out:

- Lyle and Barb Rood to St. Paul, Carroll

Official Acts

Zion Confirmation: Luke and Taylor Potthoff, December 31

In Our Prayers

Walt Noelck, Dave Grundmeier, Heather Kusel, Sherri Steffes, Jim Deevers, Gabriel Albers (Pastor and Rebecca's nephew), Athena Bess, JoAnn Wittrock, Inez Mahnke, Diane Henkleman, Pastor Johnson, Ron Claussen (Laurene Meeves' brother), Rick Spack, Arlene Mohr, Ray Christensen, Justeen Schwieso