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GOOD THINGS FROM ZION

June 2023



Navigating the Future

This is one of very few times I've had to write different articles for Zion and Bethlehem. We've been doing some visioning and discernment at Bethlehem that I can't apply here so I needed to address some of that in the Bethlehem newsletter.

But some of that conversation has had me looking more at some things that do apply to us, just as they do nearly every church in this time in history. The biggest one is trends in membership and worship attendance and what they mean for us as a congregation and myself as pastor.

The trend among churches is for membership numbers to hold fairly steady or drop a little while worship attendance has dropped considerably.

Zion's trend doesn't completely fit that. Compared to when I first came, membership might actually be higher. And we are much younger on average than many congregations, and considerably younger on average than when I first came to Zion.

But even for us, worship attendance is a struggle, especially for younger families. I know the issues of schedules...sporting events on Sundays and general schedules that leave folks exhausted by Sunday morning. I also know that some younger parents are pretty honest in saying that church just isn't their main priority. And yet some sort of relationship with God often is at least something of a priority.

Sometimes other groups fill that need for God, but some of those organizations have statements of faith that are troubling to me as a longtime Lutheran and Lutheran pastor.

A question pastors always have to ask, both of themselves and their congregation, relates to Sunday mornings. When we come together on Sunday mornings, what is our purpose? Does worship help you in your connection to God? If no, what would need to change? When you come on Sunday morning, what do you hope to take away? What do you need from your time in worship and any other education and fellowship things we do to help you live your life and share Christ's love with others? For that matter, is Sunday morning still the best time to worship? Are there other models we could look at.

It's always my hope that you leave worship recharged and ready to go out and be the church in the world. And mostly that just means living as a Jesus follower in all the aspects of your life. And when appropriate, sharing the hope you've found.

I'm still mulling over much of what was discussed at Bethlehem and what it means for both congregations and how I best serve in the next few years, not only our congregation but the larger Christian mission. In the meantime, I continue to trust that the Holy Spirit is always present and will continue to accompany us, guide us, and love us as we navigate our own future.

Christ's peace,

Pastor Kris

Bethlehem/Zion Travels

From Pastor Kris

Chicago—So far this summer I've traveled a couple of times to Chicago. Because the Cubs and our daughter and son-in-law are all in Lakeview and that neighborhood has all sorts of restaurants and bars, it can be tempting to never get out of it. Chicago has 77 of what they call community areas. Most areas have multiple neighborhoods. There are 200 neighborhoods in Chicago. I've probably actually spent time in maybe a dozen. The ethnicity of various neighborhoods has changed over the decades. One example is Pilsen. There is a Pilsen in the Czech Republic so the original Czech neighborhood in Chicago was named Pilsen. Now it's mainly Hispanic. There are some fantastic Mexican restaurants there. There is still one really great Bohemian restaurant left there, too. A travel goal for me is to get to as many of the neighborhoods as possible.

Stuttgart Germany, Prague, Czechia, and Brussels, Belgium—This was the last trip I'll take with Daryl in his role as Adjutant General. It was kind of a whirlwind trip. There's so much one could write about but I'll mention just a couple. The trips for Daryl's work have been a good way for me to see our own country through the eyes of some of the Europeans. They are much more objective about both our foibles and our strengths. The Czechs are very appreciative of the role of the United States, and the Nebraska National Guard in particular, in helping them transition from an Eastern Bloc country to a NATO country after the fall of the Soviet Union and communist regime.

I also find the history of Europe fascinating. As a church nerd, I especially find interesting the role of Church in history. The entanglement of church history and European history is impossible to tease apart. There is nothing like wandering through a museum—really in most any country in Europe— to give you a profound appreciation for the founders of our country creating a nation with separation of church and state.

June helpers

Cleaner—Cindy and Jerry
Usher—Merlin
Lector—Fick
Communion Asst.—Merlin
Acolyte—open

Calendar

Worship is livestreamed to the church YouTube channel. You can find the link to that and the bulletin on our website: [Online Worship](#)

- June 4** 9:00 am—Worship with Holy Communion, Affirmation of Baptism
Evie Hofmeister, Anne Nygren, and Taryn Sudik will affirm their baptism
- June 11** 9:00 am—Worship with Service of Holy Baptism
Jack Romans, and Ellie and Tucker Duensing (great grand-children of Marilyn McKinley)
- June 18** 9:00 am—Worship
- June 25** 9:00 am—Worship

End of Year Party for Confirmation and Wednesday School

