



I don't often reprint my annual report as a newsletter article. I'm going to do that this year (with very few changes) because I am seeking your comments on every section, especially the last part on *theodicy*. Please do tell me what you think, what you have experienced, how your faith influences you, especially when a God of love gets harder to have faith in. I start with a quotation from the Gospel of John; these are the words of Jesus.

“From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.” John 1:16

It is important to me to say that I turn 64 in 2019. Cathy and I have set no date certain for my retirement. I can say that I am not retiring at 64.

Whatever else we say, 2018 was a year of God's grace. Much of God's grace we know and can speak about. Much of it we do not. Every year in every Christian Church *gratitude* must come first.

There have been *epiphanies*. Some of you have had experiences of God that have changed your life. For many, Holy Communion has been nothing less than a revelatory experience. Communion may well seem ordinary in the extreme. Christians know it as nothing less than a revelatory miracle. These also are everyday miracles, so common and predictable that often they are taken for granted. Forgiveness can be a revelatory experience. The Spirit praying for us when we don't have words can be a revelatory experience.

We are grateful for all of it.

There have been examples of discipleship. Following Christ often means personal sacrifice. It means going more than one extra mile for some. It means forgiving when no one would expect it.

Again we are grateful.

God has been present in worship, every Sunday, whether or not we are aware of it personally. The Word of God can penetrate deep, when we are expecting it, and when we least expect it. Worship is best when the expression of gratitude is part of it.

God has been present in *devotional* lives. Some parts of life we share freely with others. Some we do not. We may share our deepest thoughts, feels, and secrets with God in prayer. Gratitude comes naturally, easily.

Probably most would not say that one of Zion's strong points is Christian *stewardship*. I would. The generosity I see often extends beyond anything resembling normal generosity, into nothing less than an inspiring expression of faith. Again, we are grateful.

God has been present when to us God seems far away. We pray every week for God's will to be done on earth as in heaven. God's revealed will is to lose none of us. God's will is love beyond human understanding. There are times when hurt longs for an understanding that will "rhyme out" what we believe and lessen the hurt. It does seem that there must be an answer to Why in our faith. We are not granted that understanding. We are grateful to for the people who have lived through intolerable pain. The question for all of us is not why did this person have to die. The understanding that we do have is to ask Why did Jesus have to die? That question has an answer from the faith: Jesus died out of love for all of us, including the non-smoker who develops lung cancer, including the children who die too young, including the people who would have no recourse save for Jesus.

There are always reasons to be grateful.

In academic theology the technical word is *theodicy*. Theodicy is this: Given a good God, why do bad things happen? Often there are two answers to this question, neither of which is acceptable. One: God is good but unable to help. No. Two: God is able to help but unwilling. No.

I have struggled with the question of theodicy my whole life. It does seem as though there is or must be a good answer from the Christian faith. Here goes. It may be that Why is in fact answered by looking at the lives of people who survive the unsurvivable. Who experience the absence of God, as Jesus did. Who die and are raised again. They tend not to speak up right away. They will say that God has been with them, even when were not aware of his presence. If they say they know what pain is; they do. If they say that they know what surely seems to them as the absence of God; they do. The love they show is genuine as no other is genuine. There is godliness in it.

I know of a Christian person who lived with chronic pain her entire life. She never lost her faith. In the face of tragedy she would never volunteer any of the all-too-common answers, and may never have realized that she herself was the answer that people are seeking. Some know that God's grace sustains as no strength can sustain. God love holds us as no other love. Here is my answer to the theodicy question. *When we seek answers, God makes introductions.* First, to people who know why they are grateful at all times, second, to Jesus Christ, who also knew what the absence of God felt like. People like this are everywhere. They may in fact be an answer (the answer?) to Why?

One answer is in fact certain, though it may not satisfy as an explanation. When we wonder why things happen as they do, or when we wonder why God does or does not do something, we point to the cross, where God has in fact done something, all for us, out of love.

God has been present in the lives of believers, who help us believe, who show us the power of human love, who show us the power of God's love.

What happened of consequence in 2018?

"... Grace upon grace."

Pastor John Golv

I have never forgotten the person who lost his wife to illness, attended worship afterwards and found himself unable to pray. He took comfort in the fact that others were able to pray when he could not.

I will always remember the member who attended worship every Sunday. He was completely deaf. His eyesight did not serve him well. People asked him why he came to church. He attended regularly so that as he put it "he could be among the people of God."

I always remember the elderly woman who confessed to a teenage sexual sin that plagued her all her life. The release upon absolution was genuine and complete. No one need live with guilt.

God's power can be shown in many ways. Music can do it. Childhood memories can do it. The Service Book and Hymnal (the original red book) had two settings of the liturgy in it. The offertory from setting I can move me to tears.

Unexpected emotions can do it. The sheer expanse of the created order can do it. Hugs can do it.

I will always be impressed by the sheer revelatory power of the church's long tradition of various forms of music, whether done professionally or as part of week-to-week worship. Musical trends come and go. Some years ago one member said, "I don't even know the music anymore." I now feel the loss of what was once commonplace, and now is all but unknown.

Epiphany blessings,
Pastor Jon Golv



- February 3 – Swim Party – Little Lambs through 5th Grade
- February 6 – Witness – 7:00 at Zion
- February 15-16 – Ski Trip – Grades 6-12
- February 17 – Flapjacks for Faith
- February 19 - Parish Planning – 5:30
- March 24 – Mission Sunday – Speaker – Paul Oman



President's Message **Laura Rude**

Dear Zion Church Family-

As we enter a new year there are many new resolutions that have been made. Some are kept; some are broken. All resolutions usually have good intentions but some lack commitment, vision or follow through. One resolution I have made is to try hard to keep God with me always. See, God doesn't move. He's always there. I move away from Him. Whether it's making decisions for my family, church or work I want God there guiding me.

2019 will present many opportunities to find your niche at Zion. Whether it's participating in a group activity or volunteering your time other ways, I would strongly encourage you to get involved if you are not already. It's such a fulfilling feeling to be part of God's work and ministry. We need a strong and active church body to continue the mission of sharing God's word to all the world!

God's Blessings
Laura Rude

WELCA



February 12
Board Meeting – 9:00am
ZLCW – 10:00am

Program: Rebekah Circle
Hostess: Elizabeth Circle
Hospitality: Sarah Circle

We will be delivering Valentine carnations to our homebound congregational members.

Water to Thrive – Build Wells, Save Lives **Zion Funds Two Well in Ethiopia**

Water to Thrive is a faith-based non-profit organization that focuses on bringing clean safe water to rural communities in Africa, primarily Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania. This is done through water projects – hand-dug wells, spring protection systems, and borehole wells – located in the communities with need. On the average the project costs about \$10 per community member or \$5,000 per well. Hundreds of thousands of people in rural Africa are enjoying clean safe water for the first time in their lives.

Zion provided funding for one Ethiopian well in 2019 and just completed funding for the second. These wells will provide clean water for a community for approximately 20 years.

Executive Director Susanne M. Wilson sends her appreciation to Zion for its support to Water to Thrive's Mission. She says, "Your support is a crucial part of a whole effort, allowing us to provide the blessing of healthy, sustainable water to 480,000 rural Africans for the first time in their history."



WITNESS

Paraphrase Theatre Presents

WITNESSES

One Actor / 8 Characters / A Fresh Look at Jesus



written by Curt Cloninger
performed by Jonathan Swenson

for more information
visit Paraphrase Theatre on Facebook
or www.paraphrasetheatre.com

The Thief River Falls Conference of the Northwestern Minnesota Synod (ELCA)
Invites Youth and their Families

Wednesday, February 6, 2019
7:00 PM
Zion Lutheran Church
Thief River Falls, MN

There is no cost to attend. A free will offering will be take to support
the work of Lutheran Disaster Response.

For more information, call Kristin at 218-684-1155

The Thief River Falls Conference of the Northwestern Minnesota Synod invites youth and their families to attend **Witness**.

“An extremely gifted and remarkably versatile performer.” – Robert Lindsey-Nassif, award-winning Broadway composer

“A home-run for our church. People continue to talk about it weeks later.” – Reverend Eric Hulstrand, RealLife Church, Bloomington, MN

“Can’t text right now. This is really good!” - Confirmation student’s tweet



These are comments made about Jonathan Swenson who will be guest speaker for area confirmation students at Zion on Wednesday, February 6, at 7:00. There is no cost. A free will offering will be taken to support the work of Lutheran disaster Response.

Witness is an innovative, humorous and deeply moving re-telling of the Gospel. In this dramatic and very intimate performance, Jonathan portrays eight different characters (historical and imagined) as each responds to Jesus. Through the eyes of these characters, both comedic and serious, the audience is challenged to see Jesus from fresh perspectives – not cold and distant, but as one who was intimately involved in the nitty-gritty of life.

For more information, visit Paraphrase Theatre on Facebook or www.paraphrasetheatre.com

Silver Creek

It was the coldest day of the year, yet we had a good turnout for our annual meeting. Some of the highlights of the meeting included election of officers: President, Roger Rupprecht; Vice President, Mike Torgerson; Secretary, Kristi House; Treasurer, Virginia Swanson; Deacons, Clark Nelson, Roger Nelson, Connie Stock; Trustees, Mark Swanson, Leland Nelson, Bill Stock.

There was extensive discussion about a security system for the church and surrounding property. Discussion was tabled until more information of the different systems can be researched.

It was decided that in the future, only members will be allowed to use tables and chairs for personal use. It was also voted on that each time a member uses the tables and chairs, a fee of \$25 will be charged.

The ladies will again make a quilt to raffle as a fundraiser in the fall. Tickets will cost \$1.00 each. Each family will be asked to sell four books of tickets.

Council will meet February 10 following worship services.

WELCA will meet February 14 at 3:00 PM for quilting. A light supper will be served and 5:30 with bible study and business meeting to follow. The bible study lesson will be #9, "Lifelong Trust." Our new program booklets will be on table in the back of the church.

Bev Ruprecht



Zion Lutheran Parish Planning Council Minutes January 15, 2019

The Parish Planning Council meeting was called to order with a word of prayer by President Laura Rude at 5:30 p.m. In attendance were President Laura Rude, Tim Numedahl, Bonnie Yost, Karen Thygeson, Barbara Overbye, Sharon Jorde, Glenice Johnson, Jody Bergman, Dennis Yost, Marijo Nabben, Mike Spears and Deb Holtan.

The minutes for December 18, 2018 were presented and approved. A motion was made by Sharon Jorde to accept the minutes, the motion was seconded and approved, the motion carried.

The Treasurer's Report was filed for audit.

After a very long and lengthy discussion, Dennis Yost made the motion that the council support the original 2019 Budget Proposal which does not include funding for the shared Youth Director with Redeemer. The motion was seconded and carried.

The 2019 Alternative Budget which does include the funding for the Youth Director will also be presented to the congregation for consideration.

The meeting was adjourned after saying the Lord's Prayer.

The next meeting will be Tuesday February 19, 2019 at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Deb Holtan, Council Secretary

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

February Reminders:

✠ No Reminders – please watch Facebook for updates.

March Reminders:

✠ No Reminders – please watch Facebook for updates.

April Reminders:

April 21, 2019

✠ There is NO Sunday School on Easter Sunday.

Sunday School Canteen 505

Please see below for a reminder on how the Sunday Schoolers can earn up to 2 coins every Sunday.

✠ For every Church Service (up to 1 per Sunday) that your child attends they will receive 1 coin to add to their bank/jar in their classroom. **
In order to receive the coin please make sure your child picks up a lanyard in the back of the church and turns it in to their Sunday School teacher.

✠ Students will also receive 1 coin for each Sunday School Class they attend (up to 1 per Sunday) - making it possible to earn up to 2 coins per Sunday!

✠ These coins will be “cashed” in twice a year (December & May) at our NEW Sunday School Canteen 505.

Please join us on Facebook!

✠ **Facebook:** Zion Lutheran Church Sunday School – TRF

If you have any questions about Sunday School or our K-5 Events please let Becky (218-686-5563) or Davina (218-689-4965) know.



LITTLE LAMB – 5TH GRADE EVENTS (ALSO KNOWN AS K-5 EVENTS)



February Event:

***** Please note updated date *****

Date: February 3, 2019

What: **Swimming Party!**

Who: All Little Lambs – 5th Graders that attend Zion TRF Sunday School

Where: Seven Clans Casino Waterpark

Time: 1:00pm - 4:00 pm

Cost: \$5/Sunday Schooler



March Event:

Date: March 17, 2019

What: **St. Patrick's Day B-I-N-G-O Party at Zion**

Who: All Little Lambs – 5th Graders that attend Zion TRF Sunday School

Where: Zion Church

Time: 2:00pm - 4:00pm



April Event:

Date: April 7, 2019

What: **Zions Got Talent Show**

Who: All Little Lambs – 5th Graders that attend Zion TRF Sunday School

Where: Zion Church Sanctuary

Time: 2:00pm – End of program

Family and Friends are encouraged to join us for the show!! Cheer on your child while they perform for the crowd!



Please see the bulletin boards outside the Sunday School Office and in the Little Lamb – 1st Grade Sunday School Hallway for more details along with our Facebook page: Zion Lutheran Church Sunday School – TRF



Christian Ed and Youth Board

Wednesday, February 6 -

- No Confirmation
- 7:00 - Witness

Wednesday, February 13 -

- 5:30 - Confirmation Supper
- 6:00 - Class Time

Friday February 15 - 16

- 6th-12th grade ski trip with Trinity and Redeemer

Sunday, February 17

- 9:30 Flapjacks for Faith

Wednesday, February 20

- 5:30 Confirmation Supper
- 6:00 Class Time

Wednesday, February 27

- 5:30 Confirmation Supper
- 6:00 Class Time



Flap Jacks for Faith
Sunday, February 17, at 9:30

If you are interested in helping with this event, please see Amber Holtan. This is a great way to earn money for IFA accounts!

Noisy Offering For February - Pathways



Pathways is a Bible Camp Corporation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Pathways camps and programs are used by over 150 churches in northwestern Minnesota.



**JOIN US IN
FEBRUARY
FOR OUR
KID
FRIENDLY
10:30
SERVICE.
WE HAVE
DONUTS 
AND
SMOOTHIES.**

PIC•COLLAGE



6th-8th Graders:
Zion Youth, Family and Friends
Winter Blues Bingo and More!

More info to come!

Annual Ski Trip

The annual Trinity, Redeemer, Zion ski trip is scheduled for February 15-16. This is open to youth in 6th-12th grade. We will leave after school Friday and return between 6:00 and 7:00 on Saturday. The cost includes transportation, lodging, supper on Friday and breakfast on Saturday. Extra money will be needed for lunch Saturday and snacks. Some drinks as well as a few snacks will be provided.

Lift ticket - \$70

Lift ticket and ski rental - \$80

Lift ticket and snowboard rental - \$100

Tubing - \$65

Adult lodging/meal with no lift ticket - \$30

Please register by Friday, February 8. Parents are welcome to contact Lisa LeClaire directly to sign up their kids. Call/text 686-5401 or email tlsensation@yahoo.com