

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

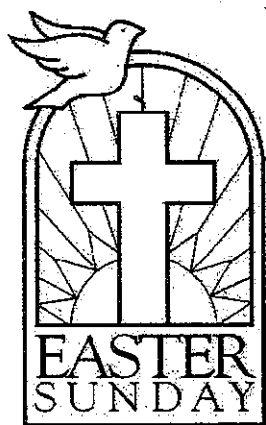
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## PASTOR'S DEVOTIONAL

*"Our Lord has written the promise of resurrection not in books alone, but in every leaf in springtime."* – Martin Luther



Easter Sunday has been my favourite day of the year since I was a child. I remember waking up and finding my Easter basket filled with wonderful toys and chocolate on the dining room table, along with flowers that filled the house with beautiful aromas. We would arrive at a church filled with more flowers, with every pew packed and rousing hymns celebrating the good news that *"Jesus Christ is risen today, alleluia!"* After church, we would gather at the home of one of our family members for a sumptuous Easter feast, and then go out into the yard on one of the first days that was warm enough to play outside. When I became a pastor, I always looked forward to the joy of the Easter worship services after the solemnity of the liturgies for Lent and Holy Week. Proclaiming the good news that *"Christ the Lord is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!"* reminded me of what a privilege it is to preach the Gospel that offers such wonderful news on Easter Sunday and on every Sunday, the weekly celebration of the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

As special as each of these Easter Sundays have been throughout my life, this coming Easter Sunday will hold special meaning for me. I am thankful that we will have the opportunity to gather for in-person worship as well as for online worship on Sunday, April 4, rejoicing in the glorious message of Christ's resurrection as we continue through the darkness and anxiety of the COVID-19 pandemic. While we will still be unable to greet each other as we have in the past, and while we will need to abide by the guidelines that have governed our worship services since last year, we will still rejoice in hearing the words of Mary Magdalene that *"I have seen the Lord"* (John 20:17) and give thanks to God for the blessed hope of our

faith that *"indeed Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died"* (1 Corinthians 15:20). During a year in which many have suffered in so many ways, and in which all of us have found our lives drastically altered, the Easter gospel brings us the good news that because Christ lives, we shall live also, and that nothing can separate us from the love of God that is ours in our crucified and risen Lord.

This Easter Sunday will also hold a special meaning for me because it will be the first Easter that I will be able to celebrate in three years. Last year, Easter Sunday occurred less than a month after our church building closed due to the pandemic, and all of us were forced to observe the day of Resurrection apart from our families as well as from our sisters and brothers in Christ. Two years ago, I missed Easter worship while I was in the throws of an illness that I later learned could have been life-threatening. I am thankful that I survived that ordeal, and that we found ways to stay connected and worship while remaining social distance out of love and respect for one another, but I am excited as I look forward to being present in our church building and online to share the good news that is at the heart of our Christian faith on the Sunday that makes all of our days possible to live in the comfort of the holy and blessed hope that *"if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his."* (Romans 6:5).

1. "Easter is real because God is real. Resurrection is real because God is not bound by mortality. Life beyond death is real because those of us who live inside God live beyond the boundaries of our own mortality." – John Shelby Spong

While we are thankful for the arrival of the COVID-19 vaccines in our community and the hope that there is light at the end of this long, dark tunnel of the pandemic, we know that we still face many more months of social distancing and other restrictions that we observe so that we might fulfill Christ's commandment to love our neighbours as ourselves. We enter Holy Week and Easter lamenting all that has been lost and all that we will still not be able to enjoy during this most important week of the church year. Yet we also know that no matter what we have suffered in this past year or past several years, we look forward to a future filled with hope because it is the future God has prepared for us and in which God will be present among us with the glorious message that because Christ has been raised from the dead that we too will walk in newness of life. As we witness the promise of resurrection in the signs of new life around us, we rejoice in the blessed assurance that our Lord's resurrection assures us that even when we cannot celebrate Easter Sundays as we have in the past, we can always celebrate the Easter message that through the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour *"so all will be made alive in Christ."* (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Yours in Easter hope,  
Pastor Jeff Laustsen

## HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SERVICES



Holy Week  
and  
Easter  
Services

Our return to in-person worship gives us the opportunity to gather for worship on this most central week of the church year, in which we are invited to follow our Lord as he triumphantly enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, shares his Last Supper with his disciples on Maundy Thursday, suffers and dies on the Cross on Good Friday, and rises from the dead on Easter Sunday so that we might rejoice that *“if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his”* (Romans 6:5). Our in-person gatherings on each

of these holy days will be accompanied by recorded services that will be posted on our congregation's website: [www.zionstratford.com](http://www.zionstratford.com).

- **Palm Sunday Worship** on Sunday, March 28 at 10:00 a.m. Our service will include the blessing of palms and the reading of the Passion According to St. Mark.
- **Maundy Thursday Worship** on Thursday, April 1 at 7:30 p.m. This service of Holy Communion on the night in which Jesus instituted this holy sacrament will include the stripping of the altar in anticipation of Christ's death on Good Friday.
- **Good Friday Worship** on Friday, April 2 at 10:00 a.m. This service on the most solemn day of the year will include the reading of the Passion According to St. John and the Bidding Prayers.
- **Easter Sunday Worship** on Sunday April 4 at 10:00 a.m. will be our celebration of the glorious resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in which we rejoice in the good news that *“Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!”*

Please call the church office to reserve a place for each of these worship services as we continue to observe COVID-19 safety guidelines in all our worship gatherings.

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MARCH CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING



The March 17, 2021 Congregational Council Meeting was the first Council Meeting after the Annual Meeting.

Pastor Jeff welcomed Marilyn Wells, new member to Congregational Council and thanked Council members who were elected for a further term, namely, Dianne Yundt, Tom Cosstick, and Judy Stanley.

As this is the organizing meeting with the election of officers and designation of Committee Assignments, Pastor Jeff was Chairperson of the meeting.

Pastor Jeff and Congregational Council reviewed the Constitution and Bylaws, Article IX – Congregational Council and its Officers and Article X – Duties of the Congregational Council and its Officers.

The following responsibilities have been assigned to Congregational Council Members by election and appointment:

Kevin Tuer – Chairperson (Property Committee)  
Liz Bomasuit – Vice Chairperson (Congregational Life Committee)  
Audrey Miller – Secretary (Finance Committee)  
Lynette McLeod (Worship and Music Committee, Christian Education Committee)  
Dan Neumeister (Property Committee, Worship and Music Committee)  
Lois Lemon (Congregational Life Committee)  
Tom Cosstick (Property Committee, Accessibility Advisory Committee)  
Judy Stanley (Congregational Life Committee)  
Tim Gropp (Finance Committee)  
Tim Iredale (Accessibility Advisory Committee)  
Dianne Yundt (Congregational Life Committee and Accessibility Advisory Committee)  
Marilyn Wells (Worship and Music Committee)

Gerald Cook was appointed Treasurer and will remain on the Finance Committee.

Installation of Council members and officers will be on Sunday, March 21, 2021.

Sister Jean has agreed to be a lay delegate for the Eastern Synod Assembly which will

take place virtually, Friday June 25 and Saturday June 26. We are allowed to have one more delegate. The deadline for registering is the end of March.

We have returned to In-Person Worship and our on-line worship offerings will continue as well.

Confirmation classes have resumed their weekly meetings in the Fellowship Hall.

Avon Mennonite Church will commence meeting for in-person worship in the sanctuary on Easter Sunday at 7:00 pm.

Quotes are being obtained for replacement of the eaves-troughs as well as adding covers to prevent leaves collecting in the eaves-troughs and the quotes are expected to be received in the next week or so.

A lawyer will be engaged to review the Endowment Fund Agreement with ELFEC before it is signed.

## **WELCOME TO OUR NEW NEIGHBOUR**



We would like to take this opportunity to officially welcome our new neighbour, Avon Mennonite Church. They have settled in upstairs utilizing two of the Sunday School rooms.

Their worship will be on Sunday evenings at 7:00 p.m. commencing Easter Sunday, April 4<sup>th</sup>.

May God bless them as they enter this new phase of their journey.

# UPDATE ON THE STRATFORD ANGLICAN-LUTHERAN TEAM FOR REFUGEES SPONSORSHIP



## ***"NEW ARRIVAL"***

The SALT refugee family is having a baby in May. The committee is seeking donations of gently used baby clothes and accessories.

If you have something you would like to donate please call Jan Bennewitz at 519-271-6073 to arrange for porch pick up or porch drop off.

## ***Spring Has Sprung***

*Spring has sprung, the grass has ris';  
I wonder where the birdie is?  
There he is up in the sky.  
He dropped some whitewash in my eye!  
I'm alright, I won't cry,  
I'm just glad that cows can't fly!*



## APRIL VOLUNTEERS

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

If when you register to attend worship and you are able to volunteer to be a Greeter, please let me know. Thank you!

Date	Communion Assistants	Greeters	Readers	Usher Captains	Counting Captains
Apr.1 Maundy Thursday	N/A	Volunteers Needed	Sister Jean Widemeyer	Tom Cosstick	Liz Bomasuit
Apr.2 Good Friday	N/A	Volunteers Needed	Liz Bomasuit	Darrell Renecker	Liz Bomasuit
Apr.4 Easter	N/A	Volunteers Needed	Marilyn Wells	Brian Coe	Liz Bomasuit
Apr.11	N/A	Volunteers Needed	Isabel Cook	David Doherty	Liz Bomasuit
Apr. 18	N/A	Volunteers Needed	Stephen Fischer	Steve Lamont	Liz Bomasuit
Apr.25	N/A	Volunteers Needed	Marg Lamont	Jerry Terhaerd	Liz Bomasuit

# HAPPY

The  
gift  
of  
God  
is

**E**

ternal life in Jesus Christ  
our Lord.

Romans 6:23

I am the  
Living One:  
I was dead,  
and behold  
I am

**A**

live forever and  
ever!

Revelation 1:18

The Father  
has sent His  
Son to be  
the

**S**

avior of the  
World.

1 John 4:34

I am  
the  
Way and  
the

**T**

Truth and the Life.

John 14:6

God  
has  
given  
us

**E**

ternal life, and this life  
is in His Son.

1 John 5:11

Remember  
Jesus  
Christ

**R**

aised from the  
dead.

2 Timothy 2:8