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PASTOR'S DEVOTIONAL

"Evening and morning and at noon I utter complaint and moan, and [the Lord] will hear my voice." – Psalm 55:17.

One of my finest childhood memories was when we attended a "doubleheader" at Yankee Stadium. On this day, the Yankees and the Detroit Tigers played two games for the price of one admission (a practice that has sadly disappeared), so we spent many hours cheering on the home team (who won both games that day), eating delicious and unhealthy stadium food, and basking in the glory of the historic "House that Ruth Built." It was a long day, but one that I still remember and cherish.



Christmas Eve

Through a quirk of the calendar, this year we have the opportunity for a "doubleheader" in worship. Sunday, December 24 is both the Fourth Sunday in Advent and Christmas Eve. For some, there is the temptation to do away with Sunday worship and focus on the evening celebration of the Birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; but while worship in both the morning and evening makes for a long day, such a "doubleheader" affords us the opportunity for a double blessing as we gather both in the Advent anticipation of the coming of our Lord and the Christmas fulfillment of God's promise of the child who *"will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."* (Luke 1:33-34). On one very special day, we will be reminded that God's *"words are trustworthy and true"* (Revelation 21:5), because we will hear the promises of the coming of Christ in the morning that will be fulfilled in our evening celebration of the birth of our Saviour, *"a child [who] has been born to us, a son given to us ... and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."* (Isaiah 9:6).

Unlike that doubleheader at Yankee Stadium, we don't expect you to remain in the church

building all day (unless, of course, you really want to!). Here is how we will accomplish our Advent – Christmas doubleheader on this most special day.

- Our 10:00 a.m. service will be a wonderful Service of Advent Lessons and Carols. We will hear many of the prophetic Scripture readings that proclaim the coming of our Lord and Saviour, and sing many of the wonderful carols of the Advent Season.
- At 6:00 p.m. our German Christmas Eve Service will include Bible readings and prayers in the native language of many of our people. The Teutonia Choir will once again share their musical gifts with us, and we will rejoice in the light that shines in the early darkness of this season.
- At 8:00 p.m. our Christmas Eve Carol Service will include the proclamation of the Gospel of the Birth of our Saviour with special music by our Zion Choir.
- At 10:00 p.m., our Christmas Eve Communion Service will once again feature the Word of our Saviour's birth as we gather at the Lord's Table to share in his Holy Supper.
- And yes, there will be a worship service on Christmas morning! We will gather at 10:00 a.m. to continue our celebration of Jesus' birth as we gather again to share in Holy Communion.

Ernie Banks, the legendary Chicago Cubs player, was famous for coming into Wrigley Field and issuing an enthusiastic invitation to his fellow players: *"Let's play two!"* On the 24th of December, we have the opportunity to "play two" as we both conclude the season of Advent and enter into the joy of the Christmas season. I'm sure that it will require a lot of energy for many of us, but I'm also certain that it will be a special day of blessing that we will remember and cherish for many years.

On December 24 – in the morning and in the evening – let us praise the Lord as we celebrate the *"joy to the world"* that comes to us in the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord!

Yours in Christ,
 Pastor Jeff Laustsen

VICAR'S DEVOTIONAL



There is no greater metaphor of hope than the season of Advent. For our expectation that the Messiah is coming is so great that even the sun and the moon must do their part to tell the story. With every day that passes from now until Christmas Eve, the nights will grow longer and the darkness darker. But out of that darkness something marvelous has already begun to shine. One by one Christ's candles take their stand against the long and dreary night, illuminating a new season of hope and expectation. And though our kindled flames burn small, they glow brightly upon their wicks, for they know as do we, that a child has come into the world, whom the darkness cannot overcome. So now with every passing day, our expectation grows in faith; the child will come again. Emmanuel.

Yet, since the earliest days of the Church there has always been great uncertainty about when the Messiah will actually return. And while I will always count myself among those who hope and wait for the coming of our Lord in all His glory, I am also reminded that each time we baptize and anoint a child's head, or promise to walk with our Confirmands in the ministry of the Church, that we confess our faith in the Messiah among us.

Marty Haugen once wrote this hope in to a song, in the Advent hymn "Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn" (ELW #242). He writes:

*Come as a baby weak and poor,
To bring all hearts together.
He opens wide the heavenly door,
And lives inside us now for ever.*

As we look forward together to the Christmas Day ahead, let us continue to place our hope in the coming of our Lord. The One who came into the world as a baby weak and poor, to bring all hearts together. But let us also continue to build up and nurture that light of Christ which dwells within ourselves and one another, that we too might shine into the darkness, and not be overcome.

May God bless you and your families this Advent Season, and Merry Christmas to all.

Your Brother in Christ,
Vicar Jason

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 17 at 6:30 PM**, which is also our last day of Sunday School until January 14. We invite everyone to join us after the pageant for coffee, juice and cookies in celebration.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL



The kitchen renovations are nearing completion. The grease interceptors have been installed, inspected and approved by the City of Stratford Building Department official. Preparation work for the fire suppression system has been completed but finalizing the installation is on hold pending receiving confirmation from the City Building Department and our Engineer as to the placement of the vent/fan on the outside of the Church building. It is to be installed 10 feet up from the pavement which would place the vent/fan directly in front of two stained glass windows. It was our preference to place the vent/fan immediately below the two windows even though this was not 10 feet up from the pavement, which we submitted and was subsequently approved by the City. However, upon their visit to inspect the grease interceptors it was learned that the 10 foot rule would apply. It was their suggestion that the fan be placed underneath the window above the altar with piping extending from the source to this location. Our Engineer is working with the City to see if alternate arrangements can be made, exception to the 10 foot rule. In the meantime, the dishwasher and the stoves are both functional and useable for any upcoming events. It is hoped that the installation of the fire suppression system can be completed in early December. Installation will be timed so that it does not interfere with any of the Zion events or private bookings that have been scheduled for December.

The Property Committee will be arranging for an assessment of the boiler and heating system to ensure that no major problems will occur during the heating season.

Interviews for the Bridgebuilder program have been completed and we look forward to receiving Pastor Riitta Hepomaki's report to the congregation on Sunday, November 26, 2017.

A Music Task Force/Search Committee is being established to firstly assess the needs and desires of our Congregation and to establish a job description for the new Music Director.



ZION TABLE FOR SENIORS

Our December Zion Table For Seniors and program is early this month. Mark your calendars for Tuesday, December 12. Lunch cost is only \$12. Our program is based on a Christmas theme to wrap up our year. Hope to see you there!

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!

+ IN MEMORIAM +

Mary Herman on November 18.

+ BEQUESTS +

Zion Church has recently been blessed to be remembered through a bequest from the Estate of Marie Broadfoot.

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 Sister Jean Widmeyer 519-273-6810. May God’s blessing rest on all who eat and all who serve.

DECEMBER 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 3	Barb Higgins & Ed Illman	Rudy & Bea Deighton	William Sylvester	Steve Lamont	Liz Bomasuit
Dec 10	N/A	Mervyn & Joyce Dietz	Marilyn Wells	Ed Illman	Liz Bomasuit
Dec 17	Loralee McNaughton & Linda Springer	Wayne & Linda Faulhafer	Volunteer Needed	Wayne Yundt	Alison Johnston
Dec 24	10 PM Liz Bomasuit	8 PM Wayne & Linda Faulhafer 10 PM Mike & Liz Bomasuit	8 PM Linda Faulhafer 10 PM Liz Bomasuit	Ed Illman	N/A
Dec 25	Volunteer Needed	Volunteer Needed	Dr. Jo Knackstedt	Wayne Yundt	N/A
Dec 31	N/A	John & Luke Fischer	Brian Wilker	Jerry Terhaerd	N/A