

## Contact Information

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Log in information and the worship bulletin for worship can be found on our website on the “Worship online and in person” page

Zion Lutheran Church  
589 County Rd. 13  
Ithaca, NE 68033



## ***Bible Believing the Lutheran Way***

In November we had two adult education sessions. The first was on understanding how our faith tradition interprets scripture. The second was then using that understanding to discuss LGBTQ issues. I'll address the first in this month's newsletter and the second in January.

Here's what the ELCA constitution says about the Bible:

**This church accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life** (Art. 2.03 of the Constitution of the ELCA).

When we talk about inspiration, we don't mean word for word inspiration. We don't use the term “infallible,” not because we think the Bible is full of errors, but because that term has come to mean a very narrow method of interpretation that is very susceptible to using verses out of context in a hurtful way.

We have 5 ways, or lenses, of interpretation.

### **Law & Gospel**

Look for messages throughout the Bible of both law (that which accuses and judges us; commandments) and gospel (that which comforts and saves us; promises). Texts may function as either or both at any given time

### **What Shows Forth Christ**

The whole of the Bible points to Jesus Christ and his saving message to us. Lutherans are Jesus people and the Bible is a Jesus book. How does a passage reveal a God who would become human and die for us?

### **Scripture Interprets Scripture**

Individual scripture passages (some difficult, even contradictory) are interpreted in the light of the whole Bible's central messages and themes. We avoid isolating passages as narrow proof texts. Some scripture is more important than other scripture.

### **The Plain Meaning of the Text**

Scripture is understood in the sense that would seem obvious to their original readers. It respects their context and how they would have heard and experienced the passage

### **Public Interpretation**

Passages should first seek the public meaning of the text— what it would mean to all people. Listening to folks from cultures and generations other than our own ensures that our sense of public is not too narrow. Then we can ask what it means for us—consistent with what it means for everyone.

One of the pitfalls of modern-day biblical interpretation is to say truth is synonymous with fact — something that can be proven by evidence and research. The biblical authors lived long before that understanding of truth was the only one. And that gets us into trouble.

The example I used was the first creation story – the seven days of creation. A modernist concrete and honestly really flat interpretation goes immediately to the 7 days. It says that the only way the story can be true is if we accept the seven days as fact. That sets us up for this ridiculous situation where we have to either believe science or the Bible. I guarantee that means the Bible will lose.

But that's never what the story hinged on. For this story, looking at the plain meaning of the story – as it would have been heard by those early Israelites – is the most useful of the five tools.

That creation story was most likely penned by some of the Jewish priests and scholars who were in exile in Babylon. It grew out of a several thousand-years relationship with Yahweh, the God of Israel.

During the session, I showed a short video that told the Babylonian creation story. You can find it on this link if you're reading this online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjyhjXXNXPE>. You can also go to YouTube and enter Babylonian Story of Creation in the search box.

In exile, the Babylonian story is what the Jewish people would have kept hearing. In the Babylonian story, there are some similarities to ours. But the gods in the Babylonian story are haughty and violent. Creation came out of an act of violence and humans were created solely to be servants of the gods so they wouldn't have to do the dirty work on earth. There was no sense that the gods loved them.

As the Jewish priests and scholars listened to the Babylonian story, they could say, "that's not the God we've known for all these years. Our God is a God who created us by speaking. Our God created through a process of order and beauty, not violence. And God created us to be the image of God. Here's our creation story – it paints a very different picture of God than that Babylonian story"

That's the main point of the story – the God they knew was in stark contrast to the Babylonian gods. Yahweh is a more loving and generous God. People were created to be partners with God. The seven days was just a poetic way to tell that story. We don't even need to argue that at all.

Next month, I'll recap our conversation about LGBTQ issues and outline how the above five methods of interpretation can help us find a more loving and inclusive way of using scripture in our relationship to our LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters.

Christ's peace,

*Pastor Kris*

## ***Advent Theme—For Such a Time as This***

Our Advent theme comes from the book of Esther, chapter 4 - our reading the first Sunday in Advent. Time is always a theme in Advent—what time is it? Advent presents us with the blurred boundaries between past, present, and future—the now and not yet that we are plunged into through the past event of Christ's death and resurrection.

In a time of ongoing struggle and upheaval, perhaps we as Christians are here for just such a time as this. What is stirring in our hearts as we contemplate this time of watchfulness and anticipation in the midst of the world's chaos?

## ***Calendar***

**Worship services are livestreamed to the church YouTube channel. You can find the link to that and the bulletin on our website: <https://www.zionithaca.org/worship>**

**December 4** 9:00 am—Worship with Holy Communion  
2:00 pm—Combined council at Bethlehem

**December 7** 6:00 pm—Advent Evening prayer—livestreamed on Bethlehem's Facebook page and then shared on Zion's Facebook page and YouTube channel  
7:00 pm—Confirmation and Wednesday School

**December 11** 9:00 am—Worship

**December 14** 6:00 pm—Advent Evening prayer  
7:00 pm Confirmation

**December 18** 9:00 am—Worship

**December 21** 6:00 pm—Advent Evening prayer  
7:00 pm—Confirmation

**December 24** 7:00 pm—Christmas Eve Service of Lessons and Carols

**December 25** 10:00 am—Combined Bethlehem/Zion Worship on Zoom

## ***Looking Ahead—Epiphany***

After a two-year Covid hiatus, we will once again have our combined Epiphany service at Grace Lutheran Church in rural Wahoo on **January 8 at 10:30 am.**

### **December Helpers**

**Cleaners** - Charlie and Diane Rine

**Communion Assistant** - Megan Patent-Nygren

**Ushers** - Charlie Rine/Gail Otto

**Lector** - Carol Mintzmeyer

### **Acolytes**

Dec 4 - Karsen

Dec. 11 —Evie H.

Dec. 18 —Taryn Sudik

Dec 24 —open