
The Zion Messenger

December 2018

December 2 – Snack with Santa

Christmas Gift Shoppe

December 6 – Trustees

Men's Club

December 10 – School Board

December 11 – Admin. Council

December 13 – Shipmates,

LWML, & Ladies Aid

December 16 – Christmas Program

December 18 – Elders

December 24 – Christmas Eve

December 25 – Christmas Day

December 27 – Alumni & Friends

December 31 – New Year's Eve

Miracle: An event that defies explanation by common laws of nature and science; by definition something only God can do including things done through **me and you**. John 14.12, 16.7

Our usage of the word is often broader than its meaning. Like when Mr. Pipe's 5th grade band finished their first song in concert. Parents proclaimed, "It's a miracle!" Or when Premi spelled "hippopotomonstrosesquippedialophobia" (fear of long words) to win the spelling contest. Everyone said, "It's a miracle!" How about you? Do you know a miracle when you see it?

Can spot two miracles in this verse? *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call His name Immanuel*" Isaiah 7.14. The first is easy-Virgins never, ever have babies. But 700 years after Isaiah prophesied the sign of Immanuel, the angel Gabriel called on Mary to announce the miracle about to be. In response Mary said, "I am the handmaiden of the Lord; let it be unto me as you have said." God spoke-Mary conceived. What a miracle!

The second miracle is even greater. He is *Immanuel*, "God with us." It is amazing that God without asking Adam, fashioned Eve from his body. Yet even more miraculous, God chose Mary and announced what He would do with her body. "You will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High." From the moment the Spirit of God came upon Mary, she was connected blood, bone, tissue to her Savior and LORD! She carried her son. She

carried God! She carried *Immanuel*! She carried her Deliverer! What a miracle!

Once when Martin Luther was telling the Christmas story to his children he chose, as he often did, some colorful metaphors in his rendition. "If I had been one of the shepherds, I'd never believe the angel's message. For if I'd been God and wanted to save the world, I wouldn't have done it like that. I would have just taken the devil and twisted his nose and said, 'Let my people go you old devil!' But God is amazing. He sends a little baby, weak as an earthworm, lying in the feedbox of a donkey. And that little baby crunches the devil's back and overcomes all power of hell, sin, and death!"

Luther talked about **three** Christmas miracles. That a virgin could conceive. That God became man. And that Mary believed the Lord's Word. Now for the sake of all who will read this article, for the sake of our Zion I'll point out one more miracle. "*For unto you is born a **Savior** who is Christ the Lord.*" That Christ came to save His people means that the greatest miracle is found beyond the manger. It is the empty tomb and beyond. This year through Advent, Christmas, and then into the New Year, let us continue to go with Mary and Joseph, and shepherds and angels and magi' wise men to be amazed at the greatest miracle!

WHAT CHILD IS THIS? Mid-Week Advent at Zion 2018

Advent is not about us going to God but God coming to us. The rich man coming to the poor, healer coming to the sick, the significant one coming to the insignificant. Advent' Hope is confident trust in the One *not seen* but who has promised to come for us in glory on the Last Day, God in the flesh, Jesus Christ. This year again you are invited to take up our Lord's Advent invitation to devotion, prayer, and worship; walking together joyfully pondering the question "*What Child is this?*"

December 5, 1:00/7:00 Midweek 1: "The Child Who is Zechariah's Hope"

December 12, 1:00/7:00 Midweek 2: "The Child Who is a Virgin's Great Son"

December 19, 1:00/7:00 Midweek 3: "The Child Who is John's Joy"

December 24, 6:00: Christmas Eve: "The Child Who is the Lord"

DO I HAVE TO GO TO CHURCH? – Part 2
Part 1 in November Messenger

“Then Jesus said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.’” Mark 2.23-28

So what does this mean? On the one hand God no longer commands us to worship or to cease our regular work on the Sabbath. And yet the word that says we are to fear and love God and gladly hear and learn His Word remains.

Jesus told Martha (Mary’s sister) that **hearing His Word is the one thing needful**. To have a low regard for hearing God’s Word, or absenting one’s self from worship with excuses like, “I have too much going on in my life” is sin; it is saying that what Jesus says **is** my greatest need **is not** my greatest need. God’s intention and invitation regarding regular worship hasn’t changed: Remember the Sabbath. And yet going to church isn’t supposed to be a slavish keeping of rules. Rather it’s about grace; it’s what God wants to do for our benefit.

In the Old Testament one of the blessings it brought was physical rest. But even more as a blessing, it was a shadow promising the coming of the true ‘Rest-giver.’ That was and is our greatest need. It’s about Jesus, our Rest-giver who alone can bring rest to your guilt-ridden conscience. He alone can bring peace to the heart troubled by sin and can drive out the terrors of hell. Jesus alone wants to bring you peace and strength for your troubles. Christ alone ends our warfare against God and reconciles the Father to us? Jesus alone can bring rest to your soul, the rest you need most of all.

“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” Matthew 11.28-30. We no longer need the shadow of the Sabbath. We have Jesus, the ‘Rest-giver.’ He meets all our real needs.

That’s why our church services are a blessing **for us**. They may not meet some of our perceived needs for entertainment or excitement or fixing one’s problems in life. But they meet our real need. They bring us Jesus. They bring us the incarnate Word; His real flesh and blood, our crucified and risen Savior. He comes through His Word and Sacraments. He holds before you His nail-pierced hands so that you know and believe you are forgiven. That’s our greatest need.

As the Old Testament Sabbath pointed ahead to Jesus, our church service points back to the work He accomplished for us. Thus in worship, God serves us. And we honor Jesus by receiving with thanksgiving His gifts. But how is Jesus honored when His people ‘skip’ church? I’m not talking about missing church on account of illness, or emergency, or being away from home, or those things that legitimately prevent our being in church. Skipping church, absenting one’s self from God’s Word and gifts does not honor Jesus. Rather it’s serving our own desires and conveniences. And that is sin. Not just because we’re breaking a command of God, but because we’re honoring someone or something else more than Jesus. By the way, you can do that even while sitting in worship week after week.

To be continued (part 3) in the January Messenger.

Live Life In Christ Stewardship Testimonies

During November, members of the Board of Stewardship spoke at the end of services on the topic of personal stewardship. In case you missed their wonderful testimonies, they are printed here.

Live Life In Christ. There's lots to that. Worship. Bible study. Service. Fellowship. And stewardship.

When I think of stewardship, three things come to mind: first-fruits, proportionate, and joyful. For a long time, I applied those only to our finances. But I'm growing more and more to realize that everything I have is a gift from God, all my time, all my talents, all my resources belong to Him. Am I caring for those resources properly? Am I improving those resources, growing them, and sharing them?

In the area of finances, Susan and I have agreed for over 40 years. Our offerings to God are first-fruits, in other words, the very first thing we decide with our income is how much we will give to God. That amount is proportionate. God's Old Testament people, who were under the Law, were required to return 10% back to God. That is the minimum for us New Testament believers, who are live under God's grace. That 10% mark has always been the minimum for us in support of God's work. I suppose at times we're more joyful than others about our offerings, but we remain dedicated and committed to being good stewards nonetheless.

Now comes the good part. Throughout the 40 years of our marriage, committed to living out God's commands and promises together, we have never lacked for anything. We've owned our own home, eaten very well, worn clothes that kept us warm in winter, travelled, raised our four children, and live incredibly comfortable now in our retirement. We've experienced God caring for us through a variety of means, and we are blessed and grateful. We have an abundance of time, talents, and treasures to use in His service.

First fruits, proportionate, and joyful stewardship of time, talents, and treasures. It works, thanks be to God.

-Paul Miller

What does stewardship mean to me? Over the years it is come to mean different things at different times. There were times where it only meant time, there were times and only meant treasures, and there were times I only meant time and talent. There was also times where it meant feeling ashamed and a little angry with myself because of not feeling like I was doing enough. It has also times or felt like I was just going through the motions and just doing any of the items just because I felt like I had to and it was burden.

I've come to realize now that I was viewing everything a little wrong and while stewardship does mean the time, talents, treasures I was missing the reason for all of that, I was missing the purpose. I have learned that the whole purpose of stewardship is God's grace and that that is why I am here and that is why I do these things. After coming to that realization it has helped made everything else a little easier. So to some up what stewardship means to me; God's mercies and Grace and working through us and around us and sharing it with anyone whenever the time feels right .

- Josh Crouch

I know that to many, stewardship means finances and tithing. While that is part of it, to me, stewardship is bigger than that. Stewardship describes my relationship with God – He has made me a caretaker.

In 1 Timothy 6 we are told that we brought nothing into the world, and neither can we carry anything out of it. We are told not to put our hope in uncertainty of wealth, but in God, who richly provides all things for us to enjoy - to be rich in good works, and to be generous and ready to share.

Because God loves me, He gives me, His steward, a portion of His wealth, to care for and use for His purposes: family, home, physical needs, talents, to name only a few. Because He loves me, and because he trusts me with these gifts, it is my responsibility as his servant or steward to use them in Christ-like service to others.

Recently in the news, this story has touched me.

Fred Rogers, [of Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood fame] often told this story about when he was a boy and would see scary things on the news. He said, "My mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'" He goes on to say, "To this day, especially in times of disaster, I remember my mother's words, and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers — so many caring people in this world."

As Christians, God calls us to be among the helpers. That is what Stewardship means to me – using what belongs to God, which He generously gives to me, to care for God's creation. One of my favorite songs says it this way, **"I want to make the invisible God, visible"**.

Though I don't always succeed, I want to live my life as a good steward. Everything I have is not mine, it is the Lord's, only mine to use while I live. And when I leave this world with nothing, my prayer is that I will hear from the Lord, "Well done my good and faithful servant (or another word - steward)."

- *Ruth Ann Henke*

Once upon a time. Shouldn't every story begin like that? Well, once upon a time God decided that you and I should be his stewards on this earth to help him manage and take care of his work. As a child we were so excited to put the dollar in the offering plate that our parents gave us. It was a treasure to us and we knew God would be happy with our gift. As we grew, we were taught God's word and were confirmed in the church. This meant more responsibility. Now we not only used the "treasures" God gave us but we were asked to help with different projects. We could put those "talents" He gave us to very good use. We felt important and happy to do what God wanted us to do.

As time went by, we had a family. Now it sometimes got a little harder to give the "treasures" and use the "talents" and especially find the "time" that God gave us the job as a good steward to do. Sometimes, a reminder from God through other stewards was what we needed and still need to set us in the right direction again.

A steward is someone who takes care of what God has given them; time, treasures and talent. We may use one more often during different stages of our lives but using them is the important thing. Using them, not because we have to but because we want to. What we have is not ours; we are just managing what God put us in charge of. We need to remember that this is our "once upon a time" to take care of what God has entrusted to us. Time, treasures and talent, please make good use of them.

- *Deanna Taylor*

Why are we here? What does stewardship mean to me? Does it just mean time, talents & treasures? I am sure you have heard a lot about those three items lately. Let me instead tell you what stewardship looks like to me.

Stewardship looks like adults, teens and babies alike, being blessed by the miracle of baptism right before our very eyes. Oh and how blessed we are to have the supreme privilege to witness it. It looks a lot like our school, which provides a strong knowledge of God's teachings as well as the formal education they need, right across the street. It looks like all of you, sitting in the pews of our beautiful church, eager to worship and receive the Holy Sacrament of our Lord as one family.

Those are all really nice and I think they make most of us feel warm and fuzzy inside. Yet we seem to feel uncomfortable talking about what bad stewardship looks like. Like are we investing more in ourselves than we are in our God? Do we take better care of our "things" than we do our Church and our School? Do we avoid gathering at certain activities here and at the school, because they don't seem fun or entertaining enough? Or maybe because our kids don't want to go and we just don't want to make them unhappy?

I think we all need to ask ourselves these questions and the answers you come to, will most likely tell you exactly what stewardship means to you. We have a beautiful church here, a great school and a wonderful staff. Are we taking good care of all of these gifts that God has given us? These gifts that other great stewards have so tenderly cared for, for decades before us? I don't know if I can answer all of those questions, but I do know that the Holy Spirit is telling me, we most certainly should be. Otherwise, why are we here?

- *Quenton Bartony*

Live Life In Christ
Response Form Summary

During the weekend of November 17 and 18, members of Zion were encouraged to submit a response form, indicating commitment to good stewardship of time, talents, and treasures in 2019. The purpose of the exercise was to motivate members to examine their personal response to God's grace in the form of Biblical stewardship. Here is a summary of the forms.

29 Stewardship of Time and Talents forms were submitted. Members signed up for a total of 87 tasks, for an average of three per respondent.

32 Stewardship of Treasures forms were submitted.

13 respondents included a percent, ranging from 5% to 13% of income. Four of those indicated a percent increase for 2019.

16 respondents indicated a dollar increase for giving in 2019.

The total giving for the 32 respondents in 2019 will be \$157,264 compared to \$141,241 in 2018.

Thanks to those members of Zion who participated. We look forward to growing in stewardship in the coming year.

2018 Advent & Christmas Schedule

Advent Worship:

Wednesdays, December 5, 12, & 19

1:00 & 7:00 p.m.

6:30 p.m. Service of Confession & Sacrament

Sunday, December 23

10:00 a.m. Service of Verses & Carols

Christmas Eve – Monday, December 24

6:00 p.m. Worship with Communion

11:00 p.m. Candlelight Worship

Christmas Day – Sunday, December 25

10:00 a.m. Worship with Communion

New Year's Eve – Monday, December 31

7:00 p.m. Worship with Communion

The Ladies Aid, LWML, & Shipmates will meet on Thursday, December 13, 2018, at 6:00 p.m. at Cavataio's Restaurant. Come and enjoy the food and sing some Christmas Carols. Please call Lois Stratmann (635-3611), if you need a ride.



Celebrate the Christmas Season with our annual Live Nativity

Sunday, December 2, 2018

5:30-7:30 p.m.

on the church property on Henry Street.

Live Nativity

Angel Tree

The Kids Café Christmas Angel Tree is located in the back of church. Green angels are needed items and the red angels are want items. We have received a lists from eight children. Purchased items should be wrapped and the angel taped to the outside of the package to allow for distribution. It is recommended to include the gift receipts and in all of your boxes, in case the child receives the wrong size or a duplicate item. Wrapped packages must be returned to the back of the church by Friday, December 14, to ensure delivery to the Helping Hands Center on Saturday, December 15. If you need help returning your items or cannot get to the church during the hours it is open, please feel free to drop them off at the daycare or contact Pam Kleckner (618-550-8297) to make drop off arrangements. If you would prefer not to shop, but would like to help out, cash donations can be given to Pam Kleckner to help purchase gifts or IGA gift certificates for the families. Thank you for making a child's Christmas a little brighter!

Scrip Orders & Contest

Check out the school's Scrip program for your Christmas gift card needs!! Scrip gift cards are super easy to order and purchase! An up-to-date order form of our most popular retailers is available at the church and school office or the church website (www.zion-uth.org). There are also hundreds of other options on the Scrip website www.shopwithscrip.com. All retailers give back an average of 5 – 10% (some as much as 20%!) to the school which then gets credited to the PTL!

As a special thank you this year, we will have four drawings to win a \$25 gift card of your choice! For every order that you placed between Thanksgiving and Christmas, your name will be entered into these drawings. Drawings will take place on Nov. 30, Dec. 7, Dec. 14, and Dec. 21. Orders may be placed at shopwithscrip.com or dropped off (with payments) to the school, daycare, or church offices. Call or email Jessica (618-635-3060 ext. 01; jessica.meade@zion-school.org) with any questions or orders. Orders placed by noon on Monday will be available for pickup by Thursday of each week. Some may be available sooner if they are currently in stock. We continue to carry our local retailers and our most popular national retailers in inventory. Please call the school office with any questions!



The PTL Trivia Night will be held on Saturday, January 19, 2019, at Concordia Hall. Start putting your trivia team together and watch the bulletin for more details!

American Red Cross Blood Drive

Monday, December 17, 3:00 – 7:00 p.m.

To schedule an appointment, please visit www.redcrossblood.org, enter sponsor code: StauntonComm, call 1-800-REDCROSS, or download the Blood Donor App to your smart phone. If you have any questions, please call the school office, 635-3060 ext. 01



CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

Zion School Christmas Programs

December 16, 2018

2:30 p.m. – Praise Him Program

4:00 p.m. Joyful Noise Program

Encore presentation will be December 21,
2018 at 9:00 a.m.

December

2018

Zion Lutheran Church

Staunton, Illinois

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Snack w/Santa Christmas Gift Shoppe 9am Catechism 5pm Worship w/C
2 8am Worship w/C 9:15am Sunday School 10:30am Worship w/C 5:30pm Live Nativity 6:30pm Christian Basics	3 5pm GriefShare	4	5 8:30am Chapel 9am Lydia Circle 1 Advent Worship 3:30pm Catechism 6:30pm Communion 7pm Advent Worship	6 10am Bible Study: Acts 6:30pm Trustees 7pm Choir 7:30pm Men's Club	7 Early Dismissal at 12:15pm	8 9am Catechism 5pm Worship w/C
9 8am Worship w/C 9:15am Sunday School 10:30am Worship w/C 5pm GriefShare 6:30pm Christian Basics	10 6:30pm School Board	11 7pm Admin. Council	12 8:30am Chapel 9am Lydia Circle 1 Advent Worship 3:30pm Catechism 6:30pm Communion 7pm Advent Worship	13 10am Bible Study: Acts 6pm Ladies Aid, LWML, & Shipmates 7pm Choir	14	15 9am Catechism 5pm Worship w/C
16 8am Worship w/C 9:15am Sunday School 10:30am Worship w/C 2:30pm Christmas Program 4pm Christmas Program	17	18 7pm Elders at R&B's	19 8:30am Chapel 9am Lydia Circle 12:30pm Glenwood 1 Advent Worship 3:30pm Catechism 6:30pm Communion 7pm Advent Worship	20 10am Bible Study: Acts 7pm Choir	21 9am Christmas Program Early Dismissal at 1:45pm	22 9am Catechism 5pm Worship w/C
23 10am Worship w/C	24 Christmas Eve 6pm Worship w/C 11pm Candlelight Service	25 Christmas Day 10am Worship w/C	26 9am Lydia Circle	27 7pm Alumni & Friends	28	29 5pm Worship w/C
30 8am Worship w/C 10:30am Worship w/C	31 New Year's Eve 7pm Worship w/C					

Zion works at His Service Station December 3-8, 2018