

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

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PASTOR'S DEVOTIONAL

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word ..." – Service Book and Hymnal.



Lutherans have long been in the habit of identifying our worship books by their colour. I grew up with the Red Book, the *Service Book and Hymnal* that served our congregations for many years. As I was about to enter seminary, we switched to the Green Book, the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, which we used in many of the congregations I served as pastor.

We then went back to red (some distinguish it by calling it the "Cranberry Book"), and today *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* is the primary worship resource for congregations throughout Canada and the USA.

One of my many memories of the *Service Book and Hymnal* was the hymn that was sung after we received Holy Communion; it was the *Nunc Dimittis*, the words of which are based on Simeon's song of praise after he comes into the presence of the child Jesus at the Jerusalem Temple. The day of the Presentation of Our Lord will be observed on February 2, when Mary and Joseph bring their son to the Temple forty days after his birth to present him to the Lord "as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord'" (Luke 2:23, Exodus 13:2). As they arrive at the Temple, Mary and Joseph are met by Simeon, who Luke describes as a man who was "righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him." (2:25). Simeon is an example of hopeful expectation, since "it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah." (2:26). We are not told how long Simeon has waited, but when he lays his eyes on the child that Mary and Joseph are bringing to the Temple, he knows that his time of waiting is over: Simeon rises from his place of waiting, approaches the Holy Family, and takes the child in his arms. Tears must have filled his eyes as he sings out in joy for what he has witnessed – the fulfillment of God's promise to him and to all people:

1. "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." – 2:29-32.

The *Nunc Dimittis* (a name taken from the first two words in the Latin translation) is inspired speech; in it the Holy Spirit is declaring Jesus to be the means of salvation for all people, Jew and Gentile. The truth of Simeon's prophetic witness is confirmed by Anna, another person who was waiting in hopeful expectation for the fulfillment of God's promises. At this same moment she also approaches the child of Mary and Joseph "*and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.*" (2:38).

2. "The two aged saints are Israel in miniature, and Israel at its best: devout, obedient, constant in prayer, led by the Holy Spirit, at home in the temple, longing and hoping for the fulfillment of God's promises ... God is doing something new, but it is not really new, because hope is always joined to memory, and the new is God's keeping an old promise." – Fred Craddock.

This year's observance of the Presentation of Our Lord comes at another difficult, challenging time in the ongoing saga of the COVID-19 pandemic. The sudden appearance of the Omicron variant has thrust our communities into yet another lockdown, closing our church building as well as schools, businesses, theatres, and many other congregate activities. In the darkest days of the calendar year, we find ourselves dealing with discouragement, despair, and even depression, not knowing how long the current outbreak will last or when there might be a glimmer of hope for a brighter future. It is in such stress-filled times that our Christian faith calls us to the hope that "*is always joined to memory*" as we remember the example of Simeon and Anna, persons who waited without knowing how long their time of watching would last but knowing that God is faithful and that God would indeed fulfill all that had been promised to them. Their songs of praise are songs that assure us that as Simeon and Anna's eyes have seen the salvation that God has prepared in the sight of all people, we will surely experience the fulfillment of God's promises to us in the child whose birth we have celebrated at Christmas, the one who brings us the Word of blessed hope that is ours in our blessed assurance that the word that God proclaims to us "*shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*" (Isaiah 55:11).

3. "It all depends on this, that we with the dear old Simeon open our eyes and see the babe, take him into our arms, and kiss him, which means that he is our hope, joy, comfort, and life. Where this faith is firm and sure in our hearts – that this child is God's Saviour – there, indeed, it must follow that the heart is content and is not afraid of sin or death, for it has a Saviour who delivers us from it." – Martin Luther, 1544.

No matter what the future may have in store for us, we too can go forth in peace, for we have seen the salvation that has come to us in the child born of Mary, the fulfillment of the promises of God that will be our hope and strength, our assurance that *"we have Christ's own promise, and that cannot fail!"* (Service Book and Hymnal, Hymn 560).

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Jeff Laustsen

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR TREASURER



As the year-end has now come and gone, on behalf of the Finance Committee and the Congregational Council, I extend a **"sincere thank you"** to our members for your generosity in helping to reduce our deficit in 2021. We were still left with a deficit at year-end however, the amount was greatly reduced from its earlier amount. I also would be amiss if I did not make mention of your generosity in supporting the wider church, especially in this time of great need, through your Benevolence offerings. You, the members of Zion Lutheran Church, are to be commended for your combined offerings to the Current and Benevolence Funds. Of course, more details will be supplied at our upcoming Annual Meeting in March. **Your continuing faithfulness to the ministry here at Zion Lutheran Church and the wider church are greatly appreciated.**

Gerald Cook, Treasurer
On behalf of the Congregational Council & Finance Committee

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE DECEMBER 2021 CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

Congregational Council Meeting



The December 15, 2021 Congregational Council Meeting was held in-person in the Fellowship Hall and via Zoom conference. Investigations are continuing regarding the possibility of providing livestreaming for the Sunday worship services. A survey was included in the December Newsletter inviting volunteers for the task force. No responses have been received yet.

The Community Roundtable was completed virtually on December 1st. Eleven community leaders attended and volunteers from Zion were recorders and presenters. The notes from the meeting have been given to Mark Harris who will compile a report and send it to our Envisioning Committee. The Committee will present recommendations to Congregational Council for potential action. It was felt that this was a positive experience. Many of the community leaders expressed their thanks to Zion.

Investigations are continuing concerning replacement of the Church phone system.

The Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and the Rent Subsidy both ended at the end of October. We are thankful for the funds provided by these subsidies which have helped to reduce our current fund deficit during the pandemic.

There are three vacant positions on Congregational Council to fill for 2022. The Executive Committee will be contacting potential Congregation Members. Nominations from the Congregation are also encouraged.

There are also three vacant positions on the Endowment Fund Committee to fill in 2022.

Discussions and plans are being made for the Annual Meeting which will be held on Sunday March 13, 2022. Depending on COVID restrictions at the time, the meeting will likely be a hybrid (in-person and virtual) similar to last year.

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 either at the Church office weekday mornings or in the locked mailbox at your convenience.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE JANUARY 2022 CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING



Online Meeting

The January 19, 2022 Congregational Council Meeting was held via Zoom conference.

As per guidance from Synod, our building is now closed for in-person worship and gatherings at least until the end of January.

The Report from the Community Roundtable held on December 1st has now been received from Dr. Mark Harris. The Visioning Committee consisting of Kevin Tuer, Tom Cosstick & Franklin Famme, presented the Report to Congregational Council and indicated that bringing these community representatives together was a very positive experience, an opportunity for the various groups to come together and learn from each other. Bringing the groups together also gave us an opportunity to learn as well, to become more aware and to consider what we can do as a congregation. The Visioning Committee made recommendations to the Congregational Council that we start with small efforts, including the convening of the community leaders on a regular basis to keep the dialogue going and to identify areas where Zion could be more

proactive. These recommendations will be revisited when the new Council is formed after the annual meeting

A new phone system has been ordered and will be installed in the next few weeks.

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There are also three vacant positions on the Endowment Fund Committee to fill in 2022.

Discussions and plans are being made for the Annual Meeting which will be held on Sunday, March 13, 2022. Depending on COVID restrictions at the time, the meeting will likely be a hybrid (in-person and virtual) similar to last year but plans may change to completely virtual if necessary.

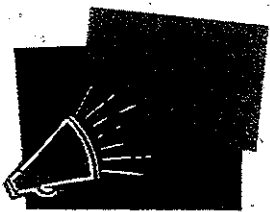
Donations/offerings, can continue to be completed via our Church website, including an option for E-Transfer, in addition to the PAR program, mailing cheques or dropping off donations either at the Church office weekday mornings or in the locked mailbox at your convenience.

NOMINATIONS FOR CHURCH COUNCIL



Nominations are now open for three (3) positions on Congregational Church Council. Your nominations can be submitted in advance of or in person at the Annual Meeting, which is slated for Sunday, March 13, 2022. Please send nominations to Kevin Tuer kevintuer@gmail.com or 519-273-6205 or to any other church council member.

ANNUAL MEETING



This year's Annual Meeting is scheduled for **Sunday, March 13, 2022.**

Due to COVID, it is not yet decided whether the meeting will be "via zoom" or be our traditional "in-person" meeting.

Pastor Jeff and your Congregational Council will assess the COVID situation and make a decision closer to the meeting. Details will be published in the Bulletin and on our website at www.zionstratford.com when they are available.

2021 OFFICIAL RECEIPTS FOR INCOME TAX

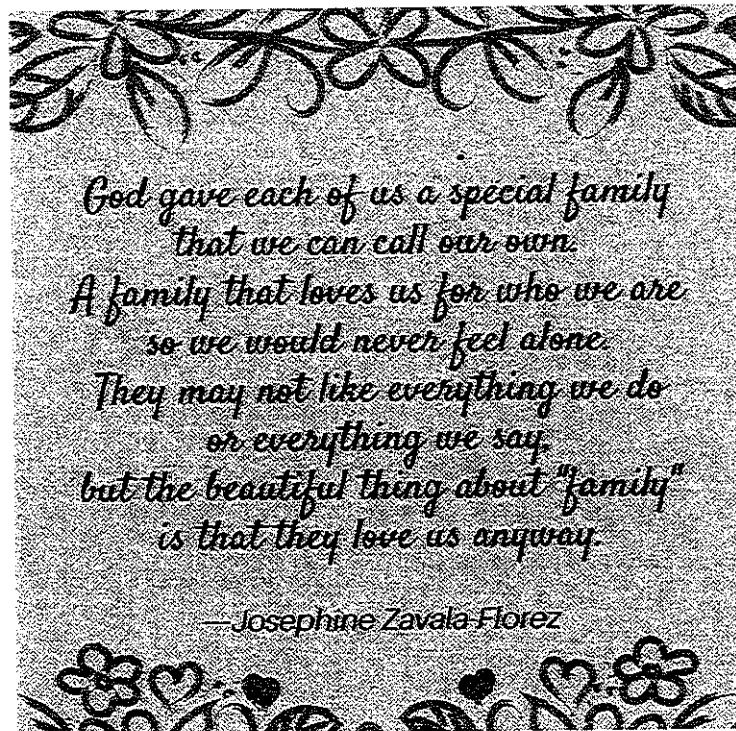


Your 2021 Official Receipts for Income Tax are completed and included with the February issue of ZIONEWS. For those of you who receive the Newsletter via email, your Official Receipts will also be mailed out to you on January 28th, 2022.

FAMILY DAY



"FAMILY" - The definition of family is a group of people going through the world together.



As we celebrate ***"Family Day"*** on ***Monday, February 21, 2022***, we hope that whatever you plan with your family, you enjoy a ***"Safe and Happy Family Day"***.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

CHILDREN'S Sunday School

We are trying to organize classes and arrange for teachers in anticipation for when we are able to plan for the return of Sunday School, when it is safe to do so.

For this reason, we ask that all parents wishing to enroll your child(ren) in the Sunday School program, please fill out the attached survey. If for some reason you are unable to complete the survey, you can also email your name, your child(ren)'s name(s), current grade(s), and whether or not they would be participating in Sunday School to Paula at pauley_mcnaughton@hotmail.com.

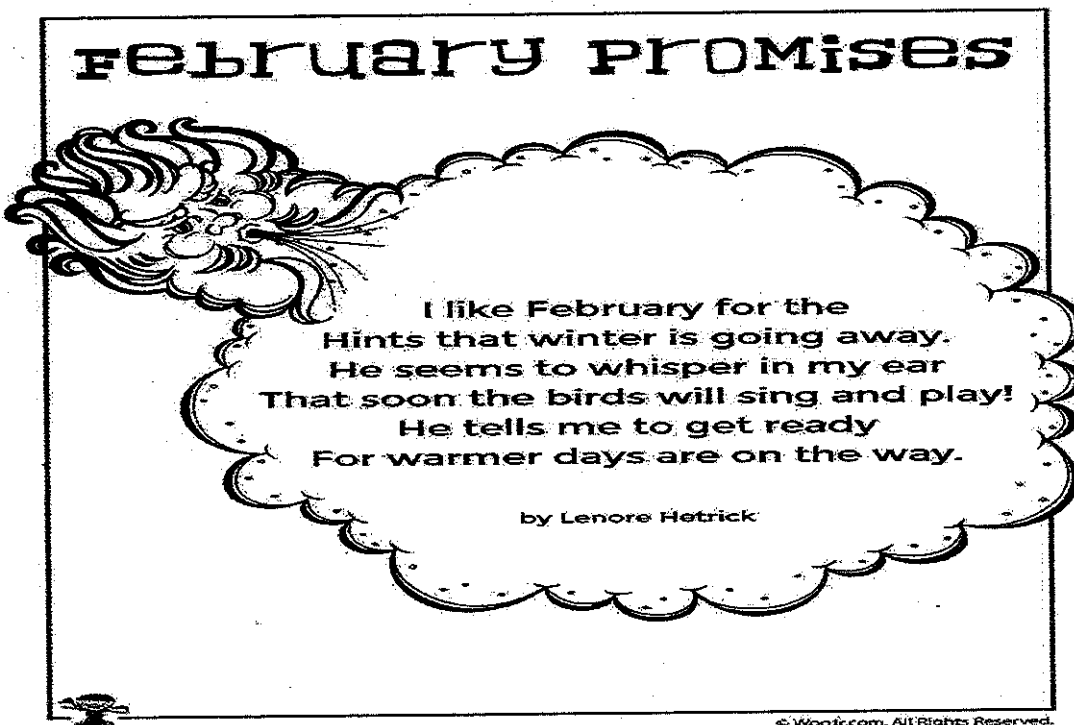
Please click here for the survey: <https://forms.gle/bS3dCdiEaSmrnXLEA>

Once we have our students registered, we will be in a better position to arrange for teachers.

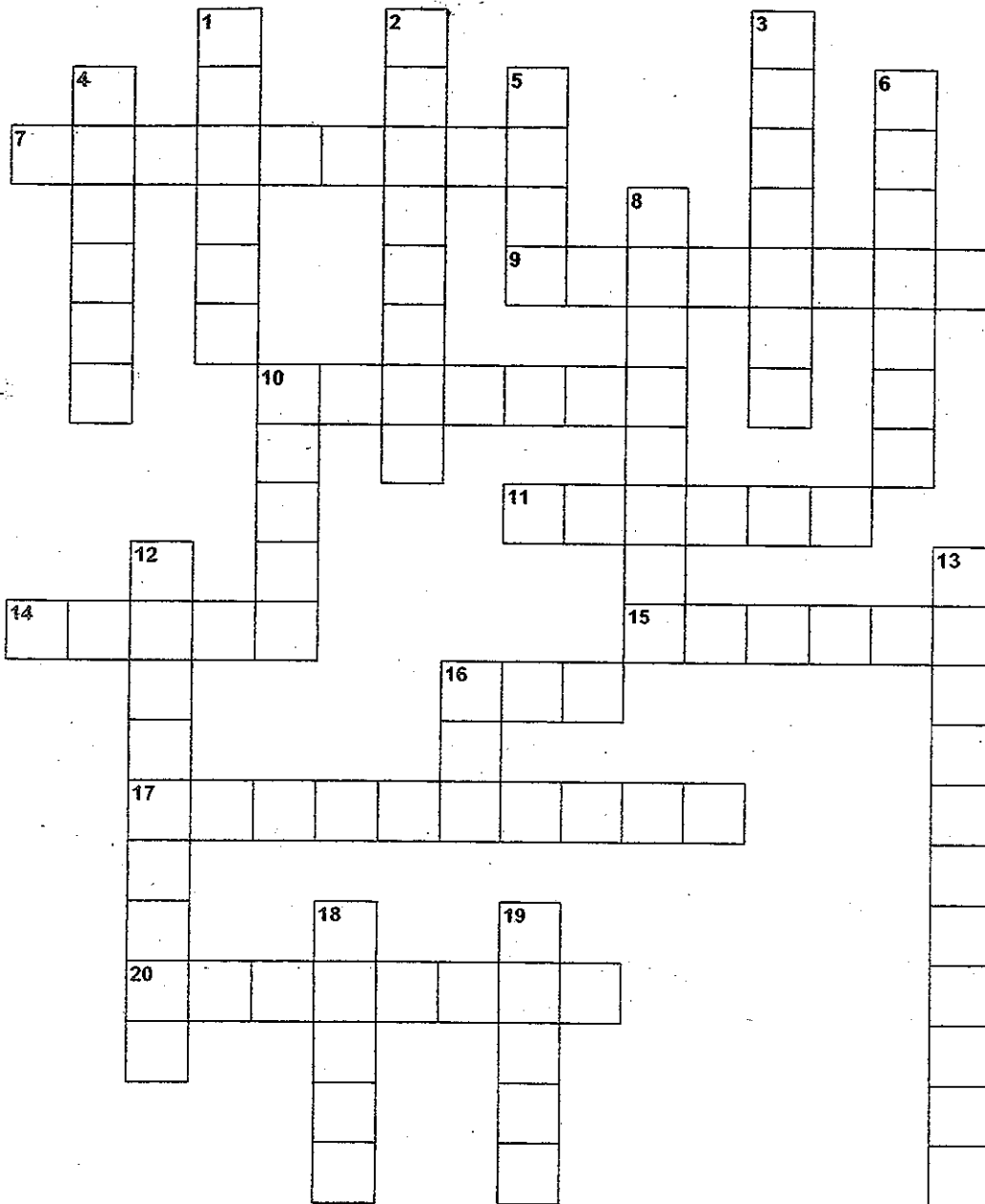
I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your assistance and co-operation!

Paula McNaughton
Sunday School Coordinator



- 1 Season of the year between autumn and spring
- 2 Heavy and widespread snowstorm of lengthy duration
- 3 Warm undergarments made of wool
- 4 Traditional January birth stone
- 5 Frozen form of precipitation that falls as ice crystals formed into flakes
- 6 First month of the year
- 8 Wood for cooking or heating
- 10 New Year's Day
- 12 Remain dormant over the winter in a den
- 13 Condition of abnormally low body temperature
- 16 Influenza
- 18 Coverings for the feet worn for protection
- 19 Warm outer jacket, often with a hood



JANUARY

Solution:

