The Christian Hope is Far Bigger than You Might Realize

How **BIG** is your hope?

Do you understand the question? If you're a confessing Christian, how far does your hope reach, how expansive is it, how much does it include? Does it stop short at business success, at college for your kids, at retirement? Popular prosperity preachers like Joel Osteen, T.D. Jakes, Paula White, and Benny Hinn notoriously sell the Christian hope short by holding hopes such as these forward as the height of the Christian hope.

Does your hope stop at dying and going to heaven? This is bigger than anything prosperity preachers offer, but even this falls short of the supersized hope offered in Scripture.

Consider how Scripture speaks of this **BIG** hope:

- According to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13).
- For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth… (Isaiah 65:17).
- Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth… And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." (Rev. 21:1, 5)
- For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Romans 8:19-21).

Process the words you just read! This is no little hope. It is not limited to bodies in the ground and souls in heaven. It involves the renewal of the entire creation! The Christian hope is **BIG**, captivatingly **BIG**, enchantingly **BIG**, even cosmically **BIG** reaching deep into and around the entire cosmos. From the microscopic molecules quivering around us to the farthest galaxies blazing beyond us to the muscular heart beating within us, God is going to renew it all. The Father means what He says: "I am making ***All*** Things New."

Imagine what this means! Imagine a world in which we are no longer required to bury our dead, a world no longer beset by scarcity, insufficiency, and lack, a world no longer burdened by injustice, oppression, and lies! Imagine a world liberated from sin's curse and made fresh and new by the glory of God – a newly mown field fresh with the morning dew, a sprightly spring shower washing away winter's grime, a spirited flock of songbirds gleefully greeting the newness of the morning after a summer storm – spread across the cosmos! God is making all things new!

Consider how this is celebrated in song. Verses two and three of "Joy to the World" celebrate this **BIG** hope with these words:

> Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
> Let men their songs employ,
> While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
> Repeat the sounding joy,
> Repeat the sounding joy,
> Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as the curse is found.

Mr. Watts (1674-1748), the hymn's author, writes of joy to the *earth* – down to the fields, floods, rocks, hills, and plains. He follows it up by celebrating the far reaches of God's blessings, blessings that will flow as far as the curse resulting from Adam's sin is found. And how far does Scripture say the curse has penetrated? Into the very ground itself! The Lord's coming (both in Christmas and in His second advent) is good news not only for mankind, but even for the sin-cursed ground! It's going to be set free from the curse!

You are living now where you are going to live forever.

And you're going to live on it. Appreciate this: you are living now where you are going to live forever. The Christian hope is not to bury our bodies and fly off to a bodiless existence in heaven forever. Yes, such an arrangement is to be preferred over the way things are presently in this sin-cursed world, but it is not to be preferred over a liberated world that has been made new and fresh by God. God has never given up on His creation. He's going to make it new.

Understanding this and joyfully confessing it changes us. It means we're not marking time until Jesus "takes us home." It means we're living in the home to which Jesus is going to come and make new. Further, as St. Paul points out in 1 Corinthians 15, our present laboring, our works done in our vocations in the name of Christ, to His glory, and in faithfulness to His call, "are not in vain."

In other words, their value won't evaporate upon our deaths. Instead, our good works will carry over into the renewal. They will be incorporated into the new creation! N.T. Wright says, author of *Surprised by Hope,* an insightful book on this topic, writes, "God is going to take everything in this present world that bears the mark of his love, goodness, power, and loving compassion and use it as the raw material out of which the new world will be made."

Wright explains what this means:

> *The present bodily life is not valueless just because it will die.* God will raise it to new life. What you do with your body in the present matters because God has a great future in store for it… what you *do* in the present – by painting, preaching, singing, sewing, praying, teaching, building hospitals, digging wells, campaigning for justice, writing poems, caring for the needy, loving your neighbors as yourself – *will last into God's future*.

In other words, the Christian hope is **BIG**, encompassing not only a glorious future on this renewed earth, but infusing the present with eternal meaning and purpose. Our lives matter now and into eternity! This is why the Christian hope is something to get excited about. The Christian hope is something to confess with gusto, to embrace with enthusiasm, and to support with passion. It is not an add on to an otherwise full life; it is the reality into which all the pieces of our lives fit.

As you enter 2019, do so with a renewed appreciation for the Christian hope and celebrate this simple truth: the Christian hope is **BIG**. – Pastor Conner

I offer the following article, orginially published by WORLD Magaizne, as one perspective on a complicated subject. Admittingly, it is a perspective toward which I am sympathetic, but it must be said up front that this article should not be received as a "Thus Saith the Lord" statement.

I offer it as a conversation starter because I believe most parents have found themselves caught off guard by the seemingly sudden emergence of smartphone technology and we haven't really had the opportunity to consider how they affect our lives, whether our children are mature enough to manage smartphones, whether they're affecting the way we conceptualize truth, whether they provide an unregulated pathway for a disrespectful youth culture to undermine parenting and parental authority, whether the instantly available porngraphic content is resistable by tweens and teens, and so much more.

In this month's newsletter I will include the first half of the article. The second half you will see next month. As stated above, I welcome your reflections and invite you to converse with me over this complicated topic.

Dare to be different: Ten reasons why parents should offer the gift of a smartphone-free childhood

by S.J. Dahlstrom

I will not buy a smartphone for my children because …

1. The assorted evils in all of world history await them in seconds.

Every wicked thought of man is waiting to be uncovered by a child on a smartphone in isolation. The perversion of every goodness lies twisted for youthful minds like a lion in blood-thirsty stalk. In the history of mankind, this is unprecedented, immediate access to both good and evil.

This tragic exposure can be innocent and accidental. The unfiltered access also preys on the natural curiosity of the human mind. Both of these instances are to be carefully shepherded by a parent. Indeed, is this not the entire job of a parent? Parenting is the act of deliberate censorship, teaching, shielding, and nurturing until the proper age when all is revealed. There are ideas and images that children are not ready for. This has always been so.

Talk about filters and parental controls is naïve and mealy mouthed. Would you give your child a rattlesnake and say watch out for the fanged end? The best filter is *not putting it in their hand*.

The abdication of parenting to the marketing-driven, impersonal, amoral vacuity of a Google search engine should terrify every parent in the world.

2. A smartphone screen provides 100 percent of the creativity needed for an entirely passive entertainment experience.

This is in contrast to a book where the mind is providing the images, color, and the gaps that are filled between printed words. Imagination and creativity are stifled through the smartphone screen by continually putting the user in the seat of the consumer. There is no free-flowing exchange of thought that expands the experience. Instead of getting smarter and more able during the experience, one becomes dumber and duller.

When fastened to a screen, the viewer loses engagement with the real world. Screens are only representations, at best, of the real world. When this happens, the user loses contact with the world around them, exchanging it for a fake reality. Strangely, this experience of losing oneself in a screen is addictive to humans. Countless studies have proven this to be true, but more so, it can be observed one example at a time.

Instead of addiction to the mere amusement of a flashing screen, I want my child to become addicted to their own creativity. There is no screen click that compares to bringing your own poem, story, musical piece, or visual art into the world. Personal creativity is a wonderful lifelong addiction that must be fostered in youth.

In this same line, screens are debilitating in that they never allow a child to be bored. There is always one more click to lead to another click. The lie of all video games is that there is a "life" limit. Boredom is the great spur of creativity. I must have the courage to let my child sit in boredom … knowing the powerful weapon of their brain is many times activated by this very experience.

What does a screen have to compare with a sunset, a conversational meal with a grandparent, growing your own tomatoes, or a good night's sleep? I don't want them to miss the good stuff. I want them to wonder at the beauty of the created world that surrounds them each day.

3. My goal for my kids is independence, not dependence.

By tethering them to me for every event, camp, and after-school event I suffocate their need to develop planning skills and the ability to face the consequences of their actions. Would I sacrifice this crucial developmental point on the altar of my convenience? Or worse yet, play into my own helicoptering need to be involved and direct every second of their lives?

After all, didn't every adult prior to 2007 endure childhood without one? Six thousand years of recorded human history tells us that a screen- and phone-free childhood is possible.

I am not my children's Uber driver or entertainment coordinator. I am not at their beck and call. I want them to learn to plan ahead, accept consequences, and figure it out when things go wrong.

4. The medium is manipulative—its primary purpose is to get you to want things you shouldn't want and buy things you don't need.

Moving images on screens are inherently deceptive. Their sole purpose is to rev up your lust and envy and greed so you will make a purchase. People in the advertising business spend years learning how to manipulate children. The claim that Google, Facebook, and Instagram are free is an outrageous mythical illusion. Nothing on the vast medium is free. Every click and viewed second is tracked and monetized.

We as parents don't teach our children media self-defense or even realize that they need it. But that's what parents must now do. I must realize that I am susceptible to this attraction as well and I must be

a role-model to them: I am not obsessed with keeping up with trivial marketers' expectations of me on a smartphone, and that I have the guts to raise them to be the only one that resists.

We as parents don't teach our children media self-defense or even realize that they need it.

What would our world be if no one in history had raised their kids with steel backbones to buck popular opinion and practice?

5. I want my kids to go into adulthood with bombproof bull detectors.

A childhood full of carefully crafted lies in photoshopped images and adspeak renders them helpless to what is real and truly needful in life. Most of the residual online marketing is sexualized to preposterous degrees. If they are raised on what is false, how will they know what is real?

There is a huge difference in the generalized casual sarcasm of teenagers and a cultivated instinct concerning con men reaching for your wallet. They must know what is authentic and what is counterfeit. Any bank teller will tell you that. I want them to grow up knowing what real people look like, how they act, and how they sound.

Watch for Part 2 next month. Until then, let the conversation begin!

This article originally appeared at WORLD's website (wng.org). Reprinted with permission. Copyright © 2018 WORLD News Group. All right reserved. To read more news and views from a Christian perspective, call 800-951-6397 or visit wng.org.

As we launch into a new year – the *we* being Trinity but also our Zion-Trinity partnership – I wanted to take a moment to lay out in words the journey we're taking through the Bible in 2019. I am in the process of rereading one of my old textbooks from my military leadership course in college. If there's any organization that has figured out organization, lifelong fidelity, and follow through, the United States military ranks pretty high. I wanted to share with you one distinction that stood out in my reading: the difference between a Group and a Team.[1]

> **GROUP**: "A COLLECTION OF INDIVIDUALS WHO INTERACT FOR A COMMON PURPOSE WITH NO REQUIREMENT FOR COLLECTIVE AND INCREMENTAL PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT."
>
> **TEAM**: "A GROUP OF TWO OR MORE PEOPLE WHO HAVE A COMMON OBJECTIVE OR PURPOSE WITH A COMMITMENT TO COLLECTIVE AND INCREMENTAL IMPROVEMENT."

So at this moment, how are we doing? Trinity, are we a group or a team? Zion, are you a group or a team? Zion-Trinity – are we a group or a team? The reality is there really is no right or wrong response, and the truth of the matter is we can always find examples where we're groups in our

[1] *Foundations of Leadership: MSL II (Revised)*, Custom Publishing 2008, 4.

partnership as well as in our individual congregations. BUT there are plenty of examples of team mentality, too. Plus, groups aren't bad. The only challenge though is that it's hard to read the Bible without seeing a call for team living. Jesus' Kingdom talk and Paul's call for the Church to live as a body that lives with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit for the sake of "the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7 – read the whole chapter). Christians have common objectives and purposes coming out their ears! And those objectives are so much deeper than just be moral or good.

Here's what I'd like you to envision – in 2019 can we begin to transform into that 90 year old Marine vet? You know what I'm talking about. Once a Marine, always a Marine. It doesn't matter if you're in your uniform or if you're walking in your civilian gear at the grocery store; you conduct yourself as a Marine *always*. Your decisions take Marine values into consideration.

Look, the military has just taken team mentality from the Bible – whether or not it knows it. The military has effectively created a team that remembers its purpose and desires to improve over time. Can we do that at Trinity and Zion?

Breathing the Bible

For my Trinity readers as well as my Zion people who can't be at Zion on a particular Sunday in 2019, we will marinate in the theme of *Breathing in the Bible*. Why? So that we rediscover our purposes and objectives as Christians as well as to foster our commitment toward creating a team. Individuals don't stand a chance, but teams have a shot at survival. Survival here, however, means so much more than keeping the doors open. Survival means demonstrating to the world, but more specifically to Manning, Manilla, Aspinwall, Irwin, so on, that Jesus matters.

How do we get there? I don't know – I've only been out of the seminary for 1.5 years; I'm still a puppy; a whippersnapper! However, I do know reading the Bible more is always a great place to start. That is, *we* have "a commitment to collective and incremental *improvement*." In other words, we breathe the Bible more in order to get the refreshing oxygen of God's truth to improve.

Bible in Worship

At Zion the Bible readings in worship will focus on Luke's presentation of Jesus' life. Luke focuses on the fact that the Gospel is for all people – even people we might not like, but Luke has the power to humble us.

At Trinity we will shift our focus monthly to rediscover our purpose and commit to change over time by engaging foundational Christian themes like:

January – New Purpose in a Purposeless World (readings from Ecclesiastes)
February – How does Baptism shape us? (Ephesians, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians)
March & April – Love God + Love Neighbor (Micah)
May – Becoming Wise (Proverbs)
July – Who is Jesus? (Colossians)
August – How does Communion shape us? (1 Corinthians)
September – Seeing Jesus (Mark & Luke)
October – How God relates to a world of powerless and foreign people? (Ruth)
November – How do we use money as Christians? (Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, Hebrews, Leviticus, 1 Timothy)
June & December – Reading the Bible as the Church (Lectionary Readings)

I wish you all the best as we jump into 2019 together, and let's become an even greater team than we already are! – Pastor Johnson

Ministry Apps

Applying the Gospel to Hearts and Homes (January 2019): Zion and Trinity Lutheran

"Arise, shine for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. . . . All nations will come to your light" (Isaiah 60:1, 3)

The church transitions quickly from twelve days of the Christmas season to what will be nine weeks of the Epiphany season—the season of Light. In the cold and dark months of winter, we are blessed with the Light of Jesus.

Learning of The Light

"Light" is "in"—"light" foods and "light" beverages. As Christians we are blessed with an even more satisfying "Light" diet. A Monday morning Bible study will be offered for three weeks beginning on Monday, January 7. Sessions will begin at 9:30 a.m. and last about an hour. The Epiphany season generated the "Light" theme. January 7—Light Creator—the work of The Father: Light Redeemer—the work of Jesus; Light Divine—the work of the Holy Spirit. Join us. Bring friends and neighbors.

Living The Light

We are blessed to have the partnership of Lutheran Family Service in offering the "light" of Jesus in the challenges that we face as families. Additional information is provided in the newsletter and elsewhere on the "Remembering Hope" session on Sunday, January 20 and the "Powerful Tools for Caregivers" that will begin on Monday, January 28. Having the Hope of Christ and the right "tools" lighten the loads that we carry as we care for one another. Share the opportunity with friends and neighbors from the community.

Sharing the Light

The Zion Fellowship Club partners with Orphan Grain Train to bring the light of Jesus in simple and practical ways. Clothing and other materials are sent by OGT to national and international regions that have experienced natural disasters or are impoverished for political and other reasons. Bring new and good, clean used items (children, women, men--all sizes and seasons) to the fellowship hall by January 13. Items will be taken to the warehouse in Ida Grove on Thursday, January 17.

The Fellowship Club continues to hear from Zion members and community citizens who share the light in the daily vocations. The January gathering will be a unique experience as the group takes a "field trip" to Templeton on Tuesday, January 8. We will meet at Zion at 1 p.m. Admission to the Templeton Rye business is $10 (veterans free). The group will return to Zion for their monthly meeting. Guests invited.

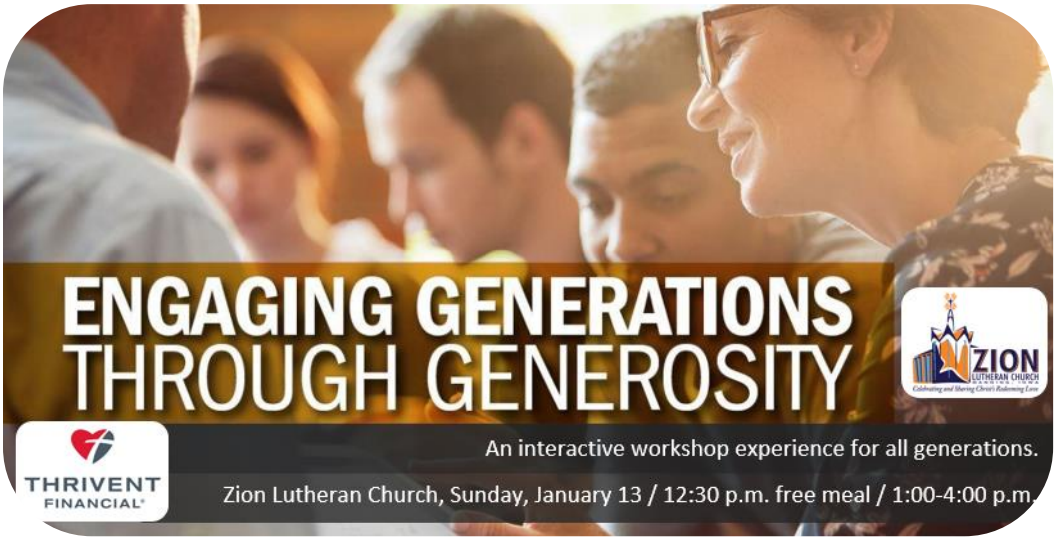
Being the Lights

Thank you to music leaders, Sunday school teachers, pre-school staff, and other volunteers who are the light to Zion's children. The children's participation and leadership in worship during the Advent season was a blessing to all of us.

An estimated 3000-plus people entered Zion's facility during the month of December to worship, learn, be comforted, enjoy fellowship, and in other ways to receive the Light and be the light. Thank you to trustees, custodian, helpers, and many others who shared their gifts and provided a welcome in Jesus' name.

Through our support of C-3 we join the other churches in Manning in sharing the Light of Jesus. Thank you for your continuing support of the Food Pantry. C-3 invites you to support the spring Wolf-Pack for Hunger by supporting a soup supper at the IKM-Manning school on Tuesday, January 8.

In His Light!
Pastor Riggert



Remembering Hope

Workshop @ Zion

Thousands of people in Iowa battle Alzheimer's disease. Each year 134,000 people in Iowa provide 152 million hours of unpaid care for a loved one suffering from the disease. Caregivers often underestimate the time and energy required, as well as the impact on their work, social and family commitments. Zion, in partnership with Lutheran Family Service and Perry Lutheran Homes, is here to help!

Caregivers, family, friends, and learners are invited to a special seminar led by experts in Alzheimer's care, including a meaningful simulation experience to build empathy and understanding. Topics addressed include:

- Demystifying dementia & Alzheimer's
- Diagnosis
- Caregiver challenges
- Communicating with your loved one
- Finding hope in Jesus

Attendance is free. RSVP to Zion (655-2352) or sign up at the resource center in the fellowship hall.

Sunday, January 20th from 3:00-4:00

Powerful Tools for Caregivers Equipping Classes @ Zion

Powerful Tools for Caregivers is a six-week class designed to provide you, the family caregiver, with the skills you need to take care of yourself as you take care of your loved one. Class leaders will equip you to:

- Identify and reduce stress
- Improve self-confidence
- Find balance
- Better communicate your feelings to others
- Improve your ability to make tough decisions
- Understand local resources

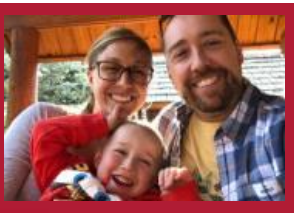
In partnership with Lutheran Family Service and Perry Lutheran Homes

Sessions begin Monday, January 28th
1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Perry Lutheran homes

Lutheran Family Service
For Nothing is Impossible with God

SERVING THE LORD IN
PANAMÁ
NEWS FROM THE GAUTHIER FAMILY



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Greetings in Jesus! And Happy Thanksgiving and a blessed beginning to the Advent season. Panamá does not officially recognize or celebrate Thanksgiving, though some folks have adopted having a turkey dinner as part of their way of life. After living in Florida for six Thanksgivings, the Dominican Republic for one, and now two in Panamá we have grown quite accustomed to warm weather and plenty of sun.

A phrase I hear daily in Panamá is "Gracias a Dios" or "Thanks be to God" which I find both fascinating and beautiful. Panamanians, especially those who are part of the Lutheran church, will use that phrase for just about everything. When I greet them in church or before Bible study they'll say, "I am here… thanks be to God." While some people may quibble that the phrase is so often uttered that it runs the risk of being trite or automatic, I am inclined to disagree.

When speaking to his disciples, Jesus explains to them that what defiles a person is not what is put into the mouth, but that which flows from the heart and out of the mouth (Matthew 15:10ff). The point Jesus is driving home to his disciples is that what comes out of the heart is from the inner core of the human creature, a confession.

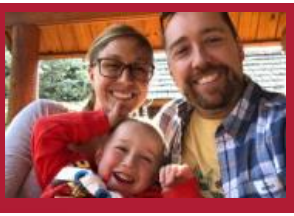
Unfortunately, I do not utter the words "Thanks be to God" very often and certainly not for little things like the coming of each new day or that I made it to church. This has led me to some tough reflection on my own self and confession of my own sin. More often than not, I am not grateful for the smallest, most mundane things in my life nor do I regularly confess that they are daily gifts from the bounteous hand of our heavenly Father. What has come from my mouth and proceeded from my heart has not always expressed that "I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all of my senses, and still takes care of them. He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him" (Luther's Small Catechism).

Moreover, the Lord gives forgiveness, life, and salvation through the death and resurrection of his Son Jesus. My prayer for my own life is that the words "Thanks be to God" become a common expression on my lips that confesses that I truly recognize and give thanks to our Lord for all things, both great and small. May this be your prayer as well as we continue to live, breathe, and work in the hands of our gracious Lord and Savior. Feliz Día de Acción de Gracias from our family in Panamá to yours, wherever you may be. "Thanks be to God" for his mercies which are new to us each morning!

Please Pray:

- Seminary students in the Dominican as the winter trimester has begun.
- Sara, a friend of ours in Panamá, whose brother is suffering from the sudden death of his wife.
- Emanuel Lutheran in Sorá who had a young boy (15 years old) lose his battle to cancer in November.

SERVING THE LORD IN
PANAMÁ
NEWS FROM THE GAUTHIER FAMILY



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Understanding Immigration

Since this is a 'hot button' topic of sorts in the news, let me briefly share our experience going the other direction, so to speak. To be completely honest, I had never given the topic much thought until I had to walk through it. And boy, is it complicated.

A US citizen can enter Panamá and stay for six months on a 'tourist visa' after which he or she must leave the country and remain outside for thirty days. The first visa we worked towards was the missionary visa. This is good for two years providing "temporary residences". The first step is hiring a lawyer as any immigration cannot be done without one and then going to the immigration building in Panamá, whose lines make those of Disney World look small, for registering our US passports. Then we had to provide an apostilled FBI background check. This meant going to the police department here for fingerprinting and this took the better part of the whole day because they insisted on fingerprinting our 1.5 year old at the time. The prints had to be authenticated by the Panamanian government and then I had to pay more because it was being used in the US. Once they were mailed to the US and the checks complete, the reports had to be mailed to the LCMS' office in Washington DC to be apostilled. An apostilled marriage license and apostilled birth certificates were also required. We also needed to provide notarized letters from the LCMS and a graduation certificate from the seminary. Once we had all the documents in hand, we had to pay for someone to translate them all into Spanish (pay per word). We filled out and signed affidavits as well as medical documents. Once that was submitted to immigration we waited there for seven hours to get our temporary ID cards, which gave us six more months in country while our papers were being processed. Once approved, we returned to immigration (another full day of standing in lines) to get our official IDs and approved visas, which were good for only 1.5 years (the other six months were already used on temporary IDs).

Overall, the cost approached $3000 for a family of three and consumed days as we document-chased and stood in lines. Our visas must be renewed in seven months. You can bet that we will need a lawyer… and who know what else :)

Preschool Praises for December 2018

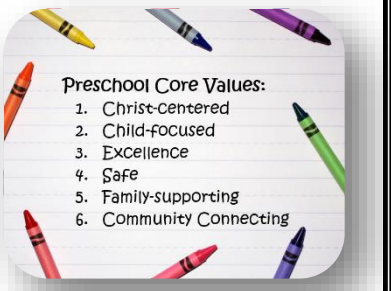
December is always a wonderful time and it is even better with these little children and their excitement! The first week in December we concluded our study of the 5 senses by looking at touch and taste. To study touch I put different objects into balloons and had the children guess what they were. There was water, syrup, marbles, rice, beans and salt. They love this guessing game! We studied taste by having different substances (salt, baking cocoa, sugar, lemon and lemon dipped in sugar) in cups and having them taste each one, then we charted their reactions. The children were good at convincing themselves that they liked the taste of the baking cocoa after they first smelled the chocolate smell from it, although they weren't interested in tasting it a second time! The charts are hanging on the wall in the preschool hallway. We also studied the letter Q and the number 6 and made ornaments for Christmas. In Jesus Time we introduced Mary the angel who came to her and announced the big news - she was to have God's son! Pastor spoke about Moses and the parting of the Red Sea when God saved his people through Moses and kept them safe and called us his treasured possession!

The second week was full of special visits! First Library Linda came to read to the morning class, then the Crawford County Naturalist visited the afternoon class and taught them all about reindeer and different deer that we have in this area, lastly our DHS inspector gave a surprise inspection. Our DHS inspection is super important because it is what gives us license to stay open as a preschool in the state. We passed with flying colors and for the 3rd year in a row we have had nothing to write up, which our inspector said is unheard of! YAY!!! Other than all the visits, we studied Winter, the letter W, triangles and tracing lines. We read *The Mitten* and got to act it out the second time I read it, which the children loved! In Jesus Time we talked about Joseph and his visit from the angel to tell him to wed Mary and be the earthly father to Jesus. Pastor spoke about Zechariah and his visit from the angel to tell him of the coming birth of his son John by his elderly wife. Since Zechariah didn't believe that God could do this, he was unable to speak until after John was born.

The last week of classes in December were energy packed as the children prepared for Christmas! Our program on Wednesday was wonderful and I am so proud of how well the children did! The benefit of having a smaller class size was that we were able to have a costume for each child to dress up and act out the nativity. We read about the candy cane, the Christmas tree and St. Nicholas and how all of them point to Jesus. I don't tend to do much Santa talk in the class room as I want to focus on Jesus as the reason for Christmas. We studied the letter J and the number 8 as well as worked on presents for the children's parents. On the last day before Christmas break we had a Jesus Birthday party where each child got to frost and decorate a sugar cookie for snack and then we had a gift exchange. We also did the Hokey Pokey and Musical Chairs! Because of a Thrivent Action Team taken out by Dorothy Knudsen we were able to gift to the children a beautiful nativity book, a Christmas activity book, pencils, candies and a handmade hat. We also used the donation to pay for the sugar cookies and frosting. Thank you, Dorothy! Jesus Time was about the shepherds and the announcement they received from the angels telling of the birth of Jesus. Pastor also spoke about the birth of Jesus in a stinky stable, not a nice, clean hospital like the preschool children were born in!

Thank you to everyone for their support and we pray that you all had a wonderful and blessed Christmas!

Yours in Christ,
Mrs. Gore, Mrs. Nemitz, and Mrs. Borkowski



We finished up the year with our annual Christmas party @ Trinity. We had over 10+ of our combined kids!

We'll restart meeting in January on Sundays @ 6pm in Manning. Excited for another big year. Trip to Ark Encounter during Spring Break along with the National Youth Gathering in the summer.

Priscilla Guild Highlights:
December 18 Meeting

- Christmas Potluck Day
- Thankful for all of Robbie Bandow's work in the kitchen
- Approaching Soll's to install a new electrical outlet in the Fellowship Hall
- End of year giving - $100 Lutheran Hour Ministries; $100 Lutheran Family Services; $500 Church Worker Excellence Fund; $300 Trinity Endowment

Special Dates:

- Christmas Decoration Tear-down @ Trinity - January 7 @ 9am
- No Monthly-Thursday Worship for January (Resumes February 14 @ 11am)
- Priscilla Guild Meeting January 15 @ 2pm

Preschool smiles from Zion Lutheran Preschool's Christmas program! A big thank you to Mrs. Gore, Mrs. Nemitz, and Mrs. Borkowski for loving these children and encouraging them to share their smiles and the message of Christmas with Zion!

On Sunday evening, December 16, nearly 75 children (pre-k – through 8th grade) announced the birth of Christ through story and song in Zion's annual children's Christmas program. Special thanks to Susie Ulrickson and Jill Arp (and their many, many helpers!) for their indefatigable efforts and loving care for children to make the program possible! For more pictures and videos, check out Zion's Facebook page.

SERVING THE LORD

ALL OVER ASIA

NEWS FROM THE FERRY FAMILY

December 2018

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

We have to be intentional about remembering it's Christmas. Where we are in Asia, and in most places "over here," Christmas is almost a non-event. There's no snow (except on the mountains). Our streets are not decorated. We don't see Christmas commercials. In fact, in our home of Taiwan, Christmas isn't even a day off: people still have to work, and students still go to school. They only know it as a commercial event.

That's part of the reason we are living and working out here, and a great reminder of why YOU and WE are working together "All Over Asia." How is it that one of the highest, holiest days in all of Christendom is lost on these wonderful people? Because they don't know Jesus, and that's unacceptable. Thank you for allowing us to be out here to serve people with the Word, and to help teach others to proclaim Him faithfully.

Thank you for remembering us in your prayers, for sending us Christmas greetings, and for your sacrificial sharing so we can stay out here and work. Please throw a snowball for us. Have another cup of hot chocolate or eggnog. Sing another Christmas carol. And pray that the Lord would continue revealing Himself to those still living in darkness so they can live in the light of Christ. Merry Christmas to all of you, our dear friends and partners in the work we've been given to do

Missionary kids and local Chinese singing Silent Night in English, German, and Chinese.

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

Cheryl and the kids have been involved in full-time language study the entire time we have resided in Taiwan. It started when we first arrived, and then has continued since we have returned with our resident visas.

Over time they have built up quite a good relationship with their teachers, who are native Taiwan ladies. The two we have with us regularly are patient, helpful, and work hard to ensure the kids learn well how to speak with those around us.

The kids have been talking with their teachers about Christmas lately, to no one's surprise. The teachers have been asking good questions, all in Chinese, and the kids have been answering… all in Chinese. Just the other day, the kids invited their teacher over to the house to show her the stockings Cheryl made for each of them. They explained about the purpose of Christmas, what the different symbols mean on the stockings (star, angel, church, etc.). And they did it all in Chinese.

What a joy to see the kids reaching out to their teachers to share "the hope that is within us." Everyone in their vocations, working where the Lord has placed us to share the life-giving, sin-forgiving Word of God.

Carissa decorates the church Christmas tree with the help of a teacher from the middle school.

Amigos en Cristo

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

January 2019

Serving Amigos en Cristo and Grace in Storm Lake:
With Pastor Grill's departure I will be serving the Hispanic vacancies in both the Denison and Storm Lake churches. We pray the Lord will guide our ministries in faithful growth and service during this time of change. We will be meeting to discuss the future that God may have for our special ministries. We are so grateful for the support we have received, both from our District office in Fort Dodge as well as from so many churches that are praying for our outreach into area Hispanic communities.

In 2019 we will be celebrating 20 years since our District called our first Hispanic missionary, Rev. Paul Brink who was serving in Barquisimeto, Venezuela as a missionary. By God's grace we now have 4 Hispanic ministries: in Denison, Storm Lake, Sioux City and Des Moines. Please continue to pray for our ministry outreach and feel free to call me if I can help to tell the story of God's work among Hispanic immigrants.

Farewell to the Grills: Pastor Willie Grills led his farewell service at Amigos en Cristo on November 25. He was installed on December 9th at St. Paul Lutheran in Mattoon, Illinois. We thank him for his ministry to our Hispanic congregations in Denison and Storm Lake. We pray for him and his wife, Angelica and their two boys, Gus and Roland as they adjust to a new life in Mattoon.

Advent Posada: Can we worship at your house? How many can you fit in your living room? Each year our Hispanic churches in Denison and Storm Lake continue the tradition of 'Posadas', home Advent devotions and fellowship in preparation for Christmas. The tradition comes from the Christmas story of Jose and Mary pleading for a place to stay in Bethlehem. Each week during the Advent season we meet in different members' homes to sing and the study the Good News of the Christmas story. It is a popular evening in which we also meet friends and neighbors of our members. And of course there is plenty of good food and fellowship.

Caps of Love in Denison and Storm Lake: The ladies sewing circle at Zion, Manning treated our ministry with the blessing of embroidered winter caps (gorras). Above is the group from Denison that gathered for a picture of thanksgiving. We will be warmed this winter in body and soul!

PLEASE PRAY FOR: + Amigos en Cristo and Grace Hispanic in Storm Lake as together we seek a permanent pastor and for the ongoing ministry to the Hispanic communities in Denison and Storm Lake. + Families in Denison & Storm Lake that they will remain faithful during this transition period. + The blessings that God has provided this past year and for those that He will grant in the New Year of 2019 for all of our District Hispanic ministries. + ***In thanksgiving for the mission hearts of the many individuals and congregations of the Iowa District West who support the Lord's work among Hispanic immigrants in Denison & Storm Lake and in our other 2 missions in Sioux City and Des Moines. +++***

Caregivers:

Research shows us that one in two adults in the workforce (42%, over 54 million employees) has provided elder care over the past five years. Of those caregivers, more than 40% still have children under the age of 18 in the home. Not only is this added responsibility and stress on the caregiver themselves, but it can often lead to strained sibling relationships.

As you plan for your aging parents, it's important that families establish healthy communication, set boundaries, clear expectations and reasonable goals. Start the conversation about what is working and what is not and establish some ground rules that allow everyone to feel they have been heard. Focus on constructive steps for moving forward and try to stay with the needs at hand, not on old wounds or unresolved disagreements.

If you are the primary care giver, consider developing a document of weekly notes that include doctor appointments, challenges, and other events that happened throughout the week in order to keep everyone abreast. Schedule a regular conversation weekly or monthly check-in and be sure to include the parents in the conversations as they are able.

Consider everyone's individual strengths and skills. Who is are able to:

- Managing finances
- Home repairs and upgrades
- Insurance needs
- Advocate and point of contact with doctors
- Computer and communication needs for parents.

Consider Seeking Outside Help:

Many assisted living facilities offer a short stay. Respite options provide a safe place for the family member while allowing the caregiver some time to themselves. As the baby-boom generation becomes of age, we see more companies offering assistance in the home. Don't feel like you have to do it all, hire out as you are able. Professional counseling or psychotherapy services can help your loved one through these difficult times of change and loss. Mental health is the beginning of overall health.

Those in the Healthcare Industry:

Please remember to be sensitive to the emotional needs of families. When caregivers were surveyed, researchers found their top two wishes:

- More frequent and better quality two-way communication with doctors and other medical providers
- More compassionate staff at the medical and nursing home facilities with skills to listen and learn from the caregivers and elders.

"It's often in the darkest skies that we see the brightest stars." Author unknown.

Aumann K., Galinsky E., Sakai K., Brown M., Bond J., Elder care study: everyday realities and wishes for change. Familis and Work Institute 2008 National Study of Changing Workforce.
Institute on Aging https://www.ioaging.org/

Ladies Guild of Zion
December 12, 2018

Guild hosted a Christmas potluck luncheon for 15 members and 15 guests. A short business meeting followed.

The LWML pledge was recited, then a skit that put Christmas in perspective was given by Margaret Backhaus, Janet Gruhn and Becki Ehlers. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved. The mite box was passed as the mite box prayer was read. There was no treasurer's report. Darlene Vollstedt reported the balance in the kitchen account.

Human Care Chairman Audrey Roe reported 12 quilts were given to the Adopt a Family mission. Circle # 1 served the funeral of Curt Struve and thanked all the volunteers that helped. President Buhr announced that the new Quarterlies are available.

Old business: Darlene Vollstedt reported speaking to Soll's Plumbing about the kitchen sinks. There will be more information available at the next meeting in January. Bev Grundmeier gave a report on Advent by Candlelight. $818.00 was raised for missions. New business: Newly elected president Audrey Roe will be making up the books for the next year. Any preferences of the members on dates to serve should be given to Audrey. Plaza bingo will be on December 28th with JoAnn Thomas as Chairman and Darlene Vollstedt, Cynthia Genzen and Sandra Vahl helping.

Decorating the tables and hosting in the kitchen were Becki Ehlers and Audrey Roe. The next meeting will be on January 9th. The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer. Sandra Vahl had a Christmas bingo game with prizes to close the afternoon.

UPCOMING EVENTS @ ZION & TRINITY

January 13

Engaging the Generations through Generosity Workshop at Zion
12:30-4:00 p.m.

January 20

A Celebration of Generations at Zion
9:00 a.m.
Celebrate Life Sunday at Zion with the generations of the faith.

January 20

Remembering Hope (3:00 – 4:00 p.m.) at Zion
Caregiving for loved ones with Alzheimer's is demanding and stressful. Remembering Hope combines information on the progression of Alzheimer's, the challenges caregivers face, and resources available for family members with the good news that Jesus has conquered death and sustains us through life's challenges, including Alzheimer's. Join the conversation. Receive support. Be encouraged.

January 28 – March 4

Powerful Tools for Caregivers (1:00-3:00 p.m.) at Zion
Caregiving is constant. Zion is here to help. These six afternoon sessions are designed to help you identify and reduce stress, improve confidence, balance your life, better communicate your feelings to others, increase your ability to make tough decisions, and to understand local resources.

January 27

Family Bowling Party (1:00 – 3:00 p.m.) in Manning
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!

January 27 – March 3

New Member Class at Zion (six sessions)
3:45 – 5:00 p.m.

Zion's Congregational Servants

Council:
Chairman: Bruce Grimm
Vice-chair: Jeff Hargens
Financial Secretary: Sonia Nulle
Treasurer: Shannon Walters
CFO: Drew Puck

Board of Elders:
Head Elder: Lynn Kruse
Mike Gore, Eric Ramsey,
Paul Christiansen

Board of Deacons:
Head Deacon: Larry Mahnke
Richard Zinke, Randy Dreher,
Jason Kienast, Chris Greving,
David Bohlmann

Trustees:
Head Trustee: Dan Behrens
Isaac Grabil, Kyle Arp,
Sam Musfeldt, Kevin Grimm

Board of Missions:
Chair: Jean Hargens
Donna Forman
Casie Eischied

Board of Education:
Chair: Joni Kienast
Shelly Gruhn (Sunday school superintendent)
Kathy Vollstedt, Casie Eischied,
Dan Dawson

Preschool Board:
Chair: Jen Morris
Jamie England, Janet Smith,
Kari Ranniger

Stewardship Board:
Chair: Rick Lohrman

Safety and Security Team
Chair: Jen Morris
Shelly Gruhn, Kyle Arp, David Bohlmann,
Gary Witt, Stan Musfeldt

Ladies Guild:
Chair: Cheral Buhr

Altar Guild:
Chair: Monica Christensen

Choir:
Director: Dr. Tom Ulrickson

Children's Choirs:
Susie Ulrickson, Jill Arp

Trinity's Congregational Servants (as of 12/20/18)

Council:
President: vacant
VP: Jason Ferry
Treasurer: Gloria Boeck
Secretary: Sylvia Bandow

Board of Elders:
Head Elder: Mike Lorenzen
Stan Spies, Scott Lingle

Trustees:
Wyatt Bandow

Stewardship:
Deb Lorenzen

Board of Education:
Stephanie Olson

January Birthdays and Anniversaries @ Zion & Trinity

Birthdays (T = Trinity)

1 Greg Neumann
2. Jennifer Morris
Joel Musfeldt
Alex Ranniger
Ryan Riesberg
Rachel Winter
3. Violet Shroeder (T)
4. Alexis Dawson
Karen Kienast
Caitlain Lahr (T)
5. Kyle Lohrmann
6. Dawn Ketchum
Betty Maasen
Bennett Stribe
Jeanette Ferry (T)
7. Sandy Hanson (T)
8. Amy Hansen
Easton Hass
9. Bode England
11. Amy Benton
Bev Woebke (T)
12. Charles Fielweber
Daniel Grove
Jacki Nusbaum
John Opperman
Ben 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
Payton Vonnahme
Shona Weitl
17. Kevin Grimm
Harper Potthoff
18. Paul Christensen
Sarah Gruhn
Sara Kobus
Brian Lamp
Noah Martin
Sonia Nulle
Blake Nusbaum
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

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

Anniversaries

1. Kyle & Jill Arp
Stanley & Lori Musfeldt
6. Mike & Judy Jacobsen
8. Rodney & Kristin Backhaus
9. Curits & Nancy Grimm
12. Steve & Erin Renze
18. Bill & Carol Joens (T)
20. Charles & Marlyn Fielweber

Official Acts

Funeral:
Curtis Glen Struve; Died December 2, 2018; Funeral December 7, 2018; Pastor Jonathan Conner

Baptism:
Isla Sherri Haubrich (Daughter of Ross and Leanne Haubrich); Pastor Andrew Johnson

In Our Prayers

Dave Grundmeier, Heather Kusel, Sherri Steffes, Jim Deevers, Rick Spack, Susan Lamb, JoAnn Karsten (Georgia Lohrmann's sister), Natalie Mason (Bruce and Mary Grimm's daughter), Judy Reinke, Gage Carlson (great grandson of Russ and Virginia Mohr), Carol Kahl