



Zion Messenger

A Monthly Publication of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church--Elgin, ND

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January 2024

Blessings for the New Year!

Looking back on the last year, try to see where God has been active in your life. Was it a person who showed up out of the blue and was a godsend to you? Maybe you had some car trouble, and a kind person helped you out. Where can we see the love of Christ in our lives? So often we can just keep our nose to the grindstone just making it through each day, getting up after a night of sleep only to do our best to make it through another day.



Have no doubt, God is with us throughout each day. I believe our problem is that technology is getting so advanced, we expect something more definitive from God. Maybe an email or a text to let us know how God has helped us each day. Unfortunately, that is not how God operates. God can be more subtle than a gentle breeze or as obvious as a deer in the middle of the road. There have been times in the past when God has left no doubt about His presence and His activity in our world.

God created the people of Israel from nomadic people. He guided them through many barriers and challenges. He shaped and formed them into His "Chosen People." From these people, Mary was chosen to bring a saving, healing, powerful force into our world. God chose her to be the mother of Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son. Jesus taught us about God the Father, and He taught us about the Father's love for us. Most everything we know about the Father, we learned from Jesus Christ, His Son.

When we look at our world, we can see that Jesus and His ministry has changed the world forever. Regardless of how we think the world is going, there is no denying that God is active in our world and in our lives.

When we read scripture, we can see how God has used countless people from Old Testament times and in the early Church to do the work He needed done. I think we might forget that many of the early Christians were just ordinary people, who followed God's call to follow Him. In all reality, they are us from a different time.

I think it may be easier for us to realize how God used those early Christians to help the church grow. Well, now is our time to be those people to help God's church to survive and, not only survive, but to grow. Too often most of us believe that there isn't much that we can do to have much of an impact on our church, our community, or our world.

This is our biggest mistake—we underestimate the power of God. Our power is limited, I will give you that. However, God's power is unlimited, and if He is behind our efforts we cannot fail. How we live out our lives has a huge impact on the world around us. The early Christians were just living out their lives, loving one another, and believing Jesus' promises.

Think about this—would you send your only child to earth in order to offer salvation to humanity,

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**ANNUAL CONGREGATION
MEETING**

**SUNDAY
JANUARY 28, 2024
10:30 AM**

WELCA News

Serving - Group 3 serves next.

Activity (Serving) Book - Women, please pick up a 2024 serving book from the narthex table.

Outreach - December being Zion's month to take birthday treats to the Care Center, we celebrated birthdays and also sang Christmas carols with the residents, with Todd Allen accompanying us on piano.



WELCA also provided a Christmas gift to each of our members who are residents in nursing homes and care facilities.

We sent \$50 to the Volunteer Program at the State Hospital in Jamestown. This donation is used to purchase Christmas gifts for their patients.

We purchased \$50 worth of personal care items to donate to New Leipzig's American Legion Auxiliary's drive for the veterans at the VA Hospital in Fargo.

WELCA will be purchasing 2-quart pitchers with a \$100 gift we were given to purchase items we need. Thank you!

Next Meeting - Thursday, January 11, at 1:30 pm

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Pastor's Message

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only to make empty promises? Everything Jesus taught us and promised us is more solid than granite. We have been given the tools to make a difference in our world. Jesus started with 12 Apostles. There are a lot more of us in our congregation. We start with making a change in how we think about and treat each other. As baptized Christians, we are children of God, which makes us brothers and sisters in Christ.

As we begin a new year, may we do our best to make a positive difference in the lives of one another. We need to be able to rely on each other, even if we don't like someone. God loves them, and we need to treat them accordingly. Let me leave you with some of our Savior's last words, from John 13:

³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."



My prayers for us as we begin the New Year is for our Heavenly Father to continue to bless us and guide us into the future as we live out our faith in our daily lives. May we *truly* learn to love one another, the same way Jesus loves us!

God bless us all!!

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Michael S. Harrison



Offerings & Gifts - December (to date)		
	Undesignated	Attendance
December 3	\$2,612	99
December 6 (Wed)	103	19
December 10	11,718	83
December 13 (Wed)	230	27
December 17	2,233	132
December 20 (Wed)	145	27
December 24 (am)	1,261	59
December 24 (pm)	1,792	102
December 31		
Total Undesignated	\$20,094	Avg Sun Attend: 93 Avg Wed Attend: 24
Bulletins	30	
Parish Ed Fund	367	
Miscellaneous	120	
Organ Fund	500	
World Hunger	300	
Sunday School	6	Avg SS Attend: 22
Income & Expenses - Year to Date		
Income	Undesignated	Other
\$139,616	\$133,122	\$6,494
Expenses	Budgeted	Designated Funds
136,598	127,613	8,985
Income vs Expense		
3,018		

Ripple-Effect Blessing from the Lord

Shortly before his death, 80-year-old farmer Hody Childress asked his daughter to continue a practice he'd quietly conducted for years: taking a \$100 bill to a local pharmacist on the first of every month. For years, Childress anonymously came to the aid of neighbors in Geraldine, Alabama, who couldn't afford medications. "Don't tell a soul where the money came from," he instructed store owner Brooke Walker. "If they ask, just tell them it's a blessing from the Lord."

Thanks to the farmer's generosity, Walker could fill prescriptions for about 24 uninsured or underinsured people each year. "I was honored he allowed me to do that," she said, "and it really encouraged me to do the same in my life."

Childress wasn't wealthy but "always gave what he could," said daughter Tania Nix. "I think he felt like he couldn't not give," she added. "Giving that way, that just got on his heart." After word spread about Childress' generosity, other people were inspired to perform stealth outreach and a fund was established in his name.

A man in Oklahoma who shares Childress' surname said a story about the farmer caught his attention. They're probably not related, he wrote, but he'd feel proud if they were. "A man like that surely tried to follow the example of Jesus," the Oklahoman wrote, and "[his] story inspires me to be a better man."

—adapted from *The Wired Word*

First Communion Classes Resume

First Communion classes will be on Sunday, January 7, and Sunday, January 14, both at 8:30 am.

The Mission Endowment Fund Committee member serves for three years and will be one of three on the committee. The Committee implements the guidelines of the Fund in accordance with our constitution and bylaws, and includes encouraging, receiving, and celebrating gifts given for ministry through the Fund, determining how fund assets are invested, providing distributions, etc.

A council member serves along with ten other members. The church council has oversight of the life and activities of the congregation, particularly with regard to worship life, and responsibility for financial, property, and employment matters. A full list of duties is found on page 13 in our constitution, which is on the table in the narthex. The term of office is two years.

Thrivent Choice Dollars

Have you directed your Thrivent Choice Dollars yet?

Eligible Thrivent members can recommend where Thrivent distributes a portion of its charitable funds by directing Choice Dollars®. If you select "Zion Lutheran Church," it's an easy way to help support our ministries. Be sure it's Zion in Elgin. Thank you!

Candidates Needed

The Nominating Committee is seeking individuals to be nominated for election to the church council (six positions), the Mission Endowment Fund Committee (one position), and delegates (two) to the Synod Assembly. Please give prayerful consideration to serving. If you are interested in being nominated or want more information, please contact any Nominating Committee member: Fred Eslinger, Thelma Haslid, Marty Heid, Lance Ottmar, Ryan Rivinius, or Verrick Schock.

The delegates to the Synod assembly represent our congregation and vote at the assembly meeting, which will be held May 31-June 2, 2024, in Watford City.

FIVE GIFTS OF DISCIPLESHIP ... *during Epiphany*

Epiphany is an ideal season of the church year to emphasize LIVING OUR BAPTISM and discover the five gifts of discipleship. Affirming the gifts of discipleship in Baptism during the season of Epiphany could become a significant New Year's tradition. Commitments are made in New Year's resolutions, often relating to health and well-being. But what about our spiritual health and well-being? What commitments do we make to claim the gifts of discipleship?

The Story of the Epiphany: The church celebrates the day of Epiphany on January 6, twelve days after Christmas. The church recalls the story (found only in Matthew 2:1-10) of the wise men who came from the East searching for a king born under a star. They met with King Herod in Jerusalem and ascertained that a king was to be born in Bethlehem. Herod directed them to continue their search for this new king.

“When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.” (Matthew 2:10-12 NRSV)

The wise men risked much and traveled far to pay homage to the king born under a star in Bethlehem. They came offering their gifts, only to be overcome with joy, not grasping that it was Jesus who provides the greater gift to the world. Aha! God was revealed to the wise men!

EPIPHANY: The Season of Aha! – The texts of the Revised Common Lectionary used by churches throughout the world during the Sundays after the Epiphany include wonderful stories of those who (like the wise men) have “Aha!” moments. We experience similar Aha moments when we say, “So that is what God is up to!” as we discover and claim the gifts of discipleship in our baptism.

EPIPHANY: “Yes I Do!” Resolution ! – In January, many people adopt New Year's resolutions. Imagine if a congregation adopted the “Yes I Do!” resolution in the text box on the right. Imagine if individuals approached this resolution with the commitment of the wise men in their search and journey to Jesus.

7 AHA! Stories of the Bible

Shepherds - [Luke 2:8-20](#)

Simeon and Anna – [Luke 2:25-38](#)

Parents – [Luke 2:41-52](#)

Unclean spirits – [Luke 4:31-37](#)

Disciples - [Luke 5:1-11](#)

Peter: [Luke 9:18-20](#)

Baptism of Jesus – Each year on the Sunday after January 6 (Epiphany), the church celebrates the baptism of Jesus and hears a clear affirmation of God's love for him, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17 NRSV) All four gospels describe this significant event in the life of Jesus. In baptism, the Holy Spirit came to Jesus, and his mission on this earth was launched.

In our baptism, we too are claimed as God's beloved children. In our baptism, we too receive the Holy Spirit, transforming our lives and launching our mission. That mission is made known in the gifts of discipleship which we are given and to which we commit our lives as we affirm our baptism.

At baptism, the presiding minister places water upon the person in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, marks the sign of the cross on the forehead of the baptized and offers these words, “Child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.” (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 231)

To be sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever is significant and life-changing. As we affirm our baptism, we are asked the following question: Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism:

to live among God's faithful people,
to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper,
to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,
to serve all people, following the example of Jesus,
and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?

Each of us responds: “I do, and I ask God to help and guide me.” This response sounds like a New Year's resolution for daily living. This response is not an obligation, but rather a five-fold gift from God. Each gift contains the potential of blessing.

Happy Birthday, Jesus

The Christmas program, "Happy Birthday, Jesus," was held on Sunday, December 17, during worship.

We thank all of you Sunday School and Confirmation students for your parts in the program. The program concluded with the Christmas story being read by the Confirmation students.

Thank you also to Kaci Ulrich and the teachers for your hard work, as well as to you parents for encouraging your children to practice their parts.

We are truly blessed, especially by God's indescribable gift!



**Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church
Council Meeting
December 10, 2023**

Present: Terry Bentz, Brandy Fuchs, Sydney Richardson, Bridget Winkler, Steph Lince, Doug Rivinius, Jim Zimmerman, Kenny Friedt, Virginia Rivinius, Pastor Mike HarriSon. Absent: Tabitha Zimmerman, Kayedenn Rivinius, Ronae Hochhalter.

The meeting was called to order by President Steph with a prayer.

Secretary's Report: Kenny made a motion to approve the report as is, Terry seconded; motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: Discussion held on CD coming due, motioned by Doug seconded by Jim to roll it in to a 9-month CD, motion carried. Motioned by Doug and seconded by Brandy to approve the Treasurer's Report, motion carried.

Pastor's Report: Worship committee meeting discussed.

Committee Reports:

1. **Mission Endowment Fund** – Recent meeting, recommended giving this quarter's \$1250 to Western ND Synod. Motioned by Brandy and seconded by Sydney to approve recommendation. Motion carried.
2. **Parish Education** – Christmas program is next Sunday, Virgil Stern stopped in and relates that he had stopped at Dakota Sound to check on different microphone that would pick up surrounding sound better, purchase price is \$470, but \$50 to rent for weekend. Consensus was to rent for the Christmas program to see if it works better than current microphone. Pastor will plan on picking up Friday and returning Monday.
3. **Property** – AED box is up on wall between bathrooms, nativity scene is set up, light out front on east side of church is out. Jim will check with Paul Wutzke about assistance with bulb replacement. Other outside projects on hold til spring.
4. **Worship** – Discussed some changes to worship Pastor would like to try, but not til after January 1st.

Old Business:

1. Property Insurance Quotes discussed, waiting on one more quote, Virginia paid 1st quarter premium of current policy, but consensus was to switch companies.
2. Bethesda Methodist Church closing, motioned by Doug and seconded by Terry to send a letter to current members inviting them to join our church.

New Business:

1. Consideration of Bids for Snow Removal and Groundskeeping – received 3 bids for mowing total, one for Church grounds, one for the Cemetery, and one for Pretty Rock Cemetery. No Snow removal bids. Motioned by Terry and seconded by Brandy to accept the mowing bids. Steph reports she has someone who voiced interest in snow removal, but no bid received, will reach out to him and 1 more person to see if there is interest in placing a bid.
2. Distribution of Mission designations- there is \$942 in general fund to disperse, discussion held, decided to give \$500 to Elgin School to use towards new playground and \$442 to Carson school to use towards outstanding lunch balances.
3. Set date/time for annual meeting. January 28th after church.
4. Received a memo from Murray, synod attorney re care of Cemeteries, council discussed, and no changes were made.

Other Business

1. Just a reminder that all committees will need to give input on possible expenditures to the Finance Committee by January 1, 2024, in preparation of Budget preparation.
2. The Nomination committee will need to seek candidates and report back to the council at next meeting, January 14th 2024.

Adjournment: It was motioned by Jim and seconded by Brandy to adjourn the meeting; motion carried.

Bridget Winkler
Council Secretary

A Challenging Word

Do you not know that God entrusted you with that money (all above what buys necessities for your families) to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to help the stranger, the widow, the fatherless; and, indeed, as far as it will go, to relieve the wants of all mankind? How can you, how dare you, defraud the Lord, by applying it to any other purpose?

From a sermon by John Wesley,
An 18th Century Methodist leader

*What is it to serve God and to do his will?
Nothing else than to show mercy to our
neighbor. For it is our neighbor who needs
our service; God in heaven needs it not.*

~ Martin Luther

Abbreviations
 A - Acolyte
 AG - Altar Guild
 C - Communion
 L - Lector
 G - Greeter

JANUARY

2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
	1 Dillon K Macy Z	2	3	4	5	6 AG: Leona H Ramona W 	
8:30 First Communion Class 9:30 Worship 10:30 S School / Confirmation / Finance Comm Mtg / Fellowship A: Treyvn L: Kaci C: Joy G: Quincey, Reuben Peyton R	7 Anna S	8	9	10	11 1:30 WELCA Meeting Landon E Zane E Jerri T	12 Marie K Madison Z	13 AG: Brenda E Lauren E Greg F Ardell F
8:30 First Communion Class 9:30 Worship 10:30 S School / Confirmation / Council Meeting / Fellowship A: Clay L: Lance C: Sydney G: Kylor, Thelma Mykenzie W	14  Dr John S James Z	15	16	17 Jackie F Kenny F	18 1:30 Fellowship at Dakota Hill	19	20 AG: Linda O Cassie R Zachary S
9:30 Worship 10:30 S School Confirmation / Fellowship A: Kade L: Jace C: Steph G: Doug & Joleen Mary S	21 Bob L & Leona Z	22	23	24 Glenn R	25	26	27 AG: Gloria S Bridget W
9:30 Worship 10:30 S School Confirmation / Annual Meeting A: Jackson L: Robin C: Becky G: George & Chris	28	29	30	31 Chad O	<i>Carry out a random act of kindness, with no expectation of reward. ~Princess Diana</i>		