

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

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for Bulletins, Hymns of Comfort  
Pastor Jeff's Sermons & Updates



## PASTOR'S DEVOTIONAL

*"The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore."* – Psalm 121:8.



### Ordinary Times

One of the many challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic is trying to establish some sort of a normal routine in these most unnormal times. The tasks that once governed an ordinary day have been radically changed; instead of going to work or school in the morning, many of us are both conducting business and attending classes at home. Instead of meeting with friends, attending appointments, and running errands, we have needed to adapt to virtual meetings and shopping online. The disruptions in all aspects of our lives, and the uncertainty as to when this will come to a conclusion, have instilled in us a yearning for a return to some semblance of normality; what was once an "ordinary day" will feel like a time of celebration when it finally arrives.

The dictionary defines "ordinary" as something *"with no special or distinctive features, normal."* Ordinary times are often not very memorable; they are not the times that we

remember or celebrate. They are days when we go about the normal routines that may have no special or distinctive features but give our lives order and structure. We may not remember many of these ordinary days, but we know that they were the times we shared with the people we love, the regular days of which the Newfoundland band Great Big Sea sang in one of their most memorable songs:

1. "I've got a smile on my face and I've got four walls around me, the sun in the sky, the waters surround me; I'll win now but sometimes I'll lose; I've been battered but I'll never lose, it's not so bad. It's just an ordinary day ... and you've just got to say it's alright.

In many churches, the month of June is the beginning of "Ordinary Time," the parts of the church year that are not included in the major seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter. While we designate the coming months as "Sundays after Pentecost," Ordinary Time is marked by the use of green paraments and altar clothes in a period in which "*the Church founded by the risen Christ and enlivened by the Holy Spirit began to grow and spread the Gospel to all nations.*" (Catholic Encyclopedia). While there are a few Sundays in which we celebrate major festivals such as Reformation Day and All Saints Sunday, Ordinary Time are the months in which we consider how God continues to bless us and abide with us not only in the major festivals of the church year but in the ordinary, normal routines of everyday living in our homes, in our communities, and in the life of the household of God that is the Church of Jesus Christ.

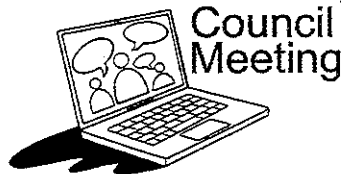
Throughout the Gospels, Jesus participates in the ordinary lives of his followers and the people he encounters in his travels. He was often a guest in the homes of friends, which would become occasions for teaching; his visit with Martha and Mary becomes a time in which he taught the sisters the importance of both working and sitting at our Lord's feet to hear his teaching, of choosing "*the better part, which will not be taken away from her*" (Luke 10:42). When Jesus enters Jericho, he sees Zacchaeus looking down on him from the branches of a sycamore tree and tells him to "*hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today*" (Luke 19:5); Jesus' presence in Zacchaeus' home on that ordinary day become a life-changing moment in the life of that tax collector. Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well on an ordinary noontime was life-transforming for someone who went from being a social outcast to a witness who invited her fellow Samaritans to "*come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?*" (John 4:29). The most ordinary days become times of blessing because of our Lord's presence

with these and other people, and Christ's promise that we live every day with the assurance that *"I am with you always, to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28:20).

We enter this Ordinary Time of the church year yearning for a return to the ordinary, normal lives that disappeared in the advent to the current pandemic. What was once a dull routine will feel like a special blessing, and no longer will we take for granted the tasks and gatherings that were once mundane but will feel like blessed events when they occur. There will be nothing "ordinary" about this Ordinary Time, because even though it does not offer celebrations like those of Christmas and Easter, it reminds us that in both ordinary and extraordinary times we live in the presence of our Lord from whom *"neither life nor death shall ever from the Lord his children sever"* ("Children of the Heavenly Father," ELW Hymn 781). The God who continues to bless us in these extraordinary times will guide us as we return to ordinary times with the assurance that our Good Shepherd will continue to abide with us as we rejoice in the good news that *"surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."* (Psalm 23:6).

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Jeff Laustsen

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MAY 2021 CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING "VIA ZOOM"



Due to the provincial lockdown the May 19, 2021 Congregational Council Meeting was held via Zoom conference.

Investigations are being made to find out what would be required in order to provide live streaming of Sunday services.

Congregational Council is organizing a phone list which will be used to contact members who are currently not the responsibility of our Visitation Minister. As we come out of the lock down we anticipate that there will be increased inquiries about renting our facilities. The Finance Committee is reviewing our rental agreement and rental policies and will be making recommendations to Congregational Council at the June meeting.

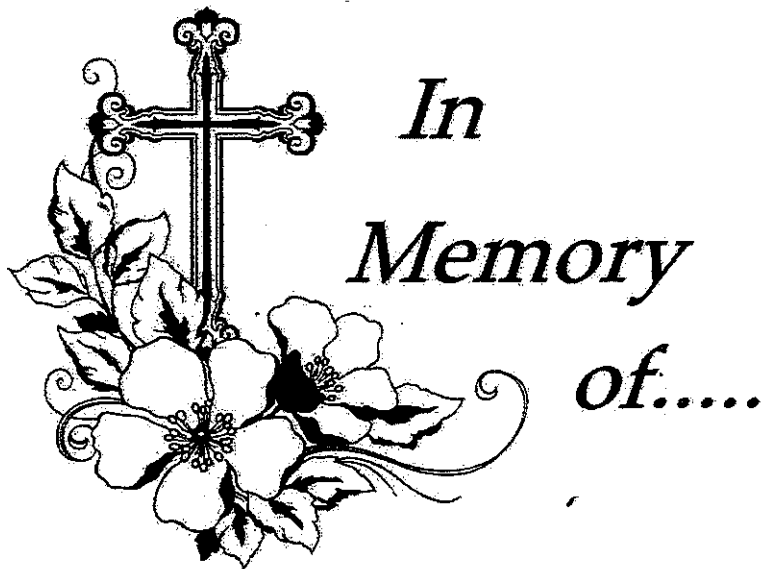
Repairing the eavestroughs and adding covers is almost completed.

The entrance area off the wheel chair ramp has been repaired and repainted.

The four air conditioning units have been installed and the wiring should be completed

shortly. As was agreed upon, we will have the system in place by the summer, when hopefully in-person worship can commence once again.

Work continues on replacing fluorescent lights with LED lights throughout the building. Donations/offerings, can continue to be completed via our Church website, including an option for E-Transfer, in addition to the PAR program, mailing cheques or dropping off donations at the Church in the locked mailbox at your convenience. Due to the provincial lockdown, the Church doors are now locked throughout the week. However, if you desire to leave your donation/offering at the office, just press the buzzer on the brick wall to the left of the door and Jane will come and accept your donation/offering.



***Martin Brandt***

***+ May 6, 2021+***

***&***

***Steven Schneider***

***+May 15, 2021+***

***&***

***Karen Mogk***

***+ May 26, 2021+***

## **IT'S A BOY!!**

**Congratulations  
on Your  
New Baby Boy!**



***"Maper"*** (from the SALT Refugee family) ***was born May 15, 2021.***

A huge "thank you" for everyone's donations. The family received boxes of diapers, a handmade blanket, toys, books, baby furniture and a gift certificate from the WOF. Also, there were monetary gifts that helped to provide all the essentials to welcome baby. We even did some online shopping. The parents are so great full for everyone's help. Big smiles all around when items were dropped off.

Submitted by:

Jan & Mary-Lou

Zion's Reps on the SALT Committee

## SUNDAY SCHOOL



NO CLASSES

It seems like forever since the **Sunday School** program has been enjoyed by the children of Zion. On behalf of Paula and her teachers, *please have a safe and happy summer!* Hopefully, we will be able to resume in September.





# Why COVID-19, God?

During this pandemic, we need to remember that God is with us.

By Dr. Tim Hegedus

## Q: Why does God allow such things as COVID-19 to happen?

**ANSWER:** For over a year, we have been living under the COVID-19 pandemic. It has not been easy. Millions of people have become ill. Many have died. It has especially affected seniors and those whose health is precarious. We have learned to live in our separate "bubbles" apart from family members and loved ones.

Naturally, some people are asking, "Why did God allow this?" It's a new version of the old question of theodicy (from the Greek words for God, *theos*, and justice, *dike*). The question of theodicy asks, "If God is loving and all powerful then how can God be just since God allows bad things to happen?"

One of the standard answers to this question is that God allows bad things to happen in order to teach us a lesson. Just as a child who has a temper tantrum may receive a "time out" from their parent, according to this argument, God also allows human beings to suffer when we have done wrong. The theological term for doing wrong is "sin." Thus, the reason that bad things happen is because of our sin.

In the Bible, the question of theodicy is central to the book of Job. The main character, Job, is consistently described as righteous. He was *blameless and upright, a man who feared God and turned away from evil* (Job 1:1b).

Nevertheless, God allows Job to experience great suffering: he loses his wealth, his children are killed, and he himself is

afflicted with terrible boils. Then, in the central portion of the book, we read numerous dialogues between Job and three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar.

Throughout their speeches, these so-called friends keep reminding Job that the reason he has suffered so much is because he has sinned. His suffering is his own fault.

However, at the end of the book we discover that God disagrees with the verdict of Job's three friends! God says that Job's friends *have not spoken of me what is right* (42:7). Instead, God continues to regard Job as righteous and Job receives back

condemnation; rather, it is grace.

The central message of the Bible is that when bad things happen, God shows us love and comes to be with us. God does not sit up in heaven judging and condemning us.

Instead, in Jesus, God comes to us and shares in our suffering with us—even to the extent of dying on the cross.

During this time of pandemic, we need to remember that God is with us. God is especially with those who are sick and dying of COVID-19.

God is also with the doctors and

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The central message of the Bible is that when bad things happen, God shows us love and comes to be with us.

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everything that had been taken from him.

The message of the book of Job is that ultimately the reason why bad things happen to us is a mystery. When God appears to Job out of a whirlwind Job says:

*...Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,*

*things too wonderful for me, which I did not know....*

*therefore I despise myself,  
and repent in dust and ashes.*

(Job 42:3–6)

Far too often Christians come across as people who love to criticize and blame others as "sinners." But the most important message in the Bible is not about blame or

medical workers who are caring for people who have the disease. God is with those who grieve the loss of loved ones. God is with the "long haulers" who recover from COVID-19 but still have symptoms that continue for months thereafter. God is with all of us who are afraid of this disease.

The God we know in Jesus Christ comes to us and stays with us in all our pain, suffering and loss because this God has suffered as we do. And God will bring us through this pandemic and lead us to be with God and with all our loved ones in the new creation waiting ahead for us. ☺

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Dr. Tim Hegedus is a member of Christ, Waterloo, ON.



## IT'S RHUBARB SEASON!!

### "RHUBARB DREAM BARS"

#### Crust

1 cup flour

½ cup sugar

½ cup butter

Mix and put in 8" x 8" pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes.

#### Filling

2 large eggs

1 cup sugar

1/4 cup flour

pinch of salt

2 cups rhubarb

Mix all together; put on top of crust.

Bake another 40 minutes (approximately, depending on your oven)

Let cool; Cut into squares; and Enjoy!

Submitted by:

Lois L.

## JUNE VOLUNTEERS



As there is still uncertainty as to when Sunday service will re-commence, we are not including the schedule of Volunteers for the month of June. When we receive permission to re-commence Sunday worship we will contact the scheduled volunteers.

# **A PRAYER FOR FATHER'S DAY**

**God our Father, we give you thanks  
and praise for fathers young and old.**

**We pray for young fathers, newly  
embracing their vocation; May they  
find the courage and perseverance to  
balance work, family, and faith in joy  
and sacrifice.**

**We pray for our own fathers who have  
supported and challenged us; May  
they continue to lead in strong and  
gentle ways.**

**We remember fathers around the  
world whose children are lost or  
suffering; May they know that the God  
of compassion walks with them in  
their sorrow.**

**We pray for men who are not fathers  
but still mentor and guide us with  
fatherly love and advice.**

**We remember fathers, grandfathers,  
and great-grandfathers who are no  
longer with us but who live forever in  
our memories and nourish us with  
their love.**

**Amen.**

***HAPPY FATHER'S DAY!!  
WE HOPE YOU HAVE A SAFE & HAPPY DAY!!***