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The Zion Spirit



"Grounded in Christ: Sent to be a blessing"

December 2017

Love came down



It is a basic question of life in many circles: How do I get to be with God? There are many answers from many different religious traditions. Even Christians often disagree on how this can happen and what we must do in order to succeed at this very basic issue. There are people who have written books, designed brochures to be passed out on people's porches, and are on TV and radio to give you the answer. In some way, shape or form they all imply, "Here's how you do it..."

That's why the Christmas season is so important for understanding the biblical message about Jesus and what God is doing in Christ. Even Christians don't all get the answer right. The right answer is, "Nothing!" There is NOTHING you can do to help you get to be with God.

This was Luther's greatest insight. In a world where the list of burdens placed on people who wanted to be with God was huge, Luther discovered something amazing in the pain of trying to succeed at this. There was no way to succeed! His humanity was so meager compared to God's majesty that the task was simply impossible. Those who were trying to tell him how to do it only increased his burdens and pain as he struggled to succeed at something he discovered could not be done. That insight was the beginning of the good news that is the gospel.

Luther discovered the good news that rather than us trying to make it "up" to God, in Jesus God has come "down" to us. Love comes down! The good news was that God in Jesus has come to us already!

We can actually give up trying to figure out how to get to God. God has come to us! Out of deep and abiding love, the God who made the world and also brought life to each of us, chose to come and be a part of our world and part of our lives. Rather than struggling to be with a God who is far away and watching from a distance, we can simply let go of the struggle and rejoice in the presence of a God who has come to us to be up close and fully present in our lives. Imagine that! The first discipline for being a Lutheran Christian is simply give up. Relax. The pressure is off. God has done the work already!

That doesn't mean that being a Christian doesn't take effort. But it changes where we focus our energy. God has come to us in Jesus and invests in a relationship with creation.

The Advent and Christmas season is grounded in a basic starting point that says that we already have a relationship with the God who comes to us in Jesus. We may be ignoring it or not attending to it

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very well. But that doesn't change the fact that we live our lives in the presence of God. God is always here bringing life, inspiring hope, and encouraging transformation. We may miss it because we live our lives filled with distractions and don't pay attention. But it doesn't change the fact that God has come to us.

This December, take time in preparing for Christmas to step back from the trimmings, the shopping and the food. Watch for God at work in and around your life. Take time to say a prayer of thanks when you notice it. Because ultimately, Christmas is less about all the stuff we've piled on top of Jesus' birth and more about the simple truth that "Love comes down."

Christmas Program December 17th

This year's program is "Twas the Night Before..." a clever title that looks at the anticipation and preparation the night before the birth of Jesus. The program is a musical and open to children who have started kindergarten all the way through adults. The intergenerational program will be performed at both services on Sunday, December 17th. Practices are on Tuesday evenings through the event, so if you see this article and want to get involved, see Jeff Grosser ASAP!



There are many of you in this congregation who think to yourselves: "If only I had been there! How quick I would have been to help the Baby! I would have washed His linen. How happy I would have been to go with the shepherds to see the Lord lying in the manger!" Yes, you would! You say that because you know how great Christ is, but if you had been there at that time you would have done no better than the people of Bethlehem. Childish and silly thoughts are these! Why don't you do it now! You have Christ in your neighbor. You ought to serve him, for what you do to your neighbor in need you do to the Lord Christ Himself.

Martin Luther

Zion's Befriender Ministry

Zion's Befriender Ministry has been busy in recent months. At our regular monthly meeting last Thursday, we reviewed successful projects we instituted.



A Listening Presence

Some of these are:

- ♦ When a Befriender visits a new friend, he/she takes a Prayer Shawl to that person and explains that Ministry to them.
- ♦ We have also begun to mail a series of four booklets called "Journeying through Grief" to members who have had a loved one die recently.
- ♦ We were involved in the decision to purchase and display the brochures "How to comfort those who mourn" introduced by Pastor David at the November 5 worship services.
- ♦ We also will have a photograph of our Befriender group on the display board outside the nursery.
- ♦ We will be having a designated phone line for Befriender calls. In other words, if a person needs to talk with a Befriender, they will be prompted to leave a message for Befriender referrals when they call the main Church phone number.

Please remember that Befrienders is a Listening Ministry, that serves anyone who is facing a difficult life situation, such a divorce, job loss, cancer, moving, etc.

Currently we have six Befrienders in our Ministry: Tim Fraas, John Bradburn, Joann Hartmann, Bev Breskovich, Larry Anderson and Chris Wargo. However, we are excited to be considering training new Befrienders from our congregation, since the need for Befrienders continues to grow.

A thousand times in history did a baby become a king. But only once in history did a king become a baby.

DECEMBER 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 Office Closed 03:00 PM- Wax LL 07:00 PM-AA	2 09:00 AM-Retreat 09:30 AM-Prayer Shawl 10:00 AM-AA 08:00 PM-AA
3 08:30 AM-Worship 09:45 AM-Sun. School 10:00 AM-Adult Ed 10:45 AM-Worship 12:15 PM-Youth Group 04:30 PM-AA	4	5 05:30 PM-Soup Kettle 06:30 PM-Play Practice 08:00 PM-AA	6 Office Closed 06:00 PM-Praise Team 07:00 PM-AA 07:00 PM-Choir	7	8 Office Closed 07:00 PM-AA	9 10:00 AM-AA 08:00 PM-AA
10 08:30 AM-Worship 09:45 AM-Sun. School 10:00 AM-Adult Ed 10:45 AM-Worship	11 06:30 PM- Church Council	12 10:00 AM-Ladies Bible at Wallie's 05:30 PM-Soup Kettle 06:30 PM-Play Practice 08:00 PM-AA	13 Office Closed 06:00 PM-Praise Team 07:00 PM-AA 07:00 PM-Choir	14 06:00 PM- Staff Party Daubert's	15 Office Closed 03:00 PM- Head Start 07:00 PM-AA	16 10:00 AM-AA 08:00 PM-AA
17 Newsletter Articles 08:30 AM-Worship & Christmas Program 09:45 AM-Sun. School 10:00 AM- Intergenerational 10:45 AM-Worship & Christmas Program	18 07:00 PM- SWAN	19 05:30 PM-Soup Kettle 06:30 PM-Play Practice 08:00 PM-AA	20 Office Closed 06:00 PM-Praise Team 07:00 PM-AA 07:00 PM-Choir	21	22 Office Closed 07:00 PM-AA	23 10:00 AM-AA 08:00 PM-AA
24 08:30 AM-Worship 10:00 AM-Adult Ed 10:45 AM-Worship 05:00 PM-Worship 11:00 PM-Worship	25 Christmas Office Closed	26 05:30 PM-Soup Kettle 08:00 PM-AA	27 Office Closed 07:00 PM-AA 07:00 PM-Choir	28	29 Office Closed 07:00 PM-AA	30 09:00 AM-FMSC 10:00 AM-AA 08:00 PM-AA
31 New Year's Eve 08:30 AM-Worship 10:00 AM- Intergenerational 10:45 AM-Worship 04:00 PM-Alathon						

If you have concerns or joys to share, please call the church office at 847-888-2882 and press 2 to place a request on the prayer line.



December 2 – “Prepare Your Hearts”

The Advent retreat will be held on Saturday, December 2nd at Riverwoods Camp along the Fox River north of St. Charles. The retreat will be a chance to explore creative ways to get ready for the birth of Jesus and hopefully also be a wonderful chance to both look inward spiritually as well as outward as we connect with others on the retreat. Please be praying for those people attending the retreat that day!

Christmas Eve Schedule

Christmas Eve falls on Sunday, December 24th and that means both the 4th Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve fall on the same day. So here's the schedule for that Sunday:

Sunday Morning:

- 8:30 AM – Early Service with Holy Communion
- 10:00 AM – Intergenerational Activity with the St. John's Bible
- 10:45 AM – Late Service with Holy Communion

Christmas Eve Evening Services:

- 5:00 PM – Family Christmas Eve Worship (with candle lighting and communion)
- 11:00 PM – Late Night Traditional Christmas Eve (with candle lighting and communion)



BIBLE READINGS for December

December 3

Daniel 3:1-30 (sermon text)
John 18:36-37

December 10

Ezekiel 37:1-14 (sermon text)
John 11:25-27

December 17

Isaiah 55:1-13 (sermon text)
John 4:13-14

December 24

Psalm 130:5-8
John 1:1-18 (sermon text)

Christmas Eve

Psalm 96:7-10
Luke 2:1-20 (sermon text)

December 31

Psalm 32:1-11
John 1:19-34 (sermon text)

DECEMBER VERSE OF THE MONTH

And the Word became flesh
and lived among us,
and we have seen his glory,
the glory as of a father's only son,
full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

Zion Mission Trip 2018

An incredible opportunity for intergenerational ministry and service awaits! A group (entering 7th grade through adult) will head to the Spirit Lake Nation, a Native American reservation in North Dakota on June 16 through 23. We will stay at Dacotah Oyate Lutheran Church in Sheyenne, ND, to learn about their ministry, culture, history and more. The week will include an on-site service project, a tour of Spirit Lake, cooking our own meals and evening campfires at night, plus an area activity. The group will take the train to North Dakota and back. It is projected that the whole trip will cost around \$550 per person. There will be an information meeting on Sunday, January 23 at 9:45 for anyone interested.

White Gifts



Each year we are asked to help with gifts for children in U-46 that are homeless or on the edge of homelessness. We are given names and gift suggestions from social workers in the schools for children to have something to open at Christmastime. If you would like to help, visit the table with names (they usually come around Thanksgiving time), sign your name by a child's number and take the corresponding tag and sheet with gifts ideas. Purchase a gift(s) for \$30. It's important to keep the value similar for each child. If you would like to purchase a gift, but don't want to do the shopping, the youth group will do that for you! Simply sign the sheet with a child's name, put ZLC next to your name and pick up a tag. Give the tag to Marlene. Make a check out to Zion Lutheran Church for \$35 (to cover gift, tax and paper) and give it to Marlene, so she will be clear on who our youth group will be buying for. Thanks for making a child's day a little brighter.

All white gifts need to be in by Sunday, December 10th in order to be brought to the schools before winter break.

Thanks!



End of year giving

December brings with it the end of the year and a chance to reflect on the blessing of the year past and look forward to the coming year. As we conclude our year of ministry at Zion, we are thankful that December is often one of the months where offerings are above average – often helping us close the year with enough resources to start the next year strong.

Changes To Newsletter Mailing

As we look at changing technology and the costs of mailing paper newsletters as well as the environmental costs of using resources like paper, we have talked with the congregation about going to a hybrid system of delivering the newsletter. This will save money and hopefully still get everyone the newsletter in a way that works for you.

The newsletter will be delivered in the following ways:

1. Emailed as a PDF that you can read on your computer or print out the entire thing or just a select page (like the calendar to hang on your refrigerator).
2. Printed and available for pickup at the church when you attend on Sunday.
3. Mailed to your home for people who are unable to attend but who want to continue to receive it.

Remember that the most recent two newsletters are always on line at ZionElginIL.org as well.

If you want a paper copy to continue to be mailed to you, please let the office know by calling in at 847-888-2882 or drop us a card or email letting us know.

Ways to Give

Thank you for supporting God's through this community of Zion! If you are seeking a way to give a one-time gift or setting up automatic giving, please visit <http://zionelginil.org/give/> and explore your many options.

Financial Report

October	Income	Expenses
General	\$14,881	\$15,686
Building Fund	\$991	\$868
YTD	Income	Expenses
General	\$172,413	\$207,156*
Building Fund	\$11,163	\$11,943

* Includes \$21,300 for roof

Zion's Youth Group

The youth group will meet December 3, following the second service. We will be going out to eat, shopping for white gifts that people have provided money for us to purchase, then returning to Zion to wrap gifts and enjoy snacks.

On Saturday, January 13 our youth group will be joining Holy Trinity's youth group from 5-9PM. We will be talking about justice and having a special guest who is a lobbyist. A lobbyist is someone whose job it is to try to influence the actions, policies or decisions of officials in the government. It will be an interesting evening and one you won't want to miss!

Feed My Starving Children



We are scheduled to pack food for Feed My Starving Children at the Schaumburg location on Saturday, December 30 from 9-11

AM. These food packages are sent globally to children in areas of extreme poverty. The packing address is 1072 National Parkway in Schaumburg and is open to Kindergarten age (with adult) through adult. We only have 20 openings, so sign up early! To sign up, go to www.fmssc.org. Click on Volunteer button. Then click on "Join a Group" in the middle of the page. Then click on "Find using Join Code". Our Join Code is 1263412. Friends are welcome and it's a great way to spend some time over break!

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

8:30 a.m. Worship/ Holy Communion
 9:45 a.m. Sunday School
 10:00 a.m. Adult Education
 10:45 a.m. Worship/ Holy Communion



- Jan 5 – Winter Fest (We're off to Hawaii)
- Jan 12 – Young Adult/Parents of Young Children Get Together
- Jan 13 – Youth Group 5-9 PM
- Jan 14 – MLK Food Drive
- Feb 14 – Ash Wednesday
- Feb 20 – Neighbor Forum
- Feb 17 – Chili Cookoff
- Feb 14 – Mar 21 (Wednesdays) Lenten Services
- Mar 3 – Spaghetti Dinner
- Mar 25 – Palm Sunday
- Mar 29 – Maundy Thursday Dinner and Worship
- Mar 30 – Good Friday
- April 1 – Easter!

Annual Congregational Dinner January 28th

On January 28th we will have a special Sunday. We will have one worship service at 9:45 AM. This is one of those chances for us to all be together for one service. Then we will follow it up with our annual dinner. The Dauberts will provide the main dish/meat and the rest of us will all join in with a potluck. Lots of good food and a delicious meal will be served shortly after worship ends. The theme of the dinner will focus on a discussion about our vision of God's future of us: What will we look like if God gets God's way with us over the next five years? We'll also thank lots of people for the excellent ministry people have led and done. There will be more info about worship, dinner and parking in our January issue. For now – save the date!