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**The Gifts Christ Freely Gives**

The next phase for the Gifts Christ Freely Gives is to fund an Assistant Pastor position. The candle to the left shows that we have received gifts totaling over $15,000 toward the goal of $40,000. Please consider contributing to this much needed position.

**School News**

* We are now enrolling children for the 2016-2017 school year. If you have friends or neighbors considering Zion, remind them to get their registration in early, as only 2 spots remain in kindergarten.
* Planning is now underway for the 2016 PEACE dinner/auction fundraiser. If anyone is interested in helping with this project please speak with Lisa Splittgerber or email her at lisa.splittgerber@zionkearney.org

We are currently needing volunteers to help with a mailing.

* Our girls’ basketball team will attend the Roundball tournament next weekend in Juniata.

**Stewardship**

John 2:3 “When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.”” Behold the faith of Mary: she sees a problem and simply lays it before her Son and Lord, “They have no wine.” She does not offer a proposed solution, she does not demand, she simply states her need and waits for the Lord's response. She trusts that the Lord is a giver and she knows that He always provides. May such a faith be ours!

**Announcements – January 17, 2016**

**Please remember...to silence your cell phone upon entering the sanctuary.**

**Zion’s sanctuary is equipped with a HEARING LOOP. Please switch hearing aids to T-coil mode. We have 2 headsets and receivers that persons without hearing aids can use. Ask an usher for assistance.**

**Our Weekly Memory Work**

**Holy Baptism 2: What benefits does Baptism give? Which are these words and promises of God?**

**Voters Meeting – Next Sunday**

The January Voters Meeting will be held January 24 at 10:15 in the Fellowship Hall.

**Senior Citizens**

Our Senior Citizens will meet tomorrow, January 18 for their monthly pot luck dinner at noon. All are welcome to join us.

**Merna Oertwig Open House**

The family of Merna Oertwig would like to invite the congregation to an open house celebrating Merna’s 90th birthday. The open house will be held Sunday, January 24 in Zion’s Fellowship Hall from 2-4 pm.

**Sunday School**

During the opening for the children’s Sunday school we celebrate each child’s birthday and baptismal day. This takes place the Sunday before the actual day. For the birthday we ask each child to bring a quarter for each year that God has blessed them with. We would ask the parents to help your children remember to bring their quarters on this special day. If you do not have the number of quarters needed the Sunday school always has some available to make change.

 From these offering, the Sunday school sponsors 5 children from Haiti through the Haiti Lutheran Mission Society – USA. For $130 per child, each is fed, clothed and provided a Christian education for a full year.

**Storytelling Festival this Friday**

As part of the Kearney Storytelling Festival, Mr Ed Stivender will be at Zion Friday morning, January 22 at 9:30 to entertain our school children. The congregation is invited to attend this presentation which will be in the fellowship hall.

**Home Basketball Games**

Our Zion basketball teams have their first home game tomorrow with Hastings. The girls play at 5:00, with the boy’s game following at 6:00. On Thursday, Jan. 21st we will host North Platte with the girl’s game at 5:00 and the boys at 6:00.

**THANK YOU** for the many cards, gifts, and words of encouragement given to me and my family during this Christmas season. We are overwhelmed with your generosity! We are thankful for our Zion family all year long, and for the opportunity to serve our Lord with you. God’s peace and blessings be with you as we begin 2016.

In Christian love, Pastor, Carol, Abigail, and Zach

**A Critical Moment for LCMS Disaster Response—an appeal for aid from President Matthew Harrison**

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Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

     As most of us gathered with family and friends for Christmas worship and celebrations, cities in Texas and the Deep South were slammed by tornados while historic rainfall poured down on the Midwest. In Texas alone, hundreds of homes were leveled, and record-breaking floodwaters in Missouri and Illinois destroyed or damaged some 2,000 homes and businesses, devastating numerous communities. And it’s not over. In the next few days, floodwaters will crest and create more flooding as they make their way to the Gulf of Mexico. Many of those affected are members of the LCMS. While we were enjoying Christmas, they experienced the worst events of their lives. Now their homes are in shambles.

     I’ve been at this business of mercy in disaster a long time. **Since the beginning of the intensification of World Relief and Human Care disaster work some 15 years ago, we have not faced such a critical moment**. Because of the ebb and flow of events and needs, our disaster funds in reserve are *critically* low. Luther preached, “Jesus has left us a commandment… that we are to render the works of mercy to those afflicted and in a state of calamity… Jesus Christ gave us the brightest example when he descended into our flesh and took on our penalty so that we might be saved.”

     The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through LCMS Disaster Response is working with district leaders, partner organizations and LCMS congregations to reach out with Christ’s love and compassion as flood and storm victims recover. As a church body, we stand alongside our districts and congregations as they help victims and their communities begin the long and difficult journey to recovery. You can help.

**Our capacity to assist those most affected will depend heavily on you and other LCMS friends whom God empowers to respond to this special emergency appeal.**

     We are beginning this response effort with existing disaster-relief funds – but we know that these available funds are far below what will be required to initiate **and sustain** a robust and meaningful response.

**Please, as the Lord has blessed you, will you provide an initial donation to support and bolster our Synod’s response efforts done in the name of Christ Jesus?**

     Financial assistance can be mailed to: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, P.O. Box 66861, St. Louis, MO 63166-6861.  Make checks payable to “The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod” (or “LCMS”) and write “Disaster Response” on the memo line. Gifts can be made via phone by calling 888-930-4438.

     Thank you. God bless you, the support He leads you to provide, and our Synod’s response as His baptized children.

Pastor Matthew C. Harrison
President, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod