Further Clothed: Our Hope for the Resurrected Body

Years ago, before we had children, Rebecca and I went tent camping up the coast of Maine into Cape Breton, Canada. We overnighted at an ocean cliff side campground called Meat Cove. In daylight and calm winds, we adventurously set up our tent on a tiny rock outcropping towering above the Atlantic Ocean. As evening advanced and the winds picked up, we found ourselves retreating inland wishing for more substantial shelter.

The Apostle Paul uses a similar image in 2 Corinthians 5 to describe our hope in the resurrected body. He writes,

> For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 2 Corinthians 5:1-5

So much hope in one paragraph! Paul compares our present body to a tent – flimsy, destructible, vulnerable. In this tent, this corruptible, death-destined body, we groan in weakness, weariness, and fatigue as we long not to put off this body, not to cast aside our tents, merely to be left naked as disembodied spirits. No. That's not our great, high hope. As we've observed many times before, our great hope is not simply to die and go to Heaven; it's to live and see Heaven come to earth!

Paul writes in Philippians 3, "Our citizenship is in heaven, and ***from it*** we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body… (3:20-21). We are awaiting Jesus to come from Heaven to transform our bodies to be like His.

Yes, Heaven is preferred over our current fallen condition. Paul goes on to write, "We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2:9), but that's not our ultimate hope. Our ultimate hope is to be *further clothed* (2:4).

Paul is envisioning a new kind of physicality characterized by incorruptibility, by immortality, by permanence and life. He is envisioning a body that is more real, more physical, more creational, a body fully and completely immune to death. This is the body God has in store for us in the resurrection.

Imagine such a body! No more groaning. No more brokenness. No more cancer. No more heart failure. No more Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, diabetes, neuropathy. No more! Instead, we will be raised in strong, healthy, physical bodies that have been furthered clothed with resurrection glory.

And as a guarantee, God has given us His Spirit! All of this is embedded in our Easter cry, "Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!" Shout it with renewed vigor this Easter. – Pastor Conner

Christianity's Bigger, Better (True) Story

Stories define us. Individual stories, family stories, cultural and societal stories. Did you grow up in hard times under difficult circumstances? That's part of your story. Did your ancestors emigrate from Germany or Mexico? That's a part of your story. Did you grow up on a farm or in town? That's part of your story. Did you live through war times or have relatives that did? That's a part of your story. The present pandemic has become a part of your story, too.

These are all pieces of your story. Parts of them overlap with others and parts are completely unique to you. In the face of such diversity, is there one story that can unify us? Is there a story big enough to include us all – the impoverished and the rich, the Hispanic and the Anglo, the accomplished and the challenged – a story expansive enough to honor our individuality, our personal stories, while unifying us?

Scripture's Story

Scripture answers with a resounding *Yes!* We might capture the essence of this story in two key Biblical texts: Acts 17 and Revelation 7.

- Paul, speaking to Athenians, says: "[God] made from one man every nation…" (Acts 17:26). From one, many. From unity, diversity.
- John, recording his apocalyptic prophecy, sees the great culmination of God's story and writes of a:

> great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Revelation 7:9-10). From the many, one. From diversity, unity.

We might express Scripture's story like this: *from one has come the many; for the many is the promise of oneness.* Or, *from one has come diversity; for the diverse is the promise of unity.* These lines are brief, but they include a world of meaning that influences our identity, our unity, our communities, our politics, and on and on.

From one has come diversity; for the diverse is the promise of unity.

In His act of creation, God creates man/humanity in His image and diversifies humanity into male and female, but He blesses them with a one-flesh union in marriage from which the great diversity of mankind is realized and experienced as diverse people/ethnic groups emerge. These people groups, while sharing a common humanity and a common divine image, are diversified by their different communal and cultural experiences and stories.

Absent a transcendent, unifying story, these diversified groups risk fracture and splintering into ever smaller, divided groups defined by ever-diversifying stories. Appreciate this point, without a deep understanding for our shared humanity and divine image (our inclusion in a larger story), our idiosyncratic group stories run the risk of becoming each group's ultimate story. These stories, then, will be pitted against the stories of other groups leaving us perpetually divided and at odds.

Appreciating our shared humanity and divine image keeps us from forever splintering into rival sub-groups. Then, Scripture's promise of a final diversified unity (every nation, tribe, people, language united in praise to Jesus) assures us that our unique group stories will be finally caught up into God's bigger, better story, but not in such a way that our group stories are erased or diminished.

This is the story Christ's Church is privileged and commissioned to tell. And it's a story we must tell with renewed urgency because the pagan world not only rejects this story, but it is actively opposing this story, offering a counterfeit story that leads to division and discord.

The Pagan Story

The pagan counterfeit story has changed throughout the ages (the ancient world, for example, was littered with rival creation stories establishing one people group as superior to others); today it is expressed in critical race and critical gender language. Without getting bogged down in the details, this story erases the divine image and eliminates the final hope, leaving us with only the smaller individual/communal stories.

This story erases the divine image and eliminates the final hope.

And, instead of celebrating unity in something humanity shares (the image of God) or in anticipating something that transcends humanity (the great promise of a diverse, unified humanity in God's everlasting kingdom), it endlessly divides people into simplistic groups based on race, gender, gender identity, sexual behavior, political affiliation, and so forth.

Then it assigns each group with a label: "oppressed" or "oppressor" / "victim" or "victimizer," leaving people locked in their assigned status so that those labeled "oppressor" or "victimizer" must endlessly make efforts to atone for their "sin" with no hope of forgiveness and those receiving the coveted label "oppressed" or "victim" may forever be exempt from moral accountability.

To be clear, in this pagan story "victimizers" don't actually have to *do* anything, they don't actually have to victimize anyone; they are born into the victimizing group and are forever deemed guilty because of it. And "victimhood" is both a coveted label and a moral pass that gives individuals in this group the freedom to express their grievances in immoral ways.

This pagan story searches for "power" and "privilege" to demonize and "intersectionality" (being included in multiple oppressed groups) to celebrate.[1] This nurtures division rather than unity

[1] Children are exhorted to rank themselves according to their "power and privilege." Teachers have actually been told they are guilty of the "spirit murder" of black children. "Dividing by Race Comes to Grade School," in the *Wall Street Journal*, (March 7).

Much of the nation's standards for Sex Ed is set by SEICUS (Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States). Mary Calderon (the first director of Planned Parenthood) along with Wardell Pomeroy (partner of deranged sex researcher Alfred Kinsey) with funds from Hugh Hefner (the founder of Playboy magazine), helped form SIECUS. It is the most significant driving force behind sex education in America (and even partners with the United Nations, setting global sex education standards). Its website endorses abortion as health care; homosexuality, bisexuality, and transsexuality as healthy sexual

and fosters grievance rather than gratitude and it is all-pervasive (as the footnotes below will illustrate).

This pagan story is told in curriculum,[2] in media,[3] in literature,[4] in politics,[5] in big tech,[6] and beyond. It is an inherently divisive story and is in no way reconcilable with Scripture's story, which is why those telling this story are actively pressuring the Church to be silent or to change our story to align with theirs. This we must not do. Christianity's story is bigger, better and true.

Bigger, Better, True

Does it mean we turn a blind eye to true injustices? No! Does it mean we endorse racism or discrimination? No! Does it mean we think we're

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lifestyles; and "sexually explicit" materials (i.e. pornography) as "valuable educational or personal aids."

[2] The Illinois state legislature recently passed legislation tying K-12 teacher licensure to the teaching of this pagan story, essentially redefining education as "activism," specifically activism for racial and gender "justice."

A recent editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* records the actual stated goal of curriculum in another state enacting this pagan story: "students will set commitments for rectifying current social ills, such as learning and planning how to carry out anti-racist activism and/or social advocacy in their communities."

As documented before, "The Gender Unicorn," a cartoon unicorn created by trans-activists that breaks identity down into the following categories: gender identity, gender expression, sex assigned at birth, physically attracted to, and emotionally attracted to, is increasingly finding its way into school curriculum across the nation.

And, no, Iowa is not exempt. Here are but a few classes offered at Iowa State: Gender Justice, Lesbian Studies, and Queer Studies. These all embrace this pagan story.

[3] In 2017, Common Sense Media, one of the nation's most influential non-profit organizations focusing on safe media content for children, issued new guidelines to give positive ratings to programs that portray "fully realized transgender characters." In other words, Programs and movies that portray transgenderism as a healthy life option (despite all the research that documents the deep psychological struggles transgender people face with or without surgical alteration) will receive Common Sense's positive rating. Those daring to depict characters afflicted by the disorder desiring freedom from it will be downgraded.

[4] Numerous public libraries across the nation have celebrated Trans story hours complete with drag queen presenters and a plethora of trans-affirming children's books such as *I Am Jazz, Red, Jacob's New Dress,* and *My Princess Boy*, are finding their way into early childhood reading lists.

[5] Multiple executive orders and the deceptively named "Equality Act" have embraced this pagan story, even going so far as to promise to "prevent and combat" all rival stories.

[6] Same-sex unions and transgenderism are regularly celebrated by social media platforms along with neo-Marxist racial ideology as espoused by the organizers of Black Lives Matters, while opposing voices are increasingly blocked. Amazon recently delisted Ryan Anderson's *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment*, Abigail Shrier's *Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters,* and the research heavy *Health Hazards of Homosexuality*. Books such as *Adult-Child Sex: A Philosophical Defense* and Hitler's *Mein Kampf* remain available. Twitter blocked Focus on the Family's *The Daily Citizen* for mentioning that President Biden's nomination for Assistant Secretary for Health at the Department of HHS, Rachel Levine, was a biological male. Facebook blocked Dr. Gregory Seltz, Director of The Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty, for writing an insightful response to the Capitol riots.

better? No! All of that opposes God's story and perpetuates evil against divine image bearers. We must always speak against evil and injustice. Further, we must call all sinners to repentance and faith in Christ. No class of sinners is exempt from the call to repentance and no group of sinners is excluded from God's grace in Christ.

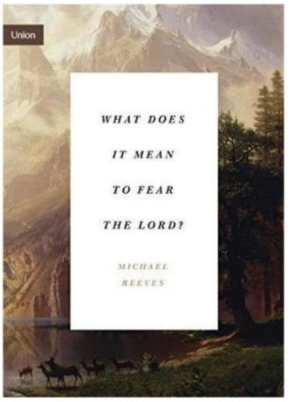
No class of sinners is exempt from the call to repentance and no group of sinners is excluded from God's grace in Christ.

Does it mean some aren't guilty of exercising power over others (or that we couldn't be guilty of it)? No. Does it mean some aren't born with privilege (or that we aren't born with it)? No. The Christian story speaks to these, urging us not to lord power over anyone, but to employ any personal or generational privilege we may have in service to less privileged, fellow divine image bearers.

The Christian story is a true, unifying story that grounds identity in something we all share (the divine image) and in something we all anticipate (an eternal diversified unity in God's everlasting kingdom). It is a story for the addict and the athlete, the immigrant and the resident, the under-advantaged and the privileged, the poor and the powerful, the ignorant and the erudite, the broken and the whole, the black and the white, the male and the female.

And this makes it a bigger, better (true) story. May we tell it with love and joy! – Pastor Conner

Trinity Book Club

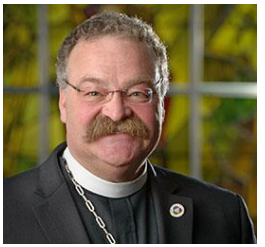


Join us for our next **book club** at Trinity on **Tuesday, April 27 @ 6pm**. We're reading Michael Reeves' **What Does It Mean to Fear the Lord?** You can pick up your free copy of the book at either Zion or Trinity.

Some of the joyful palm wavers on Palm Sunday!

A Word on the Equality Act

To the Pastors, Called Workers and Members
of the 6,000 Congregations of
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, President



The words of the apostle Peter apply to us now:

> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith — more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire — may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory. (1 Peter 1:3–8)

The church's task is not political. It is the proclamation of the Gospel of free salvation in the cross and resurrection of Jesus for all (1 Cor. 1:23; John 18:36). "The Church is the congregation of saints in which the Gospel is purely taught and the Sacraments are correctly administered" (AC VII 1).[1]

God rules His church by His infallible Word, the Holy Scriptures (John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:15–16). God rules the state by His eternal law, reason and reasonable laws for the common welfare. "Our churches teach that lawful civil regulations are good works of God" (AC XVI 1; see Rom. 13:1–7). The church should not meddle in government affairs, especially in matters upon which the Word of God is silent. It is also wrong when governments act against God's eternal law, reason and the basic civil rights of all people. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution enshrines this truth. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Throughout history, governments have acted unjustly — sometimes in the name of race, atheism, communism, religion and even Christianity — and curtailed or denied the rights of conscience and the free exercise of religion. And governments continue to do so. Our Lutheran and biblical confession is that "it is necessary for Christians to be obedient to their rulers and laws. The only exception is when they are commanded to sin. Then they ought to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29)" (AC XVI 6–7; see 1 Peter 2:13–14).

St. Paul made use of his legal right as a Roman citizen ("I appeal to Caesar" Acts 25:11). "Christ's kingdom allows us outwardly to use legitimate political ordinances of every nation in which we live, just as it allows us to use medicine or the art of building, or food, drink, and air" (Ap XVI 54). Our

Lutheran Confessions commend the seeking of public remedy for injustice. "Public remedy, made through the office of the public official, is not condemned, but is commanded and is God's work, according to Paul (Romans 13)" (Ap XVI 59). Our God-given right to act as citizens is very important, especially now.

The Equality Act is before Congress.[2] It sounds innocent. All Americans should enjoy equality and the protections of the U.S. Constitution. But in elevating sexual orientation to a protected class, the Equality Act will bring sweeping changes to current laws, to the great detriment of the religious and constitutional freedoms of biblically faithful churches, institutions, Christian schools and individuals.

Jesus referred to Genesis 2:24, when He stated:

"Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." (Matt. 19:4–6)

In fact, those churches and institutions that are bound by the Word of God to the truth of marriage between a man and a woman, and that sex outside of that institution is contrary to the word of Christ and the apostles in the New Testament (1 Cor. 7:2), could be punished for simply standing on our consistent, ancient Christian beliefs. The Equality Act effectively outlaws the words of Christ, the sublime doctrine of Creation, the First Article of the Creed, and our "free exercise of religion" based upon the Bible and Apostles' Creed. The biblical teaching that marriage is between a man and a woman is to be labeled forever a mere "sex-based stereotype."[3]

The Equality Act expands the definition of "public accommodation" and puts an ultimatum to individuals, religious non-profits, food banks, schools, charities, adoption agencies and others: "Change your faith-based practices or face government punishment."[4]

Religious schools (K-12 and universities) are a prime target of the Equality Act, which will make it difficult to maintain standards for admission and codes of Christian conduct for students, faculty and staff.[5] The Equality Act will forbid college students from using federal tuition assistance at schools that maintain standards of conduct on the basis of the Bible regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.

Sex-specific facilities and female-only spaces could be eliminated. Biological males will have the right to participate in female sports, unjustly denying female athletes at our schools a fair competition and the due rewards of accomplishment.[6]

The Equality Act will eliminate the significant protections of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, passed by Congress and signed into law in 1993.[7] This law has provided strong protections for "free exercise of religion" in the face of overzealous officials.

The Equality Act contains no conscience protections for medical staff who choose not to perform abortions, even if they have religious objections. Because of its broad definition of "health" services, the Equality Act threatens the Hyde Amendment, which limits public funding for abortion. It also threatens Christian hospitals with elimination of funding for not performing "health" services, including abortion or genital mutilation.

The Equality Act was recently passed by the House and is currently pending in the Senate. The margin is razor thin. If it does not become law now, we can be assured that it will be pressed again. We encourage all LCMS people to:

1. Treat all people with kindness and respect ("You shall love your neighbor as yourself" Mark 12:31), while holding firmly to "the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

2. Become informed about the Equality Act and the issues of gender dysphoria. (See "Additional Resources" below.)

3. Consider your role as Christian citizens and make your voice known to your elected officials, particularly in the U.S. House (*house.gov/representatives*) and Senate (*senate.gov/senators/index.htm*).

4. Pray for our officials, government and the church in these challenging days.

Martin Luther once said, "Christ dwells only in sinners." We recognize ourselves as sinners constantly in need of Christ's forgiveness. We recognize the truth of the apostle Peter's words, "For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God" (1 Peter 4:17). We know that Jesus' opponents grumbled against Him by saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:2). This comforting verse applies to us sinners, and we welcome all others to join us at the feet of Jesus, the sole Savior of all (John 3:16). As Christians, we believe that God has created all people, and all are infinitely valuable and accountable to Him. As Christian citizens, we recognize and demand basic God-given civil rights for all people, even as we insist on the First Amendment rights of Christians.

No matter the course of this or any legislation, Christ will sustain His church. Our hope is not in laws, Congress or courts. Our hope is Christ. "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20).

Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. (1 Peter 3:8–9, 13–17)

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

Additional resources regarding the Equality Act:

- Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty
- Statement from the LCMS Minnesota South District
- Statement from the LCMS Wyoming District
- LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations — Gender Identity Disorder and Gender Dysphoria in Christian Perspective
- Alliance Defending Freedom — The True Impact of the "Equality Act"

• Heritage Foundation — 11 Myths About H.R. 5, the Equality Act of 2021

Endnotes

[1] Citations from the Augsburg Confession (AC) and the Apology of the Augsburg Confession (Ap) are from Paul T. McCain et al., eds., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005). Return to statement

[2] *congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/5/text*. Return to statement

[3] Equality Act, Section. 2, Findings and Purpose: (1) Discrimination can occur on the basis of the sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, …as well as because of sex-based stereotypes. Return to statement

[4] *adflegal.org/blog/president-biden-has-promised-pass-equality-act-heres-how-threatens-your-freedoms*. See the Equality Act, Section. 2, Findings and Purpose: (11) Individuals who are LGBTQ, or are perceived to be LGBTQ, have been subjected to a history… of discrimination on the bases of sexual orientation and gender identity by both private sector and Federal, State, and local government actors, including in employment, housing, and public accommodations, and in programs and activities receiving Federal financial assistance…. An explicit and comprehensive national solution is needed to address this discrimination." Return to statement

[5] LCMS schools serve many who in some way identify with the LGBTQ community. However, our schools have standards of conduct and the expectation of respect for our biblical teachings. Return to statement

[6] Section 1101. Definitions and Rules. "(b)(2) (with respect to gender identity) an individual shall not be denied access to a shared facility, including a restroom, a locker room, and a dressing room, that is in accordance with the individual's gender identity." Return to statement

[7] Section 1107. Claims. "The Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (42 U.S.C. 2000bb et seq.) shall not provide a claim concerning, or a defense to a claim under, a covered title, or provide a basis for challenging the application or enforcement of a covered title."

Pastor Johnson's class cleaned up some branches at the Manning Cemetery because bodies matter to Jesus and He will raise His people up one day

The **TriZion LERT** (Lutheran Early Response Team) will be **planting trees on Monday, April 26th @ 6pm**. If you'd like to be notified as to how you can help that night please reach out to Pastor Johnson – 660-216-8680 (call or text) or email – johnsonan1445@gmail.com . You do not have to be a member of the team to help. We're currently working with the cities of Manilla and Manning, so we will have a lot of trees we'll need to get in the ground. Care for Creation alongside of us.

Time may not heal all wounds, but it does provide distance from that which moved us, stretched us, shaped us… whether positively or negatively.

Most of my reflections in this piece are not, strictly speaking, Bible truths, but they are general reflections devised from years of dealing with disease on a personal level and seeing disease devastate friends and family. But my hope is that these brief observations will equip you to embrace your neighbor as they face diseases; reflecting to some degree the embrace you've experienced from your Lord, Jesus.

Reflection #1: Appreciate Life

A long time ago, a friend dealing with cancer told me that they didn't understand why people dismissed their birthdays by saying things like, "Oh, it's just another day."

When we say things like that, I doubt we're trying to be dismissive. In fact, I bet we're really trying to be helpful; it's not a huge deal to you, and you would hate for your friends or family to make a fuss. You want to save them energy.

But maybe birthdays should be a big day, and we should dismiss our dismissing them. As Christians our focus doesn't have to be on ourselves, but rather on God's presence and grace. As Psalm 145:15 puts it: "The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season." Life events are a remembrance that the LORD intervened for us – we have fried chicken, division of labor, caring communities, access to water. In other words, we have life at our fingertips. Why not celebrate it? Or put differently, why not celebrate what God has done? *He has done marvelous things, I too will praise Him with a new song.*

Major milestones like birthdays serve as a reminder of God's undeserved favor or what we typically call *grace*. Why does the young person die off from disease, but the old curmudgeon lives on? Don't know. All we know is that this might be an opportunity for the curmudgeon to appreciate that they have received the gift of years for which they are wildly undeserving (by the way, please don't hear me saying that all old people are curmudgeons).

While loved ones' bodies wear out, we carry on with a radically precious gift: our spirit and body work. Why not appreciate the life our Lord has given and is maintaining?

Reflection #2:
Be Careful What You Ask

I know my gut response when I hear that someone has a disease like cancer, I want to ask, "What kind?"

I think we're drawn to that question because we're trying to discern the severity of that which is growing in our family or friend's body. Is it serious? Is it something that will require surgery or chemotherapy? What are we talking about here? And our question, on our best days, is driven by a desire to respond with an appropriate level of care and compassion.

You can imagine a pre-pastor version of myself in northeast Missouri. Gawky. Gangly. Only six months into college, and I was hit with the diagnosis: testicular cancer. While this form of cancer typically affects younger men, especially in their 20's, that fact wasn't all that helpful when it came to communicating to people what was going on inside of me. As members of my church family asked me what kind of cancer I was experiencing,

it never became any easier relaying that a private part of my body was attacked by irregular cell growth. It was embarrassing to tell people. It was uncomfortable to reveal something about a part of my body which ordinarily would *never* be a part of a typical conversation.

Unfortunately, a lot of diseases, especially cancers, damage areas of our bodies that are private or personal. Breast. Bladder. Cervical. Prostate. When we ask people what kind of cancer they have, we may be placing people in an uncomfortable position. Patients have already lost a sense of control because their bodies are being assaulted by cells. Doctors are giving orders. An additional defeat can occur when we're unable to prevent well-meaning prying eyes into a part of ourselves that we'd like to have control over.

So how can we maintain our *good* desire to provide appropriate care and interest to our loved ones when they're facing a serious disease *but* at the same time allow them to maintain some level of control of personal dignity? Give them the ability to tell you as much or as little as they would like to share. Just *assume* that when someone tells you that they have a disease like cancer that it's serious. Cells are out of whack. Then you can ask, "How can I be useful to you during this time?" Maybe they'll say you don't need to do anything. Maybe they'll ask for prayer. Or maybe you can ask, "Would you mind if I made you a casserole?"

Point being, instead of getting wrapped up in the diagnosis, which could be potentially embarrassing or distressing to that person you care for to reveal, be focused on how you're going to respond to this reality for the sake of your friend or your family member.

Reflection #3
Be Careful How You View Them

I'm slowly…and I mean *slowly*, recovering from idolatry. Pastor Martin Luther wrote that a god is anything we worship to make us feel full, whole, and in control of our lives.

In our culture of victimhood, it is all too easy to believe you are nothing unless you've been victimized. You're nothing unless you're anxious, you're nothing unless you're the product of injustice, you're nothing unless a disease has debilitated you. In effect, we take a very serious problem in life like a disease, and we give it more power over our lives than it deserves; in other words, victimhood in the form of a disease transforms into an idol or false god from which we receive a sense of fullness, wholeness, and control. What do I mean by that?

I personally felt like a somebody because I was a cancer patient and then survivor. I was strong; I had achieved; I was a somebody who deserved people's respect because I had gone through something traumatic.

Over time, however, that sense of self wears out. Everyone outside of you moves on, and they don't see you as someone deserving their respect because of the disease merit badge on your chest (that's why widowhood is a bad identity too, because people move on while you're stuck).

Plus, your having a disease does not guarantee that you won't reexperience it again or that another form won't take your life. In other words, life does not respect you because you've faced X, Y, and Z. Investing yourself in your victimhood as the essence of who you *truly* are as a person evaporates quickly.

So, what that means is we should be careful about how we view our friends and family members as they journey through disease. Are they strong? Absolutely. Are they courageous? You better believe it. But if we leave our loved ones with a sense that they can tackle life all on their own or that they matter *only* because they dealt with a devastating disease, we'll be giving them a false sense of identity. Because at the end of the day, none of us can escape death – no matter how strong we've been in the past.

So, we need a lasting God – we need a lasting identity, and we can have that. Jesus' body most likely succumbed to a combination of shock and asphyxiation on the cross (he functionally drowned above water). His body wore out, but His crucifixion didn't define Him in the sense that that was the final experience His body underwent – He also experienced resurrection.

Rather than defining ourselves as *cancer* patients we need to see ourselves as "*conquerors* through him who loved us" (Romans 8:37). We matter because we're connected to the Ultimate Person of time, space, and history; we matter because the Holy Trinity thinks highly of us; we matter because we will inherit a future that is disease-less and unending.

We will be careful when we see our hurting loved ones, because seeing them as anyone less than a member of the Body of Christ robs them of the dignity they deserve as well as the comfort they need. All of which hinges on having a sure identity concreted in Christ rather than in victimhood, circumstances, or diseases. – Pastor Johnson

College: Next Steps Event

May 5 @ 6pm

St. Paul's – Carroll

High School Juniors and Seniors and their parents are invited to St. Paul's-Carroll for a conversation on what it means to be a Christian undergoing post-high school education.

Pastor Ryan Roehrig (Carroll) –

Vocation and Debt

Pastor Jonathan Conner (Manning) –

Can I Trust the Bible?

Pastor Ben Dose (Arcadia) –

How to Follow Christ

This experience is free, 90 minutes, and dinner will be provided. We're thankful to Carole White for providing goodies for the event.

Our 2021 session of **Grief Share** will begin the first Thursday after Easter, **April 8**. There will be two opportunities you may attend: **9:30am or 6:30pm** @ Trinity-Manilla. This experience will equip you to answer important questions regarding grief as well as provide you with practical steps you can take as you figure out life without your loved one.

Session 1 – April 8
Is This Normal?
Session 2 – April 15
Challenges of Grief
Session 3 – April 22
The Journey of Grief – Part 1
Session 4 – April 29
The Journey of Grief – Part 2
Session 5 – May 6
Grief and Your Relationships
Session 6 – May 13
Why?
Session 7 – May 20
Guilt and Anger
Session 8 – May 27
Complicating Factors
Session 9 – June 3
Stuck
Session 10 – June 10
Lessons of Grief – Part 1
Session 11 – June 17
Lessons of Grief – Part 2
Session 12 – June 24
Heaven
Session 13 – July 1
What Do I Live for Now?

$20 registration fee which covers book costs and licensing fees, but if that is going to stop you from coming – please, come! Our top priority is to walk with you through grief.

After last year's pandemic cancellation, the Zion Education Committee is excited to again offer this food and fellowship opportunity to the community. Many community members and visitors appreciate the meal and the opportunity to have a place to connect with family and friends. The Memorial Day Brunch also serves as a major funding source for the summer VBS program. Pastor Bob and Diane Riggert have volunteered to assist with planning this year's brunch. The brunch was one of many efforts previously organized by our beloved sister in Christ, Margaret Backhaus. The Riggerts welcome your assistance and participation.

Contact the Riggerts if . . .

- You are willing to share Thrivent Action Cards to purchase supplies.
- You are willing to assist with planning and hosting this event.

Watch for more information in bulletins and the May newsletter. Many volunteers will be needed.

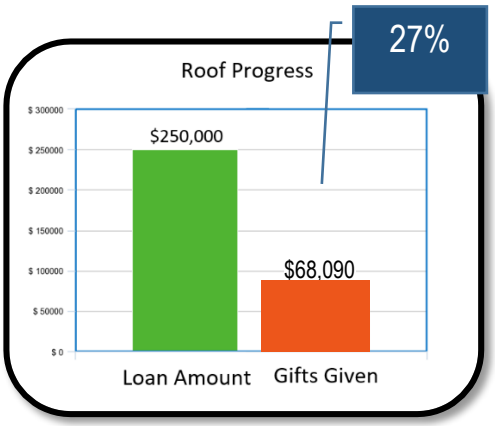
Coming soon to Zion!

What is Ramsey+? It's your go-to hub for all your needs when it comes to slaying debt, saving like you mean it, investing for the future, giving generously, and experiencing financial peace. And it's coming to Zion soon. Watch for it. Learn more here: https://www.daveramsey.com/blog/what-is-ramsey-plus!

Orphan Grain Training Clothing Collection

"Thank you" for the generous response to the recent clothing collection drive. A delivery to the Ida Grove warehouse took place on Tuesday, March 9. Two pick-ups and two vans were FULLY loaded with boxes and bags.

Local coordinator Sharon Irwin and the warehouse team gladly assisted with unloading the donations. In several months another collection will take place. Watch the newsletter and bulletin for more information. Continue to share this outreach opportunity with friends and neighbors. Financial donations are also welcomed by our Iowa West warehouse. Shipping a "container" to an area of need (often in Asia or Africa) costs tens of thousands of dollars. The Zion Fellowship Club has been a supporting partner of OGT.



Please consider making a special gift to the roof or to other ongoing and upcoming mission and ministry expenses at Zion, including technology and facility needs. Ask in the office for a detailed list of giving opportunities. Thank you for your partnership!

Dear Zion,

Our preschool board has several very important decisions to make and we are coming to you. We need to hire a new teacher and associate. We have had some fine associate interviews. We are also researching the idea of expanding the teacher position and possibly preschool times to accommodate parents' needs. The staff require a lot of training and certifications especially if covering the director position. A lot of paperwork is required for the entities that license us and fund many of our families. Much of this paperwork has been done on a volunteer basis which we feel should be paid time.

Our preschool basically funds itself. Expanding the teacher position with health insurance may not cash flow. So, first we would appreciate your prayers for God to bring the people to this job according to His plan. Second, as a church, what is Zion's vision for this preschool, how it serves children, the community, and do we need and want a Christian school? Would we like to serve beyond 2 to 3 ½ days a week and what does this look like and cost?

Thank you for your prayers & consideration.

In Him,
Janet Smith Zion preschool board chairman.

The notes below are from members and non-members expressing gratitude for Zion's ministry. The mission and ministry of Zion wouldn't happen without your participation and support. Thank you!

Thank you for the Strengthening Marriage class. We have been married 28 years and found it extremely insightful. We loved the phrase "not wrong; just different," when referring to how men and women deal with conflict. If offered at Zion, we would be very interested in a multi-session class.

- Member

The past year being homebound, I'm so thankful for your messages in the Direct Mailer. I think it's such a great way for everyone to get the Bible messages. May God continue to bless your work.
- Member

I felt compelled to send you this email to express my gratitude for last week's message regarding the "equality" act. I was stunned to hear what it all entails and was completely unaware of its existence. I saw a cartoon recently and the caption read "my desire to be well informed is often overshadowed by my desire to remain sane." Hearing about the overreach of this legislation makes it clear to me that burying my head in the sand is no longer a luxury I can afford.

- Member

My husband and I have been so blessed by your morning prayer time as well as Lenten and Sunday morning services and Bible Class. In spite of COVID, you and your church are reaching out in a myriad of ways to members, the community, and beyond. It is exciting for us to see so many children participating. We have shared the Zion links with many friends.

- Non-Members

At 7:30 a.m. several mornings a week we sit and listen to the morning devotions. We find this to be a great way to start the day. The messages have sparked many deep conversations at home and also with friends. The messages can be informative, brutally eye opening like the series on "The Other Six Deadly Sins," and they can also be very comforting. Thank you for this time you set aside to start your day with us.

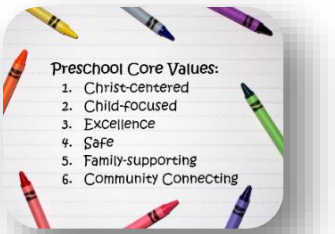
- Member

Preschool Praises for March 2021

March is always an exciting month as we look forward to the change in season with more warmth and less snow!

The first week in March we celebrate Dr. Seuss' birthday and Dad's Night! Dad's night is a wonderful time when dads come with their child and enjoy an evening of pictures, stories and fun! This year we switched things up and had the children answer a questionnaire about their father ahead of time which we then read in front of everyone at Dad's Night. Questions included: How old is your Dad? , What is something he always says?, If you could get him a gift, what would you get him?, I love Dad more than ... As you can imagine, we had some interesting answers and everyone had a good laugh!

We worked on recognizing what rhyming is and used Dr. Seuss books as a wonderful guide to learning! We played a game to match rhyming words and really focused on what words rhyme. I also finished up evaluating each child individually for conferences. During Jesus Time we talked about Jesus feeding over 5,000 people with 2 fish and 5 loaves of bread. The children were amazed to hear that there were 12 baskets of leftovers! This is another example of Jesus' divinity! Pastor spoke to the children about Jesus' secret meeting with Nicodemus. He explained to Nicodemus that "God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."



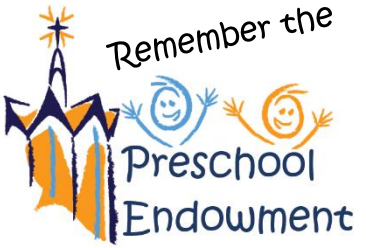
The second week of March we only had class one day as I conducted Parent/Teacher conferences over the phone on Friday. We had a fun day of watching a video of Cat In The Hat and Green Eggs and Ham. It was even more special since we had read Green Eggs and Ham by Dr. Seuss during Dad's Night the week before. During Jesus Time we talked about the parable of the Good Samaritan. We talked about caring for those in need and showing love and compassion. This is another example of Jesus' divinity!

The third week of March we only had class on Friday as I conducted Parent/Teacher conferences over the phone on Tuesday. We talked about Spring and reviewed the shapes we have been studying (circle, square and triangle) and added in rectangle by doing a coloring sheet.We also studied the number 1 and worked on a worksheet that we will include in a book that will be sent home at the end of the year. We talked about how Jesus heard that his dear friend Lazarus was sick and had died and he went to his tomb and called for him to come out, and Lazarus walked out of the tomb ALIVE! Pastor Conner spoke to the children about when Jesus healed the blind man by making mud out of spit and then putting it on his eyes. He then had the man wash the mud off and he could see! The Pharisees wouldn't believe the man that he was the same man that had been blind and that Jesus had healed him!

The fourth week of March we talked about Spring, seeds and the numbers 2 & 3. We began a study of a bean seed that we placed in a plastic baggie with a wet paper towel and then taped to the window. The children drew a picture of the seed on day one and we will continue drawing pictures of the seed's progress for the next 3 weeks in a booklet that they are keeping. We completed worksheets on the numbers 2 & 3 that we will include in our number book that will be sent home at the end of the year. The children also got to experience watercolor painting as they painted paper Easter eggs that will be used to decorate the bulletin board in the fellowship hall for Easter. For Jesus' time we talked about the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, which we celebrate on Palm Sunday. Jesus was fulfilling yet another prophecy and adults and children were cheering for him. Pastor spoke to the children about when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and how He showed them that He is stronger than death and some day all believers will be resurrected on the New Earth with Jesus!

The last week in March we will be focusing on Easter! We will do our number 4 page for our book and observe our bean seed and draw what it looks like. We will also be having an Easter Egg Hunt in the Youth Room and the children will be able to search for Easter Eggs to take home. Thank you to Dorothy Knudson for applying for a Thrivent card for both Dad's Night and Easter. We were able to purchase cupcakes and ice cream for Dad's Night and Easter baskets, eggs, books, toys and goodies for the kids for Easter! Jesus Time will be about the Passion of Jesus and how he was the perfect sacrifice for our sins!

The Preschool Board has decided to host the Easter Breakfast between church services on Easter morning. It will be a free will donation breakfast to benefit the Preschool. Thank you to all those who have volunteered food and service for the day! Thank you to everyone for their continued support of the preschool both in monetary gifts and prayer!



Mrs. Gore & Mrs. Nemitz

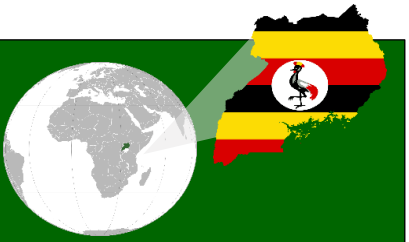
Zion Lutheran Preschool of Manning is currently accepting applications for two positions for the 2021-2022 school year: a Preschool Director/Lead Teacher and a Preschool Associate Teacher. These energetic servant leaders will have the opportunity to interact compassionately and creatively with children and families in the name of Jesus.

Position descriptions and applications are available at Zion Lutheran Church, 1204 Center Street, Manning, Iowa 51455 (712-655-2352).

Preschool Director/Lead Teacher:
This position involves administration of the preschool as well as teaching the 3 and 4 year-old classes. Applicants must meet standards developed by the Department of Human Services. The position involves 29 hours per week during the school calendar year. Salary will be based on experience.

Preschool Associate Teacher/ParaEducator:
This position involves assisting the Lead Teacher with classroom operations in the 3 and 4 year-old classes and 25 hours per week during the school calendar year. Salary will be based on experience.

THING
1



Rev. Mark and Megan Mantey
Serving in Uganda

Dear Friends in Christ,

In the month of February, the Lutheran Church of Uganda (LCU) and the Lutheran Theological College Uganda (LTCU) celebrated an important milestone! On the 28th, the LTCU had its inaugural graduation since its opening in 2016.

The twenty men that graduated represent all seven regions of Uganda where the LCU serves. The new graduates greatly assist in the workload of the thirty one pastors in Uganda as they serve over 150 congregations.

The twenty graduates will work with their deans (district presidents) and other church leaders as they prepare for ordination. Typically in Uganda, men receive more hands-on training and preparation under mentorship before ordination. Then the LCU decides the best course of action for ordination and pastoral service.

The twenty men were sent from their home congregations and deaneries (districts) so there is an understanding they go back to the region/church where they came from before seminary. The men typically serve at several congregations and even help plant churches and evangelize in the same region. Their work greatly assists the LCU in Word and Sacrament ministry while strengthening and growing the Lutheran church in Uganda.

As the graduates begin this next step in ministry, please keep them in your prayers. We are thankful they continue to abide in Christ and stay connected to Him, as well as their LCU leaders, pastors, and mentors. We pray that they can be salt and light to the congregations, schools and communities where they serve, and will continue to grow in knowledge.

We are grateful that we can walk with the Lutheran Church of Uganda in this way as we assist in preparing men for ministry through our roles of teaching and project management. We praise God for this milestone!

Peace in Christ, Megan and Mark

Owning Your Feelings

During a stressful situation, it can be easy to get caught up in your emotions as you're feeling them. Most people don't stop to think about what emotions they are dealing with at the time. However, taking the time to really identify what you are feeling can help you to better cope with a challenging situation.

Fun fact here – The English language has over 3,000 words for emotions. Can you name two dozen? Maybe you have to really stop and think about six words.

Even if you cannot come up with any words for your emotions, it is important to allow yourself to feel. Sometimes there are social pressures that encourage people to shut down their emotions. Sometimes people may say to another "big girls don't cry" or "man up". These statements are often more harmful than helpful. We all have emotions as being a part of the human experience, and you have every right to feel them.

When those emotions bubble up, it is important to not ignore how you are feeling. I'm sure you have heard of the term "bottling up your feelings". When we try to push feelings aside without addressing them, they build strength and make us more likely to explode in the future. It may not be appropriate to process your emotions right at the extremely emotional moment, but try to do so as soon as you can.

One of the ways to help deal with those emotions are to talk to someone you can trust. You may find that people are eager to share about similar experiences they have had or times they felt the way that you feel. This can be helpful, but if you are only interested in having someone listen, it is okay to tell them that.

By thinking about how intense your emotions are, you may realize that what you thought you were feeling at first could better be described by another word. For instance, sometimes a person might say they are stressed when what they are really experiencing is something less severe such as annoyance. Also, someone may be angry when they might really be experiencing a stronger emotion such as betrayal. Once you stop and take a look at the situation and the significance of it, the emotions may not be as severe.

If you are having a difficult time processing those emotions, it is important to recognize the need for assistance. Contacting your medical provider or a mental health professional is important to begin to own your feelings.

Janet Brus, RN
Psychiatric Medical Care
Manning Regional Healthcare Center
Program Director – Senior Life Solutions

Amigos en Cristo

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

April 2021

Valentine's Day this year fell on Sunday and so did the baptism of Leo Valentine Gonzalez. When we scheduled the baptism, the family was not aware that the baptism Sunday would be on Valentine's Day, so it was a special surprise to them. We celebrated with his parents Merlin and Azucena (above). They also have another son, Liam (3). Azucena grew up in our church and also attended Zion Lutheran School in Denison. Despite the fact that Merlin and Azucena are fluent in both English and Spanish, they prefer to continue to worship in our Hispanic church, Amigos en Cristo. Merlin and Azucena are a young couple that make up a special mission field in our immigrant communities. They have grown up in two worlds, in Spanish with their native family, culture and language. But they have also grown up in English and have learned the American lifestyle. While it is a blessing to know both languages, they have not only been pulled between two cultures but also between different churches and their teachings. It's a cultural challenge as well as a spiritual one. God bless and keep Merlin and Azucena and their growing family.

We celebrated Yaretzi's 4th birthday with her family last month (left). She is in our Amigos Sunday School, Zion Lutheran Preschool and a very verbal part of our weekly worship service. God bless Yaretzi and her family!

Every year, following the birth of Jesus at Christmas, we celebrate the traditional Presentation of the Lord, 40 days after His birth. In our Hispanic tradition, the remembrance is a call to bring our own children and ourselves to the Lord as children of God (1 John 3:1). The worship service is followed by a special meal (left) of tamales prepared by those who were "designated" at the Epiphany party on January 6. It's a special time to remember Baby Jesus and all of our children brought to faith in Jesus through Holy Baptism. We especially emphasize the power of Baptism in this celebration as many of our Hispanic Evangelical churches deny baptism for infants but instead promote "presenting" them to the Lord.

Rev. Daniel Vogel, 32678 Aspen Ave., Manning, IA, 51455
Home: 712-653-2354 / Cell: 712-309-1292
Email: daniel.vogel@ziondenison.org

UPCOMING EVENTS @ ZION & TRINITY

Please Note! All times and events are subject to change

Morning Prayer (M-F) via Facebook Live at 7:30 a.m. (viewable anytime)

TRIZION TriZion Youth Group: Sundays at 6:00 p.m. Trinity Manilla Basement

April 1 — Maundy Thursday
6:30 p.m. @ Trinity
7:00 p.m. @ Zion

April 2 — Good Friday
6:30 p.m. @ Trinity
7:00 p.m. @ Zion

April 4 — Easter Sunday
Trinity:
7:00 a.m. Breakfast / 8:00 Easter Egg Hunt / 9:00 Service

Zion:
7:00 a.m. Service / breakfast / 10:00 Service

GRIEFSHARE **April 8** — Grief Share begins at Trinity
9:30 a.m. or 6:30 p.m.

April 15 — Thursday afternoon Communion Service at Zion (1:30 p.m.)

April 21 — Confirmation Witness Night (@ Zion)
6:30 p.m.

Confirmation **April 25** — Confirmation Sunday

LERT Lutheran Early Response Team **April 26** — LERT Tree Planting @ 6:00 p.m.

April 27 — Book Discussion Club (6:00 p.m.)
Trinity Manilla Basement

April Birthdays and Anniversaries @ Zion & Trinity

Birthdays (T = Trinity)

1. Gloria Boeck (T)
2. Connie Ahrendsen
   Elijah Backhaus
   Kaia Backhaus
   Eletha Christensen (T)
   Larry Hansen
3. Aaron Ahrendsen
   Lillie Ceminsky
4. Dorothy Knudson
   Duane Otto
   Joleen Spies (T)
5. Mason Boell (T)
   Kimber Opperman
   Carson Woebke (T)
   Jackson Woebke (T)
6. Darla Neumann
   Thomas Saunders (T)
   Dennis Tibben
7. Jeff Bradley
   Amelia Hinners
   Jesse Page
   Hadley Wiig
8. Mikasia Jacobsen
10. Stephen Grimm
11. Jamie Hanson (T)
    Vicki Tibben
12. Cory Otto
    Kael Renze
    Thomas Ulrickson
    Nathan Vetter (T)
13. Drew Greving
    Deborah Ranniger
14. Katelyn Dreher
    Brett Eddy
    Larissa Hodne (T)
15. Jerry Backhaus
    Natalie Bauer
    Nancy Muhlbauer
    Dan Peters
    Karen Reinke
16. Marian Drake (T)
    Earl Thomas
17. Tate Greving
    Tim Kienast
    Sue Puck
    Paislee Stoberl
    Lucy Vetter (T)
18. Curt Janssen
    Cheryl Kerkhoff
    Susan Lamb
19. Colton Otto
    Diane Riggert
21. Joene Bohlmann
22. Corey Gaskill (T)
    Conrad Kurth
    Merrick Stribe
23. Shauna Borkowski
    Sara Lingle (T)
    Ashley Meier
    Roger Sinow
    Judith Wegner
24. Collin Borkowski
    Ericka Irlbeck
25. Jackie Hagedorn
    Virginia Johnson
    Becky Karsten
26. Lori Ferry (T)
    Ron Schilling
27. David Gore
    Georgia Lohrmann
    Rylan Stoberl
28. Glen Ahrendsen
    Eric Lage
29. Nels Olson (T)
    Craig Wegner
30. Andy Booth
    Emily Brus
    Madison Grabill
    Nancy Opperman
    Sara Puck

Anniversaries

8. Todd & Tammy Winter
9. Michael & Bricy Lorenzen (T)
12. Ron & Susan Schilling
25. Brian & Diane Vetter (T)
28. Greg & Sandra Sextro

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

Official Acts

Funeral:

Margaret Louise (nee: Andersen) Backhaus, Died February 26, 2021; Funeral March 1, 2021; Pastor Jonathan Conner and Pastor Robert Riggert

Arlene Sophia (nee: Mohns) Mohr, Died March 9, 2021; Funeral March 13, 2021; Pastor Jonathan Conner

Dewayne Arthur Buhr, Died February 11, 2021; Funeral March 20, 2021: Pastor Jonathan Conner

Loretta Arnold, March 26, 2021, Pastor Andrew Johnson

Baptism:

Camden Musfeldt - parents Joel and Chassity Musfeldt, Pastor Andrew Johnson

Mila Irlbeck - parents Jonathan Irlbeck and Chassity Musfledt; Pastor Andrew Johnson

In Our Prayers

Naomi Adams (Jean Ferneding's mother), Alan Grimm, Jeanne Gruhn, Ron Schilling, Ron Brus, Sherri Steffes, Jim Deevers, Rick Spack, Natalie Mason (Bruce and Mary Grimm's daughter), John Sonnichsen (Bobby Doyel's Brother in law), Gage Carlson (great grandson of Russ and Virginia Mohr), Maridee Bohlmann (David & Joene Bohlmann's daughter-in-law), Patty Meeves (Laurene's daughter in law), Beth Vitiritto (Pam Kusel's daughter)