

# ZION NEWS

## ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL

540 OAK PARK AVENUE, P. O. BOX 369  
BEECHER, IL 60401-0369

CHURCH (708) 946-2271 SCHOOL (708) 946-2272  
[ZIONBEECHER@COMCAST.NET](mailto:ZIONBEECHER@COMCAST.NET) [WWW.ZIONBEECHER.NET](http://WWW.ZIONBEECHER.NET)

## NOVEMBER 2022



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## **November 2022**

What's the Forecast? What's ahead and how can we prepare?

I get up each morning and I check the forecast to see what to expect for the day and how to prepare. Will it be colder or warmer than yesterday? Is it going to rain or be windy? And if we're planning something, especially if it's supposed to be outside, I might check the forecast for that day a week in advance, knowing that the farther away the prediction is, the more likely it is to change. In a recent sermon, I mentioned some studies done which predict the 'forecast' for our church here in America. According to these studies and predictions, our church is in for some rough weather (to put it lightly) in the coming years. So, what's the forecast? And how should we prepare?

The predictions based on the numbers are not good. Lyman Stone conducted a survey of members of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, as well as an analysis of our projected growth/decline through demographic modelling. You can read the full study results at [lutheranlifesurvey.church](http://lutheranlifesurvey.church) or listen to an interview with Lyman Stone about the results at [issuesetc.org](http://issuesetc.org) recorded on 10/11/22. The results of the study were dire. Based on current synodical demographics and trends (based on adult conversions, member and youth retention, births, deaths, etc...) the startling prediction is that we will go from a synod today of about 1.8 million members, to around 400,000 by 2070. That's about 22% or nearing 1/5<sup>th</sup> of our current size in 48 years. That is a steep decline! This isn't some forecast of just some 'rough winds and storms' ahead—but something more akin to a hurricane. A recent Pew Research study indicates this is a snapshot of a much larger picture of church decline in the United States. Again, that number of decline for our church body is based on the assumption that all trends

continue on as they are now—youth retention, adult conversion, birthrate, etc...

Obviously, this is a projection for our synod as a whole, and not every individual church will match this level of decline. And of course, it's hard to say what the future truly holds—only the Lord knows that with certainty. But, *if* our Beecher congregations reflected a standard demographic and rate of growth/decline current in our Synod (which I imagine they do), what would the forecast look like for us for the coming years and decades? Would our churches be able to be around in 48 years with only 1/5<sup>th</sup> of our current attendance/membership? Would they even be able to be around in around 20 years at that rate of decline, if for instance, we're half our current size or less at that point? Would we be able to maintain and sustain our buildings/property? Would we even be able to afford to support a pastor individually or collectively? If so, would pastors need to be shared or change to a worker-priest model where the pastor has a second job to help sustain the ministry? And the big question to me in all of this is: would our children or grandchildren be able to hear the gospel proclaimed to them in all its truth, purity, and power, that they would be able to come to and remain in saving faith? As a church and churches, we're in for some deep challenges ahead.

That's the forecast. So, how do we prepare? What can we do to possibly change or reverse some of these trends of decline? At the end of his study, Lyman Stone models different scenarios *if* various trends of decline in the church are changed. He recognizes that people will offer different solutions: increase evangelism, focus more on youth catechesis/retention, have larger families, or change worship style. He dispels the myth that changing worship or music style will significantly impact growth, by comparing churches in the LCMS of different music style over a roughly 10 year period of time, and the respective rate of growth/decline of these groups was nearly identical. In other words: changing worship style is not a silver bullet. However, he states that with positive trends in ALL of the *other* factors mentioned, the rate of decline can eventually be reversed. Here are his conclusions for what can eventually affect growth for our Synod:

“If LCMS conversion rates double to approximately  
30 new members per 1,000 existing members per

year, and LCMS families increase their childbearing by one additional child on average from about 1.5 to 2 children per woman to 2.5 to 3, and if youth retention rates return to their pre-1960s level over 80%, then by 2070, numeric decline will cease and growth will resume” (Stone, *What Is Our Life Together*, pg. 57).

Notice that improvement in just one or two of those areas is *not* enough to put us back onto a path to growth. We have to fix all of the leaky pipes to fill the tank back up! And the sad but simple fact is: due to “lopsided age cohorts,” where a significant number of our members are 55 and over, Stone says there will be decline in our overall numbers over the next 30 years even with concurrent positive trends of conversion, fertility, and youth retention. However, with positive trends in said areas, Stone concludes that this would put us back on the path to growth. Again, although this is an overall projection for the synod, I imagine the average congregation would still reflect these results and predictions.

So, what can we do? Theologically speaking we can’t make the church grow. We can only plant the seeds of God’s word, but only God by the work of the Holy Spirit can provide the growth. **But plant the seeds we can, and plant the seeds we must.** So, we must:

1) renew our focus on evangelism through training and commitment. My suggestion is that we take our goal from this survey’s “path to growth” and aim to share the word with our adult friends and family, so that (Lord willing) God will convert the hearts of 3 new people each year for every 100 of our members.

2) refocus our efforts at Christian instruction and catechesis of our youth. Here, Stone suggests one thing that is statistically shown to improve youth retention: increase “at-home religious activities per week [from 0] to 3 such activities.” In other words, while devotions and at-home instruction may not have been as needed in the past, it is a must now.

And finally, Stone’s point about increased fertility/family sizes on average by 1 requires a little bit of nuance. I do not think increasing the size of the church should be a reason for us to have children. However, I do believe that unbiblical ideas about children have crept into the church, often leading Christians to choose to have smaller families or no children at all based on these

unbiblical/worldly ideas. It's no accident that God "blesses" Adam and Eve by telling them to "be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it." And that one of God's "blessings" to Abraham is that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sands of the sea shore. And that at the end of Scripture in Revelation, there is a great multitude of people that "no one can number" standing around the throne of God praising him in heaven. The Bible teaches that children are not a curse, but a blessing from God—even despite the difficulties and challenges in having and raising them.

Of course more can and needs to be said on this and each of the topics mentioned above, but may this article serve as a sober assessment and conversation starter for us to consider together. May God grant us wisdom and spiritual growth even as we face the tough weather ahead!

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Julian LaMie

### THANKSGIVING EVE WORSHIP

*Wednesday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>*

*beginning at 6:30pm at St. John*

*Lutheran, 28054 S. Yates Ave.* Plan to

observe Thanksgiving *just as the*

*Pilgrims did* – by first worshipping our bountiful God!



### Dorcas Society



### ZION DORCAS SOCIETY MEETING

**Thursday, November 10<sup>th</sup> @ 1pm**

*Hostesses: Rhonda Campbell & Debbie Falaschetti*

*Program: Bible Study & LWML Collection*

### ST. PAUL'S LADIES AID

Ladies Aid/LWML/Dorcas Society are invited to **join St. Paul's Ladies Aid meeting on Saturday, November 12<sup>th</sup>**

**at 1pm at Zion.** We will be working on

a project for Harbor House. Light refreshments will be served.



Revenue & Expense Report		
Recap Month – September 2022	This Year	Last Year
Beginning Balance	\$3,693.80	\$75,917.83
+Receipts	22,833.36	46,923.54
-Expenses: Payroll, Taxes	7,039.70	36,455.84
Bills Paid	17,749.83	55,481.93
Ending General Fund Balance	\$1,737.63	\$30,903.60
<b>Loans, Payables Due</b>	0	0
Current Status of General Fund	\$1,737.63	\$30,903.60



### SENIOR WORSHIP SERVICE

The service will be on **Thursday, November 17<sup>th</sup> beginning at 11am**. We are encouraging everyone who is available to come to this special worship service and luncheon *no matter what your age*. Following the communion service, you will be served a luncheon which is sponsored by private donations of individual members of Zion and served by some of our members. This event is held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month. Please join us at 11am for a time of worship and fellowship. **EVERYONE IS WELCOME!**



**SAVE THE DATE –  
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**  
*Church Christmas Decorating -  
Sunday, November 27<sup>th</sup> after the  
10:30am service.*

### Christmas Cards for Military

Sunday Education Hour will be signing Christmas Cards for Servicemen again this year. We put NO postage on the individual cards. **The cards have to be completed by November 6th.** Anyone can participate in this project at home also. Simply sign cards, include a short note if you like, add a return address (your home address or Zion Lutheran Church, P.O. Box 369; St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 1407 W. Church Road; St. John's Lutheran Church, 28054 S. Yates Ave.; Beecher, IL 60401) and **bring the cards to Zion by November 6th.**





**ZION MIXED CHOIR** (grade 7 through adult) will begin in November. We will be singing for Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany services. Join us on **Thursday evenings at 7:00pm, beginning November 3<sup>rd</sup>.**

**CONFIRMATION/1<sup>ST</sup> COMMUNION MEETING**  
**Sunday, November 6<sup>th</sup> after church @ Zion**

All parents of 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders (not yet Confirmed) are invited to attend this informational meeting. Books and materials will be handed out and schedules discussed.



**MIDWEEK ADVENT SERVICES**

2pm @ Zion & 6:30pm @ St. John  
 Wednesdays: November 30<sup>th</sup>,  
 December 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, & 21<sup>st</sup>

**CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING**  
 Wednesday, November 16<sup>th</sup> @ 7pm.



**VOTERS MEETING**

Sunday, December 4<sup>th</sup> after church.  
*If you would like to become a voting member of Zion, please attend this meeting. This will enable you to vote on issues at future meetings.*

**CIRCUIT REPRESENTATIVES TO THE  
 SYNODICAL CONVENTION**

The Called and Lay leaders met at St. Paul's, Chicago Heights on 10/22, to elect the circuit's representatives to the Synodical Convention to be held in Milwaukee July 29-August 3, 2023. The officers elected Pastor LaMie, St. John's, Beecher to be the Pastoral Delegate, and Pam Meyer, St. Paul's Chicago Heights as the Lay Delegate. The back up delegates will be Pastor Holyer, Trinity, Lansing, and Will Streng, Zion, Beecher. Thank you to everyone who will represent our circuit at the convention.



## SAVE THE DATE!

### ZION DORCAS SOCIETY ANNUAL COOKIE WALK

SAT., DECEMBER 10<sup>TH</sup> – 8:30AM TO 11:00AM



The Dorcas Society's Annual Christmas Cookie Walk is a great way to stock up for the Christmas Season. The entire congregation bakes their favorite homemade Christmas cookies which will be on sale for a few hours on Saturday morning... *You are reminded to have your cookies in the kitchen on Friday, December 9<sup>th</sup>.* Thanks for your help!



### ANGEL TREE

Zion's Christian Growth Committee will again sponsor the "**Angel Tree**" which gives our members and friends an opportunity to share the love of Jesus by making sure all of our children have presents for Christmas. You, as a member or friend of Zion, St. John, or St. Paul, can sponsor any child or family (who have some kind of "connection" to our churches) that could use some help at Christmas. The child's name with their gift wishes will be put on an angel & hung on the angel tree. **The family remains anonymous.** If you have sponsored a family in the past, or know of someone who needs some help, please do not hesitate to let us know. You can protect their privacy by filling out the wish list for them and be the one to pick up and deliver the presents. If you know of a family in need, please pick up a wish list on the table in the narthex, fill it out & **return it to the church office by Sunday, November 20<sup>th</sup>.** (Note: Lutheran Child & Family Services are not sponsoring a toy drive this year, but they are again sponsoring a financial drive. See below.) *Thank you!*  
*Zion Christian Growth*



*"You can make Christmas bright for foster children. Your donation will put gifts under the tree for the children in our care. Foster parents will receive money specifically to buy Christmas gifts for each child – assuring they receive what they want and need. This is a real blessing to the*

*families we serve!" Donate at [LCFS.org/ChristmasDrive](https://www.lcfs.org/ChristmasDrive)*

*Questions? Contact [Mandy Widtfeldt@lcfs.org](mailto:Mandy.Widtfeldt@lcfs.org) or 630-470-3853*

*Mail donations to: Attn: LCFS Christmas Drive, 1 Oakbrook Terrace, #501, Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181*



**ALTAR FLOWERS FOR  
CHRISTMAS**

Poinsettias will be available again this Christmas season for \$9.00 each through the Christian Growth Committee.



The poinsettias will decorate the Altar through Christmas Day.

You may take your plant home following the Christmas Day service. Due to limited space on the altar, only 50 poinsettias will be ordered. Reserve your flowers early to guarantee having a plant to take home. Names will be listed in the Christmas Eve & Christmas Day bulletins.

**Thank you for your support!**

If you are placing this/these plant(s) in someone's memory or for another occasion, please note below. Please print clearly. This information will be printed in the bulletins on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Plant 1. \_\_\_\_\_

Plant 2. \_\_\_\_\_

Plant 3. \_\_\_\_\_

Plant 4. \_\_\_\_\_

Plant 5. \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Plants \_\_\_\_\_ x \$9.00/plant = Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please Make Checks Payable To:  
ZION CHRISTIAN GROWTH COMMITTEE**

If you choose to participate, any amount over the cost of the poinsettias will be given for the support of Seminarian Oliver LaMie.



**GRIEF SHARE  
SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS**

**2pm Sunday, November 20<sup>th</sup> @ Zion** a special Grief Share meeting ~ Surviving the Holidays. All are welcome. If you have any questions please contact Pr. Stein 618-204-0378.

**SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE  
SATURDAY, DEC. 10<sup>TH</sup> AT 6PM**



This year we will again hold a special "Service of Remembrance". Its purpose is to help those people who have lost loved ones to get through this festive time of year – but now without those who are missing from their lives.

Please remember that this is for both our own members AND anyone within our area. Please spread the word to your friends and family. Perhaps through this effort, we can help many people find more joy at this time of year.



**TRI CONGREGATION COMMITTEE MEETING  
6:45PM THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10<sup>TH</sup> @ ST. JOHN**

*(All church members are welcome to attend these meetings. If you would like to receive emails for the Tri*

*Congregation Committee News, please send your email address with a request to ~ lcmsbeecher3@gmail.com)*

We are looking to create a  
**TRI CONGREGATION TECH TEAM.**



This team will look into our current livestreaming and possible future livestreaming options. We are in desperate need of video/livestream operators. Many homebound members rely on FaceBook and YouTube livestreaming to watch church on Sunday mornings. This is an important part of our Worship Services! Please contact the church office ([zionbeecher@comcast.net](mailto:zionbeecher@comcast.net) or 708-946-2271) if you can help and join this vital team.



**Wanted: Your Wishes!** Please bring us your ideas for mission work, especially local, that we can do bigger and stronger together in the months ahead. Please put your ideas in the box on the table outside the sanctuary, and they will be gathered into a list for discussion/implementation. *We need to know who feels inspired to help with what, so if you would include your name it will help!*



**WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY** is in the Zion conference room, 9:30am-11am on Wednesdays. (November 16<sup>th</sup> is the last day this year. A new study will begin January 4<sup>th</sup>.)

**REMINDER:** Please remember to fill out an attendance card or sign the attendance sheet if you come to any worship services. We keep this information for church statistics that get sent to the LCMS/Northern Illinois District. *(Please mark if you are from St. John or St. Paul and the cards will get to your church.)* Thank you.



**2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL VILLAGE OF BEECHER CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING** event to be held at Firemen's Park the evening of **Sunday, November 27<sup>th</sup>, 4:30pm-7pm.** A light parade (open to small vehicles, golf carts, etc.) will kick off at 5pm with the official tree lighting to follow.

## Special WORSHIP SCHEDULE

- Wednesdays, **Nov. 30<sup>th</sup>, Dec. 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>**, Midweek Advent Worship (**2pm @ Zion & 6:30pm @ St. John**)
- Saturday, **Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>** Special Service of Remembrance (**6pm @ Zion**)
- Sunday, **Dec. 18<sup>th</sup>** 10:30am Worship w/Children's Program
- Saturday, **Dec. 24<sup>th</sup>** Christmas Eve (**2pm @ Zion, 6pm Children's Service @ St. John, 8pm @ Zion**)
- Sunday, **Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>** Christmas Day (**8am @ St. John & 9:30am @ Zion**) (NO Christian Ed. Hour & NO Monday evening service)

**FROM:**



**ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod  
540 Oak Park Ave., P.O. Box 369  
Beecher, IL 60401

Vacancy Pastors:

Pr. Julian LaMie 815-471-2221 (lamie.julian@gmail.com)

Pr. Michael Stein 618-204-0378 (mlstein76@gmail.com)

708-946-2271 email: zionbeecher@comcast.net  
www.zionbeecher.net FAX 708-946-2611

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