Zion Lutheran Church

**435 Oak Street**

**Manistique, MI 49854**

**906-341-5427**

The Beacon

# November 2023 Newsletter

**Saturday 5:00 p.m.** Worship in the Sanctuary

**Sunday10:30 a.m.** Worship in person & Via Zoom www.zionlutheran-manistique.org

Pastor Tommy Richter Pastor.TommyRichter@gmail.com

# Contact Us

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435 Oak Street

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www.zionlutheran-manistique.org or follow us on Facebook.com

**Rev. Tommy Richter, Pastor**

Office: 906-341-5427

Home: 906-286-4383

**Secretary:**

office@zionlutheran-manistique.org

**Musician:** Linda Levin

**Choir Director:** Rebecca Peterson

**Custodian:** Pat Toennessen

**Congregational Council:** Linda Levin, President Donna Mott, Vice President Cyndee Miske, Secretary Jo-Nell Berger

Ken Groh Ruth Jones Todd Kangas Janet Krueger Peter Mattson

Bonnie Moody Teddy Nelson Rebecca Peterson

Naomi Fletcher, Treasurer

Cyndee Miske, Financial Secretary

*You are to be praised, O God, in Zion; to you shall vows be fulfilled. To you, the one who answers prayer, to you all flesh shall come. Our sins are stronger than we are, but you blot out our transgressions. Happy are they whom you choose and draw to your courts to dwell there! They will be satisfied by the beauty of your house, by the holiness of your temple. Awesome things will you show us in your righteousness, O God of our salvation, O hope of all the ends of the earth and of the oceans far away.* -Psalm 65:1-5

We tend to always frame things in terms of our own choices. We say “this is the Church I choose to belong to” and “this is what I chose for breakfast” and “check out what I chose to be for Halloween this year!.” But we put too much of a burden on ourselves when we make our faith out to be about our own choices. When we leave it up to us, we are often very poor at making the decision to follow God. In fact, I have had many conversations with people working to assuage just this fear: Did I decide enough? Did I really choose God and mean it? What if I cannot choose God because I am not certain I believe?

I always like to start by joking that when you leave it up to me, given the choice between Christ and bacon, I’m going to pick bacon pretty much every time. It is remarkable though, that when you sit back and examine the type of thing faith is, it really doesn’t make sense for us to frame it in terms of our own choices. (Although that seems to be a perfectly fine default for us elsewhere). Faith is among the same class of things as trust. And if you think about all the people you have ever trusted, how much of that trust has ever been because of your own choices? Can you simply decide to trust someone and then muster it up inside yourself? Usually, no! It’s really hard to create faith in someone just by choosing on our own. Because trust is usually something about what the other person has or has not done. Trust is something that happens to us when the other person shows up and is there for us in our time of need, and they do it consistently. It has more to do with someone else’s choices, not to abandon us, or stab us in the back. You can decide all you like that you are going to trust someone, but if they act to betray you that choice you made doesn’t amount to a hill of beans. So it is with faith, when we make it all about our own decisions to follow Christ, we are going about things the difficult and impossible way. Faith is less about what we have done, and more about what God does.

Here in the Psalm, notice it is the people that God chooses that are called blessed. Not the other way around. Our choice about God has nothing to do with faith and blessedness! Our sins are stronger than we are, and we are not great at deciding on our own. But look what God has done! God blots out our sin. God gathers us in the temple at Zion and shows us real hope and joy. God faithfully shows up time and again, answering prayers, and drawing all flesh out into God’s embrace. It is God’s choice of us that has made all the difference.

So, if you are struggling with faith, if you are unsure about this whole God and going to church thing, you can take that right back to God in prayer. Because God is the one responsible for gathering and enlightening us, God is the one responsible for faith. Not our own choices. You can say the same faithful prayer that the father of the Epileptic Child said in Mark 9:24: “Lord, I believe, Help my unbelief!” You can say, God, look I am struggling here, now you have to show up for me as you have promised, and gather me into your sanctuary. You have chosen me God, now be there for me so that I too will have faith. Luther would call this practice rubbing God’s ears in God’s own promises. And it is a perfectly fine thing to do! So put down your heavy burdens that you have put on yourself and your own choices, and take up instead the life-giving study of what God chooses (you!) and what life is up to out in the world (forgiveness and righteousness).

-Pastor Tommy

 **Church Office Hours**

The church office will be open Monday through

Thursdays from 9 am to 12 pm. Pastor’s office hours are Wednesdays 9 am-12 pm and Thursdays 9 am-12 pm. If you have questions, concerns at other times, or are in need of pastoral care please contact Pastor Tommy at 906-286-4383.

**Join us for Worship!**

**Saturday 5 pm** Worship is moving back into the sanctuary beginning November 4.

**Sunday 10:30 am** Worship is a hybrid service. You can join us in person or over Zoom. Holy Communion is served for those joining us in person.

To join Sunday worship over Zoom, go to our church website and click on the pink words “Join our Zoom Worship” under the worship times. Click Open or Open Link in the dialog box that pops up to join the call. If you don’t see a pop-up dialog box, click the blue Launch Meeting button. You can also join by phone.

No computer necessary! Call 929-205-6099 and enter the following ID# 9063415427, Passcode 49854.

**Congregation Council Highlights**

* The treasurer’s report showed a September income of $7,658.93 and expenditures of $12,670.23, for a deficit for the month of $5,011.30.
* Pastor Tommy reported he is offering three Bible studies. He attended the Tri-County Conference meeting at Bethany in Escanaba. Pastor goes to Woodland the third Wednesday of each month to lead worship services.
* Worship and Music Committee Report – (1) The Saturday evening worship service is moving inside beginning November 4. (2) A Blue Christmas service will be held in conjunction with St. Alban’s Episcopal Church on December 20 at 7:00 p.m. (3) Our Christmas Eve service will be at 4:00 p.m.
* Evangelism and Membership Committee Report – (1) The Progressive Dinner will be held on October 22. Our church is responsible for soup. (2) Zion will prepare six Thanksgiving baskets this year.
* Finance and Stewardship Committee Report – (1) The Fall Stewardship Program letters will go out in October. (2) Stewardship Temple Talks will be done each Sunday in October.
* Property Committee Report – (1) We are looking for someone to shovel snow this winter. (2) Zion’s AED has been updated.
* Christian Education and Youth Report – No report.
* Personnel Committee – (1) We are in need of a church secretary. (2) Pastor Tommy’s request for parental leave was granted. (3) Pastor Eleanor Russey will serve as our Interim Pastor in January.

**Soup with the Saints**

Please join the Congregation Council for Soup with the Saints on Sunday, November 5 immediately following worship. The Congregation Council will be providing soup, sandwiches and dessert.

**Backpack Buddies**

The Backpack Buddies program will be distributing food bags on Thursday, November 30. All children ages 0-18, are eligible to receive food. Please pass the word!

Monetary donations or donations of food are always needed!

A thank you note was received from a donor:

 THANK YOU for your efforts to aid the food

 insecure in our community. NEVER forget

 how important this work is!

**Christmas Services**

Christmas Eve is on a Sunday this year. The Saturday service will celebrate Advent 4 during worship.

The Sunday morning service at 10:30 a.m. will also be celebrating Advent 4. There will be ONE Christmas Eve service at 4:00 p.m.

**Festival of Lessons and Carols**

The Festival of Lessons and Carols will be at St. Francis DeSales Church on December 10 at 3:00 p.m.

If you would like to sing in the mass choir, practices will be held at 1:30 p.m. on Sundays at Zion. Rebecca Peterson will be directing the Festival choir.

**November Noisy Offering**

The September Noisy Offeringof $27.93went to the Eva Burrell Animal Shelter. November’s Noisy Offering will go to the Manistique Ministerial Association.

**Time Change**

Daylight savings time ends on Sunday, November 5. Please remember to set your clocks back one hour before you head to bed on Saturday.

**All Saints Sunday**

All Saints Sunday will be celebrated on November 5th. We will honor those who have been welcomed into Zion through Holy Baptism – Sylvi Elizabeth Nord and Ellis Andrew Kangas. We also remember those members of Zion who have died since last All Saints Sunday – Pastor Ingmar Levin and Betty Briggs.

**Women’s Circles**

If you are interested in joining one of our women’s circles for Bible study, work projects and fun, please contact the church office or the following group leaders for more information:

 Sarah Circle – Elizabeth Macklem

 Joy Circle – Bonnie Groh

 Hope Circle – Sheila Clark or Julie Gauthier

The **Sarah Circle** will meet on Monday, November 6 at 1:00 p.m. in Augustana Hall.

The **Joy Circle** will meet on Thursday, November 16th at 10:00 a.m. in Augustana Hall.

**Blue Christmas**

A Blue Christmas (also called the Longest Night) Service will be held on Wednesday, December 20 at 7:00 p.m. at St. Alban’s Episcopal Church.

Blue Christmas is a day in the Advent season marking the longest night of the year. Many churches hold a service to honor people who have lost loved ones and are experiencing grief during the holiday season.

Zion is holding this service in conjunction with St. Alban’s. Refreshments will be served following the service.

**Affirmation of Baptism**

Micheal Lamb and Kristin Lamb are being confirmed on Reformation Sunday, October 29th. Congratulations and God’s Blessings!

**Home Communion**

If someone in your family is unable to attend church and would like to receive communion, please call the church office (906-341-5427).

**Automated External Defibrillator**

Schoolcraft Memorial Hospital recently updated our AED equipment and it’s good to go until 2027! The AED and all updates to the equipment are provided by the hospital through a grant. THANKS!

Church Attendance Report

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Saturday** | **Sunday** | **Zoom** |
|  **Sept. 30/Oct. 1** | 15 | 40 | 3 |
| **October 7/8** | 13 | 42 | 3 |
| **October 14/15** | 9 | 44 | 4 |
| **October 21/22** | 8 | 37 | 4 |

**Thanksgiving Baskets**

Zion will be partnering with the Manistique Kiwanis Club and other churches and organizations to fill six Thanksgiving baskets this fall. The items needed include: turkey, potatoes, vegetables, stuffing mix, cranberry sauce, milk, coffee, rolls, butter, frozen pies or other desserts, fruit and nuts, candy, Thanksgiving napkins and laundry baskets. Sign-up sheets have been posted in Augustana Hall. All items need to be at church by November 19th so the baskets can be packed and delivered. Thanks to the Gauthier Family for volunteering to pack the baskets!

**Thanksgiving Service**

The Manistique Ministerial Association will be holding a community Thanksgiving service on Tuesday, November 21st at the First Baptist Church. The service will begin at 7:00 p.m. A pie social will follow the service. Please bring a pie to share!

**We are Waiting for a Baby!**

Pastor Tommy, Ann and Zephyr are excited to welcome a new family member in December. Pastor has requested a four-week family leave, and the Congregation Council has granted that request.

The Northern Great Lakes Synod’s Leave policy is for new mothers or fathers so the family can recover, adjust, support, and establish a healthy new relationship within the family. The Synod recommends 8 weeks of leave that consists of full salary, housing and benefits. Pastor Tommy has requested four weeks. Pastor Eleanor Russey has agreed to serve as our Interim Pastor during that time



Dear Northern Great Lakes Synod,

By the time you read this, I will have completed

leading a book study through our Lifelong Faith

Formation classes on “Embracing God’s Future

without Forgetting the Past: A Conversation about

Loss, Grief, and Nostalgia in Congregational Life.”

It is a sobering read, full of truth about what many

of our congregations are facing and how grief is

being experienced.

The author, former bishop Michael Girlinghouse,

advises that this grief must be processed before a

congregation can move forward, and he offers

some ideas, workshops, and methods of how to

address this grief, not just as individuals, but as

communities of faith that are experiencing loss

and change.

I agree with him that naming the points of pain

regarding loss are important. And I believe that

we are only just beginning to understand what

those points of pain are, as our congregations are

at different places in the arc of their lifecycles and

facing these challenges at different times.

I did suspect when I accepted this call to a second

term that the church was going to change more in

the next six years than it had in the past twenty.

Changes in the last 20 - 30 years have sort of snuck

up on us. But the challenges we thought of then

as “some day maybe” have now arrived.

With shifts in culture, with the acceleration of

institutional decline pushed by Covid, with anxiety

increasing, there is gathering momentum to do

more to equip lay leaders for the work of ministry.

Of course, the work of ministry has always rested

on lay leaders who more often than not are

working in partnership with a pastoral leader or

keeping ministry in motion during pastoral

transition. However, increasingly fewer people

are entering seminary. And while it is true that

fewer congregations can afford a full-time pastor,

even the ones that have the financial capacity

must compete with each other for a shrinking pool

of pastoral leaders.

Yet, our synod is a great place to serve in ministry!

I have observed a respect for the pastoral office

and a deep appreciation for that partnership. I see

people who love their church and the ministry

accomplished through their combined efforts, and

all of it in communities that have a sense of what

it means to be neighbor. There is pride in self-

sufficiency: the garden, the homemade, the do-it-

yourself kind of attitude. Add to that the beauty

of God’s creation and we want to ask who

wouldn’t want to live here?

Unfortunately, as I seek to recruit pastoral leaders,

we are an unknown entity. Much as I try to

educate, it is the exceptional pastoral candidate

that is willing to move to the northern top of the

U.S. possibly away from family.

So….what is the answer to this current challenge?

I appeal to your own sense of pride in the

homemade. Look around your congregations.

Who has gifts for ministry? Who is already

leading? We have several Lay Schools (with NGLS

scholarship funds available) ready to equip people

for the work they are already doing. Between the

Lay school offered at Luther Seminary to the Lay

schools in our neighboring synods of the

Northwest Synod of Wisconsin and the East

Central Synod of Wisconsin, the tools needed to

equip lay leaders for ministry are within reach. I

suggest we raise up our own leaders who can then

discern if they have a call to ordained ministry (we

have scholarship funds for seminary too) or wish

to be equipped, educated, and supported for a

larger role as a lay leader.

I am grateful to our currently serving Licensed Lay

Ministers, and to our lay leaders who are such an

asset and blessing to the work of Christ. As I

continue to recruit pastoral leaders TO our synod,

I ask you to do the same IN our synod. Whatever

the future brings, I know that the work of Christ

will continue.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Katherine Finegan

**Lector**

**Those Who Serve in November**

November 5 – Larry Peterson

November 12 – Ann Stromgren

November 19 – Kaye Jarski

November 26 – Todd Kangas

**Ushers**

 Donna Mott and Teddy Nelson

**Altar Flowers**

November 5 -

November 12 -

November 19 -

November 26 -

**Bulletin Bread and Wine**

November 5 -

November 12 -

November 19 -

November 26 -

**Acolyte**

November 5 -

November 12 - Michael Lamb

November 19 - Kristin Lamb

November 26 - Nicholas Gauthier

**Communion Assistant**

November 5 - Linda Mason

November 12 - Sheila Clark

November 19 - Kim Lamb

November 26 - Julie Gauthier

**Counters**

Mary Ansell and Dorothy Brandstrom



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