

A publication for the family of Zion Lutheran Church, 202 Erie St., Stratford, ON N5A 2M8
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PASTOR’S DEVOTIONAL

“Out of love and zeal for bringing the truth to light ...” – Opening Words of Martin Luther’s *Ninety-Five Theses*.

There was nothing unusual about people posting notices on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg; it functioned as the community’s bulletin board, especially before major feasts days when many people would be attending mass. So few people probably noticed when Martin Luther posted his *Disputation for Clarifying the Power of Indulgences* on the church door on October 31, 1517, the eve of All Saints Day. Luther posted this document – better known as the *Ninety-Five Theses* – as an invitation to a discussion on the practice of indulgences, which the Roman Catholic Church was offering both to reduce one’s time in purgatory and to fund the building of the new St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. As forgiveness is a free gift of God through which people are justified by grace through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Luther objected to any notion that forgiveness could be bought and sold, and invited other scholars to a debate on the theses that he wrote and distributed *“as a matter of pastoral and theological concern ... [Luther] had no notion what the results of such a debate would be and certainly did not have in mind attacking the papacy and certainly not splitting the church”* (Timothy J. Wengert).

Even if Luther’s posting of the *Theses* went largely unnoticed at the time, they began a chain reaction that led to the Lutheran Reformation and the splitting of the Western Church into numerous factions and denominations. This month, we Lutheran Christians are remembering the events that are at the foundation of our church, as well as what it means for us to bear the name “Lutherans” 500 years after the Reformation began on that church door. It is a time for us to remember the events that led to the formation of the Lutheran movement as well as what it means for us to bear the name “Lutheran” in the 21st Century. Ironically, this name is one that Luther himself



hated, and would undoubtedly be quite distressed to discover that it is still in use today:

- “Please don’t call yourself Lutheran, but Christian. What is Luther? The teaching is not mine! How could it happen that I – poor stinking bag of worms that I am – end up having the children of Christ called by my miserable name? Let us get rid of all party names and call ourselves Christian, after Christ, whose teaching we hold.”

Despite how Luther may have felt, this anniversary month is a time for us to consider what it means for us to be “Lutherans.” For many of us, our Lutheran identity has been handed down from generation to generation; my father’s family has been Lutheran since the Reformation took hold in Denmark centuries ago. For others, their Lutheran identity was a matter of choice, coming to the Lutheran Church for a variety of reasons. Lutherans came to North America in the waves of immigrations that took place over the course of many generations, and have established churches, schools, and social service organizations that have served faithfully for hundreds of years.

Our commemoration of this milestone in the history of our church invites us Lutherans to look both backwards and forwards. We look back upon our history in order to understand how and why those who took the name Lutheran formed this church, and how our ancestors have sought to be faithful to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in their generation. We also look forward, considering what it means for us to be Lutheran today and where God is leading our church into God’s future. This may include a consideration as to whether there is still a need for a church that bears the name “Lutheran,” or whether we should heed Martin’s warning to cease to use his name as our means of identity. Perhaps the question that is truly before us on this anniversary of the Reformation is *where is God leading us as God’s people in this period of history, and how can we remain faithful to God’s call and steadfast in God’s Word?*

Bishop Elizabeth Eaton of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shares these words that help us understand who we are as Lutherans in the modern world and what is at the heart of our ongoing identity and mission:

- “We are a changing church, which brings its own tension ... We don’t agree on everything. We belong to different political parties. We have varied ethnicities. We’re liberal and conservative and everything in between. We’re in an ‘either/or’ world. And we are contending with cultural forces that exacerbate division. But by the tender love of God, by the ceaseless pursuit of the Spirit, we are members of the body of Christ. We are family. We share our lives. We love each other.”

As we remember that simple event that sparked the Reformation 500 years ago, the words of one of my seminary professors, the late Dr. Timothy Lull, continue to serve as a guiding force in my life and work as a Lutheran pastor. When asked if there was still a need for a Lutheran Church, Dr. Lull replied *“yes – because we need a church that is radically centered on God’s grace.”* Yes, there is still a need for the Lutheran Church – a church that is rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that remembers that *“we have no mission but to serve in full obedience to our God; to care for all, without reserve, and spread God’s liberating word.”* (ELW Hymn 729).

Your fellow Lutheran,
Pastor Jeff Laustsen

VICAR’S DEVOTIONAL

Like many church buildings, Zion Stratford is home to many beautiful flower gardens, and a lush well-kept lawn. So, I counted it as a small miracle when the Property Committee decided to approve a large swath of the church grounds to be used as a food bank vegetable garden. The approval itself told me a lot about the priorities of the people here. As someone new to this church, the garden’s quick approval revealed to me that I had joined a community resolute in their willingness to serve their neighbors; hospitable in their willingness to encourage the enthusiasm of a novice Vicar; and faithful in their willingness to take a chance on something new.



Our hope for the garden, was that it would maybe produce a load or two of fresh organic vegetables for our neighbors utilizing the weekly food cupboard out of St. Paul’s Anglican Church. And certainly, it has done just that. In fact, people from Zion have already harvested and delivered three large baskets of cabbage, pumpkin, pepper, zucchini, and tomato for the foodbank; with lots of tomatoes and one handsome but lonely eggplant still ripening on the vine. And though the large bounty of produce has been a wonderful surprise, something even more unexpected has grown out of our little garden.

Since the garden’s inception, it has been a source for rich and joyful conversation. People have come out of the woodwork, not only to lend a hand by turning the soil, donating resources, and passing along their green thumb wisdom, but also to share their own gardening experiences, and the memories of the farms and gardens that their own parents kept when they were growing up. In all, it seems that something more has grown out of the soil here, than seed and water alone could produce.

In Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians he writes, **“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. For we are God’s servants, working together; you are God’s field, God’s building”** (1 Corinthians 3:6-9, NRSV).

What I have come to understand, and will take away from our small adventure together in gardening, is that it is certainly good for us to plant, water, and work together toward our common goals, but that which blossoms and grows along the way is a gift from God alone; a gift that we can’t always measure by the number of baskets filled.

May the gifts of the Holy Spirit fill you in immeasurable ways,

Your brother in Christ,
Vicar Jason



THANKSGIVING AT ZION

Thanksgiving Sunday is October 8 and, as is custom, it will be a wonderful worship celebration as we gather in gratitude around Word and Sacrament. What better way to mark Thanksgiving than by turning our hearts to God with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

As in other years, we would like to enhance our celebration by asking for donations to help in the church decorations which are traditional at Thanksgiving. Can you help? Donations of preserves, fruits, vegetables and flowers would be appreciated as decor in celebration of this special event. You may take the items you loaned after the service. Items remaining on Tuesday, will be given to the House of Blessing. Decorating will take place Friday, October 6 at 10 AM. Please leave your contributions at Zion on Thursday or before 10 AM on Friday. Thank you for your generosity.

COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

Congregational Council meetings returned in September.

The council members were updated on the outstanding kitchen renovations. They were informed that the grease interceptors and fire suspension system is scheduled to be installed

during the first three weeks of October. In this way, the work will be completed between the Seniors’ Dinner and the Friendship Meal in September and these same meals in October. The work has been delayed due to acquiring the engineers report for the fire suppression system and the approval from the City of Stratford. Also, at the same time during this period, the urinal will be lowered in the boy’s washroom in the Sunday School.

On recommendation of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, investigations are being made to determine what would be required to reverse the direction of the one-way driveway at the back of the Church. The change is being considered to accommodate the safer loading and unloading of members using the Mobility Bus.

A request has been received from Canadian Lutheran World Relief to assist with the purchase of a new hydraulic baler. The baler in Winnipeg that bales quilts, clothes, school kits, etc. broke and cannot be repaired. Congregational Council approved funding up to \$4,500.00 for this urgent need. The funds for this donation will eventually come from the Endowment Fund.

BRIDGEBUILDER PROCESS

Along with the newsletter of June 2017, you received a letter from Kevin Tuer, the Chairperson of the council informing that the Congregational Council has made a decision to engage the services of the Rev. Riitta Hepomaki, Assistant to the Bishop. Her program is call “Bridgebuilder.” It is a six-step process to help congregations make necessary decisions for healthy functioning and carrying out their ministry and mission.



Pastor Riitta will interview 20 randomly selected individuals. The interviews will be conducted in late September. The purpose of the Bridgebuilder interviews is to gather information about the congregation. That is,

- what is happening at Zion
- the dilemmas/opportunities that change brings and
- what strengths/resources are available to fulfill Zion’s mission.

Interviews will be 15 minutes each. Interviewers may bring prepared notes and leave them with Riita.

However, if a member is not participating in the interviews, she/he can contact Riitta by mail,

fax, email or phone. No one is excluded from contacting Riitta. She can be reached at rhepomaki@elcic.ca or 1-877-373-5242 or by fax 591-743-4291. Please note that anonymous letters will be excluded in the interview material. Be assured, however, that Pr. Riitta will not disclose who said what in interviews, letters or emails.

Pastor Riitta will present a workshop on Saturday, October 14, at the church beginning at 1 PM. The workshop consists of a presentation called “The Congregation As An Emotional System” followed by individual written responses to prepared questions. After a short break, a session called “Tell It To Riitta” will begin. All members of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church are invited to attend.

More information regarding the next steps of the process will be available in the next newsletter and church bulletins.

I would like to thank the following persons who have agreed to assist in the Bridgebuilder process with me. Isabel Cook, Interview Coordinator; Darrell Renecker, Action Planning Coordinator; Stephen Fischer, Learning Event Coordinator; Vicar Jason Ashby, Recorder.

Looking forward to your participation in this important process for our Zion Community.

Sister Jean Widmeyer
General Coordinator

Learning Event

Pastor Riitta Hepomaki, Assistant to the Bishop, will be presenting a “Learning Event” on Saturday, October 14, here at the church beginning at 1 PM. The workshop consists of a presentation called ‘The Congregation as an Emotional System’ followed by individual written responses to prepared questions. After a short break, a session called ‘Tell it to Riitta’ will begin. All members of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church are invited to attend.

+ IN MEMORIAM +

Annemarie Hausleitner on August 22.
Lon Riehl on September 11.
Shirley Schneider on September 12.

+ BAPTISMS +

Colin Owen Illman, son of Nicholas
& Leigha on July 9.
Benjamin Orlin Hemstock, son
Danny & Sarah on August 27.

ZION CHOIR ANNUAL FALL FUNDRAISER



To mark the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, the Zion Choir will be hosting Hymn Sing Concert on October 22 at 2:30 PM at Zion.

Please come and enjoy this afternoon of commemoration. Part concert, and part hymn sing, we will explore together some of the music of our rich cultural heritage. We look forward to a wonderful time together. Monies raised will go to CLWR.

Lynne Hopcraft, Choir Director

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

God has given us freedom of choice. With our free will, we will all choose our own answers to this stewardship question. “How will you use the resources God has entrusted to you?” Some will be stewards for the Lord, whereas others will be interested only in serving themselves. In essence, we are all stewards. We will either be stewards for the Lord or for ourselves. When we spend time in God’s Word, he will strengthen our faith so we can fulfill the responsibilities he gives us. May God empower us to say as Joshua said, “But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” Joshua 24:15

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I pray for wisdom and guidance as I strive to be your faithful steward. Help me to share your love with others. May my words and actions give you the honor and praise that you deserve. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

ZION TABLE FOR SENIORS



Zion Table For Seniors will be held on Tuesday, October 24, at 12 noon. Our speaker will be Alyssa Bender from Kitchener. Alyssa is a massage therapist and went back to school for another 9 years and is now a registered Osteopath with her practice in Waterloo. She will be speaking on “Our Purpose In Life As A Senior.” Please let Doris Bartlett (519- 271-9622) or Rita Mueller (519-271-6539) know by 10 AM, Tuesday, October 17, if you can attend. Cost is \$12.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS



Be a Teacher

Our Sunday School children have returned for a new year filled with fun and fellowship. A heartfelt thank you to returning teachers Janet Chandler, Amy Chandler, Nicole Richter, Nuno Sousa and Karen McLeod. We are currently in need of a least two more adult teachers in order to keep our Sunday School operating. The time commitment is approximately 1.5 - 2 hours per week. If you have love and kindness to share, please contact Mindy Gough , superintendent, at 519-275-3770, or speak with Pastor Jeff.

ZION WOMEN OF FAITH



The executive met September 12. Topics of discussion were decorating the church for special occasions; shut-in baskets for Christmas; Christmas turkey dinner. Details and dates for Christmas events will be announced later.

Next regular meeting will be held Wednesday, October 25 at 7:30 PM.

Next executive meeting will be held on Monday, October 2 at 7 PM.



WLS WOMEN’S AUXILIARY

The Women’s Auxiliary of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary invites you to a time of worship, meeting new seminarians, singing some of Martin Luther’s hymns and learning about women of the Reformation, including Queen Maria of Hungry and Martin Luther’s wife Katharina von Bora. Speaker will be Henry Fischer. Date & Time: Saturday, October 21 from 9:30 AM to 1 PM; Registration deadline: October 13; Location: St. John’s Lutheran Church, 22 Willow Street, Waterloo; Cost: \$22 includes lunch.

To register, please contact Helen Weber, president, at 519-885-6094 or Ruth Jones, vice-president at 519-578-9876.

ZION’S FRIENDSHIP MEAL

“Jesus says, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (Matthew 24:40)

The Friendship Meals for residents of our community has begun a new season. We believe Jesus’ word that preparing and serving food for our guests is like preparing and serving a meal for Jesus Himself. We have opportunities for the people of Zion to serve our Lord and the people of Stratford in this ministry. All are welcome to come and help as your time schedule and stamina dictate. The Friendship Meal can accommodate your needs. Volunteers are needed to peel potatoes and vegetables, set tables, serve food, do dishes, and clean up the hall after the event. Our work begins around 1 PM on the day of the Friendship Meal and concludes around 7 PM. You can participate in part of the event or the whole event, as you are able. Zion thanks you for your participation in the this important parish ministry.



Friendship Meal Dates (Fridays) - 2107/ 2018:

September 29, 2017; October 27, 2017; November 24, 2017; January 26, 2018; February 23, 2018; NO MEAL FRIDAY, MARCH 30, 2018 (GOOD FRIDAY); April 27, 2018; May 25, 2018.

If you would like to participate in this exciting ministry or have any questions, please contact Sister Jean Widmeyer at 519-273-6810.

OCTOBER VOLUNTEERS

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

DATE	COMMUNION ASSISTANTS	GREETERS	READERS	USHER CAPTAINS	COUNTING CAPTAINS
Oct. 1	N/A	Wayne & Dianne Yundt	Marg Lamont	Tom Cosstick	Lois Lemon
Oct. 8	Linda Springer & Wayne Young	Gerry & Janet Ahrens	Ed Illman	Tom Cosstick	N/A
Oct. 15	N/A	Brad & Sherry Beatty	Nancy Schaff	Darrell Renecker	Lois Lemon
Oct. 22	N/A	Mike & Liz Bomasuit	Bruce Sippel	Darrell Renecker	Ron Deichert
Oct. 29	David Bennewitz & Wayne Young	Brian & Sharyl Coe	Linda Springer	Brian Wilker	Ron Deichert