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PASTOR'S DEVOTIONAL

"Now after [the wise men] had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.'" – Matthew 2:13.

In the midst of the joyous story of Christmas lies this ominous reminder that the birth of our Saviour was not good news to everyone, especially to Herod the Great, who received the news of "*the child who has been born king of the Jews*" (Matthew 2:2) as a threat to his own illegitimate claim to the throne. His maniacal thirst for power leads Herod to order the slaughter of the Holy Innocents, "*all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under*" (2:16) to ensure that this child would not usurp his authority. But through the intercession of the angel of the Lord, Joseph takes Mary and the baby Jesus and flees to Egypt, "*and remained there until the death of Herod.*" (2:14). On that day, Jesus and his parents became refugees, escaping the violence of their homeland to find a place where they found a welcome refuge until it was safe for them to return.



Today, millions of people are following in the footsteps of our refugee Lord and Saviour, fleeing the violence of their homelands to find a place of safety for themselves and their children. They are risking everything because it is impossible for them to remain in their homes, where like Jesus they would meet with certain death at the hands of ruthless despots. They are seeking what God desires for all of his children to enjoy: the goodness of God's creation in which "*God daily and abundantly provides shoes and clothing, food and drink, house and farm, spouse and children, fields, livestock, and all property – along with all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life.*" (*Small Catechism*). As we watch the events unfolding in the Middle East and Europe, where millions of people are fleeing from the violence in their homelands – especially Syria – we are called to remember that as Christ found refuge among the people of Egypt, our call as followers of our refugee Lord is to seek ways in which we

can serve our Saviour by working so that those who seek what God desires for them might find a place of safety where they will know that "*God protects me against all danger and shields and preserves me from all evil.*"

The sheer magnitude of the refugee crisis (in addition to the hundreds of thousands of refugees in Europe, some 4 million people are living in refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey) may overwhelm us and cause us to question how we can make a difference. But because we are members of the Body of Christ that is serving both here at home and around the world, there are many ways in which we can reach out to those in need in the name of Christ the true King:

- Our Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and Canadian Lutheran World Relief have issued an appeal to support Syrian refugees suffering and displaced by brutal violence in their country. Through the support of on the ground partners such as the Lutheran World Federation, CLWR is working with Syrian refugees who have settled in communities in Jordan and Iraq. Funds received will go to provide basic needs such as clothing, personal hygiene supplies, and food; assistance is also being provided to help refugee children returning to school as well as support programs for young adults affected by trauma. Donations made through the end of the year will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Canadian government through the Syria Emergency Relief Fund. You may donate online at www.clwr.donarshops.com or through an offering designated for Syrian Refugee Relief.
- Members of our congregation are in contact with relatives in Germany whose congregations are working to resettle Syrian refugee families in their communities. We will be working to coordinate direct assistance to these congregations and will share additional information when it becomes available.
- At a recent meeting at the Kiwanis Centre chaired by Mayor Dan Mathieson, the Stratford community committed itself to resettling five refugee families in our city with the assistance of the Mennonite Central Committee. Fundraising efforts include a benefit performance of *The Last Wife* at the Stratford Festival on Friday, October 9. Additional fundraising efforts and volunteer opportunities will be announced in the coming weeks.

Toward the end of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus reminds his followers that "*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.*" (25:40). Among the signs that Jesus' disciples are serving him are situations when "*I was a stranger and you welcomed me*" (25:38). When we reach out to those who are seeking a safe refuge as our

Lord and his parents found one when they were refugees from Herod's violence, we are being faithful in "serving all people, following the example of our Lord Jesus" (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, Affirmation of Baptism). As the people of Egypt sheltered the infant Jesus so that he might live to become our Redeemer, may we work to provide shelter to those who follow in Christ's refugee footsteps so that all might be blessed by the fullness of God's blessings that include a safe place to call home.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Jeff Laustsen

VICAR'S REPORT

Dear congregation of Zion Lutheran Church,

It is wonderful being here with you. Thank you for the warm welcome that I have already received from many of you.

grat·i·tude
[grat ɪ tood]
noun
the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness

Since arriving in Stratford a few weeks ago now I have continued to feel a deepening sense of gratitude for the many aspects of my life that God has so enlivened. Gratitude for enduring relationships, gratitude for the support of family, gratitude for being here at Zion, and gratitude to your Pastor Jeff for the guidance and mentorship that he has already provided. All of this is profoundly humbling – it feels like grace.

I look forward to meeting you all in the weeks and months ahead and of adding my gifts to the life of this community. It is my hope that together we can discover God in new and unexpected ways as we join the dance of life together.

There is an infinite wholeness that utterly permeates the fragmentation of our lives. There is nothing missing anywhere. (by James Finley)

Vicar Albert Romkema

THANKSGIVING AT ZION

Thanksgiving Sunday is October 11 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.



SO MANY BLESSINGS

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 9 at 10 AM. Please leave your contributions at Zion on Thursday or before 10 AM on Friday. Thank you for your generosity.

CHOIR NEWS



With a new September underway, the Zion Choir is once again in full swing; there is lots of new music, there are new opportunities, and there are new members. It is good to once again be engaged in singing and learning together as a choir, and we welcome all who would like to share in the experience, and can come out on Thursday evenings, to join us.

Communal worship of our Lord and Creator is central to our experience as Christians, and the gift of music is, in turn, central in expressing that worship. It is a joy and privilege to make music at Zion, and we look forward to sharing with the congregation a year full of God's riches.

Choir Director
Lynne Hopcraft

ZION CHOIR ANNUAL FALL FUNDRAISER



On Sunday, October 18, at 2:30 PM, the Zion Choir will be hosting our annual Fall Fundraiser for Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR). We will once again be joined by the Teutonia Choir for a light afternoon of music, fun and fellowship. Come and join us for this opportunity to support the important and lifegiving work done by CLWR around the world; we look beyond our own borders, and reach out to share with those in need. Please put it on your calendars and bring your friends!

If you would like to contribute to the entertainment, please call Lynne at 519-274-3120.



ZION TABLE FOR SENIORS

Zion Table For Seniors, a beloved ministry at Zion promoting fun, food, and friendship, will be held on Tuesday, October 27 at 12 noon. Please let Doris Bartlett (519-271-9622) or Beryl Horst (519-276-3501) know by Tuesday, October 20 if you can attend. Lunch cost is only \$12. A deal by any name!

Our after-dinner guest will be Ontario Home Health (Awareness of the many aids and devices available to seniors). All are welcome!

ZION WOMEN OF FAITH

Meetings for October:

Wednesday, October 28 7:30 PM: Linda Springer, Joanne Cosstick, & Janet Ahrens



Saturday, October 17: St. Peter's, Zurich; Liberated By God's Grace - Ladies Fall Event; Registration 9 - 10 AM, cost \$15; Ladies of all ages welcome; RSVP by October 18.

Saturday, October 24: K-W Conference; Women of Faith Fall Event; St. Paul's, Guelph - Theme: Acts of Kindness - One Step At A Time; Registration 9:30 AM, cost \$15; RSVP by October 1.

For more information on these Conferences, please call Linda Springer at 519-273-2093.

We are still looking for people to help on the flower committee.

Eternity for Today - Would you like to receive this devotional booklet at home? Call Linda Springer if you would like to subscribe to this very inspiring devotional booklet. She is waiting to hear from you.



**15th Biennial
ELCIC National Convention
July 9-12, 2015
Edmonton, Alberta**
Shaw Conference Centre

To my surprise, the London Conference elected me as a rostered delegate to the most recent national convention of the ELCIC. Zion supported the election financially.

As a Church we are moving forward with substantial activities and interests. It was a full schedule, and the motions and discussions were serious ones. The atmosphere was one of "let's get down to the real business of being Church." While there were the regular and important items of worship, financial reports, budgets, constitutional changes and elections, of most importance were the new decisions that we made.

The National Church Council prepared the way and provided strong leadership. Six motions were made and passed, proposed by the NCC. Five of them require that each congregation take them seriously, and both study and act on them. Zion, as other congregations, has work to do! These five commitments are briefly described below, with more information on the ELCIC website.

As a church we have agreed to:

Commemorate (not celebrate) **the 500th anniversary of the Reformation** in 2017 by providing 500 new refugee sponsorships, planting 500,000 trees, providing 500 new scholarships for students in schools of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, and raising \$500,000 for the LWF endowment fund. A large commitment. We need to do our part.

Advocate restorative justice approaches to the Criminal Justice and Corrections System in Canada. We are invited to seek a deeper understanding of Canada's criminal justice system, make our evaluations known, and participate fully in the 3rd week of November "Restorative Justice Week." It is our job to advocate for the victim and the prisoner.

As a congregation, **study and then sign on to the "Welcoming The Stranger Affirmations For**

Faith Leaders" document. The call to "welcome the stranger," through protection and hospitality, and to honour the stranger or those of other faiths with respect and equality, is deeply rooted in all major religions. Sufficient material is provided to study and find ways to enable each member of this congregation to sign on.

"The Doctrine Of Discovery": We are repudiating and renouncing this doctrine as fundamentally opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ and our understanding of the inherent rights that individuals and peoples have received from God. For those of us who are unaware, this "Doctrine Of Discovery" is deeply embedded in our nation and its history. In brief, it means that white people from Europe "discovered" this country – that no one of value was living here before they came – that thus the white people from Europe "own" this land and have a right to enforce First Nations people to live on reserves. As a congregation, Zion is now committed to learn more, to find ways of being companions, not overlords, and to work toward reconciliation with our First Nations peoples. There is much more. Visit the Truth and Reconciliation website.

Climate Justice: As members of Lutheran World Federation, a Communion of Churches, we are committed to joining the global Christian community and people of all faiths and persuasions, on the journey for climate justice. As a congregation, we are called to take specific actions, such as register as an Accredited Greening Congregation. This task is one that we can only achieve when we unite in a common cause.

Of course, one of the highlights, was the re-election of Bishop Susan Johnson as national bishop for a third four year term. We are also entering into a period of change as we downsize the scale of our conventions. In 2018 Synod conventions will elect delegates for the 2019 National Convention, and bishops will have a 6 year term of office. 2019 may be a Joint Assembly with the Anglican Church.

Check out our ELCIC website: www.elcic.ca for more detailed information. Take some time especially to hear Marie Wilson – her address to the convention was video taped. She is one of the three commissioners of the Truth And Reconciliation Commission.

Thank you, Zion, for supporting my election and participation in our National Convention. I am truly grateful to witness our Church taking risky action and providing the leadership we need as we struggle together to understand God's call to us in this day.

Sister Anne Keffer

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT AS AT AUGUST 31, 2015

CURRENT FUND:

Total Income from all sources is at only 46.43% of Budget (to meet budgeted expenses to August 31, 2015, it should be at 66.67%)

Total Expenses are at 61.10% of Budget

The Deficit in the Current Fund as at August 31, 2015 is -\$40,808.46



John Baker & Nancy White on September 10.

Matthew Neeb & Melissa Martin on September 19.



Marguerite Pletsch, September 3



SHARING YOUR GIFTS

In his first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul writes that *"there are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone."* (12:4-6). Our congregation's ministries depend on all of us offering our gifts and talents *"to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."* (Ephesians 4:12). As all of us are called to serve as ministers of Zion Lutheran Church, we invite

you to consider using your gifts in the committees of our congregation, which serve to fulfill our mission as God's people in this place. There are currently opportunities to serve in two of our congregation's committees:

- WORSHIP – This committee oversees the worship life of our congregation, including upcoming special worship services, music, worship furnishings, and other aspects of our common gatherings around Word and Sacrament
- CONGREGATIONAL LIFE – The committee has recently sponsored a very successful Rally Sunday Pig Roast and serves to encourage fellowship and service in our congregation; this committee also provides oversight for our Sunday school and learning ministries.

If you would like to learn more about the work of these or of the other committees of our congregation, please contact Pastor Jeff at laustsen311@gmail.com or speak with any member of the Church Council.

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 4	N/A	Ron & Deb Deichert	Linda Springer	Darrell Renecker	June Junner
Oct 11	Darlene Illman & Anne Cooper	Marten & Dianne Mann	Fritz Steigmeier	Brian Wilker	N/A
Oct 18	N/A	Audrey Miller	Bill Sylvester	Brian Wilker	Paul Hansen
Oct 25	Rob Leifso & Linda Springer	Rita Mueller	Dianne Hiller	Fritz Steigmeier	Paul Hansen