

ZIONEWS

DECEMBER 2011



A publication for the family of Zion Lutheran Church

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PASTOR'S DEVOTIONAL

"OUR QUIET GOD"

We live in a world filled with noise. At home, the television is often on, even if no one is watching. The radios and CD players blare in our cars. The computer plays music while we surf and work. Our cell phones ring and beep telling us that someone wants to talk to us by voice or text. If someone wants to introduce something new, it is accompanied by hoopla of all sorts: fireworks, bands, anything that gets our attention. And yet, each Christmas we sing, from "O Little Town Of Bethlehem," the third verse where it says, "How silently, how silently, The wondrous gift is given."

Our God seems to go out of the way to be quiet. 1 King 19 tells the story of the prophet Elijah, who, after defeating the prophets of Baal, runs for his life out into the wilderness when Queen Jezebel vows revenge. Elijah bemoans his lot in life, and God invites him to stand on the mountain as the Lord passes by. A wind strong enough to split mountains and break rocks comes up, and then an earthquake, and then a fire. But the Lord was not in any of those loud, spectacular events. Then there was the sound of sheer silence. Then God could speak to an expectant Elijah and send him back to the very place from which he had fled in fear to speak a word from God to the people.

A stable in a backwater town, a chorus of angels singing out on a remote mountainside populated only by some sheep and a few shepherds – not exactly a modern advertising executive's vision for the release of the greatest gift of all time. This is how God chose to meet humankind in the most awe-inspiring event in human history. The God of all creation, maker of all things, came to that creation in the form of a human infant, born to an ordinary woman in the gentle sounds of a stable. Wise men from the east searched for him by the silent light of a star.



This Christmas, let us pause from the hectic schedules which define our lives, remove ourselves from the noise and distractions of the world around us, and listen carefully once

again to the message of the angel, "Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord." (Luke 2:10-11). Then let us follow Jesus into the noise of the world around us, and, without fanfare, share in word and deed this most gracious gift with those who so desperately need to receive it.

Advent and Christmas blessings to you all,

Rev. Douglas Reble

Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church

VICAR'S DEVOTIONAL

"How To Wish Someone A Merry Christmas"

"It's ok to wish me a Merry Christmas." You know Advent has arrived when those buttons with that slogan begin to appear again. Carefully packed away last year with the rest of the Christmas decorations, they now make a reappearance as we insist "Christ" be put back into Christmas.

As I write this I am preparing for "Christ the King" Sunday and I am wondering what image of Christ we carry with us as we await his arrival. Would Jesus wear a button that says, "It's ok to wish me a Merry Christmas?" I guess to answer that we have to ask what our motivation is for wearing one. I can think of three possibilities.

The first is the assumption would be that someone has said, "Please do not wish me a Merry Christmas, I don't celebrate that, so I find your well wishes offensive." Now personally this has never happened to me, and I honestly wonder if it has happened to anyone. If a Jewish person wished you a Happy Hanukah, would you take offense?

The second reason we might choose to wear such a button is to ensure that Christmas does not become secularized and turn into a commercial enterprise. So as we rush from store to store trying to get the best holiday bargains, we want those corporations to know that their sales people can offer more than a "Happy Holidays" because otherwise we might possibly forget the "reason for the season." The very fact that we are taking our campaign to the malls would imply that it is likely already too late, and perhaps our energy could be better spent reflecting on that.

The third possibility is a fear that respecting the traditions of non-Christians (even if it is only

for the purpose of being politically correct) might somehow enable them to take “our” holiday away from us. What kind of a Christian nation would we be if we didn’t stand up and fight against that? So what is our image of Christ?

I recently stumbled upon the following letter from Jesus, it is a little American in context but I think you will get the point:

If you want to give Me a present in remembrance of My birth here is my list. Choose something from it:



1. Instead of writing protest letters objecting to the way My birthday is being celebrated, write letters of love and hope to soldiers away from home. They are terribly afraid and lonely this time of year. I know, they tell Me all the time.
2. Visit someone in a nursing home. You don't have to know them personally. They just need to know that someone cares about them.
3. Instead of writing the President complaining about the wording on the cards his staff sent out this year, why don't you write and tell him that you'll be praying for him and his family this year. Then follow up. It will be nice hearing from you again.
4. Instead of giving your children a lot of gifts you can't afford and they don't need, spend time with them. Tell them the story of My birth, and why I came to live with you down here. Hold them in your arms and remind them that I love them.
5. Pick someone that has hurt you in the past and forgive him or her.
6. Did you know that someone in your town will attempt to take their own life this season because they feel so alone and hopeless? Since you don't know who that person is, try giving everyone you meet a warm smile; it could make the difference.
7. Instead of nit picking about what the retailer in your town calls the holiday, be patient with the people who work there. Give them a warm smile and a kind word. Even if they aren't allowed to wish you a “Merry Christmas” that doesn't keep you from wishing them one. Then stop shopping there on Sunday. If the store didn't make so much money on that day they'd close and let their employees spend the day at home with their families.
8. If you really want to make a difference, support a missionary – especially one who

takes My love and Good News to those who have never heard My name.

9. Here's a good one. There are individuals and whole families in your town who not only will have no “Christmas” tree, but neither will they have presents to give or receive. If you don't know them, buy some food and a few gifts and give them to the Salvation Army or some other charity which believes in Me and they will make the delivery for you.
10. Finally, if you want to make a statement about your belief in and loyalty to Me, then behave like a Christian. Don't do things in secret that you wouldn't do in My presence. Let people know by your actions that you are one of mine.

Don't forget; I am God and can take care of Myself. Just love Me and do what I have told you to do. I'll take care of all the rest. Check out the list above and get to work; time is short. I'll help you, but the ball is now in your court. And do have a most blessed Christmas with all those whom you love and remember.

I LOVE YOU, JESUS!

Vicar Steve Hoffard

CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SCHEDULE



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.

SUNDAY SCHOOL SNIPITS: CHRISTMAS & MORE



The Sunday School children and teachers are busy preparing for the Christmas season which includes practising for the Sunday School Christmas program which will be held on Sunday, December 18 at 9 AM. A rehearsal for the concert will take place on Saturday, December 17, at the church, from 9 AM to 11 AM.

P.S. Sunday School resumes on Sunday, January 15 at 9 AM.

P.P.S. On Sunday, January 22 we will have a Baptismal -Birthday celebration.

Your educational team.
Jan and Mary-Lou

WOMEN OF FAITH & CHRISTMAS



Our annual Christmas Dinner will be held on Sunday, December 4. We begin with our Christmas program at 4 PM followed by a social time and dinner at 5 PM. This annual gathering is not just for WOF members. All women and men in our congregation are welcome. L & M Catering will be doing the catering and the cost is \$15 per person. Tickets are available from Linda Springer (519-273-2093) or Rita Mueller (519-271-6539)

WOF Christmas Baskets for our shut-ins will be put together on Saturday, December 3 at 9 AM in our church kitchen. Anyone wishing to donate two dozen or more cookies are welcome to bring them to the church on Friday, December 2 or early Saturday morning. The confirmands will deliver them in the afternoon.

CONFIRMANDS & CHRISTMAS



Our Zion Youth Confirmands (Grade 7 & 8) will celebrate the Christ child in a fun and giving way on Saturday, December 3. 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 TABLE FOR SENIORS



Our Christmas gathering of Zion Table For Seniors, our ministry which promotes fun, food, and friendship, takes place on Tuesday, December 20 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 Thursday, December 15 if you can attend. After dinner, we will digest a great meal with some Christmas stories and carolling.

In January, there will be a change coming to our Zion Table For Seniors program. It moves from the third Tuesday of the month, hence the January ZTS will be on Tuesday, January 24.

The meal though it will still be served by the same team of wonderful volunteers will be coming from the kitchen of Spruce Lodge/Woodland Towers and will include meat, potato, vegetable, salad, and dessert. The reason for the change is the amount of work involved preparing the meal which usually has involved three days. Terry, our faithful ZTS chef has responsibilities in our church office which she, of course, needs to attend to. What doesn't change is the cost, the fun, food or fellowship. Thank you for your understanding!

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 21 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 Vicar Steve 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 4 (9 & 11 AM), Sunday, December 18 (11 AM), Christmas Eve, December 24 (10 PM), Christmas Day, December 25 (10AM).



FRIENDSHIP MEAL

Because of the additional opportunities provided for community meals in Stratford in December we do not offer one. January 27 is our next meal. Your participation is welcome in this part of Zion's ministry. For information, please speak to or call Ingrid Fraser 519-271-4382 or 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 hopcrafttutoring@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!



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!



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 2011-2012 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



Max William Hughes, son of Jeffery & Wanda on November 13
Carter Timothy Gropp, son of Justin & Amanda on November 27



Joy Cripps, October 29
Betty Konarski, November 8
Willard Allensen, November 17

ZION CHURCH FINANCIAL REPORT



As the calendar year draws to a close it is also time to close the deficit which is over \$28,000. 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 2011 income tax return, it is important to receive your gifts by December 31, 2011. 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 2012 offering envelopes will be available for pickup during the month of December. We ask that you **do not use** them until 2012. 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. If you are interested in this easy way of budgeting your donations, please contact Terry at 519-271-8527 or email zionlc@golden.net

TO STRATFORD WITH LOVE



The 23rd To Stratford With Love Christmas Banquet has moved to the Stratford Rotary Complex and takes place, this year, on Saturday, December 17 at 5:30 PM. Volunteers are needed to donate pies which add to the “sweetness” of the event. Please sign up on the sheet located at the back of the church, if you can help out...P.S. Please deliver the pies to the Stratford Rotary Complex by 2 PM on Saturday, December 17. Bless you!

DECEMBER 2011 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 4	9 Darlene Illman & Mike Bondi 11 Verne Hammer & Linda Springer	9 Ron & Debbie Deichert 11 Nathan Festoso	9 Sarah Hartfiel 11 Marilyn Wells	9 Darrell Renecker 11 Fritz Steigmeier	Brian Stever
Dec 11	N/A	9 Tom & Joanne Cosstick 11 Wayne & Barb Higgins	9 Andrew Famme 11 Nancy White	9 Darrell Renecker 11 Fritz Steigmeier	Liz Bomasuit
Dec 18	11 Lorelee McNaughton & Barb Higgins	9 Mike & Julie Drake 11 Verne & Joyce Hammer	11 Brian Wilker	9 Mike Bomasuit 11 Don Wagner	Liz Bomasuit
Dec 25	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A



CAMP EDGEWOOD JOB OPPORTUNITIES

It’s not too late for our young people, at Zion to be looking for next summer’s job. Camp Edgewood our Lutheran summer camp located in Eden Mills just east of Guelph is beginning the process of looking for next summer’s camp staff. From lifeguards to cooks to counsellors and more. Application forms for 2012 summer employment are available from Pastor Doug. Job descriptions can be found at [www.edgewood-](http://www.edgewood-camp.on.ca)

camp.on.ca

CALL TO SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

Over the past couple of years, National Bishop has been encouraging a call for spiritual renewal and deeper discipleship within our church, which includes regular attendance at worship, daily prayer and scripture reading, involvement in a program of study, regular service in the community (not just the congregation), regular and proportional giving similar to the understanding of the tithe found in scripture, and commitment to sharing the good news with those

around us, beginning with our family and friends.

A simplified list of this call to deeper discipleship includes: Worship, Pray, Study, Serve, Give, Read, and Tell.

This month, we focus on the word “Give,” since Christmas is associated with the giving of Jesus, the Saviour of the World. Remember, don’t over do it! It’s just like starting a physical exercise program. Start with one or two new practices and make them a habit before you take the next step.

GIVE

We are called to be generous and joyful in our support of the work of the wider church through our congregations as well as in support of a variety of different church and other charitable agencies. Our consumer culture teaches us to look after our own needs first, and we are called to respond to God’s generosity and love with our “first fruits.” Here are some ways to deepen your discipleship in the area of giving.

- ✦ **Give an offering each time you attend worship. Calculate what percentage that is of your income.**
- ✦ **Increase your giving by 1% of your annual income. See if you can work up over time to 10% or more.**
- ✦ **Join your congregation’s Pre-Authorized Offering program so your offerings go to church even if you can’t.**
- ✦ **Talk with friends and family about why you give.**
- ✦ **Talk to your children about stewardship. Ask them to participate in your family’s weekly offering by giving a percentage of their allowance.**
- ✦ **Make your gift for church, other ministries, and charities your first budget item.**
- ✦ **Offer one or two hours per week of your day job pro bono (for free) in community service.**
- ✦ **Try extra-mile giving in support of a new or different area of ministry such as campus ministries, outdoor ministries and youth ministries.**
- ✦ **Make a donation where you don’t get a tax receipt.**
- ✦ **Say “yes” to every request to donate, even if it can only be a small amount.**
- ✦ **Participate in Canadian Lutheran World Relief’s Gifts from the Heart program.**

(clwr.org).

✦ **Have a Conversation on Gratitude and Generosity.** (elcic.ca/stewardship/documents/ELCICGenerosityworksheet.pdf).

✦ **Write a personal statement on why you give.**

✦ **Use the Year-Round Stewardship Ideas that are available on the Synod of Alberta and the Territories website (albertasynod.ca).**

✦ **Check out globalrichlist.com to see where your income fits in terms of the whole world. Thank God for the blessings you have received.**

APPROACHING ADVENT

It’s Advent, the season when we anticipate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. During these weeks we are given an opportunity to make Jesus’ upcoming birth a part of our everyday lives. We are given a chance to draw closer to our God and draw closer to our Saviour. So how can we go about that? What is our approach going to be? Look below for some options.

A Repentant Approach. One way of preparing for the coming of Christ is to repent of our sins. God sent Christ to earth to be born, live a sinless life, die and rise again, so that we might have forgiveness of sins. Advent is a time for us to regularly confess our wayward behaviour to God, and receive pardon and peace.

A Hopeful Approach. We have much to look forward to because Jesus is on his way! A growing relationship with our God, a life blessed by Christ’s love, and an eternity in heaven with him await us. This Advent make it your mission to live out “the hope that is in you” through your thoughts, words, and deeds. (1 Peter 3:15).



A Prayerful Approach. After Mary heard the news that she would be the mother of Jesus, she said a prayer of praise to God for all his benefits to her (see Luke 1:46-55). Prayer should be an important part of our approach this Advent, too, as we reflect on all the many gifts God has given us, especially the gift of his Son.

LET US APPROACH WITH A TRUE HEART IN FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH