

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

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## PASTOR'S DEVOTIONAL

*"While [Jesus] was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven."* – Luke 24:51.

During my years as a student at Stony Brook School, our teachers would host a monthly party for everyone who had a birthday during that month. While I always enjoyed being honoured at the March party, I always felt sorry for my classmates who had birthdays during July and August. Our teachers tried to make up for it by including them in the June or September parties, but you could tell that these students were disappointed that their birthdays were overlooked simply because they fell during a time when school was in recess for the summer.



In many ways, the Day of Ascension feels like those summer birthdays; it's a day in the church year that's often overlooked because of where it falls during the Easter season. According to Luke (in both his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles), Jesus ascended to heaven forty days after his resurrection, which means that Ascension Day always occurs on a Thursday, when most churches do not have worship services. Some churches attempt to make up for this by observing "Ascension Sunday" on the following Lord's Day, but this major festival day is still the most overlooked occasion in our remembrance of Jesus' life and ministry.

In both of Luke's accounts of the Ascension of our Lord, Jesus' ascension follows his commissioning his disciples to be "witnesses" (*martyria*), becoming the "apostles," those who will be "sent out" to proclaim the good news of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ:

- "... repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things." – Luke 24:47-48.
- "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." – Acts 1:8.

The Ascension of our Lord is a necessary part of Jesus' ministry as our Saviour and Lord. Martin Luther describes it as our Lord's "proper work":

- "Christ is seated in the heavenly places waiting for the time when his enemies will be made his footstool [Psalm 110:1]. That is his proper work. He does not sleep, but he watches us. He does not ask anyone to substitute for him; he does it himself... What now is our comfort? It is Christ, our priest, who has atoned for us and looks on us and sees our enemies and reminds the Father that he is our portion ... [assuring us] that Christ is our advocate."

This year, the Ascension of our Lord will be celebrated by Lutherans in our area. Our Nith Valley Ministry Area will be gathering for worship on Ascension Day, Thursday, May 10 at 7:00 p.m. at Trinity Lutheran Church in New Hamburg. In addition to celebrating our Lord's Ascension, we will be honouring the ministry of our first Dean, Pastor Bonnie Schelter Brown, as well as installing me officially as the Dean of the ministry area. Pastor Christie Morrow Wolfe, the synod Ministry Director for Youth and Young Adult Ministries (and a Stratford resident) will be the preacher. It will be an occasion to gather in worship and celebration of the one who is Lord of all as well as a celebration of our shared ministry here in Nith Valley. I look forward to worshipping with you on a day that will not be overlooked this year, a day when we give thanks for *"our Lord, enthroned in heavenly splendor ... heaven and earth with loud hosanna worship you, the Lamb who died."* (ELW Hymn 475).

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Jeff Laustsen

## VICAR'S DEVOTIONAL



As May 14<sup>th</sup> approaches, so does the end of my internship at Zion Lutheran Church. And while I'm looking forward with hope and excitement to the path ahead, there are also feelings of melancholy tied to our parting of ways. From our very first Sunday together, my family and I were made to feel welcomed, loved, and cared for by the people of Zion. So, as I go from here, I leave with some sadness. But mainly I leave with thanksgiving for each hand of fellowship that was extended to me, for every moment that was taken to share a story with me or to say good morning, for every meal we shared in fellowship with one another and with our Lord Jesus.

As I go from here, I also think it's important for me to reflect on why it was that I came to Zion in

the first place. I came to learn, to grow, and to put into practice the things I had learned at Seminary over the last few years. And while my learning and growth won't end when I leave here, it was at Zion that my foundation was laid. I believe that each of you helped me to accomplish this goal, and to prepare me for the road ahead.

Above all, the people of Zion have taught me the importance of relationships. Worship is something we do together, theology is something we work through together, challenges and mistakes and disagreements are all things we go through together. But it is our willingness to really listen to one another, to empathize with one another, to share our ideas and our feelings, to speak up, to forgive, and to love one another as Jesus first loved us, that forms our relationships with one another and binds us together in Christ. It is this faithful commitment to authenticity and togetherness in Christ's body that I believe is exemplified by Christ's Church at Zion.

I do not know where I will go from here, but I trust that the Lord will guide me. Until we see each other again, know that I will keep you in my heart and in my prayers wherever I go. I leave you knowing that God is with you, and Pastor Jeff will guide you in wisdom and love. As for me, I ask that you remember the words of our Apostle Paul:

“Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. At the same time pray for us as well that God will open to us a door for the Word, that we may declare the mystery of Christ, for which I am a prisoner, so that I may reveal it clearly as I should” (Colossians 4:2-4).

Always your brother in Christ Jesus,

Jason

### COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS



Bridgebuilder Program action items were discussed at the March Congregational Council Meeting and a Special Congregational Council Meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, April 4, 2018 to specifically review the action items and to plan future steps. The plan is that we will be moving forward with Town Hall Meetings to have more conversations with our members as to topics within the Bridgebuilder Action Plan Report. The first Town Hall Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, April 22, 2018 after the morning worship service.

The Property Committee is presently in conversations with the City of Stratford as to their eventual sign-off on the fire suppression system. We were informed of three items that still need to be addressed, namely, a letter from the company that oversees our fire panel as to confirming that the fire suppression system is properly set up within the fire panel, secondly, a final engineers

report, that thirdly the light closest to the fan above the stoves needs to be moved further away from the fan. A final site visit is being planned after these two items are addressed.

The recommended Guidelines for Capital Project Approval were approved by the Congregational Council. The Guidelines will be posted on Zion's website as well as on the Bulletin Boards.

Judy Stanley has set up a team for Zion for this year's Relay for Life on June 1<sup>st</sup>. More information will follow.

The installation service for Pastor Jeff as Dean of the Nith Valley Ministry Area will take place on Thursday, May 10, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. at Trinity Lutheran Church, New Hamburg.

A new job description has been completed and approved by the Congregational Council for the position of Minister of Music at Zion.

### ZION TABLE FOR SENIORS



Tuesday, May 22 is the date for our Zion Seniors dinner and program. This month we once again, have a speaker, Ruth Smith Meyers, a professional speaker and writer of several interesting books. She lives in the Ailsa Craig district, and looks forward to sharing her story. Meal at 12 noon, with program to follow. Cost is \$12 and must be signed up for by **Tuesday, May 16** by calling Doris Bartlett 519-271-9622 or Rita Mueller 519-271-6539.

### ZION WOMEN OF FAITH

#### 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1898 - 2018

**Meeting - Wednesday, May 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7:30 PM; "Movie Night & Popcorn."** Please come out and join us for an evening of fellowship.



WOF would like to thank everyone who attended the Easter Breakfast (74). We were very pleased with the response and hope it can become an annual event. Nice to see the fellowship. Thanks to Mary-Lou Drown for supplying the design for our posters and invitations. Very nicely done. I would like to thank all the women and men who so willingly helped to prepare, serve and clean up for the breakfast. Success is all of us working together.

March & April meetings we have been busy making pillowcase dresses for CLWR. As we continue to celebrate our 120<sup>th</sup>, we are collecting **gently used or new quilts and blankets for adults, children and babies**. A box is at back of the sanctuary for your donations. **Hygiene Kits** will also be made. Anyone wishing to make one or a donation towards projects would be very much appreciated.

**Hygiene Kits**: 1 bar soap, 1 toothbrush and toothpaste, 1 washcloth & 1 hand towel, 1 wide-toothed comb, 1 box plastic bandages, 1 small jar vaseline, 1 emery board & nail clippers.

**Annual Dinner & Theatre** outing at Grand Bend will be June 27. Play - "Kings And Queens Of Country." Dinner at 5:30 PM; Play at 7:30 PM. Please call Joanne Young 519-271-3225 or Ellen Wolfe 519-749-5341 for reservations.

We here at Zion are very blessed. Your gifts of love will help CLWR change lives of people affected by poverty, wars, hunger and natural disasters. Thank you for your continued support.

WOF President, Joanne Young

## FRIENDSHIP MEAL



Our Friendship Meal continues to serve people in need in our community. Our May gathering is Friday, May 25 at 5 PM. The people who come to our meal are a blessing and so are the people who volunteer. We need our volunteers to share their blessing of time and service. Please call Sister Jean

Widmeyer (519-273-6810).



## ZION GARAGE SALE

Zion Church is holding its annual garage sale on Friday, July 6th, beginning at 12 noon. All the proceeds of this sale will be donated to our congregational ministry for our Zion Seniors' Group. The contributions we are looking for are books, glassware, jewelry, dishes, tools, electrical appliances, sports equipment, toys, games, etc. The convener is Terry Faulhafer who can be reached at our church office 519-271-8527 any weekday morning. Last day for donations, is Monday, July 2<sup>nd</sup>. She has a place to store items and will also arrange pick up, if needed. Thanks to your donations, the money helps to cover entertainer fees, dinners, prizes for games, and last year a free Christmas Dinner for all who attended! Your support is greatly appreciated!

## CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY - RELAY FOR LIFE



This year the Relay For Life is on June 1 from 6:30 PM to 11 PM, at Central School on 60 St. Andrew St. Judy Stanley is putting together a team from Zion to participate in this year's walk. A team has been set up on the Relay For Life Stratford website for Zion Lutheran Church. Your individual or family name can be added as a participant or if you do not have access to a computer a donation sheet can be printed for you. The benefit of on-line donations is that your family and

friends out of town can easily donate.

Most of us have been impacted by cancer, either with a family member, friend or yourself. Any donations will help with the fight against cancer. So if you want to participate by walking a couple of hours or a few minutes or just come out to cheer your Zion team your encouragement will be appreciated.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Judy Stanley at 519-272-0144 or email at [jim\\_judy@rogers.com](mailto:jim_judy@rogers.com) Thank You!

## "WHO I AM" - A POEM BY OLIVIA WATTS

"Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards." - Søren Kierkegaard

Who I am

Here we are in 2018

I'm proud of the person that I have become today

But do you want the real story?

I am from more than half a world away

Please don't let the fact change the way that you see me

I am thankful to have entered a world full of opportunities

I am fortunate to rest assured that someone will always have my back

I am from a family, loving and caring

They have taught me to follow my dreams

And if I work hard and never give up, I can do anything

I have learned that it is important to be kind to others, and to do good deeds

I have learned that sometimes it takes more than just one to succeed

I am from playing on a team

The cool air kisses my face, and the ice feels smooth under my feet

The puck glides along the ice from tape to tape  
When we work together we cannot be beat  
As we drive back home I can feel my heavy eyelids drifting over my vision  
I fall into a peaceful sleep, still sitting in a rather uncomfortable position  
I am from long afternoons of playing under the falling snow  
I am from the warm, delicious smell of baking holiday treats  
Counting down the days, the best is yet to come  
I wake up early, and look out the window searching for sleigh tracks on the street  
I am from the joyful sounds of church bells on Christmas morning  
We share the peace with one another, to celebrate this wonderful time of giving  
When all the snow melts away and we head back to school  
Reality decides to reappear, leaving me searching for the next holiday break  
I am from preparing our house for the Easter Bunny  
I am from hunting for chocolate eggs, and feasting on ham and carrot cake  
When the end of the school year starts to come into view  
Thoughts of summer break will start to brew  
My favourite part of our family bed and breakfast is visiting with our guests  
Most are more like friends, returning like perennials year after year  
I am from feeding the chipmunks out of my very own hands  
He looks up at me with his deep, dark eyes, then he twitches his soft little ears  
I am from trips to the zoo with Nana and Papa, exploring the wildlife  
Today, summer means swimming, learning how to save a life  
Now let me tell you that when I look at my past, I don't turn to a map  
But I look to these precious memories that life has given to me  
This is where I am truly from.  
These simple, yet irreplaceable moments are what have shaped the person who you now see.



SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

Sunday School will be finishing up on Sunday, May 27. Students that require their community service hours, please bring your sheet into the Sunday School office any Sunday in May 18 if you can attend.

**CAN YOU HELP?**

We are in need of additional help on counting teams. It is usually only 4 times a year, right after Sunday Service. All that is needed is a little of your time and adding skills, it would be greatly appreciated. Please call Terry at 519-271-8527 if you are able to help out. Thank you!

THANK YOUS ARE IN ORDER



A heartfelt thank you to all who donated to the Easter Flower Fund: Elsie Dahm, Wayne & Linda Faulhafer, Richard & Anne Gaul, Brian & Barb Gropp, Tim & Darlene Gropp, Judith Hammond, the Hausleitner Family, Robert & Beverley Keutsch, Garnet & Mary Mueller, Rita Mueller, Brian & Pauline Schade, Eva Wagner, Jean Weir, Bruce Mitchell & Ellen Wolfe, Wayne & Joanne Young, and Elfrieda Zimmermann.

And a very kind thank you to Linda Springer and Joyce Dietz for purchasing the flowers and decorating the church!

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

In Luke 4, Jesus declares his mission statement to the world, quoting Isaiah 61:1: “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.” If the gospel as we demonstrate it in the world does not serve the poor, then it is not the good news!

We are God’s delivery system for serving the least and the lost. As the living, breathing body of Christ, we are the only hands, feet, and wallet God has to accomplish God’s work within the world.



James reminds us, “What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes” (James 4:14). Jesus indicated that when we tightly grip the seed we have been given, using it only for ourselves, ultimately it will decay. But if we are willing to give it up, to entrust it into God’s soil, then the seed grows into God’s future harvest.

As you worship today and throughout this week, pray for insight into how you can be an effective participant in God’s delivery system. How is God calling you to generously serve the least and the lost?

# JOIN US ON A BUS TRIP TO THE HURON COUNTY PLAYHOUSE

DATE: Tuesday, July 24

COST: \$110.00 - includes bus, lunch, and ticket to a performance of “**Canada 151**”



The bus will depart Zion’s parking lot at 10:45 AM: lunch at Aunt Gussies in Grand Bend and a matinee performance of “**CANADA 151**”; returning to Stratford at approximately at 5:45 PM. “CANADA 151” is a comedy full of music, dancing, humour and of course, some biting political satire.

**GET ON BOARD!** There will be a sign up sheet at the back of the church. Everyone is welcome. A final count is needed by Friday, June 15. If additional information is required, please call Liz Bomasuit at 519-272-0254.

## MMMM CONCERT



MMMM Composers in Concert: On May 5 at 4 PM at Zion Lutheran Church, Marco Burak along with Michel Allard and Michael Dobinson, present a concert of original compositions marking 10 years of presenting new music to Stratford audiences. Free will donations to Zion’s Friendship Meal accepted.

## MAY 2018 VOLUNTEERS

Listed below are those who serve as a reminder and as a thank you for serving.

Date	Communion Assistants	Greeters	Readers	Usher Captains	Counting Captains
May 6	Liz Bomasuit & David Bennewitz	Fritz Steigmeier	William Sylvester	Tom Cosstick	Alison Johnson
May 13	N/A	Bill & Marilyn Sylvester	Liz Bomasuit	Tom Cosstick	Alison Johnson
May 20	N/A	Elizabeth Forrest	Brian Wilker	Darrell Renecker	Ellen Wolfe
May 27	Judith Hammond & Barbara Higgins	Al & Lorraine Skowby	Fritz Steigmeier	Darrell Renecker	N/A