

ZIONNEWS

DECEMBER 2012

A publication for the family of Zion Lutheran Church
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PASTOR'S DEVOTIONAL

"A THIS - WORLDLY STORY"

When our children were young, we tried to shield them from the excesses of the cultural, materialistic and market-driven, year-end holiday. We wanted them to understand that for us Christmas was about the birth of Jesus and God's love, it had nothing to do with Rudolph, Frosty, and a Santa Claus who brings gifts and toys in direct correlation to a child's compliant behaviour. We failed miserably. In

"Christmas's Festival of Incarnation," writer Donald Heintz notes that Christians have always lamented and resisted the cultural captivity of Christmas. From the beginning they've tried to separate themselves from year end festivities. But, says Heintz, it's been a "spectacular failure of theological imagination."

Even before the Romans, the winter solstice was an occasion of thanksgiving and celebration. The darkness and cold of the retreating sun inspired terror, and when the sun finally started its slow return, ancient people marked the event with feasting and fertility celebrations. Some of their symbols are still with us – boughs of evergreen, holly and ivy, wreaths.

Later the Romans marked year's end with Saturnalia, a raucous week-long party. Christians decided to offer an alternative and began to celebrate the incarnation with Christ's Mass. Their hope was that in time Christ's Mass would replace Saturnalia. That effort failed, Heintz, says, as has every church's attempt to banish the sacred festival.

Nobody was as hard on Christmas as the Puritans, notes Heintz. "They argued that December 25 was not biblical, but heathen, that Jesus would have disapproved of his birthday celebrations, and that Christmas was just an excuse for gross behaviour, social upheaval, and drunkenness no doubt aided by the lull in agricultural life." The Puritans ordered shops to stay open, insisted that work go on as usual and banned holiday cakes and candles.

The Puritans probably did a lot of good things, but banning Christmas because of eating, drinking, and celebrating, not to mention pagan customs like kissing under the mistletoe, was not one of their more admirable ideas.

After all, incarnation means that this world is God's creation and that God loved it so much that God came here to be with us. The story could not be more this - worldly: pregnant, unwed teenager, perplexed fiancé, arduous journey, inn full of raucous guests, barn full of animals, labour, pain, blood, birth and shepherds.

It could not be more human or earthy, and that is the point. Incarnation means that God is with us in this world, the sacred in the secular, the holy in the profane. It is this world that God entered on that first Christmas and enters again and again.

A blessed Advent and Christmas season to you all.

Peace and Joy,

Rev. Douglas Reble
Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church



CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SCHEDULE

To make your Christmas truly meaningful, plan to worship with your church family. To help you in your planning, here are our Christmas worship opportunities at Zion.

German Christmas Eve: Tonight, at 6 PM, the German speaking members of our community of faith and their families and friends gather for worship. Of course, this service will be in the German language except for the sermon which will be preached in English by Pastor Doug. Something for everyone. Come and worship!

Christmas Eve Candlelight Services: We have two more opportunities to gather in our church on this holy night we know as Christmas Eve. For those who like to worship in a full church filled with glorious sound, we gather at 8 PM. A more intimate gathering is at 10 PM, when Holy Communion is offered. These are always beautiful services as we gather around candlelight to celebrate the One who is the light of the world. Come and worship the Christ Child at these much beloved events in the life of Zion Church.

Christmas Day Service: *"Unto us is born this day, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."* Christmas Day! God with us! Through Word and Sacrament, the people of Zion Church continue their celebration of Jesus' birth. Our Christmas Day service will be held at 10 AM.



“HAPPY BIRTHDAY, BABY JESUS”

A much loved tradition, at Zion, is the annual Sunday School Christmas program. This year, we will return to the format of holding the program in the evening. Please note the program will be held on Sunday, December 16 at 7 PM with refreshments to follow in our Fellowship Hall. Of course, the program isn't just for families with children in our Sunday School. It is a congregational event to which all are invited. Including extended family and friends of our children. A good time will be had by all!

P.S. Our morning schedule remains the same on Sunday, December 16. We worship at 10 AM. There will be Sunday School as the children and teachers prepare for the evening program.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS



The Sunday School children, teachers, and helpers are busy preparing for the Christmas season which includes practicing for the Sunday School Christmas program. Please remember that the teachers are sacrificing worship with their families to pass on God's love to your children. If you would be available to relieve any teacher even on a part-time basis, please speak with them. Also some teachers, may need assistance in the classroom as Christmas approaches. Again, please speak with them or the Sunday School co-ordinators.

P.S. Sunday School will be on holidays after the Christmas program. It resumes on Sunday, January 13 at 10 AM.

P.P.S. Questions? Contact our Sunday School Co-ordinators, Mitzi Podann at mitzianddoug@sympatico.ca or 519-662-4856 or Tina Small at kerbysmall@yahoo.ca or 519-273-3860.



CONFIRMANDS & CHRISTMAS

Our Zion Youth Confirmands (Grade 7 & 8) will celebrate the Christ child in a fun and giving way on Saturday, December 1. We gather at the church at 2 PM and then head out to distribute Christmas baskets to our shut-ins at Zion. After the baskets are delivered we return to the church for pizza and a movie.

ZION WOMEN OF FAITH

Please note the WOF happenings during the month of December:

Saturday, December 1: The WOF will be putting together the Christmas baskets on Saturday, December 1, at 9 AM, in our church kitchen. Anyone wishing to donate two dozen or more cookies are welcome to bring them to the church by early Saturday morning at the latest. The confirmands will deliver them in the afternoon.



Sunday, December 2: The annual WOF Christmas dinner for members and friends of Zion takes place on Sunday, December 2. We begin with a brief program and social time with dinner at 5 PM. This annual gathering is not just for WOF members but for all who want to attend. The dinner cost is \$15 for this catered dinner. Please contact Linda Springer (519-273-2093) or Beryl Horst (519-271-9898) if you wish to purchase tickets.

We are in need of several people to help us with the work of our church. We have a lot of ladies who are willing to help at funeral luncheons, but we desperately need ladies who are willing to take charge for 2 months of the year in buying the food and organizing the help needed for the funerals. You do not have to be a member of WOF to volunteer. Please pray carefully and say yes in doing this task. Contact WOF President Linda Springer at klspriinger@rogers.com or 519-273-2093 for more information or to say yes.

Roll call for Learning and Living Kit: Item this month – 1 pack of crayons, or pencil crayons. There is a box at the back of the church you can drop off your items for those who would like to help in our ongoing project.

Wishing you all a blessed Christmas Season.
Linda Springer, WOF President

ZION TABLE FOR SENIORS

Our Christmas gathering of Zion Table For Seniors, our ministry which promotes fun, food, and friendship, takes place on Tuesday, December 18 at 12 noon. Lunch cost for this Christmas dinner is \$10. Please let Doris Bartlett (519-271-9622) or Phyllis Jeffery (519-271-3668) know by Monday, December 10 if you can attend. After dinner, we will digest a great meal with some Christmas stories and carolling.

P.S. The January gathering of Zion Table For Seniors, will be on Tuesday, January 22 at 12 Noon. Guest speaker is Bev Hagedorn, Executive Director of Shelterlink which provides emergency housing and other support for youth age 16-21.



CHRISTMAS COMMUNIONS

One of the best ways to prepare for the celebration of Christ's birth is to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion. In December, we will have our regular monthly service on Wednesday, December 19 at 1:30 PM in the chapel. This will appeal to seniors and others who find the stairs to the church or a full hour long service difficult to manage. Lasting 30 minutes or so, the service will include the singing of carols, a brief meditation and of course, Holy Communion. All are welcome!

P.S. If you are unable to come to Church in December to receive Holy Communion, because of sickness or some other life circumstance, and you wish to receive it, don't hesitate to call Pastor Doug and Pastor Karen at the church. They will make every effort to bring it to your home.

P.P.S. Though the Sacrament of Holy Communion is for all the seasons of life, many Christians find it especially meaningful to receive it during the Advent and Christmas seasons. During these seasons, at Zion, we will be offering Holy Communion at the following services: Sunday, December 9 & 23, Christmas Eve, December 24 (10 PM), Christmas Day, December 25 (10AM).



CHRISTMAS FLOWERS

Donations are now being accepted so the Women of Faith group can purchase flowers to decorate the church for our Christmas celebrations. Please put Christmas Flowers and your name on a separate envelope and place it on the offering plate or bring it to the church office. Donations will be accepted from now until mid-December. Thank you for your gift!



FRIENDSHIP MEAL

Because of the additional opportunities provided for community meals in Stratford in December we do not offer one. January 25 is our next meal. Your participation is welcome in this part of Zion's ministry. For information, please speak to Pastor Robert Hutchison 519-271-5808. May God's blessing rest on all who eat and all who serve.



MUSIC NOTES & MORE

The music we share each Thursday evening in choir rehearsal reflects the diversity of the choir. Each member brings a unique set of experiences, background and interests to the music. However, perhaps the most important things each person brings are time and commitment. It is a given that music, like many other elements, enhances worship; it is also true that making music can enhance the experience of worship. If singing brings you joy, come and join us on Thursday evenings at 7:30 PM, and each Sunday morning. Thank you, Zion choir members, and welcome future members. If you would like to speak with me, don't hesitate to contact me at hopcraftutoring@yahoo.com or 519-274-3120.

Blessings,
Lynne Hopcraft, Zion Choir Director

P.S. The beginning of a new church year or calendar year is a wonderful time to begin a new activity. Joining the choir would bring joy to others and yourself. Think about it! Choir resumes on Thursday, January 10, 2013, at 7:30 PM, after the Christmas break.



10 AM WORSHIP SERVICES

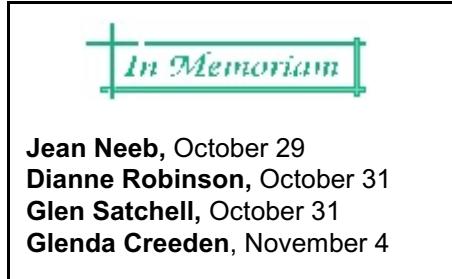
We are now three months into offering one worship service, at 10 AM, on Sunday mornings. It, for, the most part has been a good experience but not without the odd glitches. All expected. For sure worship has been joyous and many have commented on they like coming to worship in a full church.

Pastor Doug is monitoring and evaluating how to keep the Sunday Service when we celebrate Holy Communion to a reasonable length. Stay tuned and see if you notice.

You can do your part to make Sunday morning worship run smoothly by realizing you don't always get your preferred pew and by accepting that pews have to be shared with others. If you are early and prefer to sit on the outside of a pew, please indicate that the rest of the pew is free for sitting. We want to be welcoming!

Also, members who have no trouble walking are asked to park in our lot across the street, down at Festival Hydro, or on the street. Save the parking lot at the rear and side for people who have trouble walking. A simple courtesy.

Please know we will talk about the one service worship experience at our annual meeting on the first Sunday in February. Until then, come and worship!



DECEMBER 2012 VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers assist with our Sunday morning worship services. Listed below are those who serve in December as a reminder and as a thank you for serving.

Date	Communion Assistants	Greeters	Readers	Usher Captains	Counting Captains
Dec 2	N/A	Jim & Judy Stanley	Loralee McNaughton	Tom Cosstick	Liz Bomasuit
Dec 9	Anne Cooper & Barbara Higgins	Don & Connie Campbell	Ian Watson	Darrell Renecker	Rob Leifso
Dec 16	N/A	Don & Sharon Davis	Enid Lantz	Darrell Renecker	Rob Leifso
Dec 23	Wayne Hinz & Sister Anne Keffer	Gerald & Isabel Cook	Linda Weitzel	Brian Wilker	N/A
Dec 30	N/A	Rudy & Bea Deighton	Sister Anne Keffer	Brian Wilker	N/A

ZION CHURCH FINANCIAL REPORT



As the calendar year draws to a close it is also time to close the deficit which is over \$40,000. This deficit can only be eliminated with your help and through your faithful giving until the end of the year. We realize, of course, that many charities and worthy causes approach you for special Christmas and year end gifts. Our own church needs, quite frankly, fit that category as well. Thank you for all you've done so far. Thank you for your continued generosity. Your gifts of love to further the work of Christ's church are certainly needed.

P.S. A Current Fund Deficit envelope is included with this mailing so we can bring our Current Fund deficit down to "0" by the end of the year. Please respond as you have been blessed as you are able, as God's Spirit leads you. Thank you and God bless!...People who receive their newsletter by email can pick up an envelope at the back of the church or from the church office.

Further related to your financial giving and Christian stewards, please note the following:

1. In order for your financial gifts to be credited to your 2012 income tax return, it is important to receive your gifts by December 31, 2012. Feel free to mail your offerings if you can't be here over the Christmas celebrations or drop them in at the church office. If you have any questions, please direct them to Terry Faulhafer (519-271-8527), our church office secretary. Terry can also be contacted at zionlc@golden.net
2. Your 2013 offering envelopes will be available for pickup during the month of December. We ask that you do not use them until 2013. If you were missed or would like to start receiving offering envelopes, please call Terry at 519-271-8527 or by email at zioncl@golden.net. Thank you!
3. This year our special Christmas offering will be divided equally between the Christmas Basket program run by the Kiwanis which aids needy families in our community, the Canadian Lutheran World Relief which does emergency relief, hunger and development work on behalf of Canadian Lutherans around the world, and our Current Fund which allows us to minister to Zion members and the community. Thank you for these gifts. They will make a difference in people's lives both at home and around the world.
4. **Pre-Authorized Offering Program:** POP ensures that your church receives its regular support even when you are unable to attend. It is a convenient way of being

faithful in supporting the Lord's work here at Zion. If you are interested in this easy way of budgeting your donations, please contact Terry at 519-271-8527 or email zionlc@golden.net

GIVE A GIFT THAT KEEPS GIVING

Christmas is quickly approaching, which means that Canadian Lutheran World Relief has released a new edition of its Gifts from the Heart catalogue!



Gifts from the Heart are symbolic gift items that help families feed themselves, provide knowledge, improve health, strengthen communities and preserve creation. By purchasing these gifts for family members and friends on special occasions, you will be lending your support to CLWR's development work throughout the coming year.

Gifts can be ordered by cheque (send to CLWR, 302-393 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3B 3H6), or by credit card (call 1-800-661-2597) or visit www.clwr.org/donate

Copies of the 2012-2013 edition are available at the back of the church. The entire catalogue is also available for viewing on our website at www.clwr.org/donate

P.S. Of course, Lutherans across Canada use the catalogue whenever the need arises to give someone a unique gift: Christmas, Easter, birthdays, confirmations, are just some examples.

WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE LUTHERANS DOING?



During times when finances are tight, there is a natural tendency to look inwards and take steps to ensure that our own home and family are safe and secure. At the same time, we are challenged by our calling as Christians to be neighbours to those in need. Like the Samaritan on the road to Jericho, Lutherans in Canada have answered that call through their support for Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR). Throughout 2013 we will be sharing, from time to time, good news stories from CLWR highlighting its work around the world. Read. Enjoy. Give.

Microenterprise: how a little money can go a long way

In India, CLWR partners with Lutheran World Service India Trust (LWSIT) to support community development work in the state of West Bengal. Through local Strategic Action Groups (SAGs), projects such as microenterprise initiatives are helping

families achieve a greater degree of independence. Here is one story of how your support is changing lives.

Jamuna Das lives in South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. She and her husband, Gostho, have three daughters and three sons. Only the youngest, a Grade 9 student, still lives at home; the others are now all married.

In their mid-forties, Jamuna and Gostho were struggling to support their family. Visually impaired, Gostho was, for the most part, unable to work. Jamuna could not read or write, and their son was about to drop out of school, leave home and seek work in another part of India.

Then Jamuna joined her community's Strategic Action Group. LWSIT staff tried to inspire Jamuna to start a business, but being illiterate, she lacked the confidence to do so. To overcome this barrier, her SAG convinced her to enroll in a non-formal education centre where she learned to read and write, and received some training in the operation of a small business.

Armed with these new skills, Jamuna coupled 600 rupees of personal savings with a loan of 5,000 rupees (about \$90 CDN) from the SAGs microenterprise program to open a small grocery and fast food shop in August 2011. Moreover, through the encouragement of LWSIT staff, Jamuna and Gostho were able to convince their son to remain at home and stay in school.

By all accounts, the business is off to a great start. Daily sales currently average around 600 rupees from which the family is able to draw a daily income of 180 rupees. Further testimony to the business' success is that Jamuna has already been able to repay 1,000 rupees of the loan to her SAG fund.

Having a family-owned business has bestowed other benefits. Gostho is able to contribute to the operation by helping with the purchase of materials from the local market. A stable income has also enabled them to hire a private tutor for their son, make some repairs to their house, and purchase a radio to listen to news and entertainment programming.

Jamuna's fellow SAG members have noticed a great difference in Jamuna lately. One of her colleagues shared the "Jamuna no longer complains about her financial problem or ill fate. She has been managing both her family and business confidently."