

Zion Lutheran Church

MESSENGER

AUGUST

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2019

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA ★ LAKE CRYSTAL, MN ★ 507-726-2849 ★ WWW.ZIONLUTHLAKECRYSTAL.ORG

Zion to Host Community VBS: August 4-8

At Roar, kids in grades preK-5 (Fall 2019) will explore God's goodness and celebrate a ferocious faith that powers them through this wild life. Preschool/preK students (age 3+) are invited to join us in the Little Paws Preschool for a VBS experience designed especially for our little learners!

Online pre-registration is encouraged through July 31 (through the link on Zion's website), but walk-ins are also welcome!

Location: Zion Lutheran Church

Time: Sunday 5:30-8pm. Mon-Thurs 6-8pm

Cost: FREE



Zion is in need of a **Sunday School Coordinator** and a **Sunday School Music Leader** for the upcoming year. If this is something you can do, please contact Susan Gengler. 381-8372. Thank you!

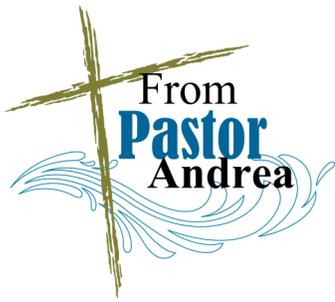
Lake Crystal 2019 Community VBS

EVENINGS 6-8 PM
SUNDAY, AUGUST 4 THROUGH
THURSDAY AUGUST 8

Hosted by
Zion Lutheran Church
211 E. Robinson Street

Register online at:
www.zionluthlakecrystal.org





“Back to School” sales are in full swing, which means the summer is quickly drawing to its close and teachers will soon return to their classrooms to prepare for their new students.

I’ve been blessed to have a number of wonderful teachers in my life. While these certainly include those who taught within a traditional classroom, my teachers have included many other members of my family and community who helped me learn and grow.

I learned how to lead devotions from my youth director. My after-school babysitter taught me how to do embroidery and needlepoint. My husband Ronald and the “Ball Blue Book” helped me learn the basics of canning. Lessons in woodworking and power tools came from Dad, and how to balance a checkbook from Mom. When it came time to master a clutch and manual transmission, big brother Karl was my patient guide.

Some teachers offer lessons that go well beyond the expected curriculum. I started piano lessons at age four, and continued all the way through college. My wonderful teacher in elementary and middle school was Mrs. Slingerland, and she taught me far more than music theory and the importance of diligent practice. You see, when I entered 8th grade, she worked with my parents to help me find me a NEW teacher. Her skillset was best suited to beginner and intermediate students, and she recognized that I was now ready for the challenges of more advanced instruction. It was a valuable lesson. Not only that she recognized the best use of her own abilities (and their limitations), but also that continued growth requires seeking new teachers and new challenges.

All these many lessons have encouraged me to em-

brace being a “life-long learner.” Though I’m not terribly interested in pursuing another degree program, I will always want to keep learning and growing, and to seek the new challenges to get me there.

In January, I embarked on an intensive mentorship program focused on preaching. The 6-month program I recently finished helped me learn new strategies for crafting effective sermons. This included a particular focus on nurturing my prayer life and some of the spiritual practices you’ve heard me explore during this summer’s sermons.

While the curriculum provided through the Backstory Preaching program was outstanding, many of most valuable lessons came through some preaching instructors right here at Zion. I’m grateful for the four members of the congregation who agreed to serve as my “listening group,” and to provide their careful and thoughtful appraisals of the sermons they heard me preaching here in worship. Receiving feedback isn’t always an easy thing, but it’s essential for understanding what we’re doing well and where we still have room to grow. I’m deeply grateful for the constructive and caring feedback provided by Janette Abraham, Mike Bottin, Donna Roesch, and Howard Ward. They’ve helped me become a better preacher!

What are you learning these days? Who are the teachers guiding you along the way, either inside or outside of a classroom setting?

I encourage you to embrace being a “life-long learner,” especially when it comes to your life as a disciple of Jesus Christ. There is always more to learn. There will always be more questions. And we are blessed to have many teachers around us. Not just “classroom” teachers like your pastor, but the peers, mentors, and students who are a part of this congregation and community.

We have much to learn from one another, and with one another!

Peace,
Pastor Andrea

September 4: Rebecca Circle	7:00 p.m.
Hostess: Judy Marshall	
Bible study: Janette Abraham	
September 4: Miriam Circle	7:00 p.m.
Hostess: Joyce Johnson	
Bible study: Joyce Roberts	
September 5: Martha Circle	2:00 p.m.
Hostess: Carol Jones	
Bible Study: Dorothy Yarger	
September 17: ZLCW Board Meeting	5:30 p.m.
September Bible Study for Leaders	TBD



The ZLCW Board did not meet in July.

A new church cleaning date will be decided at our August meeting.

Mark your calendars for Saturday, October 12, the date of our Tour of Tables. We are looking for table decorators. If interested, please be thinking of what you might like to do. More details to follow in the September newsletter.

Exploring the Book of Isaiah through GAC “Exploring Religious Questions”

Close Readings of the Book of Isaiah: Poetry, Justice, and Inspiration for Today

Isaiah is one of the most inspiring and influential books of the Bible. The original prophet Isaiah spoke during a time of great social upheaval, and later prophets and scribes added to his words over hundreds of years to address the changing needs of generations of believers. The book has been a constant source of hope for Jews and Christians worldwide, and they have quoted, studied, and been guided and moved by it for centuries. Passages from Isaiah have also richly influenced music, poetry, and the visual arts.

In this series of Monday evening sessions (7-9 PM) , participants will take a closer look at this complex and inspiring book with the help of three highly respected scholars who have all published widely on the book of Isaiah: J. Blake Couey, Hanne Loeland Levinson, and Ron Troxel. Sessions will address questions about the historical context, central themes, and significance of all three of the book’s major sections (Chapters 1-39, 40-55, 56-66).

This is a not-for-credit course organized and co-sponsored by the Office of Church Relations and the Bernhardson Distinguished Chair for Lutheran Studies and Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter.

Registration is \$35/person and due September 30, 2019. For more information or to register, contact Church Relations at 507- 933-7001 or e-mail church-relations@gustavus.edu, or pick up a copy of the registration form on Zion’s bulletin board.

Happy August Birthdays!

Janette Abraham
 Milt Abraham
 Caden Albrecht
 John Anderson
 Kendall Anderson
 Tim Anderson
 Justin Anderson
 Jill Antony
 Ryder Antony
 Robert Atkinson
 Cole Barden
 Kent Beecher
 Ronnie Bergemann
 Ann Blasing
 Cally Burnett
 Jean Childs
 Jacob Cooper
 Rachel Ebargary
 Norma Ellanson
 Grace Fjeldberg
 Lauren Fleming
 Jennifer Fleming
 McKenzie Glaubitz
 Madison Graham
 Carson Greenough
 Kylie Halvorson
 Dawn Hartman



Jerome Hawker
 Rod Isebrand
 Axl Jarvis
 Naomi Jones
 Alisha Jordan
 Nikki Lowis
 Judy Marshall
 Andy Mathews
 Courtney McDonald
 Sheldon Meyer
 Donna Mikkelson
 Danielle Mueller
 Grant Mueller
 Austin Nickels
 Christina Olson
 Tim Olson
 James Pockrandt
 Cheryl Sandstrom
 Dusten Schultz
 Rob Spencer
 Scott Spencer
 Victoria Thorson
 Bill VanRyswyk
 Jacob VanRyswyk
 Mary Ward
 Whitney Ziegler

Happy August Anniversaries:

Milt & Joy Abraham
 Mike & Sally Bottin
 Dave & Kay Carlson
 Matt & Jamie Christian-son
 Bill & Beth Dostal
 Dave & Amanda Gilman
 John & Kathi Greenough
 Jim & Darlene Halvorson
 Rod & Linda Isebrand
 Tony & Laurie Jacobs



Fred & Diana Lantz
 Scott & Sara Larson
 Ronald & Andrea Myers
 John & Gail Peterson
 Rebecca & Todd Sittig
 Jay & Dorene Spencer
 Mike & Amanda Storlien
 Robert & Joyce Vee
 Darlene & Larry Ziedler

August (Team 5)

Leaders:

Rod & Linda Isebrand

Lisa Barden
 Dorothy Barnick
 David Boomgarden
 & Crystill Lorenzen
 Jean Childs
 Lori Ebargary
 Larry Elg
 Eric & Grace Fjeldberg
 Philip & Rhonda Fjeldberg
 John & Jackie Graham
 Matt & Tammy Greenough
 Robert & Linda Hauge
 Jerry & Marsha Hawker
 Bob & Teri Hobart
 Adam & Mackenzie Jones
 Eric Jones
 Diane Klinkner



Gail Larson
 Dan & Nikki Lowis
 Rick & Charlene Manke
 Todd Manke
 Mark & Judy Meyer
 Amy Montgomery
 Verone Nelson
 John & Gail Peterson
 Donald & Byrene Schmidt
 Todd & Becky Sittig
 Jon & Michele Stordahl
 Mike & Patty Thompson
 Dwayne & Jessica Thormodsgard

August is the last month of summer office hours

Mon, Wed, Thurs: 8 am-2:30 pm

Tues: 8 am-12:00 noon

Fri: Office is closed

Pastor Andrea is usually available in the office on Mondays and Wednesdays 11 am-4 pm or by appointment. 726-2849 or 507-402-1114.



Caring Coins

Thank you to everyone who donated a total of \$164.55 to support funding for the new roof at Crossroads Campus Ministry, our July Caring Coins recipient. To date, our members have contributed a total of \$1,799.51 toward Caring Coins. Our August Caring Coins will be collected on August 11 and will support Project Promise. Those donations will be used to purchase supplies for school and personal care kits to be assembled and shipped to Lutheran World Relief.

Food for Friends

Our next Food for Friends serving date is Saturday, October 26. Please mark your calendars.

Sharing Shelf

Each month a volunteer from Zion delivers our food offerings to the Sharing Shelf. Many thanks to Marsha Larson for volunteering in July. Our August volunteer is Barb McDonald. August needs include cereal, oats, oil, peanut butter, fruit, pasta sauce and toilet paper. **Be sure to check code dates to insure donated foods have not expired.** The Sharing Shelf is located at the First Baptist Church, 312 South Oakland Street. Hours are Wednesday evening from 6:00-6:30 p.m.



There are No July Council Meeting Highlights as no meeting was held in July.



New Name, Same eGiving Convenience

Electronic giving at Zion has a new name!

The program previously known as “Simply Giving” is now called **GivePlus**. Our partnership with GivePlus allows you to support the ministries you value through several convenient and flexible electronic giving options. If you are travelling this summer, please consider utilizing one of these GivePlus giving options:

Electronic Bank Draft: Visit the “Giving” section of Zion’s website to set up a one-time or recurring gift from your bank account or credit card. By setting up your own GivePlus login, you will have easy access to update or change your giving preferences in the future.

Smartphone App: Download the free “GivePlus Church” app from the App Store or Google Play. Then, simply make donations directly from your smartphone using your debit/credit card or checking/savings account. Direct your gift to General Offering, or a special fund like Caring Coins!

If you have questions about GivePlus, please contact the church office. Thank you for your giving!

Monday Bible Study

11:00 a.m. in Classroom 21
Zion Lutheran Church, Lake Crystal



Join us each week for a study that incorporates prayer, silence, and sharing as a way to deepen our understanding of the Gospel lesson for the coming Sunday.

Come, Dwell in the Word!

Bible Quiz Answer: B and C (See Isaiah 6:1-8)

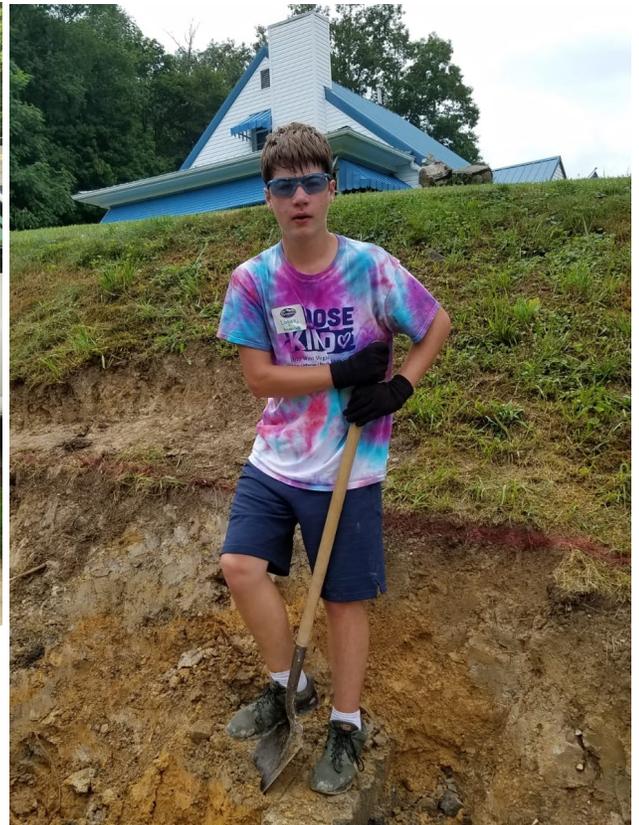
Many thanks to all who prayed for and financially supported our 2019 West Virginia Mission Trip participants! Our week in West Virginia was a challenging and fun experience! We were blessed to meet wonderful residents of West Hamlin and Hamlin, WV as we worked on landscaping and construction projects alongside youth and adults from Ohio and New Jersey. Mission Trips like this push us outside our comfort zones to discover in a new way how God is active and present with us everyday here at home.

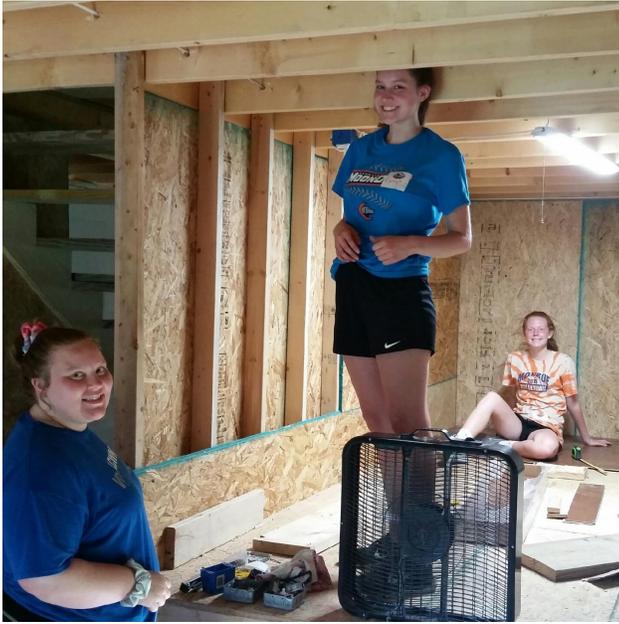
Thank you!



WEST VIRGINIA

2019 ZION YOUTH MISSION TRIP

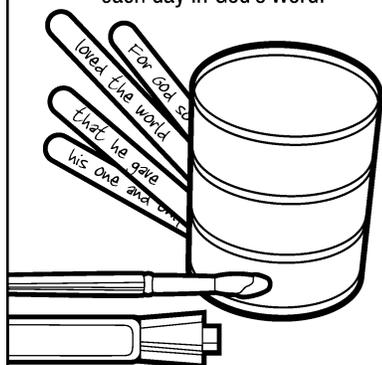




KiDs PaGe

WAKE-UP WORDS

Play this memory game to start each day in God's Word.



What you need:

- Paint and paint brushes
- Stickers
- An empty, clean tin can
- Permanent marker
- Bible
- Wooden craft sticks

What you do:

1. Paint and decorate the outside of the can.
2. With marker, write a Bible verse on several sticks (only two or three words per stick).
3. Put the sticks in the can, and set it in a spot you'll see daily. As you eat or brush your teeth, practice unscrambling the verse and placing sticks in the correct order.
4. When you've memorized the verse, repeat with a new one.



GOD'S MORNING ROUTINE

Every new day, we wake up to blessings from God.

Directions: Use the clues to fill in the words. Then write the boxed letters in order below to complete Lamentations 3:22-23, NIV.

- Brush these daily
- Do this to your shoes
- This rises in the east
- Cold breakfast food
- Hot breakfast food
- Talk to God
- Morning meal
- Extend your limbs
- Fruit drink
- Waffle machine
- Eat these scrambled or fried



Because of the LORD's great love...
 never fail. They are
 new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23, NIV

Answer: teeth, tie, sun, cereal, oatmeal, pray, breakfast, stretch, juice, iron, eggs; his compassions

Bible Quiz

During the dramatic experience when God called Isaiah to be a prophet, who or what filled the temple?

- A. 144,000 worshipers
- B. The bottom of God's robe
- C. Smoke
- D. Priests offering sacrifices

Answer: See Page 5



August Hymn of the Month

This summer, our worship services feature a “Hymn of the Month.” These songs are relatively new to Zion, and the hope is that repeating them a few Sundays in a row will help our congregation learn them well. You may even discover a new favorite!

Our August hymn is a new translation of a 17th century German Hymn, “What God Ordains is Good Indeed” (ELW 776). The original text was written by Samuel Rodigast, the pastor at Groben near Jena, and dedicated to his friend Severus Gastorius, who composed the tune.

According to one account, Rodigast wrote the text to console his friend Gastorius as he suffering with a serious illness, and Gastorius set the text to music prior to his death. The translation contained in our hymnal is a new one by Pastor Martin Seltz, which “seeks to give voice to a God who accompanies and suffers with us along life's road.”

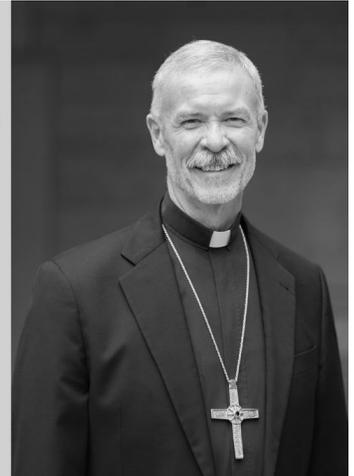
One of the struggles in this life of faith is to discern the particulars of God’s will within any particular circumstance. This hymn invites us into an attitude of confident trust that—whatever our circumstances—God will always be near, enfolding us with the light of Jesus Christ and drawing us toward salvation. As Jesus has taught us, we pray, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,” confident in the words of Deuteronomy 32:3-4:

*For I will proclaim the name of the Lord;
ascribe greatness to our God!
The Rock, his work is perfect,
and all his ways are just.
A faithful God, without deceit,
just and upright is he.*

A RETIREMENT RECEPTION

*For Bishop
Steven Delzer*

SUNDAY | **OUR SAVIOR'S**
AUG 18 | **FARIBAULT**
2-4:30PM | **1207 Prairie Ave SW**



Final Dinner Church of 2019 Wednesday, August 14

If you haven’t yet experienced our mid-week worship service called Dinner Church, there’s still one more chance to join us on Wednesday, August 14.

This is a casual, come-as-you-are gathering centered in the promise that Jesus is made known to us in the breaking of the bread.

A light supper is served at 5:30 PM (free will offering), followed by a brief service of Holy Communion beginning at 6:00 PM. Special activities will be provided for younger children during the message. Don’t miss out on this unique worship experience!

Newsletter Input Due Date:

September newsletter input is due
by Tuesday, August 20.

Report for: June 2019

Income	June 2019	YTD	June 2018	Change (+/-)
Offerings	12,748.47	89,343.03	16,686.63	(3,938.16)
Non-Benevolence	1,907.00	13,303.00	1,325.00	582.00
Building Fund	2,635.00	30,008.00	3,625.00	(990.00)
Memorial Fund	0.00	1,040.00	10.00	(10.00)
Special Projects	213.27	3,162.86	219.28	(6.01)
Scholarship Fund	0.00	3,260.00	0.00	0.00
Total	17,503.74	140,116.89	21,865.91	(4,362.17)

A summary of income for all sources, and any change from the previous year.

Ministry Expenses	June 2019	Monthly Budget	Variance (+/-)	YTD	YTD Budget	Variance (+/-)
Salaries and Related Costs	9,498.81	11,369.33	(1,870.52)	65,731.31	68,216.08	(2,484.77)
Utilities, Maintenance, Other	2,472.64	2,741.66	(269.02)	16,358.82	16,450.04	(91.22)
Education, Mission, Related Costs	495.34	741.66	(246.32)	4,726.67	4,450.04	276.63
Supplies	1,461.40	1,320.83	140.57	7,690.09	7,925.02	(234.93)
Ministry Initiatives	250.00	726.66	(476.66)	250.00	4,360.04	(4,110.04)
Synod Mission Support	1,597.95	1,815.00	(217.05)	8,689.95	10,890.00	(2,200.05)
Total	15,776.14	18,715.14	(2,939.00)	103,446.84	112,291.22	(8,844.38)

"How do our ministry expenses compare to what we planned for in the budget?"

Budget Cashflow	June 2019	Monthly Budget	Variance (+/-)	YTD	YTD Budget	Variance (+/-)
Income available	14,655.47	18,715.14	(4,059.67)	102,646.03	112,291.22	(9,645.19)
Ministry Expenses	15,776.14	18,715.14	(2,939.00)	103,446.84	112,291.22	(8,844.38)
Net (+/-)	(1,120.67)			-800.81		

(General Offerings & Non-Benevolence)

"What is our net cashflow for the year for our ministry expenses?"

Building Fund	June 2019	YTD
Income	2,635.00	30,008.00
Payments	(11,000.00)	(30,455.00)
Interest	2.53	12.90
Current Balance	8,330.80	

"What is our net cashflow for the year for the Building Fund?"

Balances	June 2019
General Checking	2,149.22
Memorial Fund	4,557.99
Non-Benevolence	991.42
Special Projects	6,844.30
Scholarship	10,024.04
Line of Credit	11,568.50
Mortgage Principal (Thrivent)	(398,628.09)
Youth Checking Account	7,323.31

	Attendance		Communion	
	2018	2019	2018	2019
June				
Week 1	93	124	91	84
Week 2	66	80		78
Week 3	86	79	74	81
Week 4	87	90		
Week 5		94		

In Memory of Marrett Broady Grund

Marrett Broady Grund, Zion's Youth Ministry Coordinator, died unexpectedly on Friday, June 28 after a very brief illness. A memorial service was held on Friday, July 5, 2019 at his home congregation, Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Mankato. Pastor Andrea led the service alongside Pastor Jay Dahlvang.

As members of Zion, we remember Marrett with thanksgiving for the impact he had during his brief time of employment with our congregation. Marrett was warm and sincere, full of faith and generous compassion. He cared a great deal about Zion's students and his mission to help them grow in faith and service.

We extend our condolences to his family and friends, placing our hope and trust in Jesus Christ and his promise of eternal life for all who believe.

If you'd like to provide a memorial, the family requests gifts towards educational savings for his daughter, Cecilia, or to Wecovery, 509 South Front Street, Mankato. Cards may be sent to the Broady Grund Family, 121 Ichabod Lane, Mankato, MN 56001.

This news has been shocking and unsettling for many of Zion's members, particularly our youth and families. If you or your child need to talk, please get in touch with Pastor Andrea.



Marrett Dale Broady Grund was born January 15, 1973 to Dale and Kay (Fenger) Grund in New Ulm, Minnesota. He graduated from New Ulm High School in 1991 and attended MSU Mankato where he earned his B.S. in Biology. Through an internship with the Minnesota DNR, he discovered his love for wildlife ecology. He was married for the first time in 1995, before moving to the University of Missouri where he completed his Master's Degree in Wildlife Ecology. He and his wife moved to Carbondale, Illinois where he completed his Ph. D. at Southern Illinois University.



His oldest daughter, Cameron, was born in 2000 in Carbondale, and the family moved soon after to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he led white-tailed deer research for the Pennsylvania DNR. Kendall was born in Pittsburgh in 2003, then the family moved back to Mankato to be nearer Marrett's family, when he was offered a position with the Farmland Wildlife Populations and Research Office of the Minnesota DNR in Madelia. He worked with the DNR until 2014, when he decided to pursue becoming a Lutheran pastor, something he'd considered from the time he was in high school.

In 2009, shortly after Caden was born, Marrett sought

treatment for alcoholism and has been in recovery ever since. The recovery community in Mankato carried him through his divorce in 2011, and Caden's diagnosis with autism in 2012. He also worked tirelessly to carry others in recovery when they needed support, often dropping everything to get someone into treatment.

Marrett met Collette through mutual friends in 2012, and he knew from the first date that he loved her. They became best friends, and taught each other to believe in God's grace more deeply. They married in 2014, and Marrett became a dedicated stepfather to Ollie. The final addition to the Broady Grund family, Ceci, was born in 2017. Marrett will be remembered for his kindness, his deep love for all kinds of people, and his faithfulness to his family and God.

Marrett is survived by his wife, Collette; children, Cameron, Kendall, Caden, and Cecilia; step-son, Oliver; father, Dale; and siblings, Geraye (Steve) Menk, Ferris Grund, and Crystal (Renee MacLeod) Grund. He is preceded in death by his mother, Kay.

Zion Lutheran Church

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

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Church website:

www.zionluthlakecrystal.org

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Hymn of The Month

Marrett Broady Grund

Sunday Morning

9:00 a.m. Worship
Communion 1st & 3rd
Sunday of the Month

No Sunday School during
summer months

Listen to sermons at
www.zionluthlakecrystal.org

SUMMER OFFICE HOURS:

August

Monday (8-2:30)

Tuesday (8-12)

Wednesday (8-2:30)

Thursday (8-2:30)

The Office is closed on Fridays.

Phone: 507-726-2849



Zion Lutheran Church
211 East Robinson Street
Lake Crystal, MN 56055

Pastor

Rev. Andrea Myers

Office Manager

Mary Gilman

Choir Director

Linda Isebrand

Organist

Sheldon Meyer

Custodians

Bob and Barb McDonald



THE BRIDGE

A Monthly Resource from the Southeastern Minnesota Synod



of Truth in a time of
to the new creation
baptized. Our new life
our horizon, our be-
nt Celtic blessing
d me, God to sur-

We Belong to the Truth

By Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton

“Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’ ” (Matthew 5:37).

When I was a girl, dinner table discussions in our family were lively. We could state our position on an issue, but then we had to be ready to back up our argument with facts. In that pre-Google time, the World Book Encyclopedia was often our source. Out came the dark blue volumes. Their very weight and color brought gravitas. One’s presentation could be critiqued, but not the facts—they were printed in the World Book Encyclopedia after all!

Those were simpler times, or maybe I was just more naïve. Now we live in the era of “truthiness” and “fake news” and “alternative facts.” One prominent attorney declared in an interview: “Truth is not truth.” I was stunned when I heard that, but even more stunned when I realized he had a point.

We have weaponized facts and forced truth into the service of spin. Often conversations are no longer the exchange of ideas and convictions but barrages of accusations. It is not enough to let our word be “yes, yes” or “no, no.” Now we need to shade and embellish and selectively “factify” our position. And if that doesn’t work, then shout or use ALL CAPS.

Jesus and Pilate have an interesting exchange about truth in the Gospel of John. “[Jesus said]: ‘For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.’ Pilate asked him, ‘What is truth?’ ” (John 18:37-38). A remarkable claim by Jesus and an interesting reply by Pilate. I wonder, was Pilate earnestly seeking for truth or was he cynically dismissing the existence of truth? Are we, followers of Jesus, able to listen to Jesus’ voice?

round me, God in my speaking, God in my thinking.”

In baptism God has claimed us as beloved children joined to the death and resurrection of Christ, sealed by the Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. Baptism makes a difference and makes us different. We now belong to the Truth. That doesn’t mean we have the Truth or even know everything about truth. The Truth doesn’t belong to us. No, by God’s gracious act we belong to the Truth. We don’t make truth claims—Truth claims us.

How then do we live? In deep humility, profound gratitude and real joy.

Humility: It is God’s good and gracious favor to be merciful to all, even, and perhaps especially, to those with whom we fervently disagree. This is the severe mercy of grace—no one, not even those we determine are beyond the pale, is beyond the reach of God.

Gratitude: God claims us. We are not our own and we are not alone. Paul wrote: “For while we were still weak ... for if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son” (Romans 5:6-10). The deep human struggle for worth and meaning is over. We are the beloved of the Most High, thanks be to God.

Joy: Dear church, we are free! Free to love, free to serve, free to listen, free to be challenged. We can “lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely and ... run with perseverance the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1).

Here is my prayer: *There is a lot of noise in this world, gracious God, including our own that lays claim to the truth. Bring us to a place of stillness where we can listen to you. Your truth has claimed us and set us free. Amen.*