



# The Mountain Top Messenger

January 2026

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
<b>Elders:</b> [11 Andy] [14 Randy] [18 JohnS] [21 Darryl] [25 Scott] [28 JohnP] Feb. [1 Doug] [4 Randy]		<b>January Altar Guild</b> Tami Thimm 715-929-0695 Janet Houle 715-292-8392		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4 8:45am</b> Sunday School 9:00am Worship Service 9:15am Confirmation 10:15am Bible Study 2:00pm LGP	<b>5</b> 10:00am Bible Study <b>Dartball 7:00pm at Summit 1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> 6:00pm Worship	<b>8</b> 9:30am LFOJ Chapel	<b>9</b> National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day	<b>10</b> National House-plant Appreciation Day
<b>11 8:45am</b> Sunday School 9:00am Worship Service 9:15am Confirmation 10:15am Bible Study	<b>12</b> 10:00am Bible Study 6:00pm Altar Guild mtg. <b>Dartball 7:00pm at Summit 2</b>	<b>13</b> 1:00pm Sewing Circle	<b>14</b> 6:00pm Worship	<b>15</b> 9:00am Winkel	<b>16</b> National Religious freedom Day	<b>17</b> National Use Your Gift Card Day
<b>18 8:45am</b> Sunday School 9:00am Worship Service 9:15am Confirmation 10:15am Bible Study 2:00pm LGP	<b>19</b> 10:00am Bible Study <b>Dartball 7:00pm. vs. Good Shepherd</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> 1:00pm Hospice Group-Gathering 6:00pm Worship	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> <b>LIFT 6pm at the church.</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>25 8:45am</b> Sunday School 9:00am Worship Service 9:15am Confirmation 10:15am Bible Study	<b>26</b> 10:00am Bible Study <b>Dartball 7:00pm. at Presbyterian</b>	<b>27</b> 1:00pm Sewing Circle	<b>28 Annual Report Due</b> 6:00pm Worship	<b>29</b> 1:00pm Northern Lights	<b>30</b> National Fund at Work Day	<b>31</b> National Hot Chocolate Day

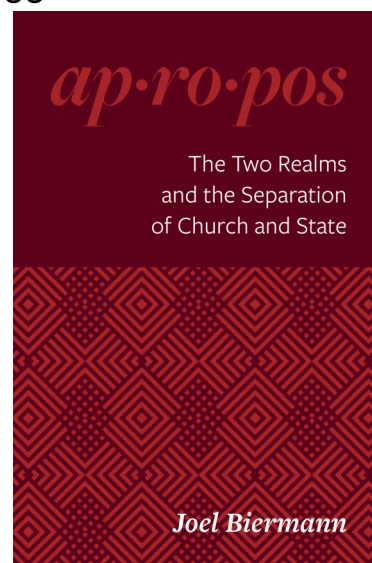
Happy New Year! 2026, Wow! After remembering the 50's 60's, 70's, 80's, 90's, 00's, 10's, it just seems a bit surreal that we are now into the year in which we will celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our nations independence. It is particularly amazing in my mind that I remember the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary quite well. I believe it is going to be a very interesting year.

However, before I look too much at the upcoming year, I would like to mention a few things about the ending of last year. First, a very large thank you to all of those talented musicians who helped make our Christmas Eve services so memorable. The choir was outstanding and all of the solo's and accompanists were spectacular. I have receive numerous compliments and wanted to take a moment to pass them on, you are all greatly appreciated. Along those lines, June and I would like to thank all of you who gave us cards and gifts for Christmas, we are very grateful and I am attempting to get a personal thank you to all of you, but unfortunately it is a slow process. Please know that we thank you for your remembering and caring about us.

I haven't really figured out a topic for the year as I did last year with the 10 commandments. So I am still open to suggestions. I have gotten a few suggestions for some shorter topics that I am planning on incorporating for the next several months.

A reminder to everyone that in both the Sunday morning and Monday morning Bible studies we are reading through and discussing a booklet written by Rev. Dr. Joel Biermann entitled "The Two Realms and the Separation of Church and State". It has been a very interesting and thought provoking study to this point, we are about a third of the way through the book and we have additional books available if you would like to join us. Following the Bible study, the books will be available for self-study in the Library.

A while back, I believe I mentioned that we would be doing a sermon series on the Book of Daniel, originally it was going to be done during the current season of Epiphany, however, the series is a couple sessions longer than the season, so instead of being during Epiphany we will do the complete series following Easter when we get back into the green season of what we call ordinary time. And yes I said Easter, it may seem a bit hard to believe but Ash Wednesday is just a little over a month away.



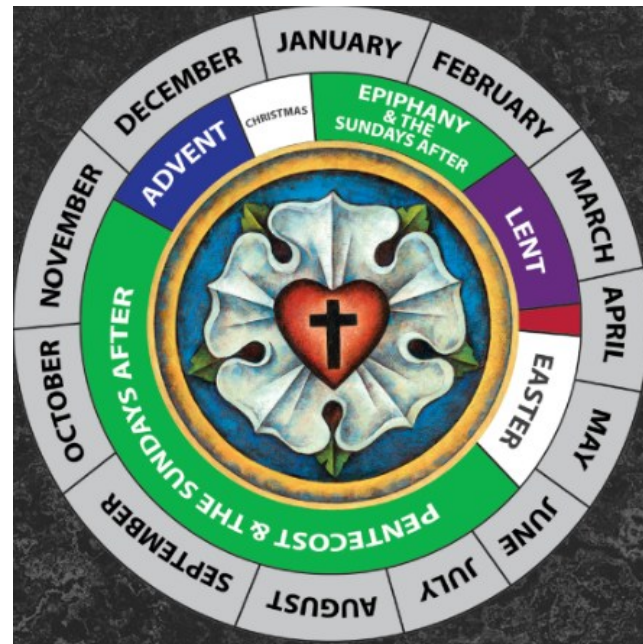


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One last item this month, I wanted to let everyone know, as some have heard, I had received a phone call from another LCMS Church the other day and they asked if I would be open to receiving a call. Now, before anyone gets concerned about that, the first thing I did was to let them know that I am not eligible to receive a call, so I would not be able to consider a call. I, as am SMP Pastor, am called to Zion Lutheran Church in Ashland, WI. Under the current Synod rules, I am not available to take a call. I am your Pastor as long as the Lord allows me to continue and wish to have me. I would also reiterate that being called as your pastor and being able to serve all of you has been, is, and continues to be the greatest blessing in my life. I pray the Lord blesses us with many more years together.

Next month, I will be doing a piece on what the different colors of our Church seasons mean, where they came from and why even have them? I look forward to that and I look forward to another year ahead with all of you.

And now: The Lord bless you and keep you,  
the Lord make His face shine upon you and be  
gracious to you, the Lord look upon you with  
favor and give you peace.  
Pastor Rick



## Zion Lutheran Church Council December 15, 2025

**Call to Order** – John Pruss, President

**Opening prayer** – Pastor Rick Williams

**Roll call** – President, John Pruss

Trustees, Nick Jarvela

Pastor Williams

Elders & Education, Darryl Warren

Secretary, Jule Jarvela

**Approval of Minutes** (printed) -1- Nick Jarvela 2- Darryl Warren MMC

**Pastor's Report** – all going well

**Approval of Treasurer's Report** – None

**Approval of Agenda for this meeting** – 1- Darryl Warren 2- Nick Jarvela MMC

**Board Reports** – None

**Official Acts**

Death – Steve Key – 11-27-2025

**Old Business**

**Concordia Plan** - Pastor Williams and Nick Jarvela met with representative from Concordia

Plan to discuss Zion's options for LFOJ employees. It was recommended that Zion change to the

Account Option for all new hires under 20 hours as of January 1, 2026

Darryl Warren 2- Nick Jarvela MMC

**New Business**

Will request LFOJ Board be present at January meeting

**Next Council Meeting – January 19, 2026**

**Adjournment** - 1- Darryl Warren 2- Nick Jarvela MMC

**Closed with the Lord's Prayer**

Respectfully submitted, Jule Jarvela, Secretary

For I know the plans I have for you,"  
declares the Lord, "plans to prosper  
you and not to harm you, plans to  
give you hope and a future."  
Jeremiah 29:11

Dear Lord, Thank you for this new year!  
No matter what circumstances I may  
face, I know you will be with me every  
step of the way. You are so good to me!

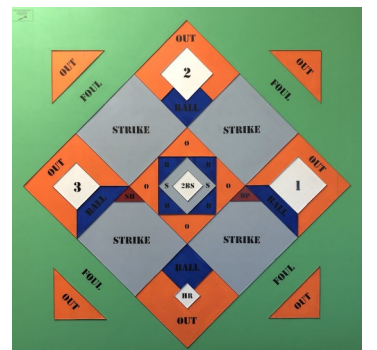


Are the Church's  
kitchen towels  
vacationing in your laun-  
dry room? It's time  
for them to come home!

Words that don't belong in the cross  
word puzzle. PURE, PROMISING,  
CROWDS, WORLDLY MEEK,

**Dartball** - The regular season is half completed.

Zion is in first place with a record of 14 wins and 4 losses, followed by Sanborn in second with a record of 13 wins and 5 losses and Good shepherd is in 3rd place with a record of 9 wins and 9 losses. So far Zion has had 3 home run hits in that little box, about 2 1/2" at the bottom in the home-run area. Dylan Osmak with 2 hits and Kim Harpster with 1 hit. Six games left for the regular season and then in March they will have an all-teams playoff for two Mondays. Come and join if you would like or come and watch and cheer them on.





the ensuing six years. Greg and Marianelly long maintained a loving and supportive home for the kids.

Despite that sterling reputation, however, Massachusetts discontinued the Schrocks' foster care license in June 2025 because of their Christian beliefs about sexual orientation and gender identity.

Like Nick and Audrey, Greg and Marianelly are devout Christians who strongly believe that the Bible teaches that human beings are created as male or female and that an individual cannot change the fact of their God-gifted sex. Greg and Marianelly further believe that it is not "caring" to encourage children to change their bodies to fit a perceived "gender identity." In fact, the couple became foster parents because of their faith, specifically with regards to the teachings of the Bible which require Christians to take special care of widows and orphans, and they believe that foster care is a way they can live out their faith.

To say that Greg's and Marianelly's faith has been instrumental in their decision to foster would be an understatement. But now, Massachusetts thinks it's a problem.

The most inexplicable part of Massachusetts' treatment of Christian foster families is that the Commonwealth is in dire need of foster homes to lovingly welcome children.

"Massachusetts' foster care system is in crisis: The Commonwealth has more than 1,400 children who are waiting to be placed with a loving family. Yet Massachusetts is putting its

ideological agenda ahead of the needs of these suffering kids," said ADF Senior Counsel Johannes Widmalm Delphonse.

"This is a particularly egregious case because the Joneses care for a little girl who is happy and healthy in the only home she's ever known," he added. "Now just because of the Joneses' commonly held religious beliefs, the commonwealth says the Joneses are unfit to parent and is threatening to uproot this little child. That's not putting children first, and that's why we're suing the commonwealth in federal court."

Massachusetts is pushing its own state-mandated viewpoints on gender ideology over the needs of children.

And make no mistake: The Jones and Schrock families are good foster homes. Both families have made abundantly clear that they'll welcome in and love any child, but also can't do anything to violate their deeply held beliefs.

That, apparently, doesn't work for Massachusetts. But Massachusetts' actions are antithetical to the Constitution and the good of its foster children.

Because of this, ADF attorneys filed a lawsuit on behalf of the Joneses and Schrocks in September 2025. Every child deserves a loving home. Children suffer when the government excludes people of faith from foster care.

*LCMS Free To Be Faithful – Newsletter – Winter 2026*

A man, new to the area, goes out ice fishing one morning. He reaches the ice and is about to cut a hole in it when he hears a voice from above: "There are no fish here."

The fisherman is shocked but gets up and moves to another spot. As he's about to cut a hole, he hears a voice from above again, "There are no fish here either."

He gets up and moves to a third spot. Before he's even finished walking, the voice says, "I'm telling you, there are no fish here."

The fisherman says, "God, how can you be so sure there aren't any fish here?"

The voice replies, "This is the ice rink manager."



ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH  
1111—11TH AVE WEST

**Sunday Worship Service** 9:00am live streamed  
**Wednesday Evening Service** 6:00pm  
**Sunday School** - 1st – 7th grade Sunday 8:45am (Sept.-May)  
**Bible Studies**  
Sunday 10:15am Monday 10:00am (Sept.-May)

**Pastor Rick Williams** - 715-209-0479  
**Office Hours:** M /T/Th 9-5 Wed. 12-8 Fri. off  
Please call ahead if you need to speak with Pastor.

**Office Secretary** Lynn Ladd 715-682-6075 **Office Hours** M/T/Wed 8:30-2:30  
Days and times do change.

**Church President:** John Pruss 715-292-4825 **Head Elder:** Darryl Warren 715-492-0488

**Little Friends of Jesus Child Care Center:** 715-682-5185  
**LFOJ Administrator:** 715-682-6075

**Website** [www.zionashland.org](http://www.zionashland.org) **E-mail** [secretary@zionlutheranashland.com](mailto:secretary@zionlutheranashland.com)

**PRAYERS for Home-bound, Assisted Living, Nursing Home**  
Those who aren't able to attend common worship that they would find comfort knowing that the Lord is with them.

*Arlene Zimmerman  
Violet Basina*

**PRAYERS FOR PROTECTION**  
For our full-time troops and public servants, for travel, missionaries, and for peace and protection for families.

*David Wright  
Jordan Thimm  
Andrew Pruss*

**PRAYERS FOR HEALTH AND HEALING**  
For good test results, treatment, positive thinking, healing, and comfort during cancer treatments, for those suffering from addiction, mental illness and for healing, strength, comfort, and peace for family we pray for:

Brad Prill	Vi Basina	James Fletcher
Harold Larson	Linda Stenroos	Don Pocernich
Tim Erickson	Patty Hmielewski	Pam Ekholm
Don Pocernich	Jamie Klema	Keith Tveit
Rick Kallio	Cheryl Hildebrandt	Mary Dahl
Mike Trimble	Molly Colgrove	Linda Parrish
Chuck Sandor	Dwayne Lynch	Tom Anderson
Octavia Pearce	Kevin Heggie	Larry Hildebrandt
Cindy Lazorik	Tracy Thompson	Bonnie Jansehski
Mike Dimich	Camden & Brooks Balmer	
Karen	Wayne	Casey
Chuck	Betsy	David

*And those in our hearts*

**Dear Lord, "We come to You today with heavy hearts, as we lift up those who are in need of prayer. We ask that You would bring healing and restoration to their body, mind, and spirit" Amen.**



**LOVE, COMPASSION, AND PROTECTION BY REV. DR. ARIC FENSKE** *(On Friday, May 23, 2025, Rev. Dr. Aric Fenske was installed as the new Executive Director of Lutherans For Life. The installation service was held at Immanuel Lutheran Church, St. Louis, Missouri, with Rev. Dr. B. Keith Haney officiating. Dr. Haney serves as Assistant to the President for Missions, Human Care, and Stewardship for Iowa District West (LCMS).)*

David uses an interesting illustration to describe his creation by the hands of God. He paints the picture of God knitting him together in his mother’s womb as a skilled artisan would knit together a beautiful piece of clothing or a colorful tapestry. When I hear these words, I can’t help but think of my grandmother, carefully and painstakingly knitting one of the blankets that were scattered throughout my childhood home.

As a young boy, I didn’t fully appreciate just how special those blankets were. But now that I am older, and my grandmother is with Jesus, I understand what a treasure those blankets are. Handmade items usually are a treasure. And not because they cost more to produce. In fact, homemade items are usually cheaper than store bought items. The value of a handmade item comes from the one who made it. Hours of carefully planning and then creating a homemade project reveals not only the skill of the maker but also the love that was needed to see the project through. My grandmother would not have spent hours and hours making those blankets for us if she didn’t love us dearly. Those blankets aren’t simply a memento—they are a lasting snapshot of her talent and her love for us. And that is why we treasure them.

So it is with every single human being. Every person has been carefully knit together by God in their mother’s womb, each with our own unique traits and personalities. And even though sin has corrupted every one of us, we can still see within every person a living revelation of the love and wisdom and skill of our God, who has fearfully and wonderfully made each and every person.

It is this loving and careful knitting together that imbues us all with an inherent value beyond our description. That value does not come from something inside of us, as if we were nothing more than the sum of our parts. No, our

value comes from the One who loved us enough to make a plan for each one of us (down to the number of hairs on our heads; see Matthew 10:30), long before He uttered the first “Let there be” (Revelation 13:8).

God treasures each person from the moment He begins to knit them together, if not even long before. And so should we. From fertilization to forever, and at every stage in between, regardless of nation or race, size or ability, each person is a treasure worthy of our love, compassion, and protection.



Nordic saying there’s no bad weather, just bad clothes so bundle up and get to work.



**MASSACHUSETTS’ RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION IS Leaving Kids Without a Home Alliance Defending Freedom, Sept. 12, 2025**

Few things in life are more tragic than children in need of a home. Nothing is more crucial than the support system a loving household can provide.

Fostering children is an incredibly selfless act — one that deserves praise. Foster families step in the gap not for recognition, but out of compassion and conviction that every child deserves a safe and loving home. and female and cannot change that fact. They believe that using opposite-sex pronouns or making efforts to change one’s gender is wrong. This is a strongly held religious conviction for the Joneses and millions of other Christians.

Yet, despite all of that, foster families are being sidelined across the nation — not because they can’t provide loving homes, but because they won’t parrot government approved talking points to the children. The government has increasingly chosen to disrupt the foster and adoption process for people of faith, no matter how disastrous it is for children.

You don’t even have to look that hard to find government officials telling foster families how to foster — or else.

- In Vermont, ADF is defending a pair of families that had their foster licenses revoked because they won’t affirm the government’s belief that boys can become girls and vice versa.
- In Oregon, a Court ruled to let a mother of five move forward with the adoption process after her application was originally denied because of her faith.

In other words, the problem is getting worse, not better.

That’s why ADF filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of two Massachusetts families after the state effectively told them that they were disqualified to foster because their religious beliefs were now incompatible with the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families’ (DCF) new Gender Identity Policy. Nick and Audrey Jones are a Christian

couple in the Commonwealth. They have been licensed foster parents since 2023 and reside in Worcester County, Massachusetts. In addition to having two of their own kids, Nick and Audrey have provided foster care to seven children over the last two years, including their only current placement, a 17-month-old girl who has practically lived with the family her whole life.

Just as importantly, Nick and Audrey are committed Christians who live out their faith in daily life. Nick and Audrey believe that the Bible teaches that people are created as male and female and cannot change that fact. They believe that using opposite-sex pronouns or making efforts to change one’s gender is wrong. This is a strongly held religious conviction for the Joneses and millions of other Christians.

Due to those convictions, there are some DCF requirements that Nick and Audrey categorically cannot comply with, such as verbally affirming a child’s desire to identify as the opposite sex (or no sex), or encouraging a confused child to undergo a social or medical gender “transition.”

In 2025, Nick and Audrey received the new Foster Parent Agreement for the first time as part of their annual license review. After reading about some of these new DCF policies, the Christian couple ultimately decided it could not sign the agreement and notified the DCF as such. In response, Nick and Audrey were told that continuing their license “won’t work” and were also told that there were no exemptions from signing the agreement form.

Nick and Audrey’s foster license expired in July 2025, but they have yet to receive any official revocation or discontinuation letter from DCF. What Nick and Audrey have learned since then, however, is that the DCF intends to remove their 17-month-old foster daughter — who is completely unaffected by the DCF’s Gender Identity Policy — just because the couple won’t sign a Foster Parent Agreement that would force them to violate their faith.

Greg and Marianelly Schrock are a Christian couple living in Middlesex County, Massachusetts with their two children. The couple first became a foster family in 2019 and have cared for 28 separate foster children over

DECEMBER LFOJ NEWSLETTER

Dear parents and guardians,  
As a reminder, we are closed Wednesday, December 24th through Friday, December 26th for Christmas.



Totville News: Merry Christmas from the Infant Room.

This month, our Bible stories were: Daniel and the Lions and Joseph and his brothers. But we have mostly been focusing on The Christmas Story. Along with the familiar songs, the children have learned a couple new songs for Christmas: Little Children can you tell and In a little stable.

In spite of the cold snap that we had, we have managed to get outside a few times. The fresh air is very beneficial even if it is only for a short time. I'm thankful for the help I've had while Nikki has been gone. The children and staff will be glad to have her back soon.

Have a blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year!

"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift."  
-2 Corinthians 9:15

-Denise and Nikki

Toddler Titbits: The Toddler room has been busy getting ready for the holidays!

We made and decorated Christmas ornaments, read Christmas books, and have been dressing up in green and red! We are getting outside when the weather allows.

Happy birthday to Lyla on December 19th and Jurek on December 20th!

We hope you have a happy and safe holiday week!

-Jane, Michelle, and Lael

**Learner Lane:** Our themes this month have included woodland animals, stockings, christmas trees, elves, presents, santa, and reindeer! We have read The Fiery Furnace, Daniel in the Lions Den, Jonah and the Whale and The Christmas Story.

So many fun things happened this month! Learners have been busy with all the festive art projects, making our own gingerbread men, and having our Polar Express party, which is coming up on December 30th!

Lilith turned four on the 13th. Happy birthday Lilith!

Friendly reminder that we go outside every day that the weather is a feel of 0 degrees or warmer. It is very important to have all the appropriate gear such as coats, snowpants, boots, hats and gloves (water proof preferred).

Merry Christmas!

-Hanna and Kate

Don't Hope,... Decide! by STEPHEN on SEPTEMBER 26, 2008

While waiting to pick up a friend at the airport in Portland, Oregon, I had one of those life-changing experiences that you hear other people talk about — the kind that sneaks up on you unexpectedly. This one occurred a mere two feet away from me.

Straining to locate my friend among the passengers deplaning through the jet way, I noticed a man coming toward me carrying two light bags. He stopped right next to me to greet his family.

First he motioned to his youngest son (maybe six years old) as he laid down his bags. They gave each other a long, loving hug. As they separated enough to look in each other's face, I heard the father say, "It's so good to see you, son. I missed you so much!" His son smiled somewhat shyly, averted his eyes and replied softly, "Me, too, Dad!"

Then the man stood up, gazed in the eyes of his oldest son (maybe nine or ten) and while cupping his son's face in his hands said, "You're already quite the young man. I love you very much, Zach!" They too hugged a most loving, tender hug.

While this was happening, a baby girl (perhaps one or one-and-a-half) was squirming excitedly in her mother's arms, never once taking her little eyes off the wonderful sight of her returning father. The man said, "Hi, baby girl!" as he gently took the child from her mother. He quickly kissed her face all over and then held her close to his chest while rocking her from side to side. The little girl instantly relaxed and simply laid her head on his shoulder, motionless in pure contentment.

After several moments, he handed his daughter to his oldest son and declared, "I've saved the best for last!" and proceeded to give his wife the longest, most passionate kiss I ever remember seeing. He gazed into her eyes for several seconds and then silently mouthed. "I love you so much!" They stared at each other's eyes, beaming big smiles at one another, while holding both hands.

For an instant they reminded me of newlyweds, but I knew by the age of their kids that they couldn't possibly be. I puzzled about it for a moment then realized how totally engrossed I was in the wonderful display of unconditional love not more than an arm's length away from me. I suddenly felt uncomfortable, as if I was invading something sacred, but was amazed to hear my own voice nervously ask, "Wow! How long have you two been married?"

"Been together fourteen years total, married twelve of those." he replied, without breaking his gaze from his lovely wife's face. "Well then, how long have you been away?" I asked. The man finally turned and looked at me, still beaming his joyous smile. "Two whole days!"

Two days? I was stunned. By the intensity of the greeting, I had assumed he'd been gone for at least several weeks – if not months. I know my expression betrayed me.

I said almost offhandedly, hoping to end my intrusion with some semblance of grace (and to get back to searching for my friend), "I hope my marriage is still that passionate after twelve years!"

The man suddenly stopped smiling.

He looked me straight in the eye, and with forcefulness that burned right into my soul, he told me something that left me a different person. He told me, "Don't hope, friend... decide!" Then he flashed me his wonderful smile again, shook my hand and said, "God bless!"

– By Michael D. Hargrove and Bottom Line Underwriters, Inc. Copyright 1997



“Never give up, for that is just the place and time that the tide will turn.” Harriet Stowe



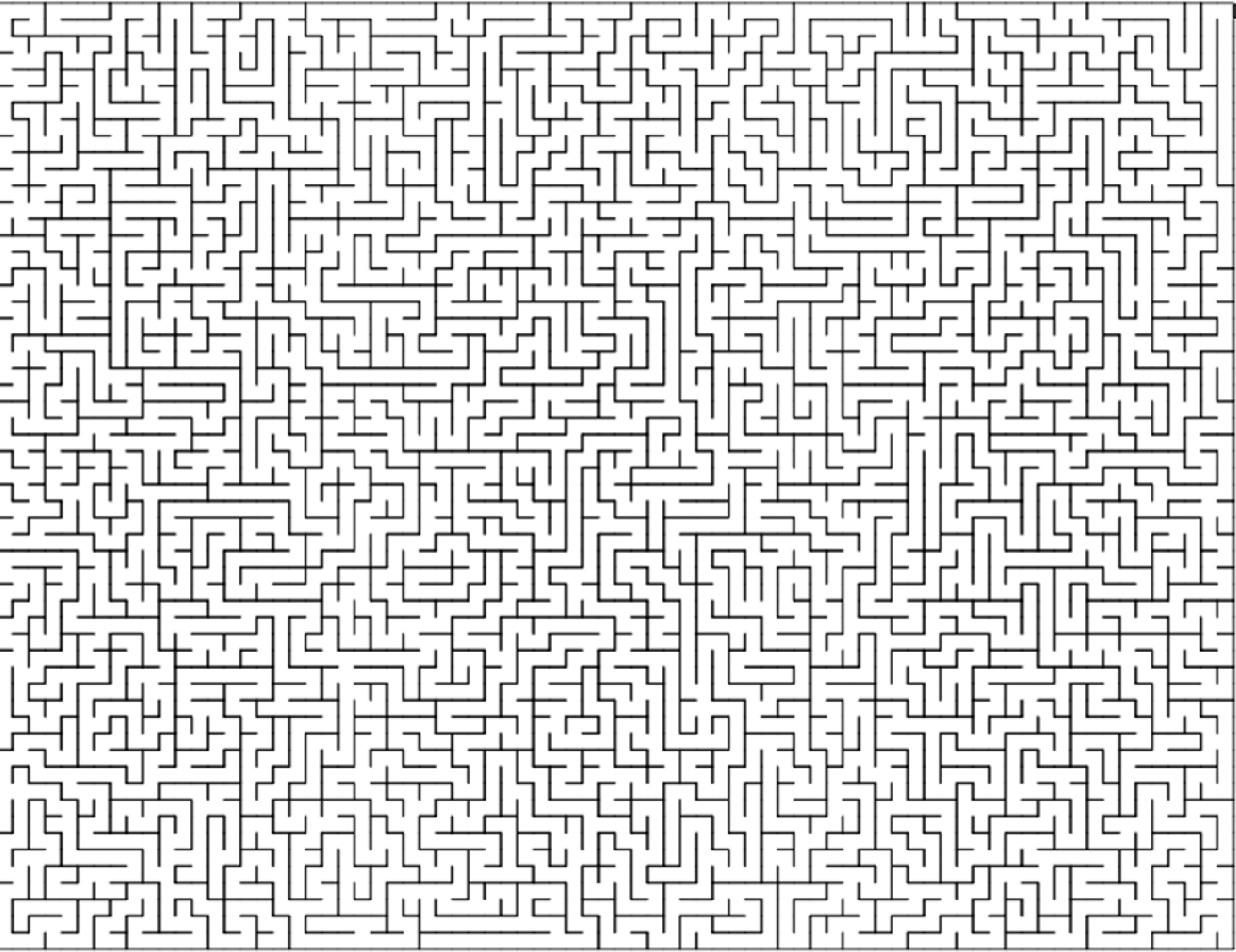
Matthew 4:12-25

PRISON  
GALILEE  
NAZARETH  
CAPERNAUM  
LAKE  
ZEBULUN  
PROPHET  
GENTILES  
DARKNESS  
LIGHT  
SHADOW  
DAWNED  
SIMON  
PETER  
ANDREW  
FISHERMEN  
NETS  
BOATS

W J D Q N L G E X Z E G H N Z  
Z N C O D A K K J S R F Y H R  
M E M B L T V A F A J H V N H  
B I V I U M S L Y C V C U E S  
S E L Z Q A U M N H J L P M L  
P E T E R C E A E D U A R R G  
E H T E R A Z A N B N D I E E  
N A P H T A L I E R A R S H N  
T H G I L I W Z P R E S O S T  
D A L G N C E O K R T P N I I  
E X N G J B W N D E O V A F L  
N T P D T S E H N A J P Y C E  
W Q K F R S B O A T H Q H Y S  
A W Q O S E Q J U G Y S F E C  
D M P M H S W L E C W N V B T

HOLY HUMOR

A father was approached by his small son who told him proudly, "I know what the Bible means!" His father smiled and replied, "What do you mean, you 'know' what the Bible means?" The son replied, "I do know!" "Okay," said his father. "What does the Bible mean?" "That's easy, Daddy..." the young boy replied excitedly, "It stands for 'Basic Information Before Leaving Earth.'"



Matthew 5:1-12 Theme

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BEATITUDES  
BLESSED  
BELIEVERS  
COMFORT  
CROWDS  
HEART  
HEAVENLY  
JESUS  
FAITH  
GOD  
MOUNT  
MOURNING

MEEK  
MERCIFUL  
PASSAGE  
POOR  
PURE  
REJOICE  
REWARD  
PROMISING  
SERMON  
SPIRIT  
WORDLY

To make this a bit harder— there are 5 words that do not belong on the puzzle. If you can't figure out which ones, they are listed on the Council minutes page.

LCMS Stewardship Ministry

January 11 – The Baptism of Our Lord

Matthew 3:15 – “But Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’” The reason God sent His Son into the world is to fulfill all righteousness for us, to do what we could not do. Here, Jesus plunges Himself into our sins and soaks them up in His Baptism, so that in our Baptism we might be cleansed and renewed. The whole of Jesus’ life, everything He did and said, was one great offering to the Father in our stead to fulfill all righteousness for us.

LCMS Stewardship Ministry January 18 – Second Sunday after Epiphany

John 1:29 – “The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’” The Israelites of old offered a lamb to God at Passover so that death might pass over them and do no harm. Over those long centuries of sacrifice, did they understand that this was actually God’s gift? That God would be the true Giver of the true Lamb? Truly, we can never out-give God, for all that we have is His.

LCMS Stewardship Ministry January 25 – Third Sunday after Epiphany

Matthew 4:20 – “Immediately they left their nets and followed him.” Discipleship cost Peter and Andrew everything they had. They left their trade, their hometown, their families, and they followed Jesus. God has called us to the same discipleship, the same devotion, though the exact details of how that is lived out will vary. The important thing is this: we know that all we have is the Lord’s, to be used for His purpose. We are His disciples and are ready to follow where He leads.