

ZIONNEWS

DECEMBER 2014

A publication for the family of Zion Lutheran Church
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December

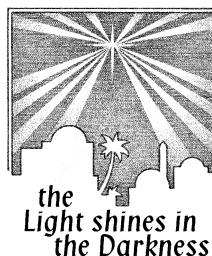
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PASTOR'S DEVOTIONAL

"We need a little Christmas, right this very minute."

Jerry Herman's words from the musical *Mame* have a meaning that extends far beyond the theatre stage. They speak of a yearning for the joy that Christmas brings us, be it "carols in the window, carols at the spinet," gathering with loved ones around the Christmas tree, or the lights that illumine our darkness as the message of Christmas speaks "joy to the world" that is often devoid of such joyfulness. For Christians, the Christmas for which we yearn brings with it the great news that "to us a child is born, to us a Son is given," the message of hope we share with all the world on this most holy night that "to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." As a year filled with violence, fear, and uncertainty draws to a close, we may feel that we need the joyful message of Christmas now more than ever.

I also am looking forward to sharing in the joy of the coming Christmas season; but there is another season that invites us to share a message of hope in these days as well as in the days to come. To paraphrase the message of the classic Broadway musical, **we need a little ADVENT, right this very minute.** Advent is a season that often gets lost in all of the busyness of our Christmas preparations; people mainly



notice Advent for its four-candle wreath and the Advent calendars that many families open each day of this four-week season. While Advent is indeed a time when we prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ at Christmas, Advent is also a season when we consider what it means for Christ to come to us (Advent means "coming") not only in the manger in Bethlehem but in our Lord's presence in our daily lives and his promise that he will come again to gather us into our eternal home. Advent calls us to turn our attention away from all of the stress obligations that weigh us down during the weeks before Christmas to hear God's Word inviting us to "rejoice" because Emmanuel ("God with us") shall come to God's people to "disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight."

Luther D. Reed, a professor at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, invites us to embrace the season of Advent as a time of preparation for Christmas as well as all that God will bestow upon us in every season of the coming year:

- "The Lutheran Church regards [Advent] as a time of sober penitence mixed with holy joy. It serves not only as a preparation for Christmas, but as an introduction to the entire church year. Early Lutheran writers said that the Church in Advent celebrates the lowly coming of Christ in the flesh, his spiritual and daily coming in the hearts of the faithful, and his glorious return to judge. The Lessons, Collects, and other Propers stress the importance of spiritual preparation, sober living, and faithful witnessing."

We need a little Christmas (some may say a *lot* of Christmas) to bring us those tidings of comfort and joy we so desperately need. And we also need a little Advent, a time for us to prepare for the coming of our Lord at Christmas, in our everyday lives, and in that day when we will gather together to share in the good news that first came to us at Christmas: Christ the Saviour is born! The Lord is with us always! The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight!

Yours in Advent hope, Pastor Jeff Laustsen

CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SCHEDULE

"For a child has been born to us, a son given to us" – Isaiah 9:6



CHRISTMAS
WORSHIP
SCHEDULE

CHRISTMAS EVE: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24

6 PM – GERMAN SERVICE: An opportunity for the German speaking members of our community of faith and their families and friends to gather for worship in their native language. In addition to celebrating the good news of the birth of our Saviour, we will be blessed by the music of the Teutonia Choir. The sermon (in English) will be shared by Pastor Jeff.

8 PM – Christmas Eve Carol Service: We gather as a family of faith in our beautiful sanctuary to sing the traditional carols of Christmas and to share the Christmas story with our children. There will be an opportunity for children to gather around our Christmas trees as we hear the angels declare the good news of our Saviour's birth.

10 PM – CHRISTMAS EVE COMMUNION SERVICE: Amid the stillness of this holy night, we gather together to celebrate the Nativity of our Lord as we share in his Holy Supper. One of the most solemn and cherished worship services of the year as we rejoice in the "silent night, holy night" in which the Christ Child "sleeps in heavenly

peace."

CHRISTMAS DAY, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25

10 AM – SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS: On the morning of this most holy day, we gather together to hear the Word of God that proclaims our Saviour's birth and sing the traditional carols of the Christmas season.

"O come, let us behold him – Christ the Lord!"



SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

How quickly the time passes...the Christmas season is upon us and with it comes the Sunday School Pageant. This year the pageant will be held on **Sunday, December 21 at 6:30 PM**, which is also our last day of Sunday School until January 11. We will be rehearsing in the church after the morning service on December 14. Please come and collect your child(ren) from there on that morning. We invite everyone to join us after the pageant for coffee, juice and cookies in celebration of the season and in appreciation of the children's continued enthusiasm.

Tina Small & Mitzi Podann, Sunday School Co-ordinators

ZION WOMEN OF FAITH

Please note the WOF happenings during the month of December:



Saturday, December 6: The WOF will be putting together the Christmas baskets on Saturday, December 6. Anyone wishing to donate two dozen or more cookies are welcome to bring them to the church by 8:30 AM Saturday morning at the latest.

Sunday, December 7: The annual WOF Christmas dinner for members and friends of Zion takes place on Sunday, December 7. We begin with a brief program and social time at 4 PM, with dinner to follow at 5 PM.

Remember we are still collecting for LWR Living & Learning Kits. Items needed are on the table at the back of the church.

Wishing you all a very blessed Christmas.
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 16 at 12 noon, for those who have signed up. After dinner we will enjoy a Christmas program and sing carols, with Marco Burak and Lynne Hopcraft.



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 30 is our next meal. Your participation is welcome in this part of Zion's ministry. For information, please speak to Sister Jean Widmeyer 519-273-6810. May God's blessing rest on all who eat and all who serve.

+ BAPTISM +
Dylan James Hansen, son of Jeremy & Kathryn
on November 9

DECEMBER 2014 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 7	Darlene Illman & Rob Leifso	Craig & Lisa Wesson	Sister Jean Widmeyer	Ed Illman	Wendy Holman
Dec 14	N/A	Gerry & Janet Ahrens	Susan Iredale	Ed Illman	Kurt Gough
Dec 21	Linda Springer & Sister Jean Widmeyer	Wayne & Dianne Yundt	Nancy White	Wayne Hinz	Kurt Gough
Dec 24	Sister Anne Keffer	N/A	Sister Anne Keffer	N/A	N/A
Dec 28	N/A	Brian & Sharyl Coe	Linda Springer	Wayne Hinz	N/A

ZION CHURCH FINANCIAL REPORT

 As the calendar year draws to a close, we give thanks to God for faithful giving of our congregation throughout this past year. Your gifts of love continue to give us the opportunity to serve others in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we give thanks for your generosity, we also ask you to prayerfully consider an additional offering to address our deficit, which stands at \$42,731.94, as of October 31. While this amount may appear somewhat daunting, we know that through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we will be able to fulfill our commitment to Christ's work here at Zion Lutheran Church.

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 2014 income tax return, it is important to receive your gifts by December 31, 2014. 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 2015 offering envelopes will be available for pickup during the month of December. We ask that you do not use them until 2015. If you were missed or would like to start receiving offering envelopes, please call Terry at 519-271-8527 or by email at zionlc@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. PLEASE NOTE: Your special offering envelopes are with the offering envelopes, if you are using POP please pick them up. If you are interested in this easy way of budgeting your donations, please contact Terry at 519-271-8527 or email zionlc@golden.net

