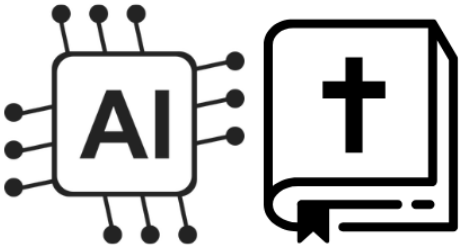


Artificial Intelligence and the Need for Real Wisdom

Part 2: AI: Research and Content Creation

In Part 1 of our series on artificial intelligence and the need to bring wisdom to bear on whether, when, and how we should employ it, we learned that AI is a super powerful but non-neutral tool that simulates/mimics human intelligence by analyzing and recombining inconceivably large amounts of data. Its processing and ordering power makes it appear agentic (having the properties of an agent), but as a tool it lacks true consciousness, morality, and creativity. So it's crucial that we exercise wisdom in using it. Scripture teaches that true wisdom begins with knowing and embracing what God has called good and relentlessly aligning our lives with it. We must employ this framework of evaluating everything in terms of what God has called good (order, embodied humanity, marriage, family, vocation, worship and the three-dimensional grace of God) in order to discern how to interact wisely with AI. In Part 2 we turn specifically to the question of AI in research and content creation.

AI and Research: The Ultimate Easy Button?

You're familiar with Google. You type in a question or subject and Google gives you millions of websites that, ostensibly, have something to do with your search, and then you have to sort through them. Large Language Models like ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini are Google on steroids. If you type your query in one of these LLMs it will scour the internet (its box), devour everything it finds that has anything to do with your question, and then condense and order its findings for you. You don't have to search multiple websites or read multiple books to get the information you want. It's the ultimate "Easy Button."

Is this good? Is there a place for easy? We drive pickups and SUVs rather than walk or ride horses because it's easy. We warm leftovers in the microwave because it's easy. We use the calculator to reconcile our bank statements because it's easy. We do laundry in the washing machine because it's easy. Is this new Easy Button different? Why have we embraced those other Easy Buttons? Aren't we trying to prioritize other aspects of our vocations such as time with our friends and families or time to learn a valuable life skill?[1]

Can there similarly be a place for time-saving AI in research? It is true that the time saved could free us up to prioritize our vocations (time with family, serving our neighbor, volunteering at church, etc.). But could there be a cost? Consider the microwave. Has it saved us time? Absolutely. But has there been a cost? Has it affected our ability to cook? Has it affected our understanding of food

[1] I think we have to acknowledge that some of us have used the time gained through these Easy Buttons to give ourselves to our media devices, scrolling mindlessly and viewing indiscriminately. In those ways, our Easy Buttons have not redeemed our time for meaningful and edifying ends. In fact, in some cases our Easy Buttons have diminished time with family and friends and eliminated the opportunity for meaningful conversations and growing in virtue.

and health? A little sober reflection might lead us to conclude that the time saved through microwaves hasn't necessarily made us healthier or wiser when it comes to food. In many ways it has cheapened food and the fellowship that traditionally happened around it.

When it comes to research,[2] AI makes it exceedingly easy, but recent evidence is showing that our new Easy Button is also coming at a cost. A June 2025 special report on AI and learning in *The Wall Street Journal* compared student learning when research was conducted through Google versus a LLM like ChatGPT. Google required students to open multiple websites and to do the work of synthesizing the information themselves. ChatGPT did the synthesizing for them. The *Journal* cites one researcher who observed, "Students who use AI tools to complete assignments tend to do better on homework—but worse on tests." He adds, "They're getting the right answers, but they're not learning." He then warns, "If we don't teach [younger people] how to synthesize and interpret information themselves, we risk deskilling the ability to learn deeply at all."[3] David Bourgeois, associate dean at Crowell School of Business at Biola University and director of the university's Artificial Intelligence Lab, observes, "We need to make sure that there's friction in our lives. AI has the potential to try to reduce as much friction as possible, so that you're living a friction-free life. … But in that case, you're not learning. You're not engaging. You're not growing or maturing."[4]

Wisdom requires us to ask what the goal of research is. Is it to learn or simply to gather information? If it's to learn, LLMs like ChatGPT might not be the best tool. The Easy Button might actually prevent learning. If the goal is simply to gather information, LLMs make it easy. But this raises another question: In pillaging the internet and reassembling text according to probability, AI often reassembles falsehoods – grammatically correct falsehoods, but falsehoods nonetheless. Not only does it sometimes cite books and articles not written by the authors it lists and quotes not uttered by the speakers it references, but AI can be duped by propaganda. An increasing amount of content on the internet has been generated by AI and much of it is patently false. In fact, rogue actors are utilizing AI to generate (at alarming rates) propaganda pieces to promote their cause or their government. Programmers do their best to craft algorithms to catch such propaganda, but it's unrealistic to think these algorithms catch it all.

WORLD magazine recently reported the following:

> A March 2025 NewsGuard report revealed that leading chatbots like ChatGPT, Grok, and Claude affirmed false Russian propaganda narratives 33% of the time. The

---

[2] In this brief article we are considering research for the purposes of learning. We must acknowledge that AI is also being used in medical and scientific research, helpfully harnessing its superpower for pattern recognition, disease treatment, ecological and environmental impact projections, and more.

[3] *The Wall Street Journal*, "AI Makes Learning Easy. Maybe Too Easy." By Jackie Snow, June 30, 2025.

[4] (Quoted in Jason Newell, *Biola*, "How Should Christians Prepare for the AI Revolution?" Spring 2025, 26) I remember reading a report awhile back about the failed attempts to grow trees in a biodome. They kept falling over. Researchers discovered why: There was no wind. Wind puts pressure on the trees, causing them to strengthen their roots and bark. Without the opposing force of the wind, the trees simply grew to a certain height and fell. One wonders if, by creating the ultimate Easy Button, we are eliminating the very opposing/challenging forces we need in our lives to grow strong—whether we will end up curtailing our own growth potential.

> bots were drawing information from Moscow propaganda network Pravda, which published 3.6 million disinformation articles through various news sites last year.[5]

It may be, then, that what ChatGPT generates is a logical, grammatically correct mix of truth and propaganda. Wisdom teaches us that *easy* doesn't necessarily equal *true*. Truth, like a homecooked meal, often takes longer to master, but both are worth it. When it comes to research, AI is most helpful for those who bring knowledge to their queries, who have a working knowledge of the subject they're researching. This is a critical point to appreciate: **We must bring competence to AI. Wisdom must precede it**. And developing wisdom is often a slow, arduous process. It requires prolonged thought, synthesizing information from diverse perspectives, filtering these through a Biblical worldview, and arriving at a place of discernment and understanding. AI can quickly collect information into one place and expedite the research process. Learning, however, can't be rushed. Learning is done best in slow mode with AI providing a quick assist (like using the microwave as a quick assist when preparing a home cooked meal). [6]

AI and Content Creation

> *From silent code, a voice is spun,*
> *It writes and paints, outshines the sun.*
> *A spark of thought without a soul—*
> *A mirror, not a mind, made whole.*[7]

What you just read was generated by AI. I asked ChatGPT to write a short poem about AI's amazing ability to generate content. This is what it produced. It's both stunning and disturbing. Setting aside the temptation to psychoanalyze ChatGPT (*silent code outshining the sun, thinking without a soul, a mirror, not a mind, creating* – disturbing indeed!), AI has the power to generate content at astonishing speed. This power is affecting us. It's well known that students are using AI to generate papers and to complete homework.[8] It's also true that professionals are using it to cheat in various capacities, using AI to generate content and claiming it as their own.

This, obviously, is a line Christians should not cross. Having AI do our homework isn't too different from having our friend do our homework (other than the fact that AI has no soul and no mind!). Either way *we* aren't doing it, and turning the paper/homework/report in with our name on it is lying, not to mention a form of stealing because AI has devoured countless unnamed documents/original pieces (many of them paywalled) and offered no credit (or remuneration) to the authors. To evaluate this powerful tool we must remember and use our framework for wise living (what God considers good).

This powerful tool is also affecting pastors because AI will generate sermons. Most pastors

---

[5] Elizabeth Russell, "A Tale of Two Chatbots: Generative AI is Growing Increasingly Powerful. What Does that Mean for Humanity?", July 2025, 86.

[6] MaryAnn Wolfe, author of *Reader Come Home: The Reading Brain in the Digital World,* astutely observes, "Only if we continuously work to develop and use our complex analogical and inferential skills will the neural networks underlying them sustain our capacity to be thoughtful, critical analysts of knowledge, rather than passive consumers of information." True learning takes what many have called, *the quiet eye*. (MaryAnn Wolfe, *Reader Come Home: The Reading Brain in the Digital World*, 62.)

[7] I asked ChatGPT to generate this on July 4, 2025.

[8] To read more on this, see "ChatGPA: AI is Forcing Teachers and Students to Redefine Education" by Grace Snell, Posted July 17, 2025, https://wng.org/articles/chatgpa-1752553977

will resist this temptation (and rightly so), but AI can generate Bible studies and discussion questions and outlines based on a pastor's sermons or prompts. It can generate articles based on the ideas in the pastor's sermons/prompts. It can voice clone the pastor and produce his sermon in his voice in a different language. It can even generate a podcast with incredibly human-sounding talking bots discussing the ideas communicated in the sermon. Wisdom requires us to wade through each of these questions individually. Where does AI help us prioritize God's good and where does it undermine it? Where does it serve the proclamation of the Gospel and where does it change it?

When it comes to sermons and papers, AI can check for grammatical errors (AI is now built into Microsoft Word to do precisely this. In fact, Word has now incorporated AI to generate content too.). AI can check papers for cultural insensitivities, unhelpful buzz words, ill-formed thoughts, or logical errors. It can offer suggestions for improving flow or consistency, or generate an outline or concise summary of a paper. AI can generate policy statements or convention overtures within the parameters provided. In this way AI can serve as an assistant in content creation.

Once again, to navigate these questions and the potentialities of this powerful tool, we need to bring wisdom to the conversation—wisdom from beyond AI, and even from beyond ourselves—wisdom from God's Word. We need to return again to what God has called good. Where does using AI in content creation help us prioritize the good of God and where does it undermine it? Where it helps affirm and further the good, Christians might use it well. Where it undercuts it, Christians should refrain and encourage others to do so as well even as we promote the good. It may be the case, though, that we find ourselves in a situation of competing goods. For instance, AI can generate a Bible study for a busy pastor and allow him the time he needs to visit a sick parishioner. It can, ironically, help create a church's policy on AI, saving several hours of research and tedious meetings, thereby allowing time for in-person ministry efforts. As before, each scenario needs to be considered individually and honestly. Wisdom requires patience and reflection, a deep understanding of creation and our status as creatures of God, a profound understanding of the good of God, and what makes for human flourishing.

AI is a super-tool with the power to make research super easy, but that may end up being to our own detriment. Easy Buttons have their place, but an Easy Button of this magnitude may end up doing us more harm than good, allowing us to spread our knowledge exceptionally wide, but preventing it from penetrating beneath the surface; making us look smart, while keeping us from being wise. And AI's ability to generate content is presenting us with ethical dilemmas, pushing the limits of integrity and threatening to curtail human creativity, even while it offers the potential to assist us in promoting and upholding the good of God. Christians must bring competence and wisdom to bear on these questions, continually reminding ourselves of what God has called good and evaluating everything accordingly. We must refuse to compromise on questions of integrity, guard against our sinful tendency toward laziness, and have thoughtful conversations on where and how AI might assist us in our various vocations.

In Part 3 of our series on AI and the need for real wisdom, we will consider "AI and the Life/Career Coach" and "AI and Relationships." Until then, practice wisdom; pursue the good!
- Pastor Jonathan and Rebecca Conner

Understanding the Old Testament: The Prophecy of Christ

Over the last several months we've been exploring the often strange and distant world of the Old Testament. For the last few months we've studied how Christ is patterned and present in its pages. This month we appreciate Christ prophesied in the Old Testament. *Pattern. Presence. Prophecy.* Jesus lives in the Old Testament.

As we consider Christ prophesied, we first need to clear up a common misconception about prophecy. Most prophecies in the Old Testament don't work how people typically think they work. Most people think prophecies have a simple one-to-one correspondence. The prophet prophesies, the fulfillment occurs. This is true in some cases as when Micah prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem:

> But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
> who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
> from you shall come forth for me
> one who is to be ruler in Israel,
> whose coming forth is from of old,
> from ancient days (Micah 5:2).

And, (700 years later), Matthew explains that Jesus was born in fulfillment of this prophecy (Mt. 2:26). Not all prophecies function this way. We'll return to the more direct prophecy-fulfillment in a moment. But, first, it's important to point out that many prophecies have what we might call a *fullest-sense* fulfillment.

We see a fullest-sense prophecy in 2 Samuel 7. David has in his mind to build a temple for Yahweh, but Yahweh has other plans, plans to build something for David. Yahweh sends the prophet Nathan to David to say,

> The Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever (2 Samuel 7:11-13).

This prophecy is partially or initially fulfilled in David's son, Solomon. Yahweh establishes his throne as Solomon builds the temple, but no sooner is Solomon's son, Rehoboam, on the throne than the kingdom splits. The kingdom looks doomed and we're left waiting for a son of David whose kingdom will endure forever, a waiting that will endure throughout the rest of the Old Testament.

The New Testament then opens with the grand announcement of the birth of the Son of David. And the angel Gabriel tells Mary,

> The Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end (Luke 1:32-33).

While Solomon partially fufills Nathan's prophecy, Jesus fully fulfills it. He gives the prophecy its fullest sense.

We see another fullest-sense prophecy in the famous virgin birth prophecy of Isaiah 7:14. There's no question that Jesus fulfills it, but not the way He fulfilled Micah's prophecy. Space prohibits the necessary deep dive to explain this fully, but when Isaiah said, "Behold, the virgin shall

conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (7:14), he wasn't simply saying, "In 700 years a virgin is going to give birth to the Messiah." Instead, it seems apparent from the surrounding context that Isaiah's prophecy had an initial fulfillment in his time and then its fullest-sense fulfillment in the birth of Jesus from the Virgin Mary.

The word translated *virgin* in the Hebrew of Isaiah's prophecy can be translated *young maiden*, as in an unmarried woman (her virginity would have been assumed). Based on the surrounding context, it seems apparent that Isaiah is speaking of a young woman – it appears to be a young woman he would marry – who would have a child. Before that child was very old, the hostile nations to Israel's north, who had been breathing threats down Israel's neck, were going to be laid waste. In other words, Isaiah was saying, *Take heart, Israel, your deliverance is near. Before this child is very old, this child that this presently unmarried, young woman is going to bear, the armies to the north who are making your life miserable are going to be removed.*

Then, when Jesus comes on the scene, Matthew reaches back into the Old Testament, which He knows reveals Christ in pattern, presence, and prophecy, and declares, "Remember what Isaiah said about the virgin giving birth?[9] And remember what he said about Immanuel and God being with us? The greater fulfillment of his prophecy is happening right here in Jesus and the Virgin Mary! Mary is the virgin and Jesus is Immanuel!"

Continuing with Isaiah, the prophet speaks in several places about the Servant of Yahweh, this mysterious figure who is going to accomplish Yahweh's purposes. In Isaiah 61 the Servant speaks,

> The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
> because the Lord has anointed me
> to bring good news to the poor;
> he has sent me to bind up the
> brokenhearted,
> to proclaim liberty to the captives,
> and the opening of the prison to those who
> are bound;
> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor…
> (Isaiah 61:1-2).

In Luke 4 Jesus goes to synagogue in Nazareth and reads this exact passage and then Luke tells us,

> [Jesus] rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing (Luke 4:20-21).

What a remarkable claim! In Isaiah 42, Yahweh speaks about His Servant:

> Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
> my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
> I have put my Spirit upon him;
> he will bring forth justice to the nations.
> He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice,
> or make it heard in the street;
> a bruised reed he will not break,
> and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;
> he will faithfully bring forth justice (Isaiah
> 42:1-3).

And then Matthew, referring to Jesus' public ministry, quotes Isaiah 42 about the Servant of

[9] The Greek word used here for virgin unambiguously means *virgin*.

Yahweh and says that Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's words.

Isaiah again writes about this Servant in chapters 52-53. This prophecy of Christ the Suffering Servant is perhaps the most famous and most clear description of Christ in the Old Testament. It's too long to include the whole text here (but it's worth looking up – Isaiah 52:13-53:12). We will quote but one section:

> But he was pierced for our transgressions;
> he was crushed for our iniquities;
> upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
> and with his wounds we are healed (Isaiah 53:5).

How can you not picture Jesus dying on the cross after reading Isaiah's words? The Apostle Peter certainly did. He wrote, "]Jesus] himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

Let's move now to Moses. Moses has led Israel out of Egypt. He knows He's not going with them into the Promised Land and He knows His time on earth is drawing to a close, so he prophesies to Israel, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen…" (Deuteronomy 18:15).

Moses' prophecy sets up an expectation that will run throughout the rest of the Old Testament (like the expectation regarding the Davidic throne) and into the New Testament: Who will this prophet like Moses be? Prophets come and prophets go, but none is like Moses; none speak with God face to face like Moses did. The editors of Deuteronomy, as they look back on the intervening years from the time of Moses, make this point: "And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face…" (Deuteronomy 34:10).

Over 1,000 years pass. The Old Testament comes to a close and this prophet is unknown and unseen. Then, in his Pentecost sermon, Peter will reach back into Moses' prophecy and declare, *Moses was talking about Jesus! He's the Prophet like Moses. He's the One you're supposed to listen to!* (see Acts 3:22) And Stephen, just moments before the Jews stone him to death for convicting them of unbelief and sin, also connects this prophecy to Jesus (Acts 7:37). Jesus fulfills Moses' prophecy. Jesus is the One all people are called to listen to.

God also prophesied about Jesus through Abraham, promising that all nations would be blessed through his offspring (Genesis 22:18). Both Peter and Paul in the New Testament saw that promise being fulfilled in Jesus. Paul's words, in particular, need to be appreciated. He writes to the Galatians,

> And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith (Galatians 3:8-9).

Paul takes this further a few verses later. He writes,

> Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ (Galatians 3:16).

Do you see what Paul is saying? When God promised Abraham that He would bless all nations through Abraham's offspring, He wasn't merely

speaking of the people of Israel. He was speaking of Jesus, the ultimate offspring of Abraham!

And then, just a little later in the chapter, Paul goes even further,

> For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise (Galatians 3:27-29).

It's difficult to appreciate the astonishing significance of what Paul is saying. In brief, he's saying that God's promise to Abraham all those years ago was His promise to send Jesus, that Jesus is the offspring of Abraham through whom all nations are blessed. But he's saying more. He's saying that we are also that offspring. In other words, we not only are blessed through the offspring of Abraham, who is Jesus, but we also are the conduit of God's blessing to the nations because of our union (in Baptism) with Jesus, the ultimate offspring of Abraham. In a way that's difficult to understand or even to put into words, we are caught up in the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham by virtue of our Baptism into Jesus!

We encounter another remarkable prophecy of Christ in Psalm 8. David writes in wonderment,

> You have given [man] dominion over the works of your hands;
> you have put all things under his feet…
> (Psalm 8:6).

Both Paul (in 1 Corinthians 15:27) and the author of Hebrews (in Hebrews 2:8-9) connect David's words to Jesus. We'll highlight the author of Hebrews' words:

> At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to [man – referring to the "man" of Psalm 8]. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone (Hebrews 2:8-9).

In other words, in Jesus the glorified man we see the fulfillment of David's words – all things being subjected to man/us. The living, reigning, and glorified Jesus is the ever-present promise of our life, reign, and glory into eternity.

Space prohibits further treatment, but we could write of Christ's betrayal (Psalm 41:9 → John 13:18), His entering Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9 → Matthew 21:4-5, John 12:14-15), His rejection (Psalm 118:22-23 → Matthew 21:42, Acts 4:11, 1 Peter 2:7), His being sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12-13 → Matthew 26:31, Mark 14:27), the casting of lots for His clothing (Psalm 22:18 → Matthew 27:35, John 19:24), His bones not being broken (Psalm 34:20, Exodus 12:46 → John 19:36), His resurrection (Psalm 1610 → Acts 2:25-31), His ascension and reign (Psalm 110:1 → Matthew 22:4, Hebrews 1:3, 13), His everlasting priesthood (Psalm 110:4 → Hebrews 5:5-6, 7:17, 21), and many, many more.

Jesus said the Old Testament bore witness to Him (John 5). He said, "Everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44)—and He fulfilled it.

"The sacred writings," of the Old Testament, "are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). And, for that reason, we treasure the Old Testament.

- Pastor Conner

New Communication Platform:

On **Wednesday, September 3rd at approximately 5:30** those who have agreed to receive notifications from Zion will receive a test text message from our new communication platform (Gloo.com). Look for this number: 833-421-4564. If you do not receive it, it may be because your phone flagged it as spam. Below are directions on how to "un-spam" this number. If you have difficulties, please contact Zion and we will help you.

To Un-spam a number:

On Android (using Google Messages app)

1. Open the Messages app.
2. Tap the three-dot menu icon (often in the top right corner).
3. Tap "Spam & blocked" or a similar option.
4. Find the conversation you want to unmark.
5. Tap the conversation.
6. Tap the "Not spam" option, which should appear at the top of the message. This will move the conversation back to your regular inbox.

On iPhone

To mark a number as not spam on your iPhone, open the Phone app, tap on Recents, then tap the information icon (i) next to the mistakenly flagged number. Scroll down and select "Report as Not Spam". This action will submit the correction to the phone's spam protection service, preventing future calls from that number from being marked as spam.

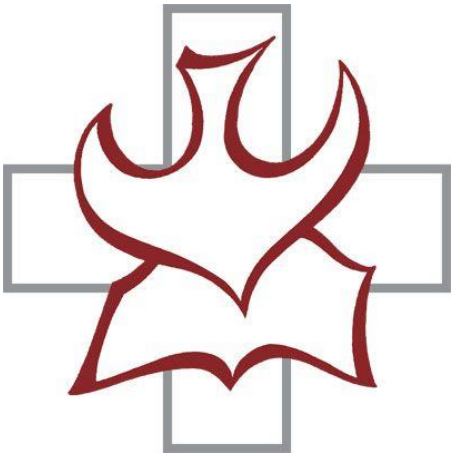
Here are the steps in detail:

1. **Open the Phone app**: on your iPhone.
2. **Tap on "Recents"**: to view your call history.
3. **Find the call**: that was mistakenly marked as spam and tap the information icon (i) to its right.
4. **Select "Report as Not Spam"** .
5. **Confirm**: the action if prompted.

We're moving to gloo!

Remind is no longer working for Zion to message members, so we're changing texting providers. You can get added to the communication list by texting your full name and "add me" to 833-421-4564.

Back at It? Learn from God!



Reading: 2 Timothy 3:16-17
"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

With the beginning of the school year readily under way, let us recognize the excitement this season of life provides. Kids of various ages have the opportunity to learn and to grow. The potential to be or do anything you set your mind to brings expectations and standards -at least for the kids.

Learning is an important part of life, and it shouldn't stop just because you have found your ideal job. Learning should continue in every season of life…

With school starting back up again, it provides each of us an opportunity to step back and remember what it was like to be in school. For some this was not a positive time in life because of the awkwardness of the teenage years. For others, this was a time which you remember with fondness because of the growth and success you experienced.

Whatever the case may be, I ask you to recognize that schooling is required because we all have an understanding that learning leads to success. Excelling at learning leads to more opportunities in life, and school is simply the way you are able to learn.

In our nation, much of our schooling has opened up opportunities for ideologies and theories opposed to Christianity to gain a foothold.

If we look back at the reading chosen for this study, we may recognize that God's Word is profitable for the task of teaching. Along with teaching, the reproof necessary to raise a godly generation, the correction of behavior, and providing training for a life of righteous living.

The outcome of putting "All Scripture" to use in life is "that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

Therefore, if we say this is true, then the opposite also must hold truth that apart from Scripture, the teaching is unprofitable, the reproof is lacking, the correction is considered hateful, and the training in righteousness falls out of the equation.

In short:

When learning is separated from the breathed-out wisdom of God, a generation of unequipped kids are being formed into incomplete adults.

This is a failure which is being felt all across this nation as a generation of biblically illiterate kids are being raised apart from the wisdom of God.

This period of time has marked a generation of anxiety. (as suggested by the book "The Anxious Generation" by Jonathan Haidt).

The influences of Scripture have been replaced by inadequate tutors which has seemingly led to increased mental illness.

The degree of connection between the brain and soul is not yet fully understood, but let us not be deceived…
Our lives are incomplete without the teaching of God, and we are found to be personally unequipped when we have not been reproved, corrected, or trained for righteousness by Him.

Do not raise incomplete and unequipped children.

Do not be an incomplete and unequipped adult.

Instead, study the Scriptures of God. Become acquainted with your Bible again, for in the words of that seemingly insignificant book, are the words of life which "are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ." (2 Timothy 3:15b)

We try to give our children the best life possible so that they might reach their potential, but there is only one potential I would offer to be worth your effort…

…To be complete and equipped in Christ rather than to be found in darkness and lacking life.

Therefore, learn not only what is given in school, but be a learner of God's Word all the more as the days press onward toward the coming of Christ again when all shall rise, but only the faithful in Christ shall rise to eternal life.

Let this be your goal and the object of your learning for both young and old alike.

-Pastor Staehr

Consider How the Wildflowers Grow.

-DCE Kathryn

"Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these." – Luke 12:27

The other afternoon I was taking my two sons 3 & 4 into the doctor's office. As I backed the truck into the parking space out front of the hospital my eldest excitedly exclaimed. "Mom, look there's pink flowers just like your pink flowers at home!" He was right there were pink petunias in the cement flower box right in the middle of the concrete parking lot sidewalk. I smiled as I recalled listening to a Christian podcast a few years ago where the woman talked about learning to be content with what you have. And how when her and her husband were young and newly married, they had rented a house and longed for the day when they would be able to buy their first home together. Yet, she felt called by God to learn to be content with what she had so she planted tulips to bring her joy out front of her tiny rented house. So, a few springs back I had the same thought. We mourn that we sold our first home over 4 years ago in San Antonio and due to medical emergencies, that brought massive bills and the ever-turbulent housing economy that we have not yet been able to buy another house. Yet, God is good and I have learned to be content with the blessings we do have in our tiny little rental house and so each spring we head to Earl May to all pick out our favorite flowers and plant them around our little home to bring us joy all summer long.

So, there I was recalling all this and smiling to myself that God is good in that because I had learned to be content and beautify our rental home my sons found joy not only in the flowers at our home but in the flowers that were JUST LIKE YOURS MOM out in the concrete jungle of a parking lot. The three of us discussed their bright pink color as we clamored out of the truck and as we began to walk past the flowers Henry exclaimed, "They're BEAUTIFUL mom! Can I smell them?"

"Of course you can!" I responded with a giggle in my tone thrilled at the awe in my two boys' eyes. Immediately Henry thrust his whole face right into the hot pink flowers and breathed deeply while his little brother, Leonard, stood opposite him sniffing in and out repeatedly trying to get a whiff.

The moment was mundane, brief and fleeting yet I took a moment to relish it. How sweet and filled with beauty our world is yet it takes the eyes of our littlest ones to remind us to literally stop and smell the flowers.

As we got inside, we met a friend of the boys from daycare and the three rough and tumble boys loudly played and tumbled throughout the waiting room. Again, unabashed joy and delight on full display for all to see.

Our appointment went well but took a while and we heard a storm and rain rumble in as we sat nice and dry inside. After our appointment, as I walked out of the hospital holding little Leonard's hand, I heard him scream in joy, "MAMA LOOK PUDDLES!!! PUDDLES MAMA PUDDLES!!!"

He was not wrong. The parking lot was littered with little puddles just begging for tiny feet to jump in and disperse the raindrops once more over the ground. What joy! What simple pure joy over flowers, friends and puddles.

It's our job as parents to teach our kids about the world around them. To teach them to love the Lord, love their neighbor, be kind, brave, strong and smart. Yet I find myself day after day, moment

after moment learning or rather relearning what it means to live through the eyes of my little boys. To have a childlike faith. To relish in the sunshine, the real rainbows and turtles, garbage trucks, clouds, music that just moves little bodies no matter how hard they try to stay still, bubbles blown about in the breeze, butterflies and water slides, sidewalk chalk and the same book on repeat night after night after night. They're never bored of repetition or of the wonder the world has to offer. Each new art project is the most marvelous thing ever made and the joy is simply in the journey of making it. Each new book becomes the newest favorite. Eyes ever wider to take it all in. What a joy it is to see the world freshly through their eyes.

I happened to have my own appointment at the hospital the next day and as I checked in the receptionist just had to laugh and tell me she found such joy last night in watching the three little boys thrill at running into each other and tumble all throughout the waiting room. I couldn't help myself; I just had to tell her and the other receptionist all about puddles and hot pink flowers too. And we all relished in the joy of a child. We smiled, I sat down and waited as I pondered how much I simply love my boys and being a mother. After my appointment as I was walking back out the receptionist called out after me with a twinkle in her eye and a wide smile across her face, "Don't forget to stop and smell the roses as you leave!" I laughed and replied. "Oh, I won't!"

God in his goodness provides us ordinary puddles and petunias! There is beauty in the ordinary, life and laughter around every corner if you stop long enough to smell the roses and are willing to look just a little silly as you splash through those puddles.

May we all be reminded by the littlest among us to find the truth, goodness and beauty in what God has so graciously given us every day, to have faith like a child, and to consider the how the wild flowers grow. – DCE Kathryn

One Small Habit Could Change Everything.

I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil. Psalm 119:161

As the fall creeps in and school kicks back off, we begin to settle into our new routines. Getting back in the swing and maybe picking up some habits we let slide a little in the summer months. We focus on meal planning or prepping, getting back in those morning workouts before school, nighttime routines with brushing teeth, prayers, etc. As September begins I want to welcome you to work on adopting one small daily habit with me, that can change everything for you.

That one small habit is getting into the Word. Reading our Bible daily can seem daunting. We start out well. We snag the Bible challenge plan off the fellowship hall table, we set maybe even set out our bible with the plan on top fully stating that we will do this! This time will be different. But life gets busy and the days fly by and we forget to crack the binding of that Good Book and the habit never fully forms.

But what if we changed our mindset. What if getting into God's word didn't have to be perfectly planned down to the hot cup of coffee and quiet pre-dawn serenity of a slow morning. But what if we worked to fit it in throughout our day. What if we tell ourselves it doesn't have to all be done in one sitting, but maybe we could read or listen to a little bit of our daily reading throughout our day. Maybe we start our day with the Bible in our lap and we only get a handful of verses read before a little one is up rubbing their eyes asking for

breakfast or the dog is scratching at the back door to be let out. Maybe, instead of closing the Bible and giving up on completing the days reading we make a note of what verse we stopped on and when we get in our car for errands or our commute, we turn on the YouVerison Bible app and pick up where we left off. Or maybe while we are cleaning up dinner that night, we pop in some ear buds and listen to the last verses and chapter while we do our chores. What if we focused on progress over perfection. Making small goals first. Instead of reading perfectly and never missing a day telling ourselves I'm aiming for three check marks this week. And then increasing it as we progress through the plan.

The habit slowly growing, slowly seeping into us, slowly increasing the desire to dive into the Word. And maybe on those days we miss we remind ourselves to say a quick prayer that God would increase our desire to read and know his Word. To change our desires to do what is his will for us, to change our kids' desires, our grandkids' desires.

Consider this one habit. Pick up the Bible Reading Challenge Plan. Join our Zion Bible Reading Challenge Facebook group. Ask questions, listen to long chunks of scripture. Focus on progress over perfection and little by little the Word will change you. You will learn to love and crave your time in the Word. You will see how one tiny habit can change so much in your life.

Bible Reading Challenge Goals:

If you fall behind, jump back in! If you miss breakfast you don't stop to eat breakfast before you then eat lunch. You simply just chow down on the next meal. The Word of God is a feast for us each day and so simply just jump back in to those days reading not trying to catch back up beforehand. The plan includes catch up days so you can use those days as built in days to go back and get those check marks if you'd like. But perfection is not the goal, simply getting into the Word that day is.

Don't let your perfect ideal stop up from forming a new habit. You don't have to slowly and methodically read each verse along with a commentary or study bible to fully understand before moving on to the next. The purpose of this challenge is not to learn everything there is to know in one read through. But to build the habit and each year as you join us in the challenge you will learn more and more through your time in the Word.

The pace is fast, but completely doable. Over the years I, DCE Kathryn, have tried various bible reading plans and have found that this one is the easiest I have found to complete. Some plans make sure to have you read an Old Testament, Psalm, and New Testament reading all in one day. And while that is lovely it can be incredibly time consuming and tedious. This plan will have you read through the whole bible from September through May. So it is a quick pace, yet, each days chunks are not crazy long to get through. Find ways to break them up if it's too much for one sitting. Try listening, reading aloud, or setting timers on your phone to do a quick 5 min To the Word break. You can do it!

Progress over perfection is the goal! So, you've grabbed the plan each time a new one is put out, but you've yet to get one single check mark? This time aim for 1 check before Christmas! You can do that. Then up the goal from there. The more you do it, the more you'll remember to do it, and the more you'll desire to do it! And "poof" a wonderful life-giving habit is born!

May we all grow in our love for the Word, in mediating on it, reading it, listening to it and abiding in it more and more with each small daily habit. – DCE Kathryn

Preschool Praises for August

It's hard to believe, but it's already time to kick off another school year at Zion Preschool! This marks my 4th year as director and lead teacher, alongside Melanie, who is also beginning her 4th year as our wonderful assistant teacher. We are excited to welcome Marlene and Kathy back as classroom volunteers this year! Their time, care, and support mean so much to us, and we are truly grateful for the love and energy they share with our students.

This year, Pastor Conner, Miss Melanie, and I—along with representatives from 37 other Early Childhood Centers—had the blessing of attending the Early Childhood Lutheran Conference in Des Moines. The theme, *"God Made Me,"* was inspired by Psalm 139: *"I am fearfully and wonderfully made."* The conference provided a wonderful opportunity to learn and grow through sessions and activities focused on celebrating how God has uniquely created each of us. We came away encouraged and equipped with new ideas for instilling this truth in our young learners, helping them grow in both self-worth and spiritual faith.

Over the summer, we made a few updates to help make our preschool even better. We added new stools in the bathrooms for extra safety and convenience, refreshed parts of our outdoor play area, and added brand-new sandboxes. We are so grateful to everyone who helped make these improvements possible—a special thank you to Nate Jensen, who is always willing to lend a hand with any project!

This past week, we had the joy of welcoming our 28 students and their families during individual classroom visits. These visits gave families a chance to meet us, bring in supplies, get acquainted with the classroom, and ease into the school year. Many of our new little friends even got to try out the new bathroom stools!

As we begin a new school year, we want to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has donated snacks or supplies. Your generosity helps us create a smooth, successful, and joy-filled year for our preschoolers, and we are truly grateful for your support.

If you would still like to contribute, there are several ways to do so:

- A donation box is available in the Fellowship Hall
- Our Amazon Wish List has items we currently need or would enjoy to add
- Or you can reach out directly to Amy Blackwell at 712-790-6703

Thank you for being such an important part of our preschool family!

We would also like to extend a heartfelt thank you to our dedicated board members: Chelsey Jensen (Board Chairman), Bary Kienast, Nate Blackford, Rachel Stoberl, Courtney Grabill, Kimber Opperman, and Kari Ranniger. We are so grateful for their time, guidance, and commitment to helping Zion Preschool thrive.

Blessings,
Miss Amy & Miss Melanie

Thank you for loving these children and enabling Zion to share the love of Jesus with them and their families!

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

REV. DR. WALTER & ROBYN STEELE

STEELES IN MISSION

AUGUST 2025

Although my alb and stoles are still on a ship, bound for The Philippines, I was invited to participate in the ordination and installation of a new pastor. Rev. Shaolin Paca-o Ticong was ordained into the Office of the Holy Ministry and installed as pastor of Mount Sinai Lutheran Church, Sinipsip, North Luzon, The Philippines. District President, Rev. Felipe Ehican presided and President Antonio Reyes preached.

The words Pastor Ehican spoke to the new pastor, as he installed him as pastor of this congregation were so fitting. The seminarians of The Lutheran Church in the Philippines do not wear a clerical collar. Rather, at Pastor Ticong's installation, the collar was put in his shirt. These words were spoken: "May this collar remind you that you are always to speak God's word to your people." Then, the stole was put on him with these words: "Bear the yoke of Christ, the burden of the Office into which you have been called." Finally, he was given a cross (a crucifix). Pastor Ehican charged him always to Preach Christ Crucified.

Join me in praying for young Pastor Shaolin Ticong, as he begins his ministry in the highlands of Northern Luzon. There is much work to do. There will be great challenges. There will be great sorrows. Yet, there will also be abiding joy in Christ.

In Christ,
Walter

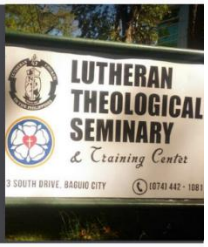
We received the joyous news that a very successful pastors' continuing education and training was held in Kenya. Our good friends, Dr. Thomas Aadland and Rev. Charles Froh, among others, taught a variety of subjects.

Walter is also continuing to assist the Africa Region with curriculum development at the new seminary in Shinyanga, Tanzania. In all this we are committed to Spread the Gospel, Plant Lutheran Churches, and practice Mercy worldwide.

REV. DR. WALTER & ROBYN STEELE

STEELES IN MISSION

AUGUST 2025



As we continue to wait for our official work permits and visas, we occasionally need to make the five or six hour trip from Baguio City to Manila. The best way to do this is by bus. A few weeks ago, when we checked into the various options, we discovered a bus with rather unique seating. Well, not exactly “seating” Rather, it is bus with individual sleeper compartments. So, we gave it a try. It was a little tight. (We Americans are generally a little bigger—and wider—than the average Filipino!) But it was good to get my feet up for the long trip to the capital. We did successfully get our “biometrics” taken for our permits. Now, we wait some more.

In other news:

We are settling into our home, awaiting the arrival of our household goods from Kenya. Kindly pray they show up soon. Walter has been assisting the pastor at St. Stephen Lutheran Church, with communion and Bible Study. He is also scheduled to teach a Luther Seminar at the seminary to the 4th Year students in October. I begin my Fall Quarter of deaconess classes this month. Next month we both are to fly to Bohol, the Philippines, for the International Lutheran Council meeting. Please pray for safe travel there and back.

Thank you for your prayers.
In Christ’s care,
Robyn

!AMIGOS EN CRISTO and GRACIA!

News from ***Las Iglesias Evangélicas Luteranas***
Amigos en Cristo in Denison and Gracia in Storm Lake
Pastor Pedro Lopez

Greetings and blessings to you from your Hispanic Ministries of the IDW. It was such a blessed summer and now we are excited to end it by planning our ESL classes. The schedule continues to be the same for praise, prayer, bible study and for the Sunday worship services.

This summer was an exciting one since we had an opportunity to take three of our youth to the National Youth Convention in New Orleans. Thanks to St. Paul Carroll who made all this possible. Paquita, Rigo, Emely and Maria had such a great experience. As new Lutherans they were amazed to see over 20,000 youth that share their same beliefs. Since they drove to the convention, they also had a chance to stop in St. Louis and tour the Seminary.

We have started working with Faith-Deloit. I received a call from them late July stating they were interested in reaching out to the Deloit community, especially the Hispanics that have been moving into Deloit in the last couple of years. So, we did. On Wednesday August 12, we had a back-to-school backpack and supplies giveaway. They worked hard to get the word out and did such a good job that we had about 50 people come to the event. What a blessing!!! We ask for your prayers as we plan for a future ESL class and a bible study.

Prayer Requests

- Our ministries at Grace and St. John- Storm Lake, St. Paul-Carroll, St. Paul, Hartley and Amigos en Cristo-Denison.
- Upcoming ESL classes in the different areas, that the Lord sends students and that we not only teach them English but can also share the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Cesar, a friend at our church facing a personal challenge.
- Noel, our Deacon who must go back to Nicaragua because his extended stay was denied. God willing, he will continue his studies through our new and expanding seminary in the Dominican Republic.
- Adrian Velazquez who was transferred by his job to Indiana. He has found an LCMS church and is attending there.
- That God continues to work with me and give me what I need to continue his work.

Bendiciones a todos. Pastor Lopez

Rev. Pedro Lopez,
Asst. to the President
Missionary at Large,
pedro@iowadistrictwest.org,
571-606-7600

Zion Fellowship Club—September 8

"Praises: Past and Present" will be the theme for the 25-26 Fellowship Club meetings. The first meeting of the season will be **Monday, September 8 at 1 p.m.**

"Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart." Ephesians 5:19.

Fellowship Club includes:

- **Inspiration**: Each month the group will explore a familiar psalm and also learn the background of a favorite hymn.
- **Mission**: Historically the group has supported Lutheran Hour Ministries. We will again coordinate clothing drives for Orphan Grain Train. The group also adopts a Garuna school outreach in Southeast Asia.
- **Service**: The group supports the Manning Food Pantry and hosts several Sunday morning fellowship times.
- **Fellowship**: Each meeting concludes with a fellowship lunch hosted by one of the members.

Zion members and friends are welcome to come monthly or occasionally. For more information contact chairman Warren Puck or Pastoral Advisor Bob Riggert. Join us September 8 and the second Monday each month at 1 p.m.

Bake Sale @ Manning's Farmers Market

Support Zion Preschool Saturday, September 13 at Manning Farmers' Market (9-11 a.m.)

Bring baked goods to Zion on Friday the 12th or by 8 a.m. on the 13th. And shop the market!

Staley's Chicken to go! Dinner

supporting

Crossroads of Crawford County for life & through life

September 23
4:30-7:00

@ the Crossroads Center
139 N. 7th St., Denison

Carryout dinners by preorder/prepay & drive through
case, Venmo, Paypal & local checks by acquaintance
Call: 712-393-4673

2 pcs chicken, potatoes, gravy, green beans, bun, and cookie
$16

LEARN MORE ABOUT CROSSROADS AND HOW TO SUPPORT LIFE:
CROSSROADSOFCRAWFORDCOUNTY.ORG

Artificial Intelligence AI
And the Need for Real Wisdom

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH
MANNING, IOWA
Celebrating and Sharing Christ's Redeeming Love

A Six Week Series in Family Bible Class
Starting September 7

Missionaries now in Romania!

Rev. Charles, Cheryl, Caleb, Caitlin, Carissa, Cassandra, Chloe, Charlotte, Caylee

The Ferry Family is coming to Zion!
Sunday, September 21

Pastor Ferry will preach and present and Zion will offer hospitality in a potluck after Sunday School.

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH
Celebrating and Sharing Christ's Redeeming Love

Mission Door Offering!

Sept. 7

Pastor Pedro Lopez
Missionary to Hispanics in Western Iowa

SEPTEMBER 7

TEACHERS INSTALLED IN WORSHIP
SUNDAY SCHOOL BEGINS @ ZION!

RALLY DAY

Upcoming Events @ ZION & TRINITY

Please Note! All times and events are subject to change

Bible Study	**Sunday mornings @ Zion following worship (AI & the Need for Real Wisdom – Begins Sept. 7)**
September 3	**First Day of Confirmation (4:00 – 5:30 p.m.)**
September 7	**Rally Day / First Day of Sunday School at Zion**
September 18	**Afternoon Communion Service at Zion (1:30 p.m.)**
September 21	**3rd Graders Highlight Bibles at Zion during Sunday School**
September 21	**Ferry Family at Zion (potluck after Sunday School!) Pastor Ferry preaches and leads Bible Class**
October 5	**3rd Graders Receive their Bibles in worship**
October 12	**Preschool Pancake Breakfast (9-Noon) Worship @ 8:00 a.m.**

September Birthdays and Anniversaries @ Zion & Trinity

Birthdays (T = Trinity)

1. Angie Miller
2. Collin Brus
   Cindy Scheuring (T)
3. Graham England
   Bruce Grimm
4. Brock Kusel
5. Madelyn Dreher
   Sarah Lorenzen
6. Brylie Baier
   Mike Hull
7. Kyle Arp
   Taylor Lapel
   Kingston Neumann
8. Austin Johnson
   Caleb Lahr (T)
   Mary Lueth (T)
   Carlys Stribe
   Darlene Vollstedt
9. Brock Baier
   Diane Vetter (T)
10. Alison Karsten
11. Ambria Ehlers
    Harold Jurgensen
    Brandi Wiig
12. Christian Birks (T)
    Kristie Borkowski
13. Carol Brus
    Allen Stribe
14. Lauren Greving
15. Will Sanford
16. Diane Lahr (T)
    Brooke Long
    Rylan Mundt
17. Waylon Bornhoft (T)
    Kaien Stoeckel
    Charlie Tibben
18. LeAnn Hacker (T)
    Madison Musfeldt (T)
    Lawrence Paulsen
    Kali Weller
19. Kora Kusel
    Sue Soll
20. Marlene Jahn (T)
    Vivian Wardrip
21. Alexis Karsten
    Wendy Stribe
    Daniel Vonnahme
22. Jason Boell (T)
    Laynie Harris (T)
    Isla Haubrich (T)
    Liv Riesselman
24. Ella Sanford
25. Jack Riesselman
26. Tanner Crawford
    Lillian Genzen
    Terri Rosener
27. Don Beck
    Ashley Martin (T)
    Thea Olson (T)
28. Camden Havick
    Susie Ulrickson
29. Michael Lorenzen (T)
30. Karl Albertsen
    Jason Ehlers
    Judy Irwin (T)

Anniversaries

1 Jay & Lynna Miller
2 Jim & Lori Asmus
  Mike & Becky Bruch
3 Frank & Gloria Boeck (T)
  Bary & Karen Kienast
4 Don & Trisha Beck
  Jon & Jill Saunders
6 Gary & Joyce Schroeder
8. Ron & Carol Brus
9. Russ & Beverly Bruhn
10 Jason & Lori Ferry (T)
14 Scott & Kristine Lingle (T)
16 Eugene & Susan Mahnke
19 David & Joene Bohlmann
  Kevin & Janet Brus
  Jeff & Jean Hargens
20 Todd & Dawn Ketcham
  Alex & Kari Ranniger
  Brett & Kasie Sanford
22 Larry & Connie Ahrendsen
24 Ben & Beth Booth
  Karl & Donna Rutz
27 Jesse & Katie Weitl
28 Conrad & Juanita Kurth
30 Allen & Carlys Stribe

If we missed or misspelled your name, please inform

Official Acts

Funeral:
Dennis Edward Grimm, Died August 14, 2025, Funeral August 19, 2025, Pastor Jonathan Conner

In Our Prayers

Bruce Rutz, Steve Rutz, Athena Bess, Kaui Meyer, Jim Deevers, Rick Spack, Sherri Steffes, Judy Reinke (Ernie's sister-in-law), Karen Vollstedt, Stacey Rolenz and Ashley Myers (daughters of Shelly Helmich), Gene Mahnke, Gary & Joyce Schroeder, Monica Christensen