



THE ECHO

DECEMBER 2021

MT. ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

A congregation of the North American Lutheran Church (NALC)

4065 Mt. Zion Rd. Lucas, Ohio 44843 419-892-2023

Pastor Eric Steward 757-876-6572 (cell) pastormtz1818@gmail.com

Sunday School at 9:15 a.m. ~ Morning Worship at 10:30 a.m.

Email us at mtzionsec4065@gmail.com Visit our website at www.mtzionlutheranchurch.org

The Gifts of Christmas



The Sunday school lesson was about the birth of Christ so the teacher decided to play a guessing game to get her preschool students to identify things related to the nativity.

"I am going to describe something to you. Let's see if you can guess what it is" says the teacher.

First, I'm small and wooly, and I like to graze in fields.

The children looked at her blankly....so the teacher continues: "Farmers clip my hair and people use this hair to make clothing."

But still no response...so desperately she continues...I'm usually white and I make a b-a-a-a-a sound. When there still was no response the teacher called on Suzy, the 4 year old who usually is good about coming up with answers...Suzy what do you think?

Suzy looked hesitantly at her classmates and replied, "Well, I know the answer is Jesus but it sure sounds like a lamb to me!"



While that joke is funny, aren't we all a little like the four-year olds? She couldn't believe the answer to the riddle because it was too simple. She already had made up her mind as to what the answer should be, but she couldn't make the clues fit.

God's plan of salvation makes no sense at all. Why would an all-knowing, all-powerful, all-wise God humble himself to the point of becoming a man? The answer? Man can't do it himself, so God does it for him.

Man likes to barter, but he can't barter with God. Self-salvation simply doesn't work. Man has no way to save himself. God doesn't work by barter but by grace. The gift of grace is not from man to God but from God to man. It is God-given, God-empowered, God-originated, and God-controlled AND it is ordinary at best.

Ordinary? yes, God entered the world as a baby from a peasant family in a stinky, urine and dung smelling stable. A more lowly place of birth couldn't exist. Ordinary, a teenage mom, a weary carpenter dad and no good shepherds were all that were there. A king is born but looked anything like a king...he looked...ordinary. Meanwhile the city continued to hum along with its daily and nightly tasks unaware of what had occurred. They missed the arrival of the king not because of evil acts or malice but because they were simply too busy to look. Not much has changed in 2000 years. Leaving us with a question, Why...why this way God.

St Paul in 1Corinthians 1:27 – 31 states it best: ²⁷ *But God chose the foolish things of the world to put to shame those who are wise. God chose the weak things of the world to put to shame the things that are strong,* ²⁸ *and God chose the lowly things of the world and the despised things, and the things that are not, to do away with the things that are,* ²⁹ *so that no one may boast before God.* ³⁰ *But because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us the wisdom from God, namely, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.* ³¹ *God did this so that, just as it is written, “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”* In other words, God didn’t want anyone or anything else taking credit for what He had done.

So as we proceed through the Christmas Season, let us remind ourselves of the gifts God has given through his Son Jesus:

1. **THE GIFT OF HIS PRESENCE.** The baby was to be called Emmanuel, “God with us.” He who resided in Heaven, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, willingly gave it all up and descended into our world. He breathed our air, felt our pain, knew our sorrows, and died for our sins. He didn’t come to frighten or threaten us. *“God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”* (John 3:17). He came to show us the way to warmth and safety and when He left, he promised to come back and sent the Spirit to continue the job.
2. **THE GIFT OF GOD’S LOVE.** God, who sees all and knows all, saw us before we were born and still sent his Son (While we were still sinners, Christ died for us). He calls you, His child and loves you like his child. How much does he love you, look at the cross...see His nail-stabbed hands and feet bleeding for you, for your forgiveness. On Christmas Day 2000 years ago, the birth of a tiny baby in an obscure village in the Middle East was the beginning of God’s triumph of good over evil for you.
3. **THE GIFT OF GRACE.** It is not Christ’s birth, but his death and resurrection that allow us to receive God’s grace. We see this in Exodus 12, when Moses instructed the Israelites to slaughter the Passover lamb and put its blood on the lintel and two doorposts. When the Lord passed through to strike down the firstborn, he saw the blood on the doorposts of the Jews and passed over. He didn’t need to look inside to see what kind of day the members of the household had had or what kind of thoughts were running through their heads. He saw the blood and passed over. In the same way, when you put the blood of Jesus (the Lamb of God) on the lintel and doorposts of your life, God passes over your sins as the wages have been paid and you are granted eternal life. He does not look inside your head to see what’s going through your mind, He only sees the blood of Jesus and passes over.

God’s presence, love and grace....what greater gifts could anyone receive than these? And guess what, these gifts are sharable. So go out and share these gifts with your neighbors, co-workers, co-students, friends. Join Jesus on his mission that started in the stable, let him work through you. Jesus is the gift that all should re-gift.

Pastor Eric



Finances

	OCTOBER	YEAR TO DATE
Income	\$10,502.31	\$98,297.02
Expenses	\$9,097.65	\$100,861.08
Net	\$1,404.66	-\$2,564.06
Benevolence	\$1,020.50	\$14,546.10

Just What is Advent?



For Christians, Advent is a time for remembering how the world waited in anticipation for God's promised Messiah to come and how we wait in anticipation for Jesus to come again. The word "advent" is from the Latin word for "coming," which is a translation of the Greek word *parousia* and as such, describes the "coming" of our Lord Jesus Christ into the flesh. It begins the church year because the church year begins where Jesus' earthly life began — in the Old Testament prophecies of his incarnation.

For centuries, Christians around the world have used the four weeks leading up to Christmas to prepare themselves for the celebration of Jesus' birth. Advent has a double-sided nature. On the one side, there is Jesus coming in humility as the baby born to Mary. The other side of Advent is the apocalyptic announcement that He will come in glory as the judge of the living and the dead. Advent specifically focuses on Christ's "coming," but Christ's coming manifests itself among us in three ways — past, present, and future. The readings which highlight Christ's coming in the past focus on the Old Testament prophecies of his incarnation at Bethlehem. The readings, which highlight Christ's coming in the future, focus on his "second coming" on the Last Day at the end of time. And the readings that highlight Christ's coming in the present focus on his ministry among us through Word and Sacrament today. Each of the four weeks leading up to Advent is focused on hope, peace, joy, and love respectively.



The Advent Wreath is an excellent symbol of this past, present and future coming of Jesus. The traditional use of Advent candles originated in eastern Germany even prior to the Reformation. As this tradition came down to us by the beginning of this century, it involved three purple candles and one pink candle. Today it often includes a white "Christ candle" in the middle to be lit during the 12 days of Christmas (Dec. 25 to Jan. 5). Our Advent

wreath depicts our current condition as we enter into the season. We live in an already not yet time and each candle points to that condition. The first purple candle, the prophets candle, reminds us of the not yet as we wait in hope, hope of Christ coming again. The second purple candle, the Bethlehem candle, tells us of the peace that is not yet with us but will come with Christ. The third candle is pink called the Shepherds candle, depicts the already and the joy of Christ coming as one of us. The fourth candle is purple and is the angel candle. It reminds us of the love God showed us in the person of Jesus Christ. Then on Christmas Eve, the center candle, the Christ candle, celebrates the present, that Jesus is the spotless lamb of God, sent to wash away our sins is present with us in Word and Sacrament. Jesus is with us now, invisible but in spirit and power.

The greatest gift-giver

When we give each other Christmas presents in [God's] name, let us remember that he has given us the sun and the moon and the stars, the earth with its forests and mountains and oceans — and all that lives and moves upon them. He has given us all green things and everything that blossoms and bears fruit and all that we quarrel about and all that we have misused. And to save us from our own foolishness, from all our sins, he came down to earth and gave us himself.—Sigrid Undset

October 14, 2021, Zion Council Meeting Minutes

Attendance Nate Arnold, David Culler III, Ashlee Hall, Ralph Hall, Ken Frayer, Pastor Eric Steward, Michael Dourson, Ethel Briggs (excused)

Pastor Eric opened the meeting with devotions related to Proverbs.

Minutes from September 9th meeting were handed out. Motion to accept with amendment from Ken Frayer and seconded by Nate Arnold. Motion passed.

Treasures report for August income \$9221.00 expenses \$8,709. Church is \$3968.00 in the red for the year.

Motion to accept report by Nate Arnold and second by Mike Dourson. Motion passed.

Pastor's report:

Pastoral Acts

Home Communion: 0

Home Visits/meeting with Parishioners: 2 (delivered meals)

Phone Visits: 4

Hospitals: 4

Worship

Sermons Preached: 4

Communion: 2

Children's Sermons: 2

Other Services: 0

Administrative and Preparation (100 hrs)

Administrative: Echo, bulletin, notebook, PowerPoint slides, email and miscellaneous

Preparation: Sunday School/Wednesday Bible Study/Catechism; Sermon and worship

Consultations

Counseling: 0

Teaching

Adult Sunday School: 4

Wednesday Bible Study: 5

Catechism: 2

Meeting and Activities

Church Council: 1

Lectionary Discussions: 3

Other:

Outreach: New Store

First Chemo treatment for dad/Radiation treatment (Columbus)

Upcoming Events

- 2nd Sunday of each month: Winchester Nursing home service suspended for time being
- October 16: NC Mission District Seminar, Joining Jesus on His Mission
- October 24: Chili cookoff and pumpkin carving
- October 31: Reformation Sunday
- Combined Adult Sunday School (Pastor Finke's book, Joining Jesus)

Committee reports:

Finance- Nothing else to report.

Property- As Nate pointed out at a previous meeting, there is no gutter spouting on main entrance of the church on the southwest side. He noted there may have been. He talked with someone about adding a gutter, but we are missing some supporting structure. After some discussion, it was decided to not add the gutter, unless we have a long term plan to upgrade the basement space. Some additional work may be needed on the front entrance steps.

Worship/Education/Evangelism- Big event this weekend with Greg Finke; several parishioners will be attending.

Fellowship- October 24th Pumpkin carving and chilly cook off and Reformation at the end of the month.

Alter Guild- We have been blessed with too many wreaths at this point!

Youth Group – looking for a new Leader

New Business-

- Outreach for November- thank you notes and brownies or some other small gift to our health care workers. All members of Mt. Zion will be encouraged to do this to the health care workers of their choice.
- Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas. LAMA will be doing a community Thanksgiving service on the prior Tuesday at Pleasant Valley. Pastor Eric has not yet decided on events during Advent. Plans for Christmas are still being considered.
- Estimates for roof over the education wing, refurbishing the parking lot and east entrance door and basement flooring \$9700 (Nature Stone). Some of this will be paid for by a Clark Grant (part of Trinity outreach).

Old Business

- October outreach was modestly successful with both youth and adults doing yard work for shut-ins. Good effort but additional organization for next year would be helpful.
- Joining Jesus on October 16th with a Greg Finke presentation at 1st English in Mansfield; several parishioners are attending.
- Trinity Ashland Grant fund request we are asking for monies to pay off any remaining money on Sanctuary roof replacement and money to reroof the educational wing and pave the parking lot. The money will be placed in our bank accounts till we decide to use it in the future.

Good and Welfare

- Messiah's Star movie has been delayed for a year.
- 200th report will be drafted by the end of the year.

Motion to adjourn by Nate Second by Dave. Motion passed.

The meeting closed with praying for those in the bulletin and the Lord's Prayer.

Event Reminder

"Questions of science in the Bible"

The astronomy around the time of Jesus' birth that suggests
what the Star of Bethlehem might have been
Saturday December 26 at the Lucas Community Center
at 6 pm.

Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

Daniel 12:3

While You Wait

The Bible promises that faith in Jesus as Savior is the only qualification for getting to heaven. Whoever believes in him will not perish but will have everlasting life.

But then the Bible says things like, “those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens.” Is wisdom also necessary for getting to heaven? And it says, “those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars.” So, is telling people certain things another secret qualification for eternal life? Or are both of those things something you do to shine a little brighter in heaven?

There are not any extra secret qualifications for getting into heaven. It’s just that believing in Jesus as Savior is the wisest possible thing you can do. You may be foolish in a lot of other areas, but if you are wise in just this one area, you are wise for eternity. Jesus is your wisdom.

And there are not certain things you can do to shine a little brighter when you are with God for eternity. Leading people to righteousness does not mean telling them what is right and wrong. It means that Jesus’ perfect life is credited to you through faith, and when you lead people to Jesus, you are leading them to the only righteousness that will save them. Jesus is your righteousness.

So, while you wait to go to heaven, you can live a wise life of faith in Jesus, confident in his righteousness for yourself and for others. Let us shine like the stars forever, when we share the good news of what Christ has done for all of us.

Blessings in Christ
Ralph Hall



Members: Ethel Briggs, Jan Cook, Karen Frayer, Bill Grubaugh, Linda Mosher family, Gene & Kate Steward, Dianna Wright. **Family and others:** Caitlin Briggs, Tyler Duckworth, Dee Fogel, Lou Leasor, Kathy Reining, Katie Spear, Matt Williams, Charlie Winger, Hailey Yoder.

ADVENT SERVICES

“The Advent of the King”

Wednesday 1 December: The King Has a Mission

Wednesday 8 December: The Long Awaited Season of Restoration

Wednesday 15 December: The King Invites Us to Join Him

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 7 pm (Readers are needed)

DECEMBER OUTREACH

Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY)

The seminary of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) in Addis Ababa was severely damaged by a flash flood that left death and destruction in its wake. The Aug. 17 flood killed three children and five adults at the seminary and displaced more than 98 people.

The Akaki River, which borders the seminary campus, rose rapidly and overflowed an earthen dike protecting the seminary. As the dike failed, waters rose quickly in the lower parts of campus, flooding that area in a matter of minutes.

The river rose six feet in three minutes. There was no warning, so students and faculty did not have time to get out. Many people survived by getting on the roofs of the buildings.

Church officials reported that a large part of the institution was badly damaged, including staff residences for both international and national missionaries. Those impacted lost all their personal belongings.

Initial estimates are that more than \$2.5 million will be needed to rebuild, relocate impacted families and install flood protection systems. About 21 buildings and roads leading to the seminary were badly damaged. "This is a catastrophic, heartbreaking and unprecedented disaster that has resulted in the loss of lives, destruction and displacement of our people," said Rev. Dr. Bruk Ayele Asa le, president of the seminary. "We are in an emergency."

Those who would like to help with building and rebuilding efforts at the seminary may either indicate this on your giving envelope and please indicate "EECMY" on the memo line.



The Real 12 days of Christmas

Did you know that for the Christian Church, Christmas starts on the 25th and ends 12 days later on January 6th with the Epiphany (the arrival of the Magi)? That is right, the opposite of the way the world celebrates Christmas. Every year, Christmas displays and Christmas music begin earlier and earlier and then comes to a screeching halt on December 26th. However, in the church we are just beginning our celebration after the 4-week preparation of Advent.



The "real" 12 days of Christmas are important not just as a way of thumbing our noses at secular ideas of the "Christmas season." They are important because they give us a way of reflecting on what the Incarnation means in our lives. Christmas commemorates the most momentous event in human history—the entry of God into the world he made, in the form of a baby.

Would it surprise you to know that up until somewhere between the 4th and 6th Century the church did not celebrate Christmas. Epiphany was the celebration of the church since AD 325. Events began to spin off from Epiphany. By the sixth century, Dec. 25 had become the celebration of Christ's birth. His Baptism was celebrated after Epiphany, so Epiphany itself focused on the arrival of the kings who, not being Jews, give it the significance of the appearance, or manifestation, of the Messiah to the Gentiles. Divisions cease. Jesus appeared not only as the Chosen One of Israel but the Lord of all nations.

So from Christmas Day onward, all the fun and festivities are just beginning! However, it is a rollercoaster ride with celebrations and feasts of saints and martyrs. These 12 days help Christians remember that the life of faith is full of challenges and hardships but also contains plenty of reasons to celebrate as we remember the heroes and heroines of the church, and most importantly, our Lord and Savior. You have twelve more days to celebrate, so leave those decorations up, right on up through Twelfth Night (Jan. 5–6). Simply put, the appearance or manifestation of God is just too big to contain in one day! That's why the Church doesn't. Instead, it extends the celebration of God's coming among us to twelve days, starting at Christmas. Don't let the world, the mall, or any calendar tell you any differently!



Look at the Candy Cane

*What do you see?
Stripes that are red
Like the blood shed for me
White is for my Savior
Who's sinless and pure!
"J" is for Jesus My Lord, that's for sure!
Turn it around
And a staff you will see
Jesus my shepherd
Was born for Me!*

THE SONG: The Twelve Days of Christmas

The popular song "The Twelve Days of Christmas" is usually seen as simply a nonsense song for children with secular origins. However, folklore has it as a song of Christian instruction, perhaps dating to the 16th century religious wars in England, with hidden references to the basic teachings of the Christian Faith. They contend that it was a mnemonic device to teach the catechism to youngsters. The "true love" mentioned in the song is not an earthly suitor, but refers to God Himself. The "me" who receives the presents refers to every baptized person who is part of the Christian Faith. Each of the "days" represents some aspect of the Christian Faith that was important for children to learn.

However, many have questioned the historical accuracy of this origin of the song *The Twelve Days of Christmas*. While some have tried to debunk this as an "urban myth" out of personal agendas, others have tried to deal with this account of the song's origin in the name of historical accuracy (see Snopes on The 12 Days of Christmas). There is little "hard" evidence available either way. Some church historians affirm this account as basically accurate, while others point out apparent historical and logical discrepancies.

The view of the song as a secret catechism is most likely legendary or anecdotal. Without corroboration and in the absence of "substantive evidence," we probably should not take overly rigid positions from either perspective. However, this should not prevent us from using the song in celebration of Christmas. Many of the symbols of Christianity were not originally religious, including even the present date of Christmas, but were appropriated from contemporary culture by the Christian Faith as vehicles of worship and proclamation. Perhaps, when all is said and done, historical accuracy, as important as that might be on one level, is not really the point. Perhaps more important is that Christians can celebrate their rich heritage, and God's grace, through one more avenue during the Advent and Christmas seasons. Now, when they hear what they once thought was only a secular "nonsense song," they will be reminded in one more way of the grace of God working in transforming ways in their lives and in our world. After all, is that not the meaning of Christmas anyway?

On the 1st day of Christmas my true love sent to me...A Partridge in a Pear Tree:

The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In the song, Christ is symbolically presented as a mother partridge that feigns injury to decoy predators from her helpless nestlings, much in memory of the expression of Christ's sadness over the fate of Jerusalem: "Jerusalem! Jerusalem! How often would I have sheltered you under my wings, as a hen does her chicks, but you would not have it so" (Luke 13:34)

On the 2nd day of Christmas my true love sent to me... Two Turtle Doves

The Old and New Testaments, which together bear witness to God's self-revelation in history and the creation of a people to tell the Story of God to the world.

On the 3rd day of Christmas my true love sent to me...Three French Hens

There are two versions of what the three French hens stand for. Some say they are the three Biblical virtues the author Paul espoused in 1 Corinthians 13:13: Faith, Hope, and Love. Others claim the three French hens represent the three precious gifts the Wise Men brought: gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and inspire us to bring our best to Christ.

On the 4th day of Christmas my true love sent to me...Four Calling Birds

The Four Gospels: 1) Matthew, 2) Mark, 3) Luke, and 4) John, which proclaim the Good News of God's

On the 5th day of Christmas my true love sent to me...Five Gold Rings

The first Five Books of the Old Testament, known as the Torah or the Pentateuch: 1) Genesis, 2) Exodus, 3) Leviticus, 4) Numbers, and 5) Deuteronomy, which gives the history of humanity's sinful failure and God's response of grace in the creation of a people to be a light to the world.

On the 6th day of Christmas my true love sent to me...Six Geese A-laying

The six days of creation that confesses God as Creator and Sustainer of the world (Genesis 1).

On the 7th day of Christmas my true love sent to me...Seven Swans A-swimming

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: 1) prophecy, 2) ministry, 3) teaching, 4) exhortation, 5) giving, 6) leading, and 7) compassion (Romans 12:6-8; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:8-11)

On the 8th day of Christmas my true love sent to me...Eight Maids A-milking

The eight Beatitudes: 1) Blessed are the poor in spirit, 2) those who mourn, 3) the meek, 4) those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, 5) the merciful, 6) the pure in heart, 7) the peacemakers, 8) those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. (Matthew 5:3-10)

On the 9th day of Christmas my true love sent to me...Nine Ladies Dancing

The nine Fruit of the Holy Spirit: 1) love, 2) joy, 3) peace, 4) patience, 5) kindness, 6) generosity, 7) faithfulness, 8) gentleness, and 9) self-control. (Galatians 5:22)

On the 10th day of Christmas my true love sent to me...Ten Lords A-leaping

The ten commandments: 1) You shall have no other gods before me; 2) Do not make an idol; 3) Do not take God's name in vain; 4) Remember the Sabbath Day; 5) Honor your father and mother; 6) Do not murder; 7) Do not commit adultery; 8) Do not steal; 9) Do not bear false witness; 10) Do not covet. (Exodus 20:1-17)

On the 11th day of Christmas my true love sent to me...Eleven Pipers Piping

The eleven Faithful Apostles: 1) Simon Peter, 2) Andrew, 3) James, 4) John, 5) Philip, 6) Bartholomew, 7) Matthew, 8) Thomas, 9) James bar Alphaeus, 10) Simon the Zealot, 11) Judas bar James. (Luke 6:14-16). The list does not include the twelfth disciple, Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus to the religious leaders and the Romans.

On the 12th day of Christmas my true love sent to me...Twelve Drummers Drumming

The Twelve points of doctrine in the Apostles' Creed: 1) I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. 2) I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. 3) He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. 4) He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell [the grave]. 5) On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. 6) He will come again to judge the living and the dead. 7) I believe in the Holy Spirit, 8) the holy catholic Church, 9) the communion of saints, 10) the forgiveness of sins, 11) the resurrection of the body, 12) and life everlasting.

The Semi-Annual Congregational meeting will
be on
January 23, 2022 after Sunday Service.

Our Coming King

—inspired by Pastor S.D. Lockridge

He is:
King of the Jews (*racial*);
King of Israel (*national*);
King of all the Ages;
King of Heaven;
King of Glory;
King of Kings;
..and Lord of Lords. [Do you know Him? *Do you really?*]

A prophet before Moses;
A priest after Melchizedek;
A champion like Joshua;
An offering in place of Isaac;
A king from the line of David;
A wise counselor above Solomon;
A beloved/rejected/exalted son like Joseph.
And yet far more...

The Heavens declare His glory...
and the firmament shows His handiwork..
He who **is**, who **was**, and who always **will be**;
The first and the last
He is the Alpha and the Omega
the Aleph and the Tau
the A and the Z;
He is the first fruits of them that slept.

He is the ἐγώ εἰμι (ego ami)
the אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh
the “I AM that I AM” [*the Voice of the Burning Bush!*]
He is the Captain of the Lord’s Host
He was the conqueror of Jericho

He is enduringly strong;
He is entirely sincere;
He is eternally steadfast;
He is immortally graceful;
He is imperially powerful;
He is impartially merciful;

In Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily;
The very God of very God.
He is our Kinsman-Redeemer
and He is our Avenger of Blood;
He is our City of Refuge;
our Performing High Priest,
our Personal Prophet,
our Reigning King.

He’s the Loftiest idea in Literature;
He’s the highest Personality in Philosophy;
He’s the Fundamental Doctrine of Theology;
He’s the Supreme Problem in “higher criticism”!
He’s the Miracle of the Ages
the Superlative of everything good

We are the beneficiaries of a Love Letter:
It was written in blood,
on a wooden cross
erected in Judea
2,000 years ago.

*He was crucified on a cross of wood,
yet He made the hill on which it stood.*

By Him were all things made that were made;
without Him was not anything made that was made;
By Him are all things held together!

What held Him to that cross? *It wasn’t the nails!*
(At any time He could have declared, “I’m out of here!”)
It was His love for you and me.

He was born of a woman
so that we could be born of God;
He humbled Himself
so that we could be lifted up;
He became a servant
so that we could be made co-heirs;
He suffered rejection
so that we could become His friends;
He denied Himself
so that we could freely receive all things;
He gave Himself
so that He could bless us in every way.

He is

*Available to the tempted and the tried;
Blesses the young;
Cleanses the lepers;
Defends the feeble;
Delivers the captives;
Discharges the debtors;
Forgives the sinners;
Franchises the meek;
Guards the besieged;
Heals the sick;
Provides strength to the weak;
Regards the aged;
Rewards the diligent;
Serves the unfortunate;
Sympathizes and He saves!*

His Offices are manifold;

*His Reign is righteous;
His Promises are sure;
His Goodness is limitless;
His Light is matchless;
His Grace is sufficient;
His Love never changes;
His Mercy is everlasting;
His Word is enough;
His Yoke is easy and
His Burden is light!*

He's indescribable;
He's incomprehensible;
He's irresistible;
He's invincible!

The Heaven of heavens cannot *contain* Him;
Man cannot *explain* Him

The Pharisees couldn't *stand* Him
and learned that they couldn't *stop* Him;
Pilate couldn't *find any fault* with Him;
the witnesses couldn't *agree against* Him.

Herod couldn't *kill* Him
death couldn't *handle* Him
the grave couldn't *hold* Him!
He *has always been and always will be*;
He had no predecessor and
will have no successor;
You can't impeach Him and
he isn't going to resign!

His name is above every name;
That at the name of Yeshua
Every knee shall bow
Every tongue shall confess
That Jesus Christ is Lord!

His is the kingdom, the power, and the glory... for
ever, and ever.
...Amen!

Light shines in the darkness

In Nepal, where blindness is prevalent due to under-funded medical care and a lack of eye doctors, ophthalmologist Sanduk Ruit has made it his mission to treat poor people. He's performed more than 130,000 cataract surgeries to restore sight, sometimes walking for a week with surgical equipment in tow to reach patients. Dr. Ruit also found a way for replacement lenses to be made locally for less than \$3 each, rather than buying them internationally for 100 times as much. The physician brings healing to remote villages and celebrates "big eye-opening festivals" with people who "were blind yesterday, and ... are seeing today."

At Christmas we celebrate the Word of God who came to live among us as Jesus, the light of the world. In countless ways since, God has brought light to those living in literal or figurative darkness.

We celebrate people, such as Dr. Ruit and the 650 doctors he has trained, whom God uses to cause "light [to shine] in the darkness" (John 1:5).

During the month of December, you are encouraged to greet and pray for these members and friends of Mt. Zion Lutheran Church who are celebrating birthdays and anniversaries.

**If there is anyone you would like to add to our Birthday/Anniversary list please contact the Church Office with your request! Thank you!



3	Tammy Cooper	20	Mylah McKenna
7	Sheri Culler	21	Erica Westfield
8	Easton Hall	24	Zachery Fraizer
13	Joyce Boggs	27	Zachery Winters
14	Zach Stallard		

5	Kevin & Sarah Smith
10	Jon & Vanessa Barrett
20	Harold & Cynthia Anschutz
27	Nate & Amity Arnold



During the month of December, we THANK these members who are offering their service to the church in various ways:

	<u>Lector</u>	<u>Acolyte</u>	<u>Fellowship Time</u>	<u>Nursery</u>
5	Kim Smollen	Daniel Fraizer	Melinda Hall	Shelby/Jamie Grover
12	Gary Cook	Andrew Smollen	Marie McKenna	
19	Matt Culler	Bobby Grover	Freda Steward	Linda Sweval
24		Atticus & Xavier Hall		
26	Sheri Culler	Lilly Fraizer	Linda Sweval	Kim Smollen

Ushers

Jeff Fraizer & Ralph Hall

Communion

Ethel Briggs

Offering Counters

Nate Arnold & Ralph Hall

Altar Guild

Tammy Cooper & Kathy Grover



WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

MISSIONARY UPDATE

First, we are SO sorry for the long hiatus on updates. It has been a combination of a crazy schedule and waiting for some decisions so we didn't have to come back and change the story in a couple of weeks.

A lot has happened over the last couple of months! We are continuing to have a lot of medical appointments for Caitlin (more on that in the next story) but one of the significant changes started taking place in mid to late summer when she started to temporarily lose sight in one of her eyes. We were originally told by a couple of physicians in MI that it was related to the POTS and wasn't a cause for concern, however, during an appointment with the cardiologist at the end of August Ren was told that it definitely was not from the POTS, and he wanted Caitlin examined as soon as possible for a possibility of TIA (mini-strokes) and MS.

Prior to the sight problems, we had purchased tickets for Ren and Caitlin to come back to Jamaica for September and part of October between cardiology appointments. Now with the possibility of strokes in Caitlin's medical mix and personal experience with seeing the inability to effectively treat that in Jamaica, we made the decision to cancel their trip back and instead have me travel to the US for a few weeks to go to some of the medical appointments and have a little time together as a family (otherwise it was likely we would have been apart for about 6 months).

I planned on being in the US for just a few weeks to go to some of the medical appointments, take a long weekend for our family to just get away and be a family, and meet with a few of our supporters and local church partners to provide a personal update, but it was during a few of these updates that we started to notice a trend that indicated maybe we hadn't been as clear as we thought in our communications.

During a chance meeting with one of our supporters they asked if we had fully moved back or were still in the process. They knew that we were at the end of our initial 4 year commitment, that Caitlin was going through some medical challenges and was being seen by doctors here in America, and now saw the three of us together in Michigan and had come to the conclusion that we were transitioning back. I quickly explained that our doctors had indicated that after we had gotten an effective treatment plan worked out that they didn't see any reason we couldn't continue to serve in Jamaica (with trips back for testing and follow-up) and that we are starting the process of visa renewals this fall to continue serving in Jamaica. This seemed to clear up some confusion, and I didn't think much more about it.

Over the course of the next week-and-a-half, however, a similar theme came up in 3 other conversations with individual supporters. Each time I was able to share about where we are in our family and ministry journey and where we see ourselves for the foreseeable future and have been so thankful to God for the amazing group of people that He has blessed us with as ministry partners as each one affirmed that they would continue to walk with us.

These conversations all ended well, but it did lead me to wonder what would happen if one or more of our church partners drew a similar conclusion and possibly dropped us off of their budget. I shared this concern with our sending agency and they agreed that it might be wise to arrange to visit with our churches if at all possible.

Because of some flexibility in the fall schedule and an amazing group of people in Jamaica who are picking up extra responsibility while I am away, I was able to extend my trip for another 3.5 weeks and have been hitting the road. In the past few weeks, I have been in 11 states and covered about 7,000 miles. We couldn't quite get all of our churches into this schedule, but if we didn't see you this time don't worry we'll definitely see you during a future visit.

This has been an amazing time for our family to reconnect with a lot of people who have been faithfully walking with us for the last four years. Whether you are a church/individual supporter, a prayer partners, encourager, sounding board, etc. - please know that you are a vital part of our ministry, and we couldn't do what we have been called to do in Jamaica without you.

Love and blessings,
The Briggs family



The Christmas message is that there is hope for a ruined humanity — hope of pardon, hope of peace with God, hope of glory — because at the Father's will Jesus Christ became poor, and was born in a stable so that 30 years later he might hang on a cross.

—J.I. Packer

December 2021

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

			1 <i>Advent Service 7 pm</i> <i>Pastor in office 12-8</i>	2 <i>Pastor in office 9-4</i> <i>Elaine in office</i>	3 <i>Pastor in office 10-3</i>	4
5 <i>Advent 2</i> <i>Communion</i>	6 <i>Pastor in office 11-3</i> <i>Karen in office</i>	7 <i>Pastor in office 11-3</i> <i>Karen in office</i>	8 <i>Advent Service 7 pm</i> <i>Pastor in office 12-8</i>	9 <i>Pastor in office 9-4</i> <i>Elaine in office</i>	10 <i>Pastor in office 10-3</i> <i>LAFP Delivery</i>	11
12 <i>Advent 3</i>	13 <i>Pastor in office 11-3</i> <i>Karen in office</i>	14 <i>Pastor in office 11-3</i> <i>Karen in office</i>	15 <i>Advent Service 7 pm</i> <i>Pastor in office 12-8</i>	16 <i>Pastor Out of Town</i> <i>Elaine in office</i>	17 <i>Pastor Out of Town</i>	18 <i>Pastor Out of Town</i> <i>LAFP Distribution</i>
19 <i>Advent 4</i>	20 <i>Pastor in office 11-3</i> <i>Karen in office</i>	21 <i>Pastor in office 11-3</i> <i>Karen in office</i>	22 <i>Pastor in office 12-8</i>	23 <i>Pastor in office 9-4</i> <i>Elaine in office</i>	24 <i>Christmas Eve Service 7 pm</i>	25 <i>Christmas Day</i>
26 <i>Communion</i>	27 <i>Pastor in office as needed</i>	28 <i>Pastor in office as needed</i>	29 <i>Pastor in office as needed</i>	30 <i>Pastor in office 9-4</i> <i>Elaine in office</i>	31 <i>Pastor in office as needed</i>	

Mt. Zion Lutheran Church
4065 Mt. Zion Road
Lucas, OH 44843



Five-Pointed Star

The star of Bethlehem is often shown as a five-pointed star. Roughly shaped like a human being, it symbolizes Christ's incarnation. It also calls to mind the wise men's journey: "After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him'" (Matthew 2:1-2, NIV).

