
Zion News

A newsletter of Zion Ev. Lutheran Church, Lawrenceville, Georgia – December, 2008

“Come let us declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God.” Jeremiah 51:10

Nativity Displays

In our post-modern society of so-called “tolerance” Christmas has become a bad word. It seems every year we hear about certain retailers who ask their employees to greet customers with “Happy Holidays” instead of “Merry Christmas.” Some people issue complaints about nativity displays in their neighborhood or community because those people only acknowledge one “religious tradition” and not the rest.

Are public Christmas displays “insensitive” to the people of other religious faiths? Not at all! I don’t think it is insensitive when people of other religions put up displays signifying their religious celebrations. I don’t like seeing Santa Claus and reindeer as “Christmas displays” because it is a distraction to the real meaning of Christmas, but I don’t think they are being insensitive toward me or others like me.

Christmas displays are a witness of what people believe. When I put a manger scene out in my yard, I am saying “I am celebrating the birth of Jesus, the Christ, the Savior of the world!” I look at it as an opportunity to be a witness to others. It is one way that I can let them know that Jesus is my Savior, and the salvation He won is a gift intended for them too. I do not force anyone to believe what I believe, but if they are interested, I am more than



willing to share the truth with them.

The real problem that we face today is that many people don’t like the fact that Christianity is exclusive. Jesus clearly states: **“I am the Way the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).** That is considered insensitive by many because it isn’t “politically correct” in our society today. It never has been and never will be, but it is still the truth! †

*Wishing you all a very
blessed Christmas
through the Christ-child!*

KING
of Kings
LORD of
LORDS

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Getting to Know Our Out-of-State Members

By Ann Duncan

Note: During the next few issues we will be introducing you to some of Zion's out of state members. These members live in Kentucky, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Most of you have never seen these members. You may wonder, "Why are they members here, if they don't ever come here?"

To answer that question, they are members here at Zion because we are the closest CLC church to these families. Some used to live here in the Atlanta area, but moved away. Some moved away from other CLC congregations, and found that we were best able to serve them with the Word of God.

So we serve these members from Zion with monthly visits from our pastor who brings them the Word of God through Bible study, worship services and the Lord's Supper.

We hope that this will help you to know these distant members better and ask that you keep them in your prayers!

Judy Low, one of our Kentucky members, was born and grew up in Austin, Minn. A CLC member from childhood, Judy and her family attended St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Austin. Judy is an office manager for Comcast in Franklin, Ky., and has worked for that company for 23 years. She left the wintry Minnesota plains for the beautiful Bluegrass State in 1979 because of a job transfer.



Judy Low at her home in Franklin, Kentucky. Services are often held at Judy's home for those members who are able to come. She always (and very willingly) makes a great lunch for those who are able to attend.

Judy is a busy lady: She's a single parent of four along with three sons-in-law to keep straight, and has a total of 13 grandchildren. She enjoys sewing and many different crafts. She said that baseball is her favorite sport, but she goes to any sport that her grandchildren participate in. If all 13 are playing a sport, Judy must spend a lot of time in the car!

This is Judy's favorite Scripture passage: **"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."** – Matthew 28:18-20

When I asked Judy if there was something she would like Zion members to know, she told me the following: "I moved to Kentucky in 1979 when I was on my own with having church service by listening to tapes. I am so thankful now for having DVDs to watch and also for having a pastor close where I can go for help and advice. I now do not feel alone anymore."

You are not alone, Judy. We are so blessed to have you as part of our congregation. †

A Library at Zion

Paul, in his second letter to Timothy wrote these familiar words: ***“But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:14-15).*** Here Paul reminds us of the importance of regularly studying the Word of God. We should be like the Bereans who ***“searched the Scriptures” (Acts 17:11).*** For this reason, it is good for our church to have library as a resource for its members, and a help in searching the Scriptures. We have the beginnings of a small library here at Zion (which can be found on the bookshelves across from the water fountains).



Our library currently includes: A set of commentaries on individual books of the Bible from the “People’s Bible” series produced by Northwestern Publishing House, other Biblical commentaries, devotional resources for children, a book on the miracles of Jesus, Creation and Evolution, and several books from the “How to respond” series from Concordia Publishing House. In addition we also have some audio and video recordings available.

The whole Bible is available on both on Cassette and CD, and copies of past services at Zion are available on CD. Also available are DVD’s of church services at our sister congregation in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Please look our library over and see if there is something that interests you. If you would like to borrow one or more of the

books, just fill out the check out information on the library clipboard and return them when you are finished. We hope these resources will be a benefit to all our members! †

If you have books (especially of a Biblical nature) that you have learned from and appreciated, you might consider donating them to the church library so that others can benefit from them as well.

Updated Order of Service

For several months now we have been using an order of service based on page 5ff in the front of the hymnal, but with updated language. This liturgy has been printed in a pamphlet format, at first with the changes in wording highlighted and later with the music included. During this time we have asked for the members of the congregation to bring any errors or suggestions to our attention so that corrections can be made. The Church Council plans to print sturdy, laminated, bound versions of this liturgy for congregational use by the first of the year, so if you have any comments, please let us know soon.

In the coming months we plan to finish the updated version of our communion liturgy and include it in the bound Liturgy supplement.

We realize that getting used to the new wording in the liturgy is difficult for most of us who are so familiar with the other. Our hope is that these changes will help us all think about and better understand what we are saying in these parts of the church service. If you have any comments, please speak to the pastor or to one of the Church Council members. †

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Pluralism – “the way of the truth will be blasphemed!”

False Prophets

Throughout the pages of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit warns of false teachers and their cancerous teaching which leads sinners away from the one true God. In the period of the Old Testament the LORD sent prophets to proclaim His Word to the world. But other “prophets” arose who contradicted the word of the LORD through His true prophets. The LORD warned of these false prophets. Through Jeremiah He proclaimed, **“Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; They speak a vision of their own heart, Not from the mouth of the LORD” (Jeremiah 23:16).**

Pluralism is becoming more popular in our society. Its deceiving nature makes it very dangerous to the child of God. For this reason, Zion is planning a seminar on pluralism in February, 2009.

Just as it was in the days of Jeremiah, so it is today. The apostle Peter wrote: **“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed” (2 Peter 2:1-2).** We are surrounded by false teachers today as well. Peter points out that these false teachers bring with them **“destructive heresies”** which **“many will follow.”** He also tells us that these teachers will be **“among you”** and that through their teaching **“the way of the truth will be blasphemed.”**

As Christians who are greatly concerned about upholding the truth of God’s Word, we should pause to consider the gravity of Peter’s words in these verses.

Pluralism

One of the false teachings which is being vigorously promoted today – with devastating consequences – is that of pluralism. Pluralism is the belief that all religions

worship the same god and that they all lead to the same place. In the Dec. 8, 2008 issue of *Newsweek* an interview with “Seven Pounds” actor Will Smith was printed. His comments throughout the interview reveal his pluralistic beliefs. In the interview Smith commented: “For me I’m certain about my relationship with the model of perfection of human life that’s laid out with the life of Jesus Christ. I’m certain of that.... I like anywhere people are searching for the truth, and I respect their path and I’m intrigued by their path.... I’m not bothered when someone says ‘Allah’ because they’re talking about the same person.”

This is a common belief in our world, yet it is expressly contrary to what God has revealed in His Word. More and more people (Christians among them) are falling prey to the destructive heresy of pluralism and are in danger of bringing upon themselves swift destruction. Why? Because pluralism undermines the salvation won by Christ. It destroys the Biblical teaching that freedom from sin and death can only be found through Jesus Christ.

Christ Alone

Concerning Jesus Peter boldly declared: **“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).** Without Jesus there can be no salvation, but pluralism blasphemes that truth by teaching that people can “choose their own way of salvation” – without Jesus Christ!

Because of the prevalent and deceiving nature of this “religious” idea, Zion is planning a seminar on pluralism in February, 2009. More information will be announced soon. We hope that you will join us to learn more about how the truth is being blasphemed through this destructive heresy. †