

## PASTOR'S DEVOTIONAL

***"Nathaniel replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!'" – John 1:49.***

One of the regular features on *Late Night with David Letterman* was "Brush with Greatness," in which audience members were invited to share their encounters with celebrities. Many of these stories were very humorous, but none of them led to any long-term friendships with famous people or could be considered life changing. Whenever I watched these episodes, it brought back memories of some of my brief encounters with people I had seen on television or in the movies. This would usually happen in New York City, either on the streets or in a diner I would frequent on the west side of Manhattan. These "brushes with greatness" have made for interesting stories to share, but none of my encounters with these people did anything to change the course of my life.



In the Gospel of John, there are stories of many people who have encounters that not only changed their lives but offer us opportunities for renewal and transformation. These "Encounters with Jesus" will be the theme of this year's Lenten Midweek Services, which begin on Wednesday, March 4. We will

gather for worship on the five Wednesdays of Lent at 7:30 pm, with the beloved *Holden Evening Prayer* service being our liturgy for these evenings. After receiving positive responses when one of last year's services was held in the Chapel, this year all these services will meet in our more intimate worship space (which is in the part of our building which is fully accessible). In our Scripture readings from the Fourth Gospel, we will explore how the encounters various people experienced with Jesus transformed their lives:

- Nathaniel, who at first dismisses Philip's invitation to meet Jesus by asking "*can anything good come out of Nazareth?*" (John 1:46), only to proclaim Jesus to be the Son of God and King of Israel when he comes into the Lord's presence and become one of Jesus' first disciples.

- Nicodemus, a Pharisee who comes to Jesus under the cover of darkness to learn more about the teachings of the man from Nazareth, who in turn proclaims to the leader of his people that "*no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.*" (John 3:5).
- The unnamed woman at the well in Samaria, who is shocked when a Jewish man approaches her in the noonday heat and asks for a drink, and then is offered "living water" that "*will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.*" (John 4:14).
- Mary and Martha, who are visited by Jesus as they are mourning the death of their brother Lazarus, and who hear the Gospel message that "*I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.*" (John 11:25-26).
- Mary Magdalene, a follower of Jesus who witnessed his death on the Cross and was horrified to discover that his body was missing on the first Easter morning, only to be the first to encounter the Risen Lord and to be commissioned to share the good news of Christ's resurrection, to proclaim to Jesus' disciples that "*I have seen the Lord.*" (John 20:18).

Lent is a season of renewal for all God's people, when we are invited to "*return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.*" (Joel 2:13). Beginning with Ash Wednesday on February 26, we are invited to come into our Saviour's presence confessing that we have often fallen short of what Christ expects of his holy people, that we have not loved the Lord our God with all our hearts nor our neighbors as ourselves. Our confession is not a time of fear or uncertainty, because we know that the God who claimed us as sons and daughters in Holy Baptism is the one who offers forgiveness and reconciliation so that we might be renewed in our love of God and our service on behalf of others. It is a time when we are invited to come into our Lord's presence, knowing that when we encounter our Saviour our lives will be changed.

- "So 'be strong, take courage.' God is on the side of life; and we, who are often strangely attracted to death, may nevertheless be raised to life – enticed away from death – by the God who brought Jesus from the dead. By grace, we can learn, not only how to recognize the goodness of God in the land of the living, but how to participate in it ourselves – how to be stewards of that mysterious, transforming goodness." – Douglas John Hall.

Our encounters with Jesus are not merely change "brushes with greatness," for our Lord promises to be with us whenever we gather together in worship around God's Word; and we know that like the saints who came into our Lord's presence in John's Gospel, our encounters with our Lord and

Saviour assure us that we will be changed, we will be blessed, we will be redeemed and reconciled so that we might live in trust and hope that we are God’s people, sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Jeff Laustsen

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FEBRUARY CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING



Staffing Update – Jane Kelly has taken over as Parish Secretary. Paul Shilton has assumed his role as Minister of Music and Sandra Mogensen is serving as worship pianist in partnership with Marco Burak. Sister Jean Widmeyer will be sharing visitation of our homebound members with Pastor Jeff.

Two members of Congregational Council attended the January 29<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Nith Valley Shared Ministry Council. The feedback from our two members who were in attendance was very positive. The Shared Ministry model has many attributes that all member congregations can benefit mutually. Representatives from the Nith Valley Shared Ministry Council will be invited to a future meeting of Zion Congregational Council to provide us with more information.

The Baked Potato Lunch will be Sunday, March 1, 2020. All donations will be designated to be used for installation of an automatic door opener at the back of the Church.

The pavilion and bandshell in Upper Queen’s Park have been reserved for the summer outdoor worship service and picnic which will be held on Sunday, June 14, 2020.

Planning will commence later in the year to have a new Pictorial Directory completed in 2021.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS



Susan Lausten has been busy picking out the children’s Lent/Easter crafts. Our 3 year olds, JK, SK and Grade 1 will be doing their craft on Sunday, March 22. Our Grades 2 to 6 will be doing their craft on Sunday, March 29. On Easter Sunday, April 12, we will not be having Sunday School so our teachers and helpers can celebrate Easter as a family.

## ZION TABLE FOR SENIORS



Zion Table For Seniors will be held on **Tuesday, March 24 at Noon**. Enjoy fun and friendship as we play BINGO with lots of prizes to win! Please reserve your spot by calling Mary-Lou Drown at 519-273-2268 or Linda Hicks at 519-271-0319 before **10 AM on March 17**. The cost is \$12 for a full meal and entertainment.

**+ IN MEMORIUM +**  
**Heinz Mikler +February 8**  
**Horst Bornath +February 13**

## WOMEN OF FAITH



It was with heavy hearts we said goodbye to our sister, Linda Springer. Linda had been President of Women of Faith; she had been the Flower Committee Convenor for the past several years; and was actively involved in many other roles such as Assisting with Communion. She willingly shared her gifts where she was needed. We will sadly miss Linda’s kindness, her ready smile and her soul-filled eyes.

The Women of Faith were asked to make a celebration lunch for Earl Clarke’s Retirement Party this past January at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church. We prepared for 200 guests and, due to weather conditions, served 180 guests. We received many positive comments on the lunch and thanks from their Women’s Group for giving them the day off!!

Joanne Young has been busy organizing activities for the 85<sup>th</sup> and over Birthday Party. Her team is ready and plans are underway! The date is set for **Friday, June 5** in the Fellowship Hall. More on this as we get closer to the date!

We will continue to collect Hygiene Kits into the new year now until they are shipped in May. I encourage the congregation to contribute to this worthy cause. Again, the instructions and the container for completed kits are at the back of the Church.

Our Women of Faith General Meeting is **Wednesday, March 4**. We will attend the Lenten Service at 7:30 PM and have a short social time following the service.

Ellen Wolfe,  
President

### EASTER FLOWERS



As is our custom, at Zion, donations will be accepted so the Women of Faith group can purchase flowers and decorate the church for our Easter celebrations. Please write “Easter Flowers” and your name on a separate envelope and place it on the offering plate or bring it to the church office any weekday morning. Donations will be accepted up to Palm Sunday, April 5. Thank you kindly!

### FRIENDSHIP MEAL



Our Friendship Meal continues to serve people in need in our community. We are now serving around 100 people a month which unfortunately indicates that things are difficult for some people. **Our next Friendship Meal will be Friday, March 27 at 5 PM.** Volunteers are needed to prepare, cook, serve, and clean-up. That could mean you and you are welcome to help out. Indeed, we need you! Questions? Please call Sister Jean Widmeyer (519-273-6810).

### MARCH VOLUNTEERS

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

Date	Communion Assistants	Greeters	Readers	Usher Captains	Counting Captains
Mar. 1	Wayne Young & David Bennewitz	David & Sheila Wittig	Marilyn Wells	Brian Coe	Judy Stanley
Mar. 8	N/A	Jim & Kathy Schellenberger	Liz Bomasuit	Fritz Steigmeier	Judy Stanley
Mar. 15	Liz Bomasuit & David Bennewitz	Gerry & Janet Ahrens	Sister Jean Widmeyer	Fritz Steigmeier	Tom Cosstick
Mar. 22	N/A	Willi Hausleitner & Family	Brian Wilker	Steve Lamont	Tom Cosstick
Mar. 29	N/A	Wayne & Joanne Young	Sister Jean Widmeyer	Jerry Terhaerd	Liz Bomasuit