



**Under
Construction
For
125 years**

ZION
Lutheran Church

The Zion Bell

Dec. 2011-Jan. 2012

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Gifts and Gimmicks

There was a portion of the Cub Scout magazine “*Boy’s Life*” that was called “*Gifts and Gimmicks*.” It was a section of want-ads for camping gear, pocket knives, clothing and other useful things, as well as x-ray glasses, hovercraft you could make with a vacuum machine engine, and other such esoterica. I figured it was called “*Gifts and Gimmicks*” because it was up to us to decide which were useful, and which were useless.

The same could be said for religious life in these United States nowadays. There are faithful churches which bestow God’s gifts upon the people, and there are churches which dispense all kinds of gimmicks that look slick, fun, and exciting on the page (or screens) but have been emptied of anything useful in conveying to the hearer the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation Christ won at the cross (*which, by the way, was neither slick, fun, nor exciting now, was it?*).

Back in the 1800’s the chief Gimmick-user was an ex-lawyer named Charles Grandison Finney. Standing six-foot three, with piercing eyes, great musical skill, and excellent rhetorical techniques, he made quite an impression. He’d take his “Show” on the road, setting up tent revivals which soon caught on like wildfire. People came forward by the hundreds of thousands to make their decision for Christ. The promised gift was a life free from sin from that point on. Wow! Who’d not want that? Even American Lutherans chased after the circus.

Trouble is, we’re sinners by nature. So they’d backslide and have to go have another conversion *experience*. So often did revivals visit certain areas to “help” backsliders re-devote themselves to Jesus that they were called the “Burned-over district!” Some gifts, huh? Sounds more like a worthless gimmick to me! Our Missouri Synod was founded in part to restore the gift-giving Gospel to such a misled American culture.

God gives. That’s who He is. Any worship or teaching (*they go hand-in-hand*) which asks us to serve it

up to God is worshiping and teaching a false god. So who’s pitching their revival tent in your life these days? Is it that TV preacher giving blessings for pledges? Is it the church down the road that employs entertainment-based worship based on the fickle emotions of our quick-change, remote-clicking, next-big-thing-chasing culture? Is it the family member whose holier-than-thou attitude makes you feel like a second-class Christian? Is it the commercials on the TV and radio that tell you that unless there’s a BMW with a big bow in the driveway for your loved one, you haven’t celebrated Christmas?

This season of gift-giving, can we **PLEASE** leave behind chasing after all the **GIMMICKS** to focus on the **GIFTS**? “**For God so loved the world that He GAVE HIS ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON.**” Here we have the simple truth come down from Heaven to earth for us and for our salvation. Here we have the real presence of Christ’s body and blood given and shed for us for the forgiveness of sin. Here we have the promise of joining Christ, the first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep, in the resurrection of the dead. Christ is pure gift. No gimmicks, no false promises, nothing misleading. He shows the cost of our sin as He hangs there on the cross, and shows us the glory to come in His Resurrection and Ascension.

Fortunately, I never did have enough spending money to get that hovercraft kit. Had I bought it, made it, and actually got it to work, I probably would have driven it right over the garage roof or something stupid like that and killed myself. Same thing with operating our Spiritual life with all these gimmicks—they’re risky and even potentially ***deadly*** to our faith!

Folks, when our resources are so short these days, let’s not invest our time, possessions and devotion in false, gimmicky Christmas celebrations this year. Leave the flying acrobatics to the Revivalists. Come to Christ’s altar. See, hear and taste the real thing. The real gift. Christ, the New-born King.

Student Ministry

MIDDLE SCHOOL & HIGH SCHOOL EVENT PROGRESSIVE DINNER & CAROLING SUN, DEC 11 5-8 PM



All youth (6-12 grade) and their families are invited to an evening of singing and food. Please sign up in the youth room by noon of Dec 11th.

HIGH SCHOOL EVENT

ICE SKATING @ MOYLAN ICEPLEX SUNDAY, DEC 4 FROM 1-3 \$7.50

Bring friends! We will be meeting at Moylan Iceplex. The address is 12550 West Maple Road.



MIDDLE SCHOOL & HIGH SCHOOL EVENT MAHONEY SLEDDING SUNDAY, JANUARY 8 @ 12-5 PM



Grab your sled & snow gear; we are sledding at Mahoney. It is free to attend. Please come having already eaten lunch. To go you must RSVP by Wed, Jan 4.

HIGH SCHOOL

Nov 27	No Youth Group
Dec 4	Ice Skating (1-3 PM)
Dec 11	Progressive Dinner & Caroling (5-8)
Dec 18	Pie Auction
Dec 25	No Youth Group
Jan 1	No Youth Group
Jan 8	Sledding @ Mahoney (12-5 PM)
Jan 13-14	Lock In (7 PM - 7 AM)
Jan 15	No Youth Group
Jan 22	Bowling
Jan 29	Sledding
Feb 12	Family Game Nite (4-6 PM)
March 11	Variety Show

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS SERVICE "O CHRISTMAS TREE"



Children of all ages are invited to participate. A part for everyone! Sign up in narthex.

**Sat, Dec 3 Rehearsal
10:30-11:30 AM**
**Sat, Dec 10 Rehearsal
1-2 PM**

Worship Service on Sat, December 17 @ 6 PM

FAMILY GAME NITE SUNDAY, FEB 12 4-6 PM

For people of all ages! Stay tuned for more info.

**VACATION BIBLE
SCHOOL**
Save the Date
June 10 - June 14
6-8 PM



SUNDAY SCHOOL

There will be **NO** children's or Youth Sunday School on Nov. 27 or Dec. 25.

MIDWEEK & CONFIRMATION

Midweek & Confirmation classes are currently on Winter Break. All children 4 yrs - 8th grade are invited to join us when they resume Wed, Jan 4th @ 5:30-6:30 PM.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Dec 3	Christmas Rehearsal (10:30-11:30 AM)
Dec 10	Christmas Rehearsal (1-2 PM)
Dec 11	Progressive Dinner & Caroling (5-8)
Dec 17	Christmas Worship Service
Dec 18	Pie Auction
Jan 8	Sledding @ Mahoney (12-5 PM)
Feb 12	Family Game Nite (4-6 PM)
March 11	Variety Show
March 16-17	Middle School Youth Gathering

PIE AUCTION



SUNDAY, DEC 18 @ 11:45 AM

All are invited to join the Youth for Zion Annual Pie Auction. Lunch starts at 11:45. Please bring a potluck item; youth are supplying brats & hotdogs. All proceeds go to support Zion's Middle School & High School Youth activities.

PIE IN THE FACE
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18
11:45 AM



Every year one lucky person gets a pie in the face. Last year Bob Vandervort took one for the youth.

Anyone that hasn't already taken one for the team is eligible for nomination. All votes are \$1.

Vote early, Vote Often!

CALLING ALL COOKS

The youth humbly request donations of cakes, pies or other similar items to auction off at the pie auction.

Please deliver all goods to the Lakeview Room prior to 10:30 AM on Sunday, December 18. Thank you for your support!



As part of this year's Sunday School Rally Day on September 11, the children created and wrote items to add to Zion's Time Capsule. The 2 year olds – Kindergartener created a card with a handprint that included their name, parents' names, and grandparents' names. The 1st through 6th graders added a special memory of church to their handprint card. The Jr. High and High School students wrote cards that included a special memory of church and where they expect the church to be in 25 years.

Below are some of our children's thoughts in their words:

"My baptism was special because I met Jesus"

1st Grader

"1. I will always miss little lamb lessons.

2. Bible school

3. Mrs. Sandy

When my little brother's naughty and has to get a spanking after church."

2nd Grader

"Whisper to your friends in Bible School"

2nd Grader

"About 1 year ago a bad storm came in and we stopped at Pastor's house. He said "Yes I will give you shelter" right away."

3rd Grader

"Easter 2009 because it was the day Jesus rose from the dead and because it was fun!"

4th Grader

"I remember a couple years ago when there was a huge windstorm during vacation bible school and everyone was freaking out. I think I was six!"

5th Grader

"My special memory is when Mr. Klaus got pied at the pie auction."

6th Grader

"I loved the Christmas programs because they are always so much fun and I enjoy them"

7th Grader

"I was acolyting and it was my first time so I went out of order, burnt my finger, and forgot a candle."

8th Grader

"Andrea takes us to New Orleans and Idaho. We do May Day candy bags in the neighborhood and lots of fun activities at church. 25 years from now, hopefully Pastor will still be here."

High School Student

"...Everyone here is really nice and inviting and it was really easy to feel like I belonged. We do something every week. Sometimes it's crazy like snowball fights using pantyhose filled with flour or throwing jello at each other. Other times it's just fun like making pizza or playing ultimate frisbee. This summer we went to Idaho for a servant event and it was a ton of fun. This Friday we are going to have a lock in to repaint the Youth Room. I hope that in 25 years, the people here are still as fun and inviting as they are now."

High School Student

"Zion Church will grow in the next 25 years. We will have many fun times as long as we're here.

Zion is a family we have all come together. We went to Idaho. We have game nights every Sunday!

25 years from now, we will still be a family!!"

High School Student

"...One of the best things at this church overall is the pastor. He is so passionate and eager for the Word. He preaches the Word with so much enthusiasm and joy. It is inspirational to be around him. I hope there are future pastors who take the Word with so much joy as Pastor Schmitt."

High School Student

JANUARY VOTERS' ASSEMBLY

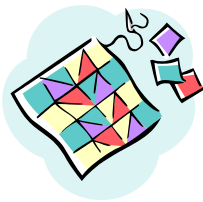
Mark your calendar for the January quarterly voters' meeting on January 15 immediately following the 10:30 worship service. You will have an opportunity to share your views on the proposed budget for 2012.

"SEW" BLESSED QUILTERS

is the name chosen for our quilt group. We will be sewing quilts for the Lutheran Hour Ministries, Lutheran Hour Reformation Rally next November. They will collect new and used quilts of all sizes for the Orphan Grain Train.

We will continue to accept donations of cotton fabric, good used clothing, thread, batting, used sheets and cash. The first meeting will be January 17, 2012 at church in the lower level, 10 am to 3 pm or so. Bring a sack lunch. Questions call Rudy Murchie or Mary Christensen.

All volunteers are welcome; you don't have to be an expert.



A Concordia Christmas

On behalf of the Concordia University, Nebraska family, I invite you to join us for our annual **Christmas at Concordia** celebration December 3 and 4. Christmas at Concordia is a musical celebration featuring concert performances and devotional presentations by student musicians and faculty from the university department of music. **Christmas at Concordia** events include several opportunities for you to celebrate our Savior's birth, God's ultimate gift of love and peace, during this Christmas season:

Concerts are scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 3 at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 4 at 3 p.m. at St. John Lutheran Church, 919 N. Columbia Avenue, in Seward. Admission is free, but tickets are required. In 2010 all concerts were sold out, so early reservations are important.

Holiday buffet dinner accompanies the Saturday concerts and is scheduled for Saturday, 4:30-6:30 p.m. in the Janzow Campus Center. Tickets are required for the buffet dinner.

The 17th Annual Scholarship Parade of Homes tour of five Seward homes decked out in Christmas cheer is scheduled for Sunday, 12:30-4:30 p.m. Tickets are required.

All reservations and tickets may be obtained via on-line registration beginning November 1 at www.cune.edu/CaCpayment or by calling 800.535.5494, ext. 7408.

CHRISTMAS DECORATING

On Sunday, December 4, after the 10:30 worship service, we will have lunch and then decorate the church for Christmas.

Everyone is welcome to help.

~ Board of Fellowship ~

Coffee and Donuts

The new 2012 schedule for serving coffee and donuts on the second Sunday of the month after the 8:00 service is as follows:

January	Fellowship
February	Elders
March	Youth
April	Rebekah Circle
May	Lydia Circle
June	Discipleship
July	Church Properties
August	Education
September	Elders
October	Stewardship
November	Rebekah Circle
December	Lydia Circle

Thank you to all that helped serve coffee and those delicious goodies this past year.

On the bulletin board by the Lakeview Room there is a sign-up sheet for anyone who would like to serve coffee and donuts after the 8:00 service. You could do it for an occasion such as an anniversary or birthday.

All it requires is to bring donuts, cookies, or anything delicious, make coffee (coffee and kool-aid already bought and in the cupboard), serve, and clean up.

Thank you to the Lydia and Rebekah Circles, Board of Stewardship, Randy & Kim Froehlich, Andrew McCoy and Barb McDonald for providing these treats in October and November.

~Board of Fellowship~



PROJECT HOPE

Received a mailing from the President of the Project Hope Board of Directors stating that they need "help big time"! In this economy they are feeding increasing numbers of people at their main site and their two satellite sites. With winter and the holidays approaching the need is going to be even greater.

Project Hope is experiencing a serious drain on their resources. Their shelves are too often near empty as donations are down. The Food Bank is also bare so Project Hope must buy more food than ever from other sources, costing them more. Their cash reserves are quickly depleting as cash donations are down. Project Hope also had to purchase a new used truck as the ancient one became too costly to repair and was not safe to drive.

Project Hope wants us to know that they greatly appreciate the gifts that have been shared with them throughout this year. Without them, they could not do what they have done to date.

Project Hope asks that we **prayerfully consider giving a special, second mile, above and beyond donation of food items and/or a cash donation.**

Each day they stop at noon to pray. In these prayers they thank the Lord for their blessings, they pray for the clients and their families that they are privileged to serve and they pray for their faithful supporters. They now ask us to pray for them that the Lord will provide the resources they need to keep up the good work of the Kingdom over the holidays and beyond.

There is a Project Hope box in the narthex with envelopes to make it easier to make a monetary donation if you desire. Also take advantage of the sales at the various supermarkets and pick up a few of those items to put in the Project Hope cart in the narthex.

For December the featured items are coffee, tea, and cocoa or hot chocolate drink mixes.

Zion has always been a great supporter of Project Hope and that is a blessing. Can we reach just a little deeper to help Project Hope get through the end of this year?

Kathy Rummel
Food Coordinator, Project Hope

POP CAN TABS

Zion is very near to reaching the goal of 150,000 pop can tabs by the end of this year. Please remember to save your tabs, bring them to the Lakeview Room and put them on the east counter by the miniature Ronald McDonald House.

Saving the tabs is a way of recycling for us and it helps the Ronald McDonald House raise funds so they can continue to assist families with ailing children in the Omaha Hospitals.

CARD COUNTER

Thanksgiving cards and napkins will be available at the Card Counter through Thanksgiving. Christmas cards will also be available, hopefully by the time you receive this newsletter. Stop by early for the best selection. Christmas napkins are also available.

FEED THE BODY/ FEED THE SOUL

Due to unforeseen circumstances, books were not baled to be purchased at warehouse prices for the Feed the Body, Feed the Soul tree and therefore, the tree will not be up this year. However, please consider the purchase of any Christian book, Arch book, or Christian Christmas book and donate it to Project Hope.

Hopefully, we will be able to do this next year.

OPEN DOOR MISSION /PROJECT HOPE TREE

If not by the time you receive this newsletter, then shortly thereafter, the Open Door Mission/Project Hope Tree will be up to be decorated by the hats, mittens, gloves, and scarves that are needed by these two missions for the winter months. Look for sales and bring your new items to the narthex and put on the tree. These donations will be shared equally by Open Door and Project Hope and deliveries will be made as the tree becomes full. For those who are less fortunate than us, a warm cap, mittens and/or scarf is a real blessing. Please consider having your children be part of this mission by helping to make a selection for the tree.



Lydia Circle News

Our October meeting opened with a reading, "The Yellow Light", and a Mite Offering Prayer.

A Thank You was read from the Orphan Grain Train for the donation we sent them for "scrub buckets" that went to help in the clean-up for the flood victims.

Five members from the Rebekah and Lydia circles attended the LWML Fall Rally on October 2nd at Good Shepherd in Gretna. Judy Treadway will be the secretary for the next term. Pastor Fred Simon from Pilgrim in Bellevue spoke about "Living on the Edge". He also led us in a Bible Study from Acts 4. We should remember to tell people of who Jesus is and how we should be loving and caring for others as He was.

Thanks to all who donated or bought items at the "Baking Event" that both circles sponsored on November 19th & 20th. The proceeds taken in went to Project Hope and Open Door Mission.

We thank Elaine Raabe and Shirley Lang for taking the offices of President and Vice President for another term. Our program for October was "Ask the Pastor". Birthdays for September and October were Marybeth Cohrs, Shirley Lang, Connie Hagen and Elaine Raabe.

Marybeth sent quite a few invitations to our new members to come and visit either one of our circles. Anyone can come and see what we are all about.

Secretary, Aleta Neuhaus

Rebekah Circle News

Nine members and Pastor Schmitt met on November 15th. The meeting began with a reading called "The Lord Said Go". Mites were collected and reports given. Correspondence included thank you notes from the VanPelt family and Orphan Grain Train plus the Wycliffe newsletter.

Plans for the Bakery Event were made with several members volunteering to help and everyone asked to bring baked goods between one and three on Saturday. The cook books and Christmas tree ornaments will also be available during the event and until Christmas.

Christmas cards will be available soon at the card counter as will the Christmas tree for caps, scarves and gloves for Project Hope and Open Door Mission. The items for Project Hope for December are canned vegetables, cake mixes, frosting, canned pumpkin, pancake mix, syrup and new unwrapped toys for children of all ages.

There was no election but Mary agreed to become secretary and Joann agreed to be the new treasurer for the circle for the next two years.

We presented Pastor Schmitt with a card of appreciation for all the things he does for us. We then had some lively discussion during the "Ask the Pastor" portion of the meeting while we enjoyed a delicious dessert, nuts and beverages that Anna served. The meeting adjourned.

Secretary, Carol Scebold