



For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a

time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace. -Ecclesiastes 3:1–8. Many of you who were in my one of my Ecclesiastes classes this past year have already heard my sermon on this text, but as New Year's Eve is one of the rare times that Ecclesiastes appears in the Lectionary, I thought it most appropriate to say these words again here at the turn of the year. There is a profound unspoken comfort in this well-known poem which is worth speaking aloud for all to hear. And that comfort is this: it is okay to have struggles in life! It is okay to be stressed out when you are stressed out. It is okay to be in mourning when you are in mourning. These things have their proper place and time just as much as merriment and peace. It is vanity that we try to put on airs all the time and pretend, and muster up for ourselves a different season for our lives than the one we are actually in. Some of us even do this with the literal seasons and pretend that it is still summer as long as we possibly can even as the snow starts to fall. We spend so much effort trying to be "okay" and "happy" when instead, we should be learning to breathe. Ecclesiastes promises us that the state we are currently in has its proper place in the world, and it's okay to not be okay. It's a part of the many seasons of life. There is a time for rending our hair out, and there is a time for breaking down, and there is a time for mourning. All of these things are proper and worthwhile and gifts from God just as much as their opposites. So breathe friends. Life has a space for you to live in it, no matter what time or season you are in. I have heard so many times during this pandemic the phrase: this too shall pass. And that is a comfort, yes, and that interpretation is also here in this poem. But what I find is more profound, and even more comforting, is knowing that "this too has its proper time!" You don't have to keep striving for some future where the season will be different. We don't have to keep pretending that 2021 will magically be different and better just because it is not 2020. You don't have to keep pretending things are not as they are. You have permission from God to live now, right here where things are difficult and you are encouraged to do so with vigor. Just as you have permission to live when the times are happy. So as we look to this new year, let us live vigorously into the times that God has given us. Knowing that each year has its place, as well as each season. Friends in Christ, I say again: Breathe! Do not torture yourselves with trying to be in some season that you are not. Live like we did this Christmas Eve, when we had an amazing creative outdoor worship service with campfires. Thanks to our worship team, and all our volunteers, our intrepid live nativity couple, the city of Manistique, and the congregation of Saint Albans all for coming together to make it such a memorable evening! By a conservative estimate, we had almost 100 people in attendance, all socially distanced and wearing masks, or safe in their cars! I had more than one person say to me "Pastor, we should do this every year, even when we're not in a Pandemic! That way we could even have hot chocolate and make it a tradition." Well, time will tell I suppose, but I could not think of a better witness to how brightly the light of Christ shines in the darkness, and how the darkness has not overcome it. That in the middle of such a season and a year as 2020, we have had such a joyous celebration that people want to do it again! This joy too has had its time and proper space. Merry Christmas, and a Deep Breaths New Year! -Pastor Tommy Richter



The church office will be open Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:00am-12:00pm until further notice. All other days, if you have questions, concerns or are in need of pastoral care, please contact Pastor Richter at 286-4383.

Holy Communion will be offered each week at the Saturday parking lot worship service. If you are interested in helping defray the cost of the individually packaged communion sets, please call the office. The cost is \$71.00.

To join the Zoom Worship go to our Website and click on Covid Info. There is a big blue button that says "Join our Zoom worship" click on it. Click **Open** on the dialog shown by your browser. If you don't see a dialog, click **Launch Meeting**. You can also join by phone by calling 929-205-6099 and entering the following ID # 9063415427, Passcode 49854.



Thank you to my church family for the thoughtful Christmas gift. It is truly appreciated and nice to know that the work I do is appreciated by you. Thank you to everyone who has called to check on Frank after his surgery. It really brightens his day. I pray that we will be able to be together soon, but until then hugs to all and God's blessings.—Shirley and Frank Leitgeb

The Work of the Church - 2021

Very soon, Zion's Nominating Committee will begin the important work of putting together lists of people willing to serve in elected roles. These roles include the Audit Committee, Congregation Council, Nominating Committee, and Synod Assembly Representatives, as well as Delta Conference Representatives. At Zion's Annual Meeting on February 14, 2021 members will review and elect members to fill these positions. Following is a brief re-cap of the roles and responsibilities of our elected positions:

Audit Committee: Audit Committee members are elected by the Congregation Council to a three-year-term. Individuals who serve on this committee provide an independent evaluation of the financial records of Zion and provide an opinion as to its financial statements. The Audit Committee also recommends improvements as to internal controls of the congregation.

Congregation Council: Congregation Council members are elected to a three-year-term and may serve a second consecutive full term. Council members have general oversight of the life and activities of Zion, and in particular, its worship life. Congregation Council members are also responsible for the financial and property matters of the congregation. The Council normally meets monthly on the third Tuesday at 6:00 p.m., and members are asked to serve on at least one standing committee (Christian Education and Youth; Evangelism and Membership; Finance and Stewardship; Personnel; Property; Worship and Music). On a rotating basis, members are also asked to find Sunday worship readers and serve as communion ushers.

Nominating Committee: Six Zion members are elected to a one year term (two of whom, preferably, are outgoing members of the Congregation Council). The committee meets in the weeks prior to the Annual Meeting to identify nominees for open elected roles. They do this with the pastor and president of the congregation council who may be aware of potential candidates. Once the slots are filled as fully as possible, the report is included in the Annual Report and used as the basis for elections.

Synod Assembly Reps: Each year, two persons are elected to attend the Northern Great Lakes Synod Annual Assembly. In 2021, the assembly will be virtual. Zion Reps will gather with representatives from 80 other churches, as well as their pastors, to vote on issues affecting the synod and to learn and come away inspired through worship and workshops.

Delta Conference # 6 Reps: We are able to elect four persons as conference representatives. Zion is the newest church in the Delta Conference and joins nine others, from: Escanaba (3), Gladstone, Perkins, Rapid River, Rock, Stonington, and Trenary. The next conference meeting to be announced, and we also anticipate another Walking Together Event in October 2021.



All committee chairpersons are reminded to turn in their annual reports to the church office by the week of January 25th and earlier if possible. Please submit the reports in Microsoft Word format if possible. These reports are reviewed by our auditors before they are ready to be copied and assembled. The annual reports will be ready for your pick up February 8 & 10. The annual meeting will on Zoom, February 14th following worship at 11:00am.

Reports are needed from the following committees:

Ahlstrom Trust Fund

Audit Committee

Endowment Fund

Funeral Luncheon Committee

Quilters

Tanzania Church Committee

Thrivent

Sunday School/Christian Education Committee

Property Committee

Finance & Stewardship Committee

Personnel Committee

Evangelism & Membership Committee

Worship & Music Committee

Gifts to our congregation have been given in memory of

Gay Waldvogel

Liz Macklem—Memorial Fund

Carole Johnson

Liz Macklem—Memorial Fund

Join us for Bible Study

The Monday night Bible study group will be and 4th Mondays starting January 11th . Pr.

study on the book of Ecclesiastes. We will meet in person in Augustana Hall. Be sure to wear your mask and social distance. If you have any questions about this opportunity for study, please contact the office.



meeting at 6:30, every 2nd Richter will be leading our

Circle News

The Circles are able to start their monthly meetings. If you are not a member of a circle and would be interested in joining one, please contact any one of the following ladies for more information:

Sarah Circle—Liz Macklem
Joy Circle—Donna Gauthier
Ruth Circle—Verda Kreuzwieser
Hope Circle—Sheila Clark

The **Sarah Circle** meets on Mondays at 1:00pm

The **Joy Circle** meets on the second Thursday at 10:00am.

The **Ruth Circle** meets on the third Wednesday at 11:30am.

The **Hope Circle** meets on the third Thursday at 6:00pm.

Be sure to check with your Circle Leader to find out if and where your circle will be meeting.

Upcoming Scripture Readings

January 3 —2nd Sunday of Christmas

Jeremiah 31:7-14, Psalm 147:12-20, Ephesians 1:3-14,
John 1:[1-9], 10-18

January 10—Baptism of Our Lord

Genesis 1:1-5, Psalm 29, Acts 19:1-7, Mark 1:4-11

January 17—Second Sunday After Epiphany

1 Samuel 3:1-10 [11-20], Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, John 1:43-51

January 24—Third Sunday After Epiphany

Jonah 3:1-5, 10, Psalm 62:5-12, 1 Corinthians 7:29-31, Mark 1:14-20

January 31—Fourth Sunday After Epiphany

Deuteronomy 18:15-20, Psalm 111, 1 Corinthians 8:1-13,
Mark 1:21-28



"Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree."

~Attributed to Martin Luther

Dear Northern Great Lakes Synod,

Have you ever seen a new tree planted that has two supports added? I'm thinking of a young tree that stands between two poles to which are attached a tether, each pulling the tree in the opposite direction. Not only do these supports help guard against windstorms, but they ensure that the young tree grows up straight and true between the opposing tensions of being pulled in opposite directions.

So too, I imagine, do the opposing pulls of the Democrat and Republican parties do the same for our country. Blue and red need each other; right and left, conservative and liberal. We need the dichotomy, the tension of opposing forces, the disagreement, so that we can grow, straight and true somewhere in the middle.

I can only imagine what the tree feels as it is being pulled in two opposite directions, but I would guess it is something like what our country is feeling now. When considering the election results, some feel relief and even elation, others feel disappointment and even anger. Never before have so many voted. Never before has the country offered such clear and disturbing statistics for how many are pulling in opposing directions. We are polarized, standing in support on opposite sides of the tree, pulling with all we've got, and yet, if one side has too much influence, the tree will bend. There is value in having each side pull, so that our country can grow straight and true somewhere in the middle.

What then does this mean for ministry?

It is curious to me how 100% of our congregation members can agree that Jesus Christ is Lord, but we do not agree on what that means, how that impacts our vote, and how we embody that conviction in our ministry efforts. But then again, the church is not known for its level of agreement *except* for the conviction that Jesus Christ is Lord.

When political convictions run deep, when we feel the tension of being pulled in opposing directions, when we are grieved by the lack of agreement and the swirl of emotions and the resentment towards those who are pulling the opposing tether, I urge you to extend some grace. Forgive others for not voting as you did. Forgive others for not championing the same convictions that you hold dear. And turn your efforts, your attention, your energy to push and pull the growth toward and into the work of Christ.

We are not going to agree as a country, and not even as congregation, but we can agree that we are invited to participate in the breaking in of the kingdom of God. We are called to bear the light of Christ. And our efforts in ministry are strengthened when we work together towards some goal, some embodiment of the presence of Christ in the world. Feed the hungry. Clothe the naked. Comfort the afflicted. There is blessing and life-giving growth as we concentrate on the nuts and bolts of our faith.

Yes, there is still the pandemic which is no small challenge. But consider that it is an additional tether, another added tension. Don't let that get in the way of you and your congregation growing straight and true and keeping the thing, the thing. Jesus Christ is Lord. And more than that, Jesus Christ is your Lord, your Lord and Savior. The rest is just...tension, albeit challenging, grieving, thick, and concerning tension, but through which we grow straight and true.



In the midst of this tension, God is at work. As we consider our own convictions with humility, and the convictions of our friends and neighbors with grace and forgiveness, we will find our way forward, as a country and as congregations called to serve the work of Christ.

And whether or not you believe the world is going to pieces, I am glad to remind you that the Northern Great Lakes Synod has indeed already planted an apple tree. In November of 2018, I was invited to participate in the retreat for newly elected leaders sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation. In observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, I planted an apple tree on behalf of our synod in Wittenberg, Germany. We are Tree #468, and if you are ever in Wittenberg, please feel free to find our tree and take a picture.

Because even if the world goes to pieces, Jesus Christ is Lord and you and I are invited, encouraged, indeed, we are called and equipped to be his presence in the world. And that, my dear friends, colleagues, and congregational members, is no small thing.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Katherine Finegan.



Greetings from Fortune Lake!

You are invited to worship with the Fortune Lake Association congregations as we celebrate Epiphany on Sunday, January 10, 2021! We know how hard you have been working throughout this pandemic. We hope that you will accept this gift of a pre-recorded

worship service that you can share with your congregations! Perhaps you can even take a week off from planning and preparing a virtual worship service?

Our Epiphany worship service will include scripture, prayers, engaging preaching (thank you Pr. Brenda Greenwald!), and camp-style worship songs. There will be contributions from campers, summer staff, and Fortune Lake friends and family from near and far. The recording will be available on our YouTube channel by Saturday, January 9th so that you can share it as you see fit.

A highlight of this worship experience will be the virtual blending of 'This Little Light of Mine' videos from our camp family. If you or others from your congregation would like to participate, please email fortunelakedigital@gmail.com for details.

Join us as we close out the celebration of our 90th year of ministry through our Epiphany worship. May we all be grateful to God and continue "Lighting the Way" for generations to come.

Grace & Peace,

Amanda Rasner

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Musician: Linda Levin

Choir Director: Rebecca Peterson

Sunday School Coordinator: Sheila Clark

Custodian: Pat Toennesen

Congregation Council:

Rick Pink, President

Cathy Knudson, Vice President

Kay MacGregor, Secretary

Marie Bellville, Treasurer
Cyndee Miske, Financial Secretary
John Barry
Jo-Nell Berger
Naomi Fletcher
Linda Levin
Kathy McDonough
Donna Mott
Teddy Nelson
Cindy Olli
Jim Russey



A congregation of the Northern Great Lakes Synod
of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.