



ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

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THE HERALD – OCTOBER 2016

We are a congregation that strives to be an inviting, faithful, and growing presence in our community and in our world, with a passion for living and spreading the love of Jesus Christ by using our spiritual and material gifts in the service of all God's people

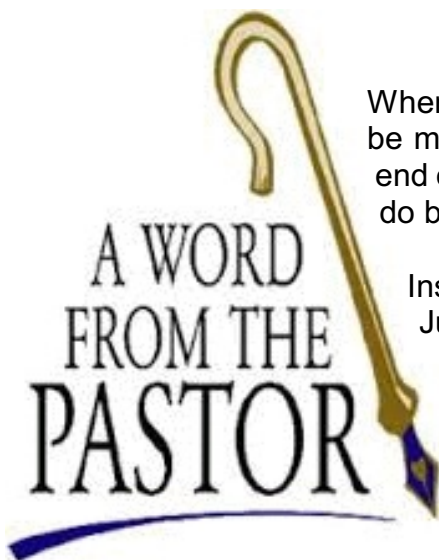
Oct 02	10:00 am	WORSHIP	Exodus 12 (Passover: blood of the lamb) WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY
Oct 09	10:00 am	WORSHIP	Exodus 32 (Golden calf, God forgives)
Oct 16	10:00 am	WORSHIP	1 Samuel 1 (Birth of Samuel, Hannah sings)
Oct 17	7:00 pm	COUNCIL	
Oct 21 -23		EDGEWOOD	Fall Cleanup Days - lots to do
Oct 23	10:00 am	WORSHIP	2 Samuel 7 (God's promise to David)
Oct 30	10:00 am	WORSHIP	1 Kings 17 (God's Care for the Widow)
Nov 06	10:00 am	WORSHIP	Jonah 1 (Jonah and God's Mercy)
Nov 13	10:00 am	WORSHIP	Isaiah 6 (Isaiah's Call and Sending)
Nov 20	10:00 am	WORSHIP	Jeremiah 36 (A New Covenant)
Nov 27	10:00 am	WORSHIP	Daniel 6 (Daniel's Hope in God)

2016 Zion Council

Nick Beck (Chair) Wayne McCracken (Vice Chair)
Mickford Durgana Ginette McCracken Alethia McIntosh Ed Strath

Non-Council Positions

Ingrid Beck (Treasurer) Brian Cartwright (Recording Secretary)



When Jesus ascends to heaven, he gives clear instructions: “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” What the disciples did next is what we, as churches, do best: they committee-ed the commission to be witnesses.

Instead of finding ways to be witnesses of Christ in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria or the ends of the earth, they felt it was necessary to bring the number of 11 original disciples back up to 12.

We’re all familiar with the concept of taking a mission, a call, a vision, a plan, a purpose and committee-ing the heck out of it until everyone is either over it, confused, annoyed or a mixture of those things. We’ve all experienced talking an idea to death in forms of committees and meetings.

The chapter opened with Jesus instructing the disciples to wait a few days for the Holy Spirit. But the period of waiting was only supposed to be a few days. Our gestation periods often last longer than days. Sometimes, we wait for years to attempt to do something. Maybe we tell ourselves we’re refining skills or growing our ideas while we’re waiting. Sometimes that’s true. Other times, it’s an excuse. Even after Pentecost, if it weren’t for Paul and the persecution of the Christians, the gospel may never have reached anyone outside of Jerusalem.

We have a tendency to gather, secure, protect and hold. We make permanent landmarks in areas that were supposed to be temporary resting places. We build bigger buildings. We make clearer standards of belonging to the tribe, which leads to making bigger walls (both literal and figurative) creating more outsiders. We slowly start thinking that everything holy and good happens here, within our tribe, within our walls. And everything out there is hedonistic, dangerous, secular and can be avoided. Being witnesses of Christ, then, focuses on bringing in here the ones who are out there. Or wait for them to come to us.

At least the disciples were ordered to wait for a few days. What’s our excuse for waiting? We’ve already received the power of the Holy Spirit. We already are empowered and gifted and encouraged. Our call is to go and make disciples. Action verbs. But we wait and see who will come into our doors. Or we wait for the right idea and the right time to do something. And while we’re waiting, we watch the world pass us by.

The heartbeat of the Scriptures is the concept of being sent. Going into the world and reaching out to humanity with love and grace. “Where are you?” God asks Adam and Eve in Eden. From the beginning, God has been reaching out to humanity. God has been relentlessly looking for us and pursuing us.

Later in history, God’s question of “Where are you?” was asked in the form of Jesus Christ. Through Jesus, God searched for the lost, broken and downtrodden. Today, God’s question of “Where are you?” is asked through you and me. Jesus commissions us to continue the work of his ministry.

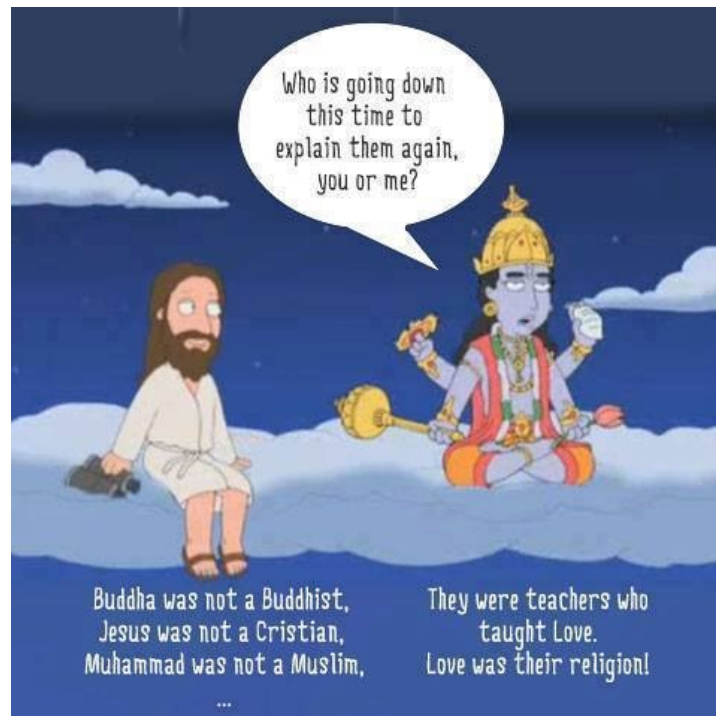
It's nice to have the right plan of action and the right time and place to execute those plans. But that can lead to such a passive life of discipleship. There are plenty of things you can do now. The words of Paul echo in my heart: So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, you should do it all for God's glory. (1 Corinthians 10:31).

You don't have to have the cure for cancer to make a difference – you can show love and comfort for those affected by it. You don't have to have the solution to eradicating poverty and homelessness – you can treat folks with dignity and remind them that despite their difficulties, they still carry the image of God and are worthy of love and respect. You don't have to have the answer to ending racism and inequality – you can work to pursue justice and speak out when you witness injustice.

We're all being invited to participate right now in the ongoing work of God. So what are we waiting for?

A Quote From Bishop John Shelby Spong:

Ultimately the resurrection is a call to universalism. Go to all the world, go beyond the boundaries of your fears. Go to those you have defined as unclean, unworthy, unsaved, uncircumcised and unbaptized. Go to those you have reduced to being the object of your prejudices. Go to those who are different. Go to the rejected of the world and teach them what I have taught you, namely that God is love and that love embraces all that God has made, that love has no boundaries, that love rejects no one and that love is the essence of the gospel. The Great Commission was never meant to be a charge to us to convert the heathen, as it has so often been interpreted to be. It was and is a call to see everyone as living inside the love of God.



OLIVE BRANCH NEWS

I received the following letter from Deborah this past week. Since the letter was sent, a doctor in Mbeya has examined Baraka and decided that he has been mis-diagnosed. His problem is caused by heart valves that need to be replaced. The doctor arranged to send Baraka by ambulance, with a nurse to Dar es Salaam for the surgery. We pray and anxiously await for a miracle for Baraka.

A Long and Painful Process of Saying Goodbye

2 years ago, social welfare placed a beautiful, charming, intelligent 15 year-old boy named Baraka with us at the Zion Home. We knew from day one that our story with Baraka would end with sadness. He had spent 8 months in hospital, suffering from heart failure, resulting from a bout of rheumatic fever he suffered as a child. Overwhelmed by his condition, his uncle, one of two surviving relatives in Baraka's life at the time, abandoned him in the Pediatric ward of the main hospital in Mbeya.

Before welcoming him into our home, we discussed with our family what it would mean to bring in someone so fragile and with such a severe and terminal illness. Our family did not bat an eyelash, although I quaked at the thought.

For 1 year and 4 months Baraka flourished. We could almost delude ourselves into thinking that miraculously, he was cured. Whatever we could do with Baraka, we did and, if things were too challenging for him, he was never short of a family member prepared to carry him on their back to reach the summit of a climb or take his place on the football pitch.

His eyes sparkled, his cheeks rounded and life seemed great. Alas, nothing lasts, at least not for someone who is terminally ill. In June this year, Baraka took a sharp turn for the worse. Since June, he has been in hospital, with only a few, short stints back at home. Our home and staff have mobilized to help him in hospital, from bringing him food at 6am, 1pm and 4pm, to purchasing the necessary medicines to keep him comfortable, to washing his clothes, to bathing him and just keeping him company.

It has not been easy. A shadow has descended over our home and although we are all smiling and coming together, we know our time with Baraka is limited. We all feel guilty that our lives and work keep moving forward and, yet, his life, his beautiful, meaningful life, is grinding to a halt. As a family, we are rallying. I am so infinitely proud of our amazing children and the entire Olive Branch staff. No one has skipped a beat, save perhaps for myself, who finds it exceedingly difficult to accept defeat and even more difficult to embrace sadness.

I just wanted to send this message to you, our nearest and dearest, to know what we are currently going through. For those of you who love Baraka, know Baraka or know Baraka through stories, messages of love and support for him and for all the children would be great. Thank you all for walking this journey with us.

Love from all of us at The Olive Branch for Children,
Deb, Putiyei and Olive Branch Family