

Looking Up | Reaching Out



ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

Harbinger

August 2020
Volume 152 Number 8

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August is a perfect time for some thoughts about Christmas. We are surrounded by so much we don't understand, don't like, or fear that such a diversion might help change how we look and feel about each new day. Many years ago, when Abby was still in preschool, we had a wonderful snowfall several days after Christmas. Now, there is nothing more exciting for a child than fresh snow, especially when the joy of Christmas morning is still bubbling away. She begged to go outside to play. Once dressed in snowsuit, gloves, cap and boots she ran and immediately laid on her back in the snow. She started swinging arms and legs back and forth. We laughed as we watched her making a snow angel! And it was an energetic one at that. As I watched more closely I saw her lips moving and realized she was talking. I didn't want to distract her, so I quietly slid open the back door only to hear her saying, over and over again, "Don't be afraid! Don't be afraid!" I told Rox what I heard. At first it didn't click, but then we both got it. She was repeating the words of the angels to the shepherds, "Don't be afraid!" The Christmas story had energized her mind. She wasn't just "making" a snow angel, she WAS the Christmas angel "Don't be afraid! Don't be afraid!" It reminded me that children really do listen and remember. And that is how the Christmas story touched her heart. When I was a kid, we just made show angels for fun, to stand back and see what we had created. Her acting career started early as she had become an angel in the snow, and her role was to repeat the good news of Christmas. "Don't be afraid!" What better message is there than "Don't be afraid?" Whether to shepherds near Bethlehem, to a little girl in church on Christmas Eve, or the world in which we live today, what better message is there than "Don't be afraid! Don't be afraid?" Because a baby was born in Bethlehem there is nothing that can ever separate us from God's love. And that love brings peace to any conflict or pain or fear. "Don't be afraid!" What good news! And what a great memory for me! Blessings! Pastor Seeber

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Kalamazoo, MI 49008
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Email: zion@zionkazoo.org
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COVID UPDATE

The building is still closed except for essential functions. **We are NOT accepting food or bazaar donations at this time.**

Office hours: Mon—Thurs / 10am-2pm

Phone: 382-2360.

Email: zion@zionkazoo.org

Typically someone from our pastoral staff is in the building most of the time during the week.

Pastoral staff cell numbers:

Pastor Seeber 501-3624

Aaron Grube 271-2848

Pastor Brelje 330-9538

Pastor Couch 598-8167

Pastoral staff email:

Seeber: pastortim@zionkazoo.org

Grube: dcegrube21@gmail.com

Brelje: lkbrelje@sbcglobal.net

Couch: pastormarksg@gmail.com

We are continuing to worship in the parking lot at 9:30am on Sundays. This is a regular service with live music and liturgy. Everyone sits in cars or lawn chairs and it has been well received and has helped us to start moving back toward a more normal routine. Restrooms are open during worship should that help your decision about attending.

We are discussing how to add Holy Communion to the parking lot worship services and might possibly already be doing it by the time you receive this newsletter.

We are sending weekly email updates for all who we have email addresses for. If you are not receiving a weekly email, please contact the office so we can add you to the list!

Sunday “online” worship begins Sundays at 10 am, on Zion’s Facebook and YouTube pages (you can access also from our website.) (These premiere at 10am but can be viewed anytime after that.)

Aaron and Pastor Seeber continue to post devotions on our Facebook page on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

Wednesdays we post the scripture lessons and themes for the coming weekend as another way to prepare for Sunday worship.

Portals of Prayer (July-September) are available and can be picked up Sunday mornings during our parking lot worship, when the office is open, or we can mail you a copy if you call and ask.

“WHEN will we worship in the sanctuary again and our normal programs resume?” The answer is “we aren’t sure.” This continues to be a week by week effort to plan and respond to changing conditions. We are all anxious to get back to “normal” with the understanding that whatever normal is will look different than it did six months ago.

Financial support continues to be amazing! Thank you for your support of ministry!

Until the virus goes dormant, or a vaccine is available, a great number of our members will not be comfortable being in the building. And so, when we “re-open” we will also need to continue all that we are doing now, likely for quite a while! That is why we keep saying our “new normal” will look different. But it will be good and maybe we’ll be able to touch even more lives than we have in the past!

Zion’s support staff and pastoral staff is most grateful for your prayers, love, patience, and support for our efforts during this time. You have been a big help to all of us who serve this congregation! Thank you!

Life Together isn't always smooth sailing.

Unless one is schizophrenic, the only way you can avoid arguments and disagreements is to live alone. But life is not meant to be lived alone. Christ came to show us what that means! We know from our experiences in families, workplace, clubs, groups and teams that there are times when people who come together for a common reason but wind up in conflict. We know that some cause more problems and pain than others. And often those who cause such pain have no clue that they are hurting others. Life is like that!

No surprises there! But one thing that often comes as a surprise to some is when that happens in a Christian congregation. More people leave congregations because of conflict than because of the color of a hymnal or the programs that are offered. And when that happens, it takes a long time for such people to return to another congregation, for who wants to risk being hurt again by people who are supposed to love? Love means that I will listen to others as easily as I expect them to listen to me!

We know that forgiving and servant love is part of being a Christian, and yet we are not perfect and sometimes it is hard to love and forgive people who might not agree with me. Even Jesus struggled with complaints from his own family, and the attempts of his disciples to change the "way" he was doing ministry. Saint Paul was aware of such problems, from a very dysfunctional congregation in the city of Corinth. His letters to them were to help them stay on track and learn how to "*act out what they said they believed.*" And that is always our issue as well. We tell our spouse or children we love them, and if that is true, we need to love them even when it isn't easy to do so. We forgive when we have been hurt, not because forgiveness is deserved but because that is how love works. Here is a portion of how Paul talked about this in 1 Corinthians 12:

The body is not made up of one part but of many. Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body ... God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be ... God has put the body together ... so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

A toothache can make the whole body hurt, while joy can override normal body aches. Life is like that. Why should life as members of a congregation be any different? We are members of one body here at Zion, and we are here by the grace and guidance of God. He has created us and He has a purpose for us. But it is as ONE body. There should be consideration for everything we do or say as to the effect it will have on the rest of the body. If I demand that others listen to me but don't first listen to them, how can we be "one?" Even if I am convinced I am the smartest cookie on the planet, but don't have love, or my actions cause someone else pain, how smart have I shown myself to be?

Part of the life of a congregation is to learn how to live with the freeing, forgiving, and serving love of Jesus with people who all want to do that same thing, so that it becomes more natural and easy to do it in our daily lives. Practice never makes us "perfect" but it makes us "better." And if God's grace daily makes us better, we are on the right boat. How we learn to live together here makes us better in our loving, nurturing and serving love "in the real world." Life together isn't always smooth sailing, but with Jesus in the boat, it always brings the promise and the power of peace! And if we live as if we are loving and forgiving people, we already are feeling the power of that peace!

Pastor Tim

Catechism Review: The Lord's Prayer (part 7)

"Deliver us from Evil"

We quickly say "lead us not into temptation" AND "deliver us from evil" as if that was the same thing. But it isn't. *Temptation is about an apple I wish to take a bit out of. Evil is about a serpent that wants to take a bite out of me.* This last petition or request ("deliver me from evil") might be the most powerful of all. It concludes this prayer Jesus taught in such a perfect way. In Middle Eastern countries, stories and parables were told as a way of remembering. And many of them were told in a style where the end causes you to go back to the beginning. They are like a circle or a cycle and their very form teaches more than just the words on a page.

Think about the first word of this prayer, "Father!" (it is about God.) And the last word is about "Evil." (Everything that is NOT God or that is opposed to God.) *Deliver us from evil* is the cry of every child to a father or mother (even when they don't know that is their request!) It is the cry of "protect me, guard me, wrap me in your wings, keep me safe from all that can destroy me."

This petition is not a demand, but rather a reminder that we are surrounded by evil and demonic forces. As every night reminds us of how dark and cold the world would be without the sun, so these words remind us that there is a darkness that is lurking, evil that is rumbling, and a force of destruction that (if it could) would separate us from the love of the Creator and the power of faith.

That was the purpose for Jesus' journey into our world — to chase the darkness away. To deliver us from evil. To chase the shades of night away — forever. In this prayer we acknowledge the battle, which is a true and necessary *holy war*, in which God comes to fight for our very lives and our eternal souls. Deliver us from evil indeed! Do you think it was a coincidence that Jesus was born in the

darkness of night, in a dark manger far from the bright lights of Jerusalem? Of course not! Or do you think it a quirk of fate that Jesus' climbed onto the darkest tree of all (called a cross) and was immediately enveloped in his agony by an eclipse in which the earth was shrouded (at high noon) by an event that attempted to blot out the sun? Of course not! God's entire plan of salvation, beginning in the Garden, repeated by the prophets, and announced when the Word became Flesh was to deliver us from ALL evil! From darkness! From death! From anything that can eclipse the Light of the World!

What a great way for Jesus to end his lesson on how to pray, what to say, and how to understand why the relationship with God is the answer to everything in life! These words remind us that the world is often a dark place. And that God's Son has come as the Light of the World to conquer sin, death, and the devil — in other words, *to deliver us from evil!* 1st Peter 5 reminds us: "*Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*" What a great description of a broken world, the forces of death, and the antithesis of Gods' goodness!

But there is more. This is not a mild request in which God's action is dependent on our faith! What this means is that God doesn't only deliver from evil IF we ask politely. God has already fought the war and won the battle. In these words we are encouraged to enter into the presence of the victory which already is our gift. Evil exists, but it can only destroy us if we embrace the darkness rather than bask in the light. The world isn't perfect and heaven will come later, not now. But this prayer reminds us that nothing can separate us from the love of God, the Good News of the Christ birth, or the victory of Easter. Yes, deliverance has come — as a gift of grace. And our last prayer lesson (in these simple words) reminds us to celebrate that we have been delivered, and we are now set free!

Pastor Seeber

Worship Help for Parents and Children

(It is OK for everyone else to read too! We'll keep finding other ways to help, but this page will deal with worship in the Lutheran Church.)

This month: HOLY COMMUNION

For Dads and Moms and younger adults: To discuss Holy Communion, we always begin with the Passover (Exodus 12) which was first celebrated on the night that Israel escaped from captivity in Egypt. The Passover meal was Israel's reminder of God's deliverance. The blood of the lambs marked the homes of the faithful. This miraculous rescue set Israel on the path to a land of Promise.

Jesus kept the Passover with his disciples on the night of his betrayal. But in the midst of the remembrance of past deliverance, He added something new! *"This broken bread I share is my body ... This cup of wine that I share with you is my blood."* And soon after that meal with his disciples, Jesus sacrificed his life for once and for all!

The new "Passover Lamb" was slain that all people might be set free. The waters of death were held back that God's people might be set on the path of life. From the earliest days of the Christian Church, Holy Communion was celebrated every time the congregation gathered together. There is no way to underestimate the importance of regular participation in the meal of the new kingdom. And so, our liturgy is centered around both Word (Bible) and Sacrament (Holy Communion). God's gifts are so much more powerful than anything we can create!

Holy Communion is a meal of remembrance, God's presence, and peace! This meal is a "foretaste of the kingdom to come" — a preview of coming attractions. It celebrates Christ in our midst. It is the wedding feast in which Christ marries himself to his Church. It is the family meal in which our Savior again and again comes to us in a most special way. In

this meal we receive the gifts of forgiveness and strength for our daily lives. This is a spiritual meal for our spiritual lives.

For many years (in our recent past) Lutherans didn't take communion as often for fear of "trivializing the meal." There was a concern that we would take it for granted if it was offered too often. We have rightly returned to an historic tradition of celebrating this meal every time we gather as one.

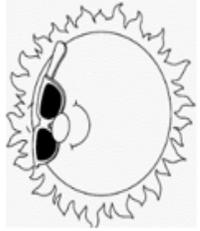
For Parents with young children: Talk about your traditions at home — like birthday parties and Thanksgiving meals. Why do you have a certain menu and routine for those annual events? Why are tables decorated and special attention given to the traditions year, after year, after year?

When those questions are answered, it is easier to begin talking about this special meal we call Holy Communion. It is "holy" because God has given it, and He is present with us in this meal in a special way. It is "communion" because it gathers God's family and makes us one with Him. Explain that the altar is like a table that the whole family gathers around (and since we can't all fit at once, we keep coming up until everyone has had a chance to "sit at the table.")

The tradition in the last few centuries of the Church has been to wait until children are "older" for them to "take communion." We begin at Zion in grade 6, but our younger children come to the table and receive a blessing, so they are not left out. This begins the opportunities that you, as parents, have to begin talking about communion with our children at home.

As soon as your kids express an interest or wonder when they can take communion is the time to start answering their questions and teaching them what communion means. And please, let us know if there are any ways we can help with that effort of love!

AUGUST 2020

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Youth & FamilySummer NewsMiddle School

Confirmation Camp will be a one day event this year on August 12th (Wednesday) from 9am–2:30pm

All 6th–8th grade students should attend!

High School

Last summer study: August 4th at 3pm at Ritter's.

Family

Growler's Game (properly social distanced) August 15th at 6:35pm. Tailgating beforehand. Cost is \$10/adults

Kids 18 and under FREE
To sign up contact Aaron

Echoes

God IS at work through people in our congregation...here is their story:

June 25th: 22,000 meals are packed and distributed to food pantries in the area.

Thanks to an endowment grant and a helpful number of volunteers, we were able to provide a very tangible and desperate need in our community. It wasn't difficult. It took a few hours. It took some coordination and a good chunk of money but WHAT a return on investment! Being able to provide 22,000 meals is pretty spectacular.

Thanks to Meals of Hope! Thanks to the many volunteers! Thanks to Loaves and Fishes and the other food pantries who provide a bridge and outlet for such a feat. Galatians 6:9 states: "Do not grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." We may never see the harvest that comes from this good act. People may never recognize the little child and older adult who compiled their meal—or the grateful donor who contributed to the endowment. But because of all these loving actions, people who are hungry, will have a meal today, and people of God will have obeyed His command: Love one another!

CAMPUS MINISTRY



In mid-June, I started contacting Lutheran congregations in the (269) or (616) area code to determine college age students in their congregations that were currently WMU students or incoming freshmen. To date, I have spoken with 27 of the 36 congregations. There are a total of 3 students coming to WMU from those congregations.

I'm waiting to hear from 9 other congregations and have 18 more LC-MS congregations to call. Contacting the LC-MS congregations in Michigan is a joint effort by the other full time campus ministries at MSU, CMU, EMU and U of M, along with WMU. The campus pastor's at those congregations are calling the congregations in their areas and then we will be sharing the names and contact information of students with one another once we have finished our calls.

I am very excited to share I recently began a podcast series with students involved in campus ministry. The first one was with two WMU student athletes. Those two young men did a wonderful job sharing the joys and challenges of being an athlete and how they are trying to use their platform as an athlete to share their faith and how they are dealing with the uncertainty of whether there will be a football or soccer season this Fall.

There are several other upcoming podcasts. Two of our international students from Pakistan and South Africa, both working on their PhD's, will be the feature of one podcast and several students who have been a part of Bronco Buddy mentoring will be featured in another.

I've also reached out to several African-American WMU faculty members to see if they would be willing to do a podcast or possibly be a part of a panel discussion in the Fall semester regarding race relations, racial equality and the issues that are before us today.

Additionally, I will be reaching out to the WMU counseling department and the Social Work department to see about involving them in a podcast or seminar/workshop in the Fall semester to inform students about their services. I believe mental health/well being and striving for wholeness will be important for the campus community when school begins and my hope is to work together with or help students learn about the resources available to them, especially in this time.

I've also reached out to a number of Zion members who are either WMU faculty or staff to see how I can best support them, both individually and as a group.

God's blessings to you all!
Pastor Mark



Book Review: "Every Good Endeavor; Connection Your Work to God's Work." Timothy Keller. Viking Press. 2012

Keller is a well known pastor / author best known for his books "The Reason for God," and "The Prodigal God." He began a mission church named "Redeemer" in downtown Manhattan in 1990. His target was young, educated professionals who had little faith background or were very skeptical of the value of Christianity. Today, Redeemer has grown to over 25,000 members in 4 different locations throughout the city.

Keller has a unique way of speaking to many who had no church background but were open to what they sensed was missing in their lives. Amazingly his approach is very traditional (not typical in "megachurches" today) His worship style was very liturgical, but Gospel centered preaching and teaching, and a genuine concern for connecting our faith to real life times and issues were his passion.

His theological approach feels very "Lutheran" in terms of the balance of Law and Gospel, and his emphasis on faith and grace! His approach was not to attract people with loud music, flashing lights, or a cult of personality. His style is that of a teacher who presents the faith in a relevant and compassionate way. His unique gift is the ability to share Christ in a non threatening and practical manner which is easy to understand. He is biblically centered and culturally relevant.

This might seem to be a strange book to review during a time when so many are in uncertainty and transition. And yet, what better time to stop and think about God's plan and purpose in relation to mine?

His introduction quotes a theme from "Habits of the Heart" which lamented that our culture has moved from a validation of God's

sacredness to a "validation of the sacredness of the individual." And the sacredness of the individual is not balanced by any sense of the whole or the common good. [18]

That sets the tone for Keller's book which uses the context of Scripture to recover the idea that ALL human work is not a job but a "calling." A vocation! And the original sense of "vocation" had the sense that God is part of calling us to work!

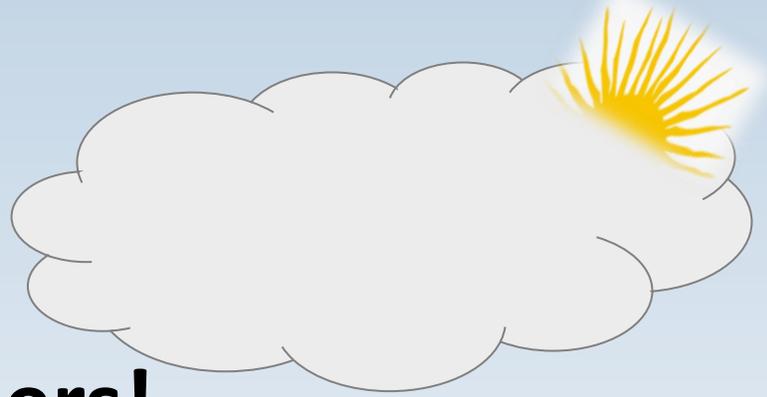
Luther and the other Reformers consistently confessed that all work, was as much a calling from God as the ministry of a monk or priest. [20] And when what we do as parent, teacher, truck driver, cashier, or physician has that tone and motivation, work moves from being a burden or necessity to stay alive to an opportunity to serve God and neighbor.

That is the easiest spin I can put on this book. And Keller writes so well and is so practical that there is something in this book for all.

Even if you were to look at a chapter that sounds like an area of difficulty for you, and read nothing else, the book would be a help.

Keller introduces his book with reference to God's plan for us to work. He then outlines many of the practical problems we encounter in "work." He concludes with a section that outlines a new perspective for each day's efforts. And he uses many stories from the real world to illustrate his point.

John Coltrane, one of the pioneers of jazz in this country was not a good role model, until a spiritual awakening changed his life. His album "A Love Supreme" is one of the most famous jazz albums of any time, and was dedicated "as a humble offering to God." Keller uses stories such as this to show the change in any "work" when we see who we are and what we do as an offering to God and servant love to those around us.



Kalamazoo Growlers!

Saturday, August 15th at 6:35 pm

Tickets are only \$10/adult! Kids 18 and under are FREE!

Join other Zion families and friends on the annual trip to the Growlers!

Family Ministry is covering the cost of kids 18 and under, so they are free! Tickets are first come/first serve and we only have 60 tickets this year! This event is open to everyone in Zion's congregation, Friends of Jesus Preschool, and family/friends. Ticket includes access to the tailgate area (unlimited food) which is open prior to the game (5pm). To sign up, contact Aaron at dcegrube21@gmail.com and he will send you a link to the online sign up form. All tickets will be emailed this year.



Financial Report for June 2020

ZION: June Giving was under budget by \$14,213. Expenses were under budget by \$9,494. June ended with a Net Gain of \$2,011. YTD Net Income gain was \$2,011, under budget by \$4,719.

FRIENDS OF JESUS PRESCHOOL: Income was over budget by \$191. Expenses were under budget by \$2,416. June Net loss was \$468. YTD Net Income loss was \$468, over budget by \$2,607.

Solid Grounds: Income was under budget by \$3,004. Expenses were over budget by \$235. June Net Loss was \$58. YTD Net Income loss was \$58, under budget by \$3,239.

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH	Current Month			Year-To-Date		
	Budget	Actual	Over/Under	Budget	Actual	Over/Under
INCOME						
Zion Giving & Misc.	61,825	47,612	-14,213	61,825	47,612	-14,213
EXPENSES						
Zion Staff Support	28,053	27,751	-302	28,053	27,751	-302
Office Operations	1,435	1,626	191	1,435	1,626	191
Church Property	6,372	3,465	-2,907	6,372	3,465	-2,907
Education Ministry	0	34	34	0	34	34
Evangelism/Missions	0	0	0	0	0	0
Worship Ministry	300	863	563	300	863	563
Other Ministries	400	191	-209	400	191	-209
Music Ministry	1,625	500	-1,125	1,625	500	-1,125
Finance Ministry	10,340	6,368	-3,972	10,340	6,368	-3,972
Zion Haus Ministry	400	300	-100	400	300	-100
Missions - General	6,170	4,503	-1,667	6,170	4,503	-1,667
Total Expenses	55,095	45,601	9,494	55,095	45,601	-9,494
INCOME LESS EXPENSES	6,730	2,011	4,719	6,730	2,011	-4,719
FRIENDS OF JESUS PRESCHOOL						
INCOME						
FOJ Income	1,965	2,156	191	1,965	2,156	191
EXPENSES						
FOJ Staff Support	3,140	2,355	-785	3,140	2,355	-785
FOJ Operations Expenses	1,900	269	-1,631	1,900	269	-1,631
INCOME LESS EXPENSES	-3,075	-468	2,607	-3,075	-468	-2,607
SOLID GROUND						
Solid Ground Income	11,730	8,726	-3,004	11,730	8,726	-3,004
Solid Ground Expenses	8,549	8,784	-235	8,549	8,784	-235
INCOME LESS EXPENSES	3,181	-58	-3,239	3,181	-58	-3,239
SOLID GROUND						
Solid Ground Income	11,730	8,726	-3,004	11,730	8,726	-3,004
Solid Ground Expenses	8,549	8,784	-235	8,549	8,784	-235
INCOME LESS EXPENSES	3,181	-58	-3,239	3,181	-58	-3,239
BALANCE SHEET						
	6/1/2020		6/30/2020		YTD Change	
ASSETS						
Cash	78,336		63,919		-14,417	
Investments	137,222		137,334		112	
Other Assets	10,944		12,076		1,132	
TOTAL	226,502		213,329		-13,173	
LIABILITIES						
Payroll	5,829		6,013		184	
Dedicated Funds	87,136		71,735		-15,401	
Unrestricted Funds	133,537		135,581		2,044	
TOTAL	226,502		213,329		-13,173	
MORTGAGE LOAN BALANCE	\$780,033					
Dedicated Accounts with Balances over \$3,000						
Equipment Fund	\$3,492					
Youth Ministry	\$8,399					
New Staff	\$50,000					



Are you looking forward to the Zion bazaar? We are, too...
just not THIS year.

Due to the uncertainty of the coronavirus, we are canceling the November bazaar. We do hope, however, that if you have crafted items in anticipation of this year that you will hang onto them for next year. The same goes for attic treasures.

While you currently can't bring items to church, once you can, we have ample room for storage.

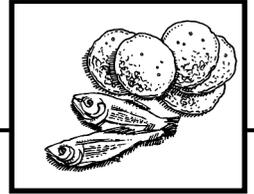
Sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed, assisted and supported this event. We hope to make the 2021 bazaar the biggest and best yet!

If you have questions, please contact Jayne Mayer (375-8342) or Linda Mayer (375-1241).

KALAMAZOO LOAVES & FISHES

The wish list item for **August is Whole Grain Pasta**. While the church is not currently taken donations, please remember Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes still need assistance, either in the way of food or monetarily.

Thank you!



RELIGIOUS HUMOR

—Reprinted from Reader's Digest—

A priest, a minister, and a rabbi want to see who's best at his job. So each one goes into the woods, finds a bear, and attempts to convert it. Later, they all get together. The priest begins: "When I found the bear, I read to him from the catechism and sprinkled him with holy water. Next week is his first Communion." "I found a bear by the stream," says the minister, "and preached God's holy Word. The bear was so mesmerized that he let me baptize him." They both look down at the rabbi, who is lying on a gurney in a body cast. "Looking back," he says, "maybe I shouldn't have started with the circumcision."

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Trust in the LORD with all your heart;
do not depend on your own understanding.
Seek his will in all you do,
and he will show you which path to take.

Proverbs 3:5-6